



Inspiration: Late. Dr. L.C. Wallia



'Took her to the cops': Father of woman held for husband's brutal murder

Vatika Times
NEW DELHI: Father of Muskan Rastogi, the Meerut woman accused of murdering and dismembering her husband Saurabh Rajput with the help of her lover, on Friday said he personally "took his daughter to the police station and asked her to tell the truth". Meanwhile, her mother said she was uncertain whether "Muskan was brainwashed or did drugs". Speaking to ANI, Muskan's father Pramod said, "While we were going to the Police station, I stopped the scooter and spoke to her and told her to tell me the truth...then she confessed the truth that she and her friend together killed her husband, they put his body in a drum and placed cement on top of it." "I took her to Police station and asked her to tell the truth...that's how the case got solved. The verdict, in this case, should come fast and I don't want anything less than capital punishment for her...what she did is very wrong...my son-in-law should get justice," he added. Muskan's mother, Kavita admitted that her daughter had "committed a big mistake" and said she was uncertain over whether her daughter "was brainwashed or did drugs." "My child has committed a big mistake. I used to ask her continuously what the problem was, but she kept losing weight; she had lost 10 kg in 2 years. She hid a lot of things from us and that's why she is in jail today. We have no idea if she was brainwashed or did drugs," she said. "I want to tell all the children out there that never hide anything from your parents."

'You do not have courage': Shah's sharp attack on Stalin government

Vatika Times
NEW DELHI: Union home minister Amit Shah on Friday took a sharp swipe at Tamil Nadu chief minister MK Stalin, accusing him and his party of exploiting the language issue for political gains and to divert attention from corruption allegations. He also said the Tamil Nadu government does not have the courage "to provide medical and engineering education in Tamil" because the "economic interests will be affected". "Some parties are raking up the language issue for their own politics. They are doing it just to hide their corruption," Shah said on Friday while replying to a debate on the working of the Ministry of Home Affairs in Rajya Sabha. The DMK-led Tamil Nadu government has been in a prolonged tussle with the Centre over the National Education Policy (NEP) and its three-language formula. Addressing this, Shah asserted that Hindi is not a rival to regional languages but a "friend" of all Indian languages. The home minister strongly dismissed claims of Hindi imposition, said asserted that every Indian language is valuable.



"There have been enough divisions in the nation in the name of language, and it should not happen anymore," he said. To demonstrate the Centre's commitment to linguistic diversity, Shah announced that from December onwards, he will conduct all official correspondence with chief ministers, MPs, and citizens in their respective languages. "The Modi government has established a new department of Indian Languages under the 'Raajbhasha Vibhaag' to promote all Indian languages, including Tamil, Telugu, Punjabi, and Assamese. There will even be apps for translation," he added. In his Rajya Sabha speech, Shah took a dig at the MK Stalin government saying it does not have the courage to introduce medical and engineering courses in Tamil. "I want to tell the Tamil Nadu government, we have been saying this for two years... You do not have the courage to provide medical and engineering education in Tamil because your economic interests will be affected," Shah alleged. He then vowed that once the NDA government comes to power in Tamil Nadu, it will ensure these courses are made available in Tamil. Shah also dismissed accusations that the BJP was against southern languages, pointing out that he himself hails from Gujarat while Union finance minister Nirmala Sitharaman is from Tamil Nadu. "Those who are spreading poison in the name of language prefer a foreign language over an Indian language," he said, taking a veiled dig.

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Won't give in to 'blackmail', Centre makes it clear to Tamil Nadu

Vatika Times
NEW DELHI: In the midst of its escalating political standoff with Tamil Nadu govt over National Education Policy (NEP) 2020, Centre has made it clear that it is firmly committed to implementing the three-language policy at school level. Centre is steadfast in its stance and will not succumb to Tamil Nadu's "blackmailing" tactics, govt sources said. Union education minister Dharmendra

Pradhan, in a letter to Tamil Nadu chief minister M K Stalin on Friday, criticised the state's opposition to NE, calling it "highly inappropriate" and a "narrow-minded approach". Pradhan sought to allay concerns raised by Tamil Nadu govt, saying, "Let me unequivocally state that there is no question of imposing any language on any state or community." NE advocates a flexible three-language formula, emphasising

multilingual education, while allowing states to choose their own languages within the framework. However, Tamil Nadu govt has consistently opposed the policy, arguing that it undermines the state's long-standing two-language formula and poses a potential threat to linguistic identity. Despite the state's reservations, Union govt remains firm on implementing NE nationwide.

Illegal migrants are becoming a decisive factor in polls: Vice- President Jagdeep Dhankhar

CHHATRAPATI SAMBHAJINAGAR: Vice-President Jagdeep Dhankhar on Saturday said crores of people were living in India who did not have the right to live in the country. "They are making their livelihood here, making demands on our resources, education, health and housing sectors. Now things have moved further.

They are intervening in our electoral process and becoming a decisive part of it. Therefore, it is the duty of all of us to spread awareness so that every Indian will become aware of this," Dhankhar said at the 65th convocation of Dr Babasaheb Ambedkar Marathwada University (Bamu) in Chhatrapati Sambhajinagar.

Odisha HC grants bail to thief with 'sapling plants' condition

Orissa
An Orissa HC judge has granted bail to a man facing prosecution for alleged theft on the condition that he plant 200 saplings of local varieties such as mango, neem, and tamarind around his village in Jharsuguda district and maintain them for two years, reports Lalmohan Patnaik. Manas Ati had been in judicial custody since December 25 last year for allegedly stealing six electric poles in villages under Kolabira police.

'Finally travelling in same direction': Baijayant shares selfie with Shashi

Vatika Times
NEW DELHI: Bharatiya Janata Party national vice-president Baijayant Jay Panda on Friday shared a selfie with Congress leader Shashi Tharoor from a flight on social media. However, what caught the attention was the BJP leader's quirky caption, "My friend & fellow traveler called me mischievous for saying that we seem to be finally travelling in the same direction." "The selfie comes days after Tharoor's "egg on face" remark on



India's Russia-Ukraine stance which gave ammunition to BJP to corner Congress. The BJP highlighted Congress leader Shashi Tharoor's praise of India's handling of the Russia-Ukraine war, calling it an endorsement of Prime Minister Narendra Modi's

diplomatic acumen. Senior BJP leader and Lok Sabha MP Ravi Shankar Prasad welcomed Tharoor's admission that his initial criticism of the government's neutral stance on the war was misplaced. Describing it as a case of "better late than never," Prasad said, "The Modi government takes decisions that serve India's best interests. If other Congress leaders acknowledge this as well, it would be beneficial."

Jamia Millia Islamia hikes fees by up to 41% across courses for 2025-26

Vatika Times
NEW DELHI: Delhi's Jamia Millia Islamia has announced substantial fee augmentation for the academic year 2025-26, with increments fluctuating between 16 to 41 per cent across diverse academic programmes. A thorough scrutiny of the latest prospectus, juxtaposed with its predecessor, unveils a considerable escalation in tuition fees. The Persian Department has experienced a substantial increase of 41.41 per cent in fees, with annual charges rising from Rs 6,700 to Rs 9,475. The Arabic Department has implemented a 37.15 per cent increase, raising the yearly fees from Rs 7,200 to Rs 9,875. Foreign language courses, including BA (Hons) in Turkish and other languages, have recorded a similar 37.15 per cent elevation in fees.

84 drug batches fail quality test, commonly used antacids

Vatika Times
NEW DELHI: As many as 84 batches of certain drugs, including some of the commonly prescribed steroids and cholesterol lowering drugs, have been found to be 'not-of-standard quality' in the latest round of inspections carried out by the drug control authorities across the country. The CDSCO, the apex body responsible for approval of new drugs and clinical trials, has issued an alert regarding this. The CDSCO issues alerts about non-standard quality drugs being sold in the market monthly. According to its latest data, for Dec 2024, they found 84 batches of drugs manufactured by various firms to be of not-of-standard quality. This includes some of the drugs prescribed for common conditions such as acidity, high levels of cholesterol, diabetes and bacterial infections among



others. Identification of drug samples as NSQ is done based on failure of the drug sample in one or the other specified quality parameters. The failure is specific to the drug products of the batch tested by the govt, officials said. "This action of identifying NSQ and spurious medicines is taken on a regular basis in collaboration with state regulators to ensure that these drugs are identified and removed from the market," she added. Recently, the CDSCO introduced new guidelines for the inspections. It stated all drug inspectors should collect at least 10 samples in a month; nine samples of drugs.

Sahil's eerie behaviour, manipulations and chilling instructions

Vatika Times
NEW DELHI: As hesitant Muskan sat on the chest of her unconscious husband, her lover Sahil handed her a knife and showed her how to wield it. "You have to stab him in the heart three times," he instructed her with a promise of a new life after all this. Sahil, along with his lover Muskan Rastogi, stands accused of the murder of Muskan's husband, former Merchant Navy officer Saurabh Rajput. **Room filled with satanic symbols** Sahil's room offered a glimpse into his dark and disturbing psyche. A dimly lit space with broken walls, filled with satanic symbols, cigarette boxes, and artwork depicting drug consumption. The victim's family believe that Sahil's obsession with the occult played a role in the murder, with Saurabh Rajput's



mother, Renu Devi, claiming that her son was killed as part of a tantric ritual. In Sahil's room a bed sheet covered the window, and a sofa stood against the wall. Among the graffiti was a message: "You can't trip with us." The room had liquor cans scattered. **'Made Muskan an addict'** On March 4, Rajput was allegedly drugged, stabbed, dismembered, and his remains sealed inside a cement-filled drum. Muskan and Sahil then embarked on a vacation to

Himachal Pradesh, using Saurabh's phone to mislead his family. The crime was discovered two weeks later when Muskan finally confessed to her parents, who then informed the police. Police sources told news agency PTI suggest that Sahil exercised psychological control over Muskan, isolating her from her six-year-old daughter and turning her into an addict. Muskan's parents accused him of trapping her in his web of superstitions. Neighbours also recalled his

eerie behaviour—wearing kurtas with 'Mahakal' inscriptions, feeding stray cats, and keeping his room shrouded in darkness. Sketches of ominous figures adorned his walls, reinforcing his unsettling presence. **How the murder unfolded** "Sahil's occult practices dominated Muskaan's mind in such a way that she started keeping her six-year-old daughter away. Sahil had made Muskaan an addict and completely superstitious," the victim's mother said. **'Directed her to stab Saurabh's heart thrice'** Muskan, in her statement to police, admitted that Sahil coerced her into committing the murder. He allegedly told her, "You have to kill Saurabh if we are to start a new life." On the night of the crime, he directed Muskan to sit on Saurabh's chest before handing her a knife.

Judge rules Indian post-doc Badar Suri should not be deported pending hearing

Vatika Times
Washington: A federal judge on Thursday blocked the Trump administration's effort to deport Badar Khan Suri, an Indian post-doc fellow at Georgetown University who has been detained by immigration authorities for alleged pro-Hamas activism, saying he should not be removed from the US pending the outcome of the legal challenge seeking his release. Virginia Eastern District Judge Patricia Tolliver Giles did not rule on the merits of the deportation case itself but suggested Suri's habeas corpus needs to be heard first in an order stating he "shall not be removed from the U.S. unless and until the Court issues a contrary order." Suri's attorney has said his client was abducted from his apartment in Rosslyn, Virginia, a suburb.

Elon Musk shares British Muslim scholar's viral video with 'Two Big...

Vatika Times
Elon Musk has quoted a viral Tweet from Ian Miles Cheon about British religious scholar Abu Waleed. The Tweet that has a video of Abu Waleed has received over 8 million views, almost 67,000 Likes, 13,000 retweets and 8,000-plus comments so far. In the 4 minute-long video, Abu Waleed reportedly says that Britain needs to be converted into a Muslim state. "British religious scholar Abu Waleed says it's necessary to



impose humiliating laws for non-Muslims in Britain and convert them," reads the caption of Choeon's Twitter post. Quoting the same Elon Musk shared Two BIG question marks. The video has also been shared by some other users on

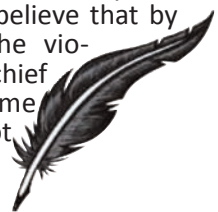
Twitter. Incidentally, this is not the first time that Elon Musk has spoken about/shared his views on what he believes to be growing dominance of Muslims in the United Kingdom. Late 2024 and earlier this year, Elon Musk reignited a political row about gangs of men who are said to have groomed and raped girls in England over several decades. The world's richest man shared a flurry of posts on his social media platform.

Editorial

Are they threatening those who are demanding caste census?

Ritu Walia

So are they threatening those who are demanding caste census? Or those people who speak against the Modi government. Because if he was angry with the Modi government, he would not have said things with double meaning. However, the way he said everything in double meaning, there is a lot of confusion as to what he wants to say. It is not easy to play with words the way he played with them. Obviously, a person of such high status does not speak in simple and clear language, there is a lot hidden in his gestures. Be it the government, be it the opposition, be it the people spreading hatred, or be it the people spreading hatred under the guise of religions. In fact, the Sangh chief also said something which led to his statement that injustice is being done to us because of him. Victimhood mentality will not work. There is no victim. They say that I don't get a house in any colony, so I have to live in my own colony. But he also said that it is not right to take people's votes by inciting sentiments. In this way he indicated to the people what kind of people they should vote for. But at the same time he also indicated that the government's work is good. So what does this mean that on this day in 1995, the Chenav nuclear plant in Kiev in Ukraine was demolished due to safety related deficiencies? Sangh chief Mohan Bhagwat also said that we have to be cautious in elections and should not vote under anyone's influence. We have to vote for who is better. Along with this, Sangh chief Mohan Bhagwat also praised some of the works of the government. It is clear from this that he has not spoken against the government. So are they threatening those who are demanding caste census? Or those people who speak against the Modi government. Are you indicating to stand with the government? Because even in the year 2018, he had said that "Hindu Rashtra does not mean that there is no place for Muslims there. The day this happens, Hindutva will cease to exist. Hindutva speaks to one world, one family. But If we look at the other side, In India, people of more castes and religions live together than in any other country in the world. If we look at history, we will find that people from all over the world came to India and most of them stayed here. But today, Manipur has been burning for many months due to the hatred and bitterness that is prevalent among people of different religions in India. The leaders of the ruling party, especially the Prime Minister, are silent about this violence. Meanwhile, Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (Sangh) chief Mohan , has taught the country to live with unity and love. But the Sangh chief's statement about living in unity in the country is being interpreted in different ways. The reason for this is that apart from the Manipur violence, Mohan Bhagwat has said many other things which need to be considered at this time. In fact, the Sangh chief gave a big message of unity in the Nagpur parade on the day of Vijayadashami regarding the increasing tension between Hindus and Muslims. The way the Sangh chief said in a questioning tone, how did people living in the same country become so alien? Political people, intellectuals, journalists and political analysts are trying to find out the meaning of everything Mohan Bhagwat says from this question. No one is able to understand its true meaning? The simple meaning of this question of Bhagwat is that hatred towards the people of one's own country is not a good thing. But the question is arising for whom did Mohan Bhagwat say this? But before this it is important to understand that the Sangh chief also said that there should not be indiscretion and imbalance. There is a need to take our mind seriously and bind the country in the threads of unity. Because I believe that by expressing concern over the violence in Manipur, the Sangh chief has also hinted at Prime Minister Narendra Modi not speaking on Manipur.



The Cancerous River Ghaggar: Who Will Emancipate It?



JAG MOHAN THAKEN

Just within a month after BJP's win in Delhi Assembly, how did Haryana CM Saini change his previous standpoint and how the dirt and effluents in the same Yamuna River water have become visible, which previously was being claimed carrying pure and drinkable water? Chairing 56th Meeting of Haryana State Drought Relief and Flood Control Board in Chandigarh on March 15, CM Saini directed all DCs to ensure that no polluted effluents fall into the Yamuna and said, "We need to find alternate arrangements for the outflow of sewage water". Doesn't It mean that previously the polluted effluents and sewage water were falling into the river without any hindrance and no need ever felt to find the alternate arrangements? Issuing strict instructions, the Chief Minister ordered that no sewage water or polluted drain should fall into the Yamuna River as it was our collective responsibility to clean the Yamuna. He said we need to find alternate arrangements for the outflow of sewage water and especially directed the Deputy Commissioners of Panipat, Sonipat, Palwal and Yamunanagar districts to set up Sewage Treatment Plants (STPs) in their districts to prevent polluted water from flowing into the Yamuna. The Chief Minister reiterated Haryana's commitment to clean the Yamuna River permanently. He also directed officials to look into the functioning of 6 STPs in Masani Barrage in Rewari and ensure their maintenance. During the Delhi assembly elections, River Yamuna became the hot issue to woo the voters. AAP and BJP, both were blaming and slamming each other for the contaminated water flowing through the river. Delhi former Chief Minister Kejriwal, as well as the then CM Atishi blamed



the BJP led Haryana Government for making the Yamuna River water dirty and contaminated. Arvind Kejriwal on his X account, on January 30, wrote, "BJP has made Yamuna water poisonous by adulterating it." He asked the BJP led Haryana Government, "Do you want to kill the people of Delhi by giving them the water which you yourself cannot drink?" Kejriwal also challenged the BJP leaders to drink the dirty water being supplied to Delhi, "The poisonous water containing 7 PPM ammonia coming from Haryana to Delhi is being sent to the houses of leaders of other parties, they should try drinking this water."The then Chief Minister of Delhi, Atishi @AtishiAAP, while referring her letter Jan 28 to Election Commission stated on her X, "Ammonia levels continue to be 6 times above normal in Yamuna waters, at the point it is entering Delhi from Haryana. Such levels are extremely toxic for the human body."And on the other corner Haryana Chief Minister Nayab Singh Saini not only refuted the claim of the Aam Adami Party leaders, but also counter alleged by accusing them of failing to make proper arrangements for water distribution, which has forced Delhi residents to consume contaminated water. He alleged that the AAP government in Delhi systematically diverted 28 drains into the Yamuna. Amid allegations and counter allegations between Haryana and Delhi governments, Haryana CM Saini claimed having a sip of water from the Yamuna River in Delhi's Palla Village. Later Saini said, "An unfortunate statement by Arvind Kejriwal was given to create fear in the minds of people for his political benefits. Today, I have come here to the banks of River Yamuna and took a sip of water from Yamuna. He (Kejriwal)

said that the BJP Govt of Haryana has poisoned the Yamuna River. He spoke about mass genocide. The water resource authority took samples from here and no poison was found in the water. Arvind Kejriwal has lied all his life...", reports Economic Times web portal on January 29.What a sudden shift! Now the CM Saini is clearly seeing the dirt and polluted effluents flowing abundantly in the Haryana territory in the same river water which was very clear and fit to drink one month before, and now alarming the officers to ready up the river clean. Here arises the question-- If Haryana CM Saini is so anxious about the dirt and effluents flowing in the river waters, then why is he not even talking about the Ghaggar River, which is so badly poured with polluted effluents and sewage waste that it is being named as cancerous river in the public? Ghaggar is welcomed in Haryana at its entry point, the Panchkula city, which showers the welcome flowers by pouring its untreated sewage waste through nallahs at different places and let it speed up its crawling further to get blessings in the form of industrial effluents and sewage dirt in the journey ahead to return the favour by spreading cancer. No one cares for its dirt and grime. Central Pollution Control Board (CPCB), stating the history of River Ghaggar, states, "The Ghaggar is an intermittent river in India, flowing during the monsoon season. It originates in the Shivalik Hills of Himachal Pradesh and flows through Punjab, Haryana and Rajasthan. In it flows through south-west of Sirsa and by-the-side of Talwara Jheel in Rajasthan. This seasonal river feeds two irrigation canals that extend into Rajasthan. The wide river-bed (paleo-channel) of the Ghaggar suggests that the river once

flowed full of water, through the entire region, in the presently dried channel of the Hakra River."Hinting about the quality of water flowing in Ghaggar, CPCB further adds that in addition, the industrial and domestic wastewater discharges from the towns located along Ghaggar or its tributaries deteriorate the water quality of the river.

Will someone heed? Haryana's Health Minister, Arti Singh Rao, on March 18, 2025, while giving data of cancer patients in the state assembly, said that health institutions in Haryana and joint capital Chandigarh reported 30475 new cancer patients in the year 2024. However, there are only 915 beds for cancer patients in 38 special wards in various government health institutes, said the Minister, as reported by Indian Express on March 19. What a big surge in cancer reported cases during 2024! Kumari Selja, an MP from Haryana, in her press release dated 17 December ,2024, giving reference of her question asked in Lok Sabha, claims that the Government admitted in the Lok Sabha that people living around the Ghaggar River are at a higher risk of Cancer as the water of the Ghaggar River is neither fit for drinking nor bathing. She adds the Risk of Cancer is continuously increasing due to the polluted water of the river and the adequate arrangements have not been made for Cancer patients by the state Government. Divulging details, Kumari Selja revealed, "The People living near the Ghaggar River, which flows through several districts of Haryana, face a high risk of cancer. The river's water has become so polluted that it is neither fit for drinking nor bathing. Polluted water is contributing to cancer, with the number of cancer patients increasing every year. However, there are no adequate treatment facilities for these patients, forcing them to travel to Delhi, Chandigarh, or other states for treatment. Sirsa MP Kumari Selja had asked the Union Health and Family Welfare Minister in the Lok Sabha about the number of cancer patients in Haryana, the details of special cancer wards set up in various districts for treating these patients, and the

extent to which polluted water from the Ghaggar River is responsible for spreading cancer. Kumari Selja also inquired about whether the government has any plans to clean this river and if the central government provides any special assistance to cancer patients from Below Poverty Line (BPL) families. In response, Health and Family Welfare Minister Prataprao Jadhav stated that under the National Cancer Registry Program of the Indian Council of Medical Research, Haryana reported 1,486 cancer cases in 2019, 1,536 in 2020, 1,580 in 2021, 1,630 in 2022, and 1,678 in 2023. The minister further said that facilities for cancer patient care are available in government medical colleges in Hisar, Karnal, Nuh, Sonipat, and Rohtak, along with comprehensive facilities at the National Cancer Institute in Bhadsa. The response also revealed that studies indicate a higher risk of cancer among people living near the Ghaggar River. The river's water contains lead, iron, and aluminium in amounts far exceeding permissible limits, which contributes to the spread of cancer. In Haryana, the water of this river is unsuitable for drinking and bathing. Under the National River Conservation Plan, 28 sewage treatment plants (STPs) with a total capacity of 291.7 MLD have been set up in Punjab for treating wastewater discharged into the Ghaggar River's catchment area, while Haryana has created a sewage treatment capacity of 588 MLD. Central health minister Prataprao Jadhav confirms that the studies indicate a higher risk of cancer among people living near the Ghaggar River. The river's water contains lead, iron, and aluminium in amounts far exceeding permissible limits, which contributes to the spread of cancer. In Haryana, the water of this river is unsuitable for drinking and bathing. Will the Haryana CM heed towards the facts stated by the union health minister and divert his action plan to keep clean the Ghaggar also with the same concern as is being shown towards Yamuna River or will keep mum? Will he let the cancerous Ghaggar to flow as it is running and ruining the lives of the inhabitants? (Ground Post).

The world became unipolar, with the US dominating the security

Mahesh Sharma

The world became unipolar, with the US dominating the security scene. This was also the period when the world concentrated on the War against Terror. West Asia became the area of focus. By 2007, Russia had begun to consolidate its power under President Putin. China had started rising as an economic and military power. China unilaterally usurped nearly three million sq. km of the South China Sea (SCS), and became aggressive for Taiwan unification. The Quad was formed with the US, Japan, Australia and India to thwart China's expansionist designs in the Indo-Pacific. Meanwhile in Europe, Ukraine was showing inter-

est in joining NATO. This would have brought the alliance on the Russian doorstep. This was unacceptable to Russia. Initially to secure its Black Sea fleet, Russia arranged to annex Crimea in 2014. With Ukraine still not relenting on NATO, Russia invaded Ukraine in February 2022. Effectively that brought an end to the post-Cold War era. \Despite massive NATO support to Ukraine, Russia continues to hold nearly 20 percent Ukrainian territory. The American and European public opinion shows war fatigue, and are not keen to pump more money or weapons. Hamas in Gaza, Hezbollah in Lebanon, Houthis in Yemen and several militias.

Geopolitics has no finality; there is no "happily ever after

Saariq

This cycle will continue, as diplomacy is often 'business as usual.' Meanwhile, the trick is to keep developing border infrastructure, build India's manufacturing prowess and bolster its military. Only from a position of strength can India negotiate effectively on the global stage—no strategy alone can achieve that. Remember, India is just one major border standoff away from cutting off dialogue with China again and only one sensible American President away from a warmer relationship with the West. Geopolitics has no finality. there is no "happily ever after."

Only interests are permanent, which India has been chasing quite successfully through PM Modi's multi-alignment policy. This assumes greater significance in light of the economic woes that China is currently facing. But at the same time, the power differential between India and China would keep the United States relevant in the Indian scheme of things, because balancing China is not a choice, it is a compulsion. Even before Galwan, the Modi government was steadily pursuing a close relationship with the West, as evident in the revival of the Quad, the signing of foundational military agreements, and recognising the concept of the

'Indo-Pacific' as a joint strategic region. For the West also, the Khalistan issue is a plank to arm-twist India into submission – the proverbial "stick" in the "carrot and stick" approach. Yet, the reality is that India is uniquely positioned to be the lynchpin of their Indo-Pacific strategies. Only India can firmly help in balancing China, serving as an effective counterweight. India, in its own right, is an alluring partner, with strong undercurrents of trade, investment, and technological cooperation, particularly given its status as the fastest-growing major economy. Even if a condescending candidate like Kamala Harris comes to power, the US would still like to court India, because the corporate America is too greedy to ignore the Indian market. Not to forget the promise of India as a market for large arms imports. So, all in all, relations with the West are unlikely to falter in the long run. As for the long-term potential of India-China relations, one has no hope except to be at their cautious best. Since these two ancient civilisations emerged as modern countries in the late 1940s, one constant in China's behaviour has been its propensity to dishonour agreements. This pattern began with Panchsheel in 1954 and continues to this day.

India's past tussles with the West

Aarti Singh

India's past tussles with the West over its own nuclear programme may trigger another round of strategic unpleasantness over New Delhi's stance. India has a long-standing policy of strategic autonomy, and the complexity of its relations with the West is par for the course. The question is only of degree. The scope of India's support to its alliance partners in any overtures, real or perceived, against the West needs to be clearly defined, if not announced. While BRICS has achieved precious little in tangible terms in the past 15

years, the symbolism of grouping may have consequences for India as ongoing conflicts stretch into the future and new challenges around them emerge. On the other hand, the internal dynamics of the expanded BRICS are going to pose another challenge. BRICS, only a little more than an ad hoc grouping with diverse challenges and interests, has miles to go to emerge as a counterforce to alliances like the G7 or the Five Eyes, where members have been able to thrash out at least a common minimum programme. All eyes have been on Iran for more

than a year. Naturally, the first BRICS summit with Tehran's membership is bound to breed speculation about what the prospective new world order would look like. At home, there needs to be an examination of India's bilateral ties with a country that is seen firmly anti-West in its outlook. Iran and India are sailing in the same boat, at least momentarily: of the West's castigation. The temptation may be high on both sides to form a joint front against Western hegemony in the security space. Narendra Modi has held bilateral talks with the new Iranian

President, Masoud Pezeshkian, with a focus on strategic cooperation in and beyond the Middle East. It can be endlessly debated without itching anywhere close to a resolution whether multilateral global groupings make any difference to realpolitik either domestically or internationally. The signalling, however, remains crucial. To begin with, the West is already perceiving the summit as Russia's show of strength. Headlines like 'Putin Gathers Allies' and 'Putin Hosts Global South Leaders at BRICS Summit Meant to Counterbalance Western Clout'.

Malabar Gold & Diamonds to Open 12 New Showrooms in March

Vatika Times
Rohtak : Malabar Gold & Diamonds, world's 6th largest jeweler, is set to launch 12 new showrooms by March 2025 to further strengthen its presence across India. The latest expansion drive will take the total showroom count to 391 showrooms across 13 countries and presence in 19 states across India. The new showrooms will be located at Panvel in Mumbai, Sinhagad Road in Pune, Brahmapur and Soubhagya Nagar in Odisha; Dhanbad in Jharkhand, Hospet, Nagarbhavi and Chitradurga in Karnataka; Nandyal, Amalapuram, Machilipatanam in Andhra Pradesh, Varanasi in UP. Malabar Group has invested Rs. 600 crore in this expansion phase and hired 406 employees in various roles this financial year. Malabar Gold & Diamonds plans to open 60 new showrooms in 2025, fur-



ther expanding its global presence. In April 2025, the Group is set to inaugurate 5 new showrooms, marking its expansion into the Middle East, UK, and Canada. Commenting on the expansion, MP Ahammed, Chairman, Malabar Group said, "Our expansion plan is aligned with our broader vision of extending our global footprint and offering quality-focused, transparent retail practices coupled with a world-class shopping experience to more people across the world. We are

deeply committed to ethical business practices and responsible sourcing, which are at the core of our values. As we continue to grow and enter new markets, each showroom opening represents a step closer to realizing our vision of becoming the world's number one jewellery and luxury brand. This global market penetration not only broadens our reach but also strengthens our position as a trusted brand that offers excellence, integrity, and unparalleled luxury to our customers worldwide."

Maximize Tax Relief with Tata AIA's Tax Bonanza Consumption Fund

Vatika Times

Hisar : Tata AIA Life Insurance (Tata AIA) has introduced two contextual funds targeting different consumer segments: Tata AIA Life Tax Bonanza Consumption Fund: Through this specially curated fund, consumers can not only capitalize on the rising consumption trends but also ensure financial security for their loved ones. Thus, the fund offers the dual advantage of wealth creation and financial security. Tata AIA Life Tax Bonanza Consumption Pension Fund: Exclusively available through Tata AIA's unit-linked pension solution, this fund is perfect for



those looking to grow their savings after retirement. Designed to offer long-term growth, it helps you build a robust retirement fund that can provide financial stability and peace of mind for the years ahead. Both the New Fund Offers (NFO) will be available from 24th to 31st March 2025, with units priced at ₹10 each. Punit Jindal, Ravinder Kumar and Sushil Kumar are Tata AIA's Managing Partner Business Associates in Hisar. The veteran life

insurance advisors are delighted with the launch of the two NFOs. They believe is that the launch of the Tata AIA Life Tax Bonanza Consumption Fund and Tata AIA Life Tax Bonanza Consumption Pension Fund will allow Consumer make the most of the tax savings announced in the recent union budget. In their opinion, consumers will greatly benefit from investing the money saved through tax reductions in these two funds.

Jamia Hamdard organises Cultural and Sports Week

Jamia Hamdard University wrapped up its Sports and Cultural Week recently. Over eight days, the university grounds bustled with a myriad of activities, offering a platform for students to display their diverse abilities. Under the leadership of Vice Chancellor M

Afshar Alam and with support from Chancellor Janab Hammad Ahmad and Sajid Ahmed, CEO HNF HECA, the festivities commenced with an inaugural ceremony. DSW Prof Reshma Nasreen ignited the spark for an exhilarating journey

filled with literary, cultural, musical, and sports performances, encapsulating the essence of Jamia Hamdard. At the helm of the seamless execution was the core coordination committee, led by Reshma Nasreen, and comprising faculty members.



Honda Motorcycle and Scooter India promotes Road Safety Awareness Campaign in Fatehabad, Haryana



Vatika Times

Fatehabad : Honda Motorcycle and Scooter India (HMSI) reinforced its focus on road safety by conducting an awareness campaign in Fatehabad, Haryana. The initiative engaged over 1500 students and staff members from Govt. ITI equipping them with essential knowledge on responsible road behavior. With a focus on early road safety education, HMSI designed this initiative to go beyond awareness and encourage a lasting behavioural change. Educating the students at an early stage helps shape responsible road users who can influence their surroundings. By engaging with schools, colleges and institutions —both government and non-government— HMSI continues to make road safety an integral part of everyday life. The awareness campaign in Fatehabad included safety riding lessons, danger prediction training, games, quizzes, helmet awareness and riding trainer modules.

All-round development of students is possible only through Gurukul education system : Acharya

Jasbir Singh Duggal

Kurukshetra: In ancient times, the sages of our country used to educate children in Gurukuls only because the all-round development of a child is possible through Gurukul education system. The above words were said by Acharya Devvrat, patron of Gurukul Kurukshetra and Governor of Gujarat, while addressing thousands of parents who had come with their children to the Gurukul Shiksha Utsav organized by Gurukul Kurukshetra. He said that today, with modern education, children are making their future as doctors, engineers and in other fields,



but the lack of values ??is clearly visible in the young generation, the increasing number of old-age homes in the country is a direct proof of this. In Gurukul, students are provided with

literacy and the invaluable heritage of ancient rituals so that when they grow up, they contribute to the building of a civilized society, fulfill their duties and serve their parents in their old age.

On this occasion, OSD to Governor Dr. Rajender Vidyalankar, Director of Gurukul Kurukshetra Brigadier Dr. Parveen Kumar, Shivkumar Arya of Gurukul Nilokheri, Arjun Dev Arya, Principal

Sachin Arya of Gurukul Jyotisar, Principal Dinesh Rana of Aryakulam Nilokheri etc. were present. Governor Acharya Devvrat said that mobile has become a challenge for parents today

because children are getting addicted to mobile. Apart from this, the increasing trend of drug addiction among the youth is also becoming fatal for the society. In such a situation, it is our moral responsibility to make children cultured and to fill them with human values. In Gurukuls, the all-round development of students is being done in accordance with the motto of 'service, security, education and culture', due to which the children here remain leaders in every field along with education. Today every parent wants to get their child admitted in Gurukul

Kurukshetra, because they have full faith that their children's present and future are safe only with Gurukul education. Dr. Rajendra Vidyalankar said that preparation for various competitive exams like NDA, IIT, NIT, NEET etc. is given by experienced teachers in Gurukul campus itself. This year 10 students from Gurukul Kurukshetra and 4 students from Gurukul Jyotisar have been selected in NDA, while many students have gone to IIT. Parents should be rest assured about their child's future. He clarified that apart from Gurukul Kurukshetra, Chaman

Vatika Kanya Gurukul Ambala, Gurukul Nilokheri, Aryakulam Nilokheri and Gurukul Jyotisar, Acharya Devvrat has nothing to do with any educational institution running in the name of Gurukul. Parents should not get misled by anyone and play with their child's future. Let us tell you that examinations for admission in Gurukul Kurukshetra and other Gurukuls are being organized in Gurukul Jyotisar from 20 to 24 March, under which students wishing to take admission in 9th and 11th class gave the entrance examination today.

BJP's National Secretary encouraged the workers to take forward the party's policies and programs



Jasbir Duggal

Kurukshetra: Bharatiya Janata Party's National Secretary Om Parkash Dhankhar today attended the Kurukshetra BJP office. During this, Advocate Vedpal and Dr. Sanjay Sharma, Chairman Dhumman Singh Kirmach and State Secretary Rahul Rana were also with him. District President Tejinder Singh Goldy welcomed National Secretary Om

Parkash Dhankhar and felicitated him by draping a shawl and giving him a sword. During this, party workers met Dhankhar and discussed about the upcoming programs. Om Parkash Dhankhar appealed to the workers to work hard for the party and inspired everyone for the success of BJP in the upcoming elections. He encouraged the workers to take forward the party's poli-

cies and programs. This program was an important step for the BJP, in which a symbol of the workers' loyalty and commitment to the party was presented. On this occasion, General Secretary Jaswinder Saini, District Media Incharge Shailesh Vats, Gulshan Saini, Vikram Sharma, Vijay Laxmi, Anu Malyan, Vandana, Rajesh Mehla, Sunil Chaudhary and other workers were present.

Jawa Launches the Iconic Jawa 350 Legacy Edition to Celebrate One Year on Indian Roads

Vatika Times

GURUGRAM : A year ago, the Jawa 350 rekindled the spark of classic motorcycling in India, blending timeless elegance with modern engineering. As it completes a year on Indian roads, Jawa Yezdi Motorcycles commemorates this milestone with the Jawa 350 Legacy Edition.

This exclusive edition is reserved for the first 500 customers. The Jawa 350 Legacy Edition enhances the riding experience even further with special inclusions, like the



touring visor which helps cut through the wind with ease, a pillow backrest enhancing comfort for two-up riding, a premium crash guard providing added protection, elevating both safety and style.

The edition also includes a premium leather keychain, and a collector's edition Jawa miniature. Sharad Agarwal, Chief Business Officer, Classic Legends, shared, "Since the launch of Jawa 350

last year the motorcycle has been loved by our customers and the riding community alike. The Jawa 350 embodies the perfect balance of timeless design and modern performance, staying true to the her-

itage that has defined Jawa for generations. One of its most remarkable attributes is its adherence to the golden ratio—a design principle that ensures perfect proportions for both aesthetics and ride dynamics, just like the legendary Jawas of yesteryears. With the Legacy Edition, we're offering riders an even more immersive experience - superior comfort, enhanced protection and a touch of added glamour making this milestone celebration truly special."

Former Gujarat minister Bhupender Singh Chudasama visited Maa Bhadrakali Shaktipeeth

Jasbir Singh Duggal

Kurukshetra: Gujarat's former minister Bhupender Singh Chudasama visited the Bhadrakali Shaktipeeth in Kurukshetra, Haryana, along with his family to seek the blessings of Maa Bhadrakali. He was welcomed with a bouquet of flowers by the temple



staff. Chudasama performed a

ritualistic puja at the Devikoop and offered prayers to the goddess. He also donated a pair of clay horses to the temple, a tradition believed to have been started by the Pandavas after their victory in the Mahabharata war. Chudasama expressed his desire to dedicate his life to

serving the nation with renewed strength and sought the goddess's blessings. He also mentioned that he had been visiting the Bhadrakali temple in Ahmedabad and had always wanted to visit the Kurukshetra temple. After the darshan, he felt a sense of divine experience.

Supreme Court ruling set to ease govt land acquisition process

NEW DELHI: Frowning at vexatious litigation relating to land acquisition, which delays projects for decades, Supreme Court Thursday ruled that when a govt acquires land for public purposes using its sovereign powers, it cannot be frustrated by creation of third-party rights after the acquisition. A bench of CJI Sanjiv Khanna and Justice Sanjay Kumar said even a public body for whom an acquisition was done can't give the land to someone through a private agreement as only govt has the power to withdraw acquisition for the entire land, or a portion of it. Litigation relating to acquired land, mainly because of creation of third-party rights, has been a key factor for delay in execution of many projects, especially national highways. This ruling may help ease the impediments caused by post-acquisition litigation. The case that warranted the ruling pertained to acquisition of 33 acres abutting Narela-



Bawana Road to enable Delhi Agricultural Marketing Board to establish its grain market. The acquisition notification was issued in Oct 30, 1963 and the award determining compensation issued on Jan 10, 1986. When a woman claimed ownership over a portion of the land, the Board chairman surreptitiously entered into a private agreement with her and agreed to release half of the claimed land to her while permitting her to claim compensation for the other half. Writing the judgment, Justice Kumar said the flow of events turned curiouse and curiouse as in 'Alice in Wonderland'. After the chairman's retirement, the Board disputed the agreement. But Delhi high court allowed the woman's plea for arbitration of

the dispute with the Board relating to the acquired land. The arbitrator appointed by the HC ruled in favour of the woman and said the return of the land was valid. "When the state uses its sovereign power of eminent domain and acquires land for a public purpose, such an exercise cannot be set at naught by the beneficiary of such acquisition, the Board, by entering into a private agreement shortly after the acquisition so as to reverse the usage of the power of eminent domain by the state," Justice Kumar said. "Validating this dubious enterprise by a statutory beneficiary of a compulsory acquisition would be nothing short of permitting a fraud on the exercise of such sovereign power by the state," he added.

JAMMU: An Army jawan was injured in a landmine explosion along the Line of Control (LoC) in Poonch district of Jammu and Kashmir on Saturday. This is the fourth such incident since Jan 14, when at least six soldiers sustained injuries in a landmine blast near the LoC in the Nowshera sector of Jammu's Rajouri district. The blast occurred at 10.50 am in the forward area of Krishna Ghati sector of Mendhar, when the jawan accidentally stepped on a landmine during routine patrolling, sources said, adding that he was immediately airlifted to



the command hospital at Udhampur. On Jan 21, too, a soldier was injured in a landmine blast in Krishna Ghati sector. As part of an anti-infiltration obstacle system, the forward areas are dotted with landmines which sometimes get washed away by rains, resulting in such accidents, officials said. On Feb 20, an Army rifleman, Mohd Asif Rather, who was part of a

patrolling party, was injured in a similar accident in Balakote sector of Mendhar sub-division. In another development, Army troops found a rusted mortal shell in Fazalabad village of Surankote area in Poonch district during area domination patrol on Saturday afternoon. The area was immediately cordoned off and the shell was safely defused, officials said.

Trapped between lift & elevator shaft, boy, 6, dies

HYDERABAD: A six-year-old boy, who was trapped between a lift and the wall of the elevator shaft in an apartment on Friday, and was rescued, passed away Saturday due to multi-organ failure while undergoing treatment. Cops suspect a mechanical malfunction of the lift could have led to the tragedy, which unfolded



when the boy was entering the elevator. Without warning, the lift moved, leaving the boy's legs suspend-

ed in doorframe while his upper body was caught between the elevator & wall of lift shaft.

Indian Art envisions balance of employability and innovation: VC KUK

Jasbir Singh Duggal Kurukshetra: Department of Fine Arts, Kurukshetra University Kurukshetra organised an international conference on 'Contemporary Indian Art and Global Art Market' on 21 March in the Senate Hall. The Chief Guest of the inaugural session, Vice Chancellor of Kurukshetra University Prof. Som Nath Sachdeva said that there are myriad job avenues in the field of art by linking it with the contemporary perspective. Prof Sachdeva further said that the Fine Arts artists from Haryana should work to make Haryana's folk art Sanjhi popular which is the art of rangoli and painting in minutest detail and India's rich cul-



tural heritage and aspects of modern art are important components of the global art discourse. The keynote speaker, Prof. Kavita Singh, Chairperson, Fine Arts Department, Punjabi University, Patiala, said that art needs to be presented as per the market demand. Prof.

Kavita added that Indian artists, drawing inspiration from their traditional roots, are assimilating global trends and challenging established artistic norms through their works. Dr Gurcharan Singh, Chairperson, Fine Arts Department, welcomed all the dignitaries and elucidated the

objective of the conference. Conference Co-Convener Dr Pawan Kumar and Organizing Secretary Dr Rakesh Bani shared views on the global art market and the role of digital platforms and NFTs. Deputy Director, Public Relations, Dr Jimmy Sharma informed that the conference was organised in a hybrid mode and panel discussions were organised during the conference which were moderated by renowned artists like Heena Bhatt, art expert Dr. Ranjan Malik, Dr. Anjali Dhuhan, Dr. Shekhar Chandra Joshi, Dr. Sonu Dwivedi and Dr. Badar Jahan. Participants from India, Japan, Turkey, Russia and Sri Lanka among other countries joined

62-year-old arrested for sexual assault on minor

New Delhi: A 62-year-old man has been arrested for allegedly repeatedly sexually assaulting a 16-year-old girl in southwest Delhi's Sarojini Nagar. The inquiry revealed that the accused had threatened to kill the minor. Police said the crime came to light after the girl's pregnancy was discovered. On Feb 6, police received information from a hospital about the admission of a minor girl who was found to be pregnant. A team from the local police station visited the hospital and spoke to the doctor. The investigating officer met the survivor, who initially claimed she was in a consensual rela-

tionship with a boy for a year. However, her statement was later found to be false. During her statement, the girl told police that she lives with her mother and brother in Sarojini Nagar. "Her mother works as a maid, and her brother works as a security guard. Her mother took her to Safdarjung Hospital for a medical checkup, where she was found to be two months pregnant. She stated that, four months ago, her neighbour lured her with requests to fetch items from the shop, then called her to his room and forcibly engaged in sexual relations with her, also threatening her,"

police said. Out of fear of the accused, the girl initially gave a false statement to doctors. A case under relevant sections of the BNS and the PoCSO Act was registered at Sarojini Nagar police station. Deputy commissioner of police (Southwest) Surendra Choudhary formed a team under SHO (Sarojini Nagar) Atul Tyagi, which apprehended the accused from his house. During inquiry, the girl told police that the accused had threatened her with dire consequences if she revealed the incident to anyone. The accused works as a security guard.

Delhi man kills Goa woman after feud over dog walking

PANAJI: A Delhi man was arrested Saturday for mowing down a resident of Goa's Mandrem locality with his four-wheeler following a feud over walking a dog the previous night. Investigations revealed that the family of the victim, Maria Joao Fernandes, had fought with the kin of the accused, Deepak Rajeev Batra. While Batra was walking with his parents, he got into a verbal duel with Maria's son, who objected to walking the dog close to his mother's house. The argument soon escalated into a physical altercation, with both sides exchanging blows and sustaining injuries, police said. An enraged Batra then sat in his car with his parents and ran over Maria with the speeding vehicle around 9pm Friday. She succumbed to severe



injuries. Later that night, villagers gathered at Mandrem police station demanding Batra's arrest. They left the premises the next morning only after being promised action. North Goa SP Akshat Kaushal said initially, police received a report about an accident in Junaswada area wherein a woman had been hit by a car. "Police immediately began an investigation. The car involved in the accident was seized and Batra, a resident of New Multan Nagar in

Delhi's Paschim Vihar area, was arrested," the SP said. "The accused's hands bore bite marks, for which a medical examination was conducted. An FIR under BNSS Sections 103 (murder) and 281 (rash driving) was registered," SP Kaushal said, adding that a forensic examination of the crime scene and the vehicle was conducted. Batra had previously worked as a chef in Dubai. Stay informed with the latest India news, updates on public holidays, and bank holidays in March.

'Nitish Kumar not mentally stable, make his son Bihar CM': Rabri ups ante over national anthem incident

NEW DELHI: Rashtriya Janata Dal on Friday staged a protest against Bihar chief minister Nitish Kumar accusing him of insulting national anthem. Outside the assembly complex, RJD legislators displayed posters mocking Nitish and raised slogans against him. This comes a day after Nitish was seen "talking" to his chief secretary on the stage as the national anthem played out. When the chief secretary tried to stop him, the chief minister ignored his intervention and continued with his conversation nudging the officer on his shoulders again and again. Later, Nitish Kumar folded his hands to greet those standing in the front while all others on the stage were in attention for the national anthem.



Leader of opposition Tejashwi Yadav lashed out against CM and termed the incident shameful. Speaking to the reporters, Tejashwi said, "Nitish Kumar is older to me and is a chief minister of Bihar, and I respect him for this. However, the way he insulted the national anthem yesterday, it is shameful. He has ashamed Bihar." "The chief minister is the leader of the state, but what happened yesterday was shameful, and this is the first time in India's history when a chief minister

was caught insulting the national anthem," he added. Former chief minister Rabri Devi also attacked CM and demanded to give his son Nishant Kumar top job. "He (Bihar CM Nitish Kumar) is not mentally stable. We demand that he should make his son the chief minister if his mind is not working," Rabri Devi said. Earlier on Thursday, Tejashwi once again raised questions on his mental and physical health and said, "Let us remind you that you are the chief minister

Apples from Thar: Rajasthan farmers cultivate a taste of Himalayas

JAIPUR: The Thar in Rajasthan stretches duney and dry. Summer temperatures climb to a blistering 49°C. But the desert is changing. A fruit synonymous with the Himalayas has found an unexpected home in this sea of sand and scorching sun. Apples - red and ripe. What seemed impossible is now a flourishing reality for farmers in Sikar and Jhunjhunu districts, defying conventional wisdom about the fruit's need for cool climates. Santosh Khedar, a farmer from Beri village in Sikar, never imagined her small experiment would turn into a successful apple orchard. A single sapling given to her in 2015 by National Innovation Foundation in Gujarat has multiplied into a thriving apple farm yielding more than 6,000kg of fruit each season. "Since we have a certificate of organic farming from Rajasthan Organic Certification Agency, if the market price for apples from Himachal and Kashmir is Rs 100 a kg, we are selling it at Rs 150/kg," said Santosh's son Rahul, who studied agriculture, determined to ensure the family farm continued to thrive. The family had long grown lemon, guava, and sweet lime on their 1.25-acre farm, but an apple tree seemed like a fantasy. "We were initially sceptical," Santosh said. "We watered the plant and used organic fertilisers as needed. A year later, we saw apples growing on it." Her neighbours laughed at the idea. Apples? Here? They shook their heads at the thought. But Santosh's tree did not care for their disbelief. In its second year, it bore nearly 40kg of fruit.

Reshuffle in AAP: Saurabh Bharadwaj to lead Delhi unit, Sisodia for Punjab



NEW DELHI: Aam Aadmi Party on

Friday appointed former Delhi minister Saurabh Bharadwaj as the new Delhi AAP chief. According to a press release by the party, Manish Sisodia was assigned responsibility for Punjab, Mehraj Malik for Jammu and Kashmir, Gopal Rai for Gujarat, Pankaj Gupta for Goa, and Sandeep Pathak for Chhattisgarh. The decisions were taken during a meeting of the AAP's political

affairs committee (PAC) at the residence of party supremo Arvind Kejriwal. Announcing the organisational modifications, AAP general secretary (organisation) Sandeep Pathak proclaimed that Gopal Rai has been entrusted with the responsibility of Gujarat, where the party endeavours to broaden its presence. Pathak, a Rajya Sabha MP, has been designated in-charge of the AAP's

Chhattisgarh unit, whilst Pankaj Gupta shall spearhead the party's Goa chapter. Mehraj Malik has been appointed the new chief of the party's Jammu and Kashmir unit. The meeting additionally deliberated on the "unfulfilled" promises made by the BJP in Delhi, including providing monthly financial assistance of Rs 2,500 and free LPG cylinders to women, Pathak said.

Conduct in-house inquiry into allegations against Delhi HC judge

NEW DELHI: The Supreme Court collegium must conduct a thorough inquiry into allegations levelled against Delhi High Court judge Yashwant Varma and apprise about provisions that allow for an in-house committee formation to investigate allegations of such nature, Senior Advocate Adish Aggarwala, former Supreme Court Bar Association (SCBA) president said on Friday. The Supreme Court collegium- led by Chief Justice of India Sanjiv Khanna had met on Thursday evening and decided to transfer Delhi High Court judge Justice Yashwant Varma back to



his parent Allahabad High Court, following an adverse report about the alleged recovery of cash during a fire at his residence. "The Collegium of the Supreme Court should make a thorough inquiry. There's nothing wrong in transfer," Aggarwala told ANI. "Transfer is a normal thing and not a stigma. I am not admitting that

there can be a situation of corruption because I feel that sometimes, people who are not getting favourable results, may also plant. Here, I feel, when the judge himself and his family members were not there and such thing happened, including fire incident and video being made, there is suspicion," the senior advocate said.

Dr. Rupesh Singh from city attends wedding reception of Adanis

Chandigarh: City based Dr. Rupesh Singh attended the grand wedding reception of Jeet Adani, son of Shri Gautam Adani and Smt. Preeti Adani, and his wife Diva which was held in Ahmedabad on

Saturday. The event witnessed the presence of the entire Adani family, including Vinod Adani, Rajesh Adani, and their sons Pranav Adani, Karan Adani and Sagar Adani, along with esteemed guests and

dignitaries across the country and overseas.. Dr. Rupesh Singh extended his heartfelt blessings to the newlyweds and wished them a prosperous married life, praying for divine blessings on their new journey together.

'Fraudulent info, misrepresentations': How US embassy detected visa fraud by agents

NEW DELHI: Following a complaint from the US embassy, Delhi Police on Thursday registered a case against 31 people, accusing them of running a large-scale visa fraud racket. According to the FIR, the embassy named visa applicants and agents operating from Punjab, Haryana, and other states, who were allegedly involved in forging documents such as bank statements, educational certificates, and employment records to obtain US visas. The fraudulent activities took place between May and August 2024, during which the embassy highlighted 21 alleged instances of conspiracy between agents and applicants



cants to cheat the US government. "The agents are suspected of submitting fraudulent information on US online visa applications (DS-160s) and providing fraudulent documents to applicants in order to cheat the US Embassy in India and the US government, thereby obtaining US visas

based on fraudulent information, misrepresentations, and fake documents," the FIR read. "During the period from May to August 2024, our office (US Embassy) conducted relevant investigations and compiled a comprehensive list of individuals linked to multiple IP addresses, suspected to

be associated with visa consultants, document vendors (for educational certificates, bank documents, and employment certificates), passport delivery addresses, and education consultants," it read. During the investigation, the embassy found that several visa agents were charging applicants between Rs 1 lakh and Rs 15 lakh to arrange fake documents. In one such instance mentioned by the US Embassy, an agent promised to assist with an applicant's visa for Rs 13 lakh. "On August 20, 2024, an individual identifying himself as Chamkaur Singh applied for a non-immigrant visa at the US Embassy in New Delhi.

'Worked in adverse conditions': AAP defends Delhi govt officials amid Verma's 'thick-skinned' remark

NEW DELHI: Former Delhi chief minister Atishi defended government officials on Friday, countering PWD minister Parvesh Verma's allegations that officials had become "thick-skinned" over the past ten years, saying that "these are the same officers who have worked in adverse circumstances." Addressing a press conference Atishi said: "PWD Minister of Delhi Government, Parvesh Verma, is saying wrong things about the offi-

cers of Delhi Government... But these are the same officers who have worked in Delhi even in adverse circumstances in the last 10 years." "What has changed in just one month? These are the same officers who built the Signature Bridge and transformed Delhi's government schools. The BJP is abusing them because the AAP never asked for any commission. Officers have told us that BJP ministers are demanding a 10-per cent cut on all proj-

ects and those who refuse are being threatened with suspension, despite the fact that no Delhi minister has the power to do so, only the LG has the power to do that," she added. AAP national general secretary (organisation) Sandeep Pathak also criticised the BJP, alleging that the party is using officers as scapegoats to mask its own failures. "Earlier, the BJP was blocking officers from working just to target the AAP. Now, it is blaming them.

25 Indians on death row in UAE, over 10,000 nationals in foreign prisons

NEW DELHI: The number of Indian nationals facing the death penalty in the UAE, with sentences yet to be implemented, stands at 25, the central government informed Parliament on Thursday. Minister of state for external affairs Kirti Vardhan Singh provided this information in a written response to a query in the Rajya Sabha. "As per the information available with the ministry, the number of Indian prisoners, including under-trials, in foreign prisons at present is 10,152," Singh said. The query also sought details of Indians awaiting capital punishment abroad and the efforts made by the Indian government to assist them. "The government attaches high priority to the safety, security and well-being of Indian



nationals in foreign countries, including those in foreign jails," Singh said. The minister shared data for eight countries where Indians have been sentenced to death but are yet to be executed. According to the figures, 25 are in the UAE, 11 in Saudi Arabia, six in Malaysia, three in Kuwait, and one each in Indonesia, Qatar, the US, and Yemen. "Indian Missions/Posts abroad provide all possible assistance to Indian nationals who have been sentenced, including with death sentences by the foreign courts. Indian

Missions/Posts also provide consular access by visiting the jails and follow up their cases with Courts, Jails, Public Prosecutors and other concerned agencies. The jailed Indian nationals are also assisted in exploring various legal remedies including filing of appeal, mercy petition etc," the minister said. Singh was also asked whether any Indian nationals had been executed abroad in the past five years. He confirmed executions took place in Malaysia, Kuwait, Qatar, and Saudi Arabia.

New I-T bill may be introduced in House on Tuesday

NEW DELHI: Finance minister Nirmala Sitharaman is likely to introduce the new income tax bill in Parliament on Tuesday, with the legislation likely to be referred to a standing committee for examination. "I hope to have it introduced in Lok Sabha in the coming week. The process is the committee gives its recommendation, it comes back, and then the government, through the Cabinet, takes a call on whether these amendments.

'Will have negative impact on society': Union minister slams HC's 'grabbing breasts not rape

NEW DELHI: Union minister for women and child development Annapurna Devi on Friday strongly criticised the Allahabad high court's recent ruling, which downgraded charges in a case involving the sexual assault of an 11-year-old girl in Uttar Pradesh's Kasganj and said that grabbing breasts and snapping pyjama string is not an attempt to rape. The minister called on the Supreme Court to take urgent notice of the verdict, arguing that such a decision has

"no place in a civilised society," reported PTI. "I am completely against this decision and the Supreme Court should take serious note of it," Devi was quoted by the news agency PTI. She further warned that such a ruling could send a dangerous message to society, potentially undermining efforts to protect women and children from sexual violence. "Somewhere, this will have a negative impact on society and we will discuss this matter further," she added. The case

involves two men, Pawan and Akash, who allegedly grabbed the minor's breasts, tore her pyjama string, and attempted to drag her under a culvert while she was walking with her mother. Initially, they were charged under Section 376 of the IPC (rape) and relevant sections of the Protection of Children from Sexual Offences (POCSO) Act. However, the Allahabad high court ruled that their actions did not constitute rape or an attempt to rape but instead fell under the lesser charge

of aggravated sexual assault, punishable under Section 354(B) IPC and Section 9(m) of the POCSO Act. The high court's ruling was based on the argument that an attempt to commit rape must go beyond mere preparation and demonstrate a "greater degree of determination." The court noted that there was no evidence to suggest that the accused intended to commit rape and said, "There is no allegation that the accused tried to commit penetrative sexual as.

Trump announces F-47, 6-th Gen fighter by Boeing

Washington US President Donald Trump Friday announced the world's first 6th generation fighter jet to be built by Boeing. It will be known as F-47, the 47th US president announced adding that 47 is a beautiful number. "It's something the likes of which nobody has seen before. Nothing in the world comes even close to it," Trump said. Donald Trump announces F-47, 6-th Gen fighter by Boeing: 'Nothing in the world comes even close to it' President Donald Trump Friday announced the sixth generation fighter jet which will be known as F-47.47 in the name of the new jet is apparently an approval for himself as the 47th president."It's a beautiful number, F-47. It's something the likes of which nobody has seen before. In terms of all of the attributes of a fighter jet, there's never been anything



even close to it, from speed to manoeuvrability to what it can have for payload," Trump said. Trump said Boeing will build this next-generation air dominance fighter jet that will replace F-22 Raptor, which was the world's first fifth-generation fighter jet."Nothing in the world comes even close to it," the president said in the Oval Office. Defense secretary Pete Hegseth said the announcement of F-47 is a big day for the warfighters. "We've had the F-15. We've had F-16, the F-18, the F-22, the F-35. Now we have the F-47," he said. "It sends a very direct, clear message to our allies that we're not going anywhere, and to our enemies that we can, we will be

able to project power around the globe unimpeded for generations to come."The program is considered a "family of systems" and is expected to work with uncrewed Collaborative Combat Aircraft (CCA) that function as semiautonomous "loyal wingmen" for the new aircraft, Business Insider reported. Photo of F-47 was displayed at the Oval Office as Trump announced its arrival. Photo of F-47 was displayed at the Oval Office as Trump announced its arrival. According to reports, Boeing and Lockheed Martin were engaged in a tough race to build the new aircraft that is meant to be the center of the Air Force's Next Generation Air Dominance.

Elon and the Pentagon: Trump dismisses China chatter

Washington: A well-publicized visit by Elon Musk to Pentagon on Friday threw the American strategic community into a tizzy with feverish accounts in the legacy media that has was going to be briefed on US war plans against China. The fact that Musk has extensive business interests in China rattled a constituency that sees the billionaire as an interloper in Washington's conduct of foreign affairs and strategic planning. But President Trump broke the China fever. "The Fake News is at it again....China will not even be mentioned or discussed. How disgraceful it is that the discredited



media can make up such lies," Trump said, hours after "the Failing New York Times" said, incorrectly according to him, that Musk is going to be briefed on any potential war with China." He called the report "ridiculous." But the legacy media doubled down on the story. The Washington Post, citing "people familiar with the matter,"

following up the NYT "scoop" by insisting the Pentagon briefing for Musk -- to include classified slides and battle-specific plans -- focused on the threat posed by China, and not just the billionaire's work to slash the U.S. government bureaucracy. Musk himself was agitated enough with the story to warn that he looks forward to the "prosecutions."

'Tillers' meet cordial, next talks on Mar 19'

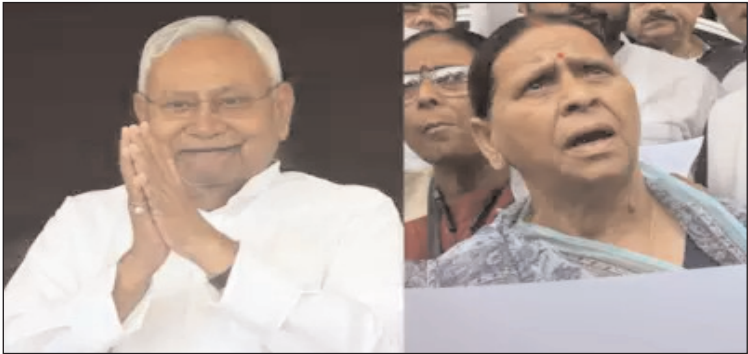
CHANDIGARH: Union agriculture minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan said the meeting with farmer leaders was held in a cordial atmosphere and the next round of talks will take place in Chandigarh on March 19. A fresh round of talks between the protesting farmers and a central team, headed by

Chouhan, to discuss the farmers' various demands, including a legal guarantee for MSP on crops, was held on Saturday evening. Union ministers Pralhad Joshi and Piyush Goyal also attended the meeting. Chouhan said the discussions with the farmers took place in a cordial atmosphere. The central team placed farmers' welfare programme before them during the meeting, Chouhan said. "We heard views of farmer leaders Jagjit Singh Dallewal and Sarwan Singh Pandher. A very good discussion took place," he said. However, he did not take any questions from the media. Punjab ministers Harpal Singh Cheema, Gurmeet Singh Khuddian.

welfare programme before them during the meeting, Chouhan said. "We heard views of farmer leaders Jagjit Singh Dallewal and Sarwan Singh Pandher. A very good discussion took place," he said. However, he did not take any questions from the media. Punjab ministers Harpal Singh Cheema, Gurmeet Singh Khuddian.

'Her husband made her the CM ... ': Why is Nitish Kumar mocking Rabri Devi, again and again?

NEW DELHI: Is Bihar chief minister Nitish Kumar targeting opposition leader Rabri Devi with a purpose? Twice in the space of 15 days, Nitish Kumar has mocked Rabri Devi reminding her of the circumstances under which the RJD leader was made the chief minister of the state in 1997. On Thursday, when Rabri Devi, along with other opposition members in the legislative council, targeted Nitish Kumar over the law and order situation in the state, the Bihar chief minister's counter was sharp and personal. "Her husband (Lalu Prasad) made her the chief minister when he was placed under suspension," Nitish said referring to Lalu Prasad's move to



make Rabri Devi the chief minister after he was forced to resign from the post following an arrest warrant in a fodder scam case. Rabri Devi, a homemaker-turned-politician who is now the leader of the opposition in the Council, rose to register her protest, asserting that she could speak of achievements of her eight-year-long

tenure as the chief minister. Nitish Kumar then ticked her off with the Magahi phrase "chhoda na tohra kuchh maloom hai (you stay out of this. You know nothing about these matters)". This was the second time that Nitish Kumar had singled out Rabri Devi on the issue and made a mention of how and why Rabri Devi was

made the chief minister. Earlier on March 7, during a heated debate over plight of women under the NDA government, Nitish had unleashed a broadside against the RJD in general and Rabri Devi in particular. The Bihar chief minister surprised many with his choice of words to refer to former chief ministers Lalu Prasad and Rabri Devi. "Jab iske husband doob gaye to apni wife ko bana diya (When her husband began to sink, he installed his wife (in the CM's post))", Nitish had said. So, why is Nitish Kumar harping on what happened 28 years ago? Is he trying to drive home some political message as the state gears up for assembly elections later this year?

Tata Group to step up competition with Indigo!



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. Additionally, 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.

FBI asks Android and iPhone users in US to delete these messages immediately

Washington Chinese phishers are reportedly targeting US residents with text messages that appear to be from US toll road operators. These "smishing" texts are said to be targeting iPhone and Android users across America with fake toll bills. The FBI has advised users to delete these texts immediately. One cyber expert has also described the scale of this issue as "astonomical." According to a report by the Anti-Phishing Working Group (APWG), "residents of the US are being bombarded with text messages from Chinese phishers, purporting to come from US toll road operators, including the multi-state E-ZPass." These kits also send package delivery and other fake messages. This is described as an infrastructural attack on



phones. In December 2024, the FBI also advised Americans to stop sending texts due to Chinese hackers. What the FBI said about the scam. In a statement to Forbes, the FBI said: "The texts claim the recipient owes money for unpaid tolls and contain almost identical language. The 'outstanding toll amount' is similar. However, the link provided within the text is created to impersonate the state's toll service name, and phone numbers appear to change between

states." Attackers are reportedly registering tens of thousands of domains to impersonate state and city toll agencies, using an advanced phishing kit from China to send nearly identical scam texts. These messages, often sent to random phone numbers regardless of toll usage, usually include links with Chinese top-level domains like .TOP, .CYOU, and .XIN—the .TOP domain in particular has a history of abuse and remains under ICANN investigation.

Trump says he will pay out of his own pocket for Suni Williams and Butch Wilmore's overtime

Washington President Donald Trump Friday said he was not aware of the fact that astronauts Suni Williams and Butch Wilmore did not get any overtime for their unexpectedly long stay on the International Space Station. "Well, nobody ever mentioned this to me. If I have to, I'll pay it out of my own pocket. I will get for them," Trump said as he was told that they would get \$5 per day which would result in \$1,430 for their 286 days in space apart from their annual salary of \$152,258. "Is that all? That's not a lot for what they had to go through," Trump said as he thanked Elon Musk for bringing them back. "I want to thank @elonmusk by the way because think if we don't have him. You know, there's only so long even though they



were in the capsule the body starts to deteriorate after 9 or 10 months. Gets really bad after 14-15 months with the bones and the blood and all other things that you've been reporting on very well. And if we don't have Elon, who else was going to get them? I just want to thank him," Trump said adding that Elon Musk is going through a lot because of the violence against Tesla. The perpetrators will get 20 years in jail, as decided by his administration, he reiterated. Suni Williams and Butch Wilmore traveled to the ISS in June last year for an eight-day mission

which got prolonged owing to issues that Boeing Starliner started to develop. In September, the capsule returned to Earth without them. On March 18, this year, the two astronauts were brought back amid celebrations across the world. Trump announced that they would visit the White House once they recover physically from their Space overstay. "They have to get better. It will be a little bit tough for them. It's not easy, you know. They were up for a long time and when they do, they will come to the Oval Office," Trump said.

Joe Biden, Jill want to come back to politics, Democrats not sure how to respond

Washington Two months out of office and now both Joe Biden and Jill Biden are ready to work for the Democratic Party in times of its leadership crisis. An NBC report said that Joe Biden told some Democratic leaders that he would raise funds and do anything else to gain the lost ground and Jill Biden said she's also ready to campaign for fellow Democrats. But this throws the party in a quandary and the leadership is not certain whether they want the Bidens back as the wounds of the 2024 election are still fresh. The NBC report mentioned a private meeting between Biden and Democratic National Committee chairman Ken Martin where Bideb offered to help the party. But Democrats are not convinced given the lowest approval rate of the party -- after its election loss for which the party insides blame Joe Biden, his indecisiveness on whether to contest the election which left Kamala Harris a brief window to campaign in which too she had to toe Biden's lines. After leaving the White House, the Bidens have settled in Delaware and both of them are planning to write a book. Recently, the Donald Trump administration has ended the Secret Service protection for their children Hunter and Ashley Biden which shocked the Bidens as there was no warning about it.



'Unknown' firm in Bangladesh got \$29m: Donald Trump



New York: US President Donald Trump has criticised a \$29 million US-funded project aimed at "strengthening the political landscape" in Bangladesh, stating that the money was awarded to a two-person firm that nobody had ever heard of, reports Ahsan Tasnim. Speaking at the White House Friday, he targetted a series of USAID projects that were recently cancelled based on recommendations of Department of Govt Efficiency (DOGE), led by Elon Musk.

"\$29 million to strengthen the political landscape in Bangladesh. Went to a firm that nobody ever heard of," said Trump, adding, "can you imagine you have a little firm. You get 10,000 here, 10,000 there, and then we get \$29 million from the US govt. They had two people working in that firm, two people, I think they're very happy, they're very rich." He went on to suggest that "they'll be on the cover of a very good business magazine pretty soon, for being great scammers".

Pakistan plans to purchase 40 J-35 stealth fighter jets

Islamabad: Pakistan is set to acquire 40 of China's much-anticipated J-35 stealth fighters, a Chinese media outlet reported, signalling Beijing's first export of fifth-generation fighter jets to a foreign ally. The acquisition of fifth-generation jets is expected to impact the military balance between Pakistan and India, the Hong Kong-based "South China Morning Post" reported. The land-based J-35A will make its first public debut on Tuesday.

Bedouin Muslim among 6 hostages released by Hamas

Palestine Palestinian militants freed six Israeli hostages on Saturday, with hundreds of Palestinian prisoners expected to be released under a fragile Gaza truce that is nearing the end of its first phase. The release of the last group of living hostages under the truce's first phase caps an emotional two days in Israel, where the remains of another hostage, Shiri Bibas, have been identified after the initial handover of a different body. Hamas' rapid effort to find and return the body of Bibas was a sign that it did not want to bear responsibility for ending



gering the agreement before the next transfer, planned for Saturday. Bibas and her two young sons were among dozens taken captive during the Oct 7 raids. At a ceremony in Nuseirat, central Gaza, masked Hamas militants brought onto a stage Eliya Cohen, 27, Omer Shem Tov, 22, and

Israeli-Argentine Omer Wenkert, 23. They waved while holding release certificates before their handover to the Red Cross and return to Israeli soil. In Rafah, militants handed over Tal Shoham, 40, and Avera Mengistu, 38, who both appeared dazed. Shoham was made to address the gathering.

DOGE team sacks auto safety agency staffers

New York: Elon Musk's cost-cutting team is eliminating jobs at the vehicle safety agency that oversees Tesla and has launched investigations into deadly crashes involving his company's cars. The National Highway

Traffic Safety Administration has cut a "modest" amount of positions, according to a statement from the agency. Musk has accused NHTSA of holding back progress on self-driving technology with its investigations and recalls. The staff

reductions have come through a combination of firings, buyouts and layoffs. Asked about whether the cuts would impact any probes into Tesla, the agency said it will "enforce the law on all manufacturers of motor vehicles and equipment."

'Everything he touched turned to s**t': Donald Trump roasts Joe Biden's beach naps

New York: Donald Trump roasted former President Joe Biden's beach trip and said that he has the ability to sleep in front of media which the US President don't have. While speaking at the CPAC, Trump recalled the Biden's beach trip and said that everything he touched turned into s**t. "He (Biden) had one ability that was amazing. He could go with cameras on him, television fake news on him. Probably because he knows they wouldn't cover it badly. You know, they covered him as well as you can cover him. How the hell can you cover the guy? Well, but he had this



incredible ability. He could barely walk in the sand. Somebody thought he looked great in a bathing suit," Trump said. "And he'd walk in the sand pulling a thing that weighed about six ounces. You know, those aluminum. See, aluminum is very good. It's

meant for children and very old people to lift, right? So he would put it down and he'd put it down and he'd fall into it. And he'd immediately fall asleep in front of the media. I could never do that," he added. He also called Biden sleepy, crooked, terrible and a worst

President. "He was the worst president in the history of our country. I don't care. I'll say it. Jimmy Carter passed away recently. And he passed away a happy man. He was a happy man when he passed away because he said that. It's not even close. Joe was the worst," Trump said. He also said that the former President Biden made the border a mess which he had to clean. "I have to clean up the mess. I'm cleaning up the mess. And it is a mess. On the border with inflation. Could go over every single thing he touched turned to shit. Okay? Everything. It's true," Trump said.

Afghan embassy warns of mass expulsion of Afghan refugees

Islamabad The Afghan embassy in Islamabad has warned that Pakistan plans to expel all Afghan refugees, citing ongoing arrests and forced relocations in Islamabad and Rawalpindi. The embassy criticized the lack of formal communication from Pakistani authorities. Pakistan hosts approximately 1.45 million registered Afghan refugees, alongside many undocumented individuals. The situation raises concerns over the treatment and future of Afghan refugees in the country.



The Afghan embassy in Islamabad issued a warning on Wednesday that the nation intends to expel all Afghan refugees. Afghan nationals in Islamabad and the neighboring garrison city of Rawalpindi have been the target of arrests and searches, the embassy said in the sharply worded statement.

They have also been ordered by the Pakistan police to leave the two cities and settle in other parts of the nation. "This process of detaining Afghans, which began without any formal announcement, has not been officially communicated to the Embassy of Afghanistan in Islamabad through any formal correspondence," it added. In addition to the hundreds of thousands of people who are illegally residing in Pakistan, the UNHCR has approximately 1.45 million Afghan citizens listed as refugees.

Donald Trump fires joint chiefs chair, possibly over diversity ruse

New York: US President Donald Trump has fired senior military officials, including Gen Charles Q Brown Jr, amid a dramatic Pentagon purge. Brown, the country's second African American chairman of the Joint Chiefs, is replaced by retired Gen Dan Caine. Trump's decision reflects dissatisfaction with the military's focus on diversity, equity, and inclusion programs. Donald Trump fires joint chiefs chair, possibly over diversity ruse. US President Donald Trump fired the country's senior military officer as part of an extraordinary Friday night purge at the Pentagon that injected politics into the selection of the nation's top military leaders. Gen Charles Q Brown Jr, a four-star fighter pilot known as CQ who became only the second African American



to hold the chairman's job, is to be replaced by a retired three-star Air Force general, Dan Caine, who endeared himself to the President when they met in Iraq six years ago. Six Pentagon officials were fired, including Adm Lisa Franchetti, the first woman to lead the Navy; Gen James Slife, the vice chief of the Air Force; and the top lawyers for the Army, Navy and Air Force. The decision to fire Brown, which Trump announced in a message on Truth Social, reflects the President's insistence that the military's leadership is too

mired in diversity issues, has lost sight of its role as a combat force to defend the country and is out of step with his "America first" movement. Joint Chiefs chairs traditionally remain in place as administrations change, regardless of the President's political party. In a statement, defense secretary Pete Hegseth thanked Franchetti and Slife "for their service and dedication to our country" and requested nominations for their replacements. Hegseth did not say why he was firing the judge advocates general.

Canada-based Bench Accounting announces sudden closure

Canada-based Bench Accounting announces sudden closure, putting hundreds out of work. Representative image Canada's Vancouver-based bookkeeping service Bench Accounting has announced its unexpected closure, leaving hundreds of employees without jobs and forcing thousands of customers to seek alternatives just days before the end of the year. In a statement posted on its website, Bench, which has described itself as North America's largest bookkeeping service for small businesses, revealed that as of Friday, the platform was "no longer accessible." The company acknowledged the abrupt nature of the closure, emphasizing that it would assist customers through the transition. As per CBC News, Bench had previously reported having over 600 employees and more than 12,000 US-based customers. The company had raised \$113 million in investor funding. Initially founded as 10sheet Inc. in the US in 2012, Bench relocated to Vancouver and rebranded in 2013. With the unexpected shutdown, the company has outlined the steps its customers



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need to take to retrieve their data. They will be notified by December 30 and will be able to download their current and prior year-end financials, along with uploaded documents like receipts, and bank statements, until March 7. Customers are advised to file for a tax extension to allow extra time to find a new bookkeeper.

Irony! Laura rants against Indians, ends up asking for donations

Following a series of racist and xenophobic remarks about Indians, Loomer took to social media, asking her followers to support her financially after being banned on major payment platforms like Cash App, Venmo, and PayPal. In response to an inquiry about how fans could donate, she shared a link to the donation platform Buy Me a Coffee, claiming it would help her in her ongoing battle against "Big Tech." "I'm banned on Cash App, Venmo, and PayPal because these people want to strangle me and have been subjecting me to their caste system for YEARS," Loomer wrote, venting her frustration about the bans. However, Loomer failed to realize that Buy Me a Coffee is a platform founded by two Indian tech entrepreneurs, Jijo Sunny and Joseph Sunny—whom she had just blasted in a previous rant. Buy Me a Coffee was created to allow creators to connect with their audiences and receive financial support directly. The platform's founders designed it to give creators a simple way to receive payments and interact with their fans. It seems the irony was lost on Loomer, who, while railing against Indians for allegedly undermining the US, was unknowingly promoting a platform built by them. In an amusing twist, Jijo Sunny, one of the founders of Buy Me a Coffee, took the opportunity to respond to Loomer's inadvertent promotion of the platform. With a knowing wink, he quipped, "Sometimes the best way to silence hate is by showing the world how far we've come—no matter where we're from." The controversy traces back to Loomer's reaction to the appointment of Sriram Krishnan, an Indian-American tech executive, as Senior Policy Advisor for Artificial Intelligence at the White House Office of Science and Technology Policy.

'Chronic' underutilisation of allocated budget by food processing



NEW DELHI: A parliamentary panel has pointed to “chronic underutilisation of funds” by the food processing ministry for flagship schemes, including in Pradhan Mantri Kisan Sampada Yojana (PMKSY) and PM Formalisation of micro food processing enterprises scheme (PMFME). It said this reflects inadequate planning and execution by the ministry. The panel headed by former Punjab CM and Congress leader Charanjit Singh Channi has mentioned that in the 2024-25 (till February 11), the ministry has utilised only Rs 1,020 crore against the revised estimate of Rs 2,530 crore, which is barely 42%. The

budget estimate at the beginning of the financial year was Rs 3,052 crore. The report by standing committee on agriculture, animal husbandry and food processing, in its latest report on Demand for Grants for FY26, has also said that that the past performance of the food processing ministry in terms of utilisation of funds in the previous two financial year was also not been satisfactory as it could utilize only about 75% of the downwardly revised budget estimate. “While occasional underutilisation may be justifiable due to unforeseen circumstances, chronic underutilization of funds reflects inadequate planning and execution,” the report said. Taking note of higher allocation of Rs 4,364 crore for 2025-26, which is the highest ever allocation, the panel said the onus is now on the ministry to create quality infrastructure, provide better opportunities for small and medium enterprises in the sector to grow, and foster innovation and competitiveness in the food processing industry. Regarding under-utilisation of funds in the current fiscal, the panel has recommended the ministry to have a thorough review of the budgetary estimation process to ensure full utilisation of the allocated funds in future.

Rahul summoned by Sambhal court over ‘fight against Indian state’ remark

NEW DELHI: Congress leader and Leader of Opposition in Lok Sabha, Rahul Gandhi, has been summoned by the district judge court of Sambhal in connection with a complaint filed over his controversial remarks stating that the Congress party’s fight was not only against the BJP and RSS but also against the Indian State itself. Issuing the notice on Thursday, the court has directed him to either appear or submit a response on April 4. According to the news agency ANI, Advocate Sachin Goyal confirmed that the court accepted the complaint and



issued the notice to Gandhi."Leader of Opposition in Lok Sabha and Congress leader Rahul Gandhi had made a statement on 15 January 2025 that 'We are now fighting the BJP, the RSS and the Indian State itself'. Simran Gupta had filed a case in the special MP/MLA court to register an FIR against Rahul Gandhi. The CJM had

quashed it on the grounds of jurisdiction," Advocate Goyal said.The complaint was initially dismissed by the CJM court on jurisdictional grounds, but a revision petition led the district judge court to intervene and summon the Congress leader. The controversy was triggered by a speech Gandhi delivered on January 15, 2025.

Health and wealth benefit from flexible work hours

Delhi: The Economic Survey supports allowing manufacturers to average legally capped working hours over three weeks or longer rather than week-by-week. Industry captains want larger hours. It claims that agile regulations will assist management satisfy production

demands and grow."New Labour Laws are an improvement. With flexible legislation and competent implementation, firms may develop and create more jobs. "They protect labor rights and boost wages," it stated. The Survey complained that labor laws like the

Factories Act (1948) limit working hours to 48 per week, whereas other nations "allow these caps to be averaged over multiple days and weeks". It said India's working hour laws impede manufacturers from satisfying demand and competing globally.



Sony PlayStation Network back after 24-hour outage, here's what the company said



Sony PlayStation Network back after 24-hour outage, here's what the company said Sony's PlayStation Network (PSN) is back online after a 24-hour outage. This outage disrupted gaming services for users worldwide. The Japanese gaming major confirmed the restoration of PSN on social media platform X (earlier Twitter), stating that online features should now be accessible without issues. The outage prevented users from launching games, apps, and other network features. Sony has also apologised for the inconvenience but did not provide details about the cause of the disruption. However, the company promised that all PlayStation Plus members would automatically receive an additional five days of service for the day-long outage. In its initial post, the company said: “PSN has been restored. You should be able to access online features without any problems now. For more details: <https://status.playstation.com>.Sorry for the inconvenience!”

Modernisation proposals worth Rs 54,000 crore get ministry of defence’s initial nod

NEW DELHI: Military modernisation proposals worth over Rs 54,000 crore, ranging from BrahMos missiles and six ‘Netra’ airborne earlywarning and control (AEW&C) aircraft to upgraded Russian engines for T-90 tanks, naval anti-aircraft missiles and torpedoes, were given preliminary nod by defence ministry on Thursday.Rajnath Singh-led Defence Acquisitions Council (DAC) accorded “acceptance of necessity (AoN)” to additional Army regiments and IAF squadrons of BrahMos super-sonic cruise missiles, whose strike range has been extended to 450km from the original 290km, worth around Rs 20,000 crore, sources told.



BrahMos missiles, jointly manufactured with Russia in India, have become the “prime conventional (nonnuclear) precision-strike weapon” for the armed forces, with contracts worth over Rs 55,000 crore already inked over the years. The grant of an AON, of course, is just the first step in

the long-winded procurement procedure that can take years before the final contract is inked. Towards this end, DAC also approved guidelines to reduce timelines at various stages to make the process “faster, more effective and efficient”. Another key takeaway was the fresh AoN grant-

ed for six ‘Netra’ AEW&C Mark-1A aircraft or “eyes in the sky” for IAF to boost surveillance capabilities along the borders as well as help direct friendly fighters during air combat with enemy jets. The new Netra aircraft, which will entail mounting indigenous active electronically scanned array antenna-based radars, electronic and signal intelligence systems on Brazilian Embraer-145 jets, will cost over Rs 9,000 crore. With IAF currently making do with just three Netra Mark-1 planes and three Israeli ‘Phalcon’ radars mounted on Russian IL-76 aircraft, India is lagging far behind Pakistan, let alone China, in this arena.

Bitcoin marked its first weekly decline since election victory

Bitcoin marked its first weekly decline since Donald Trump’s election victory as the Federal Reserve’s cautious policy outlook tempered optimism over the president-elect’s embrace of the crypto sector. The largest digital asset was down more than 7% for the seven-day period through 9:27am Monday in Singapore, the biggest such drop since September. A wider crypto market gauge, encompassing smaller tokens such as Ether and meme-crowd favorite Dogecoin, suf-

fered a sharper decline of about 10%. The Fed delivered a third straight interest-rate cut while signaling a slower pace of monetary easing next year to keep inflation in check, sending global stocks into a tailspin. The hawkish pivot also damped the speculative spirits unleashed in the crypto market by Trump’s pledge of friendly regulations and his backing for a national Bitcoin stockpile. A record outflow from US exchange traded funds investing directly in Bitcoin last

week will weigh on prices in the near term, said Sean McNulty, director of trading at liquidity provider Arbelos Markets.“We should hold the \$90,000 level for Bitcoin into the year end, but if we break below that could trigger further liquidations,” McNulty. said adding that “meaningful downside hedging” was seen in the options market last week with large buyers. for January, February and March puts in \$75,000 to \$80,000 strikes.

250-strong 'troll army' fanned Nagpur flames, claim police

NAGPUR: Authorities lifted curfew in two police station limits in Nagpur and relaxed restrictions for two hours in six areas Thursday. But Monday night’s riots epicentre Mahal remained under heavy security. Police arrested 17 more suspects and detained four minors for stone-throwing, bringing the total in custody to 95. Fahim Khan, a burqa seller accused of masterminding the violence, was charged with two cases of sedition. He was arrested Tuesday and remanded in police custody. He is expected to be transferred to the cyber cell for further investigation.Police alleged that he spread inflammatory content through viral videos in the hours



leading up to the riots. "Khan proactively shared his inflammatory video, which propagated hate against another community and police," said cyber cell DCP Lohit Matani. Khan had led a protest to Ganeshpeth police station Monday, filing a complaint against Bajrang Dal and VHP members for burning an effigy of Aurangzeb and a religious chadar during the day. Shortly

after leaving, he posted a video blaming police for shielding the demonstrators. The video quickly went viral, which authorities claim incited the violence in Mahal Gate, a neighbourhood just 2km from the RSS headquarters.Police sources said Khan's video gained traction online, fuelling tensions and helping mobilise a stone-throwing mob. Cyber investigators alleged .

Family returns from hospital only to find house attached by bank

KANNUR: A Kerala family was forced out of their home Wednesday, when Kerala State Cooperative Bank enforced a court order to recover an unpaid loan of Rs 2 lakh. The family's three-room home at Parappachal in Kasaragod was seized and

their belongings were left outside while they were away for a medical visit. Janaki, 70, her son Vijesh TP, daughter-in-law Vijina, and their two children were able to return on Thursday after an NRI businessman stepped in to settle their debt.

"When we returned from hospital around 6pm Wednesday, we found the house sealed and a bank notice pinned to the wall," Vijesh said. With no place to go, the family spent the night in the courtyard, setting up a temporary kitchen. Their situation gained wide-

spread media attention Thursday morning. Upon seeing the reports, Unnikrishnan Nair, an NRI businessman from Cherthala in Alappuzha , contacted the bank and repaid the outstanding amount that had grown to Rs 6.5 lakh due to interest and penalties.

Big desi guns booming: CCS clears mega deal of Rs 7,000 crore for big indigenous artillery guns

NEW DELHI: Big indigenous guns are finally booming. The PM-led cabinet committee on security Wednesday cleared the Rs 7,000 crore deal to acquire advanced towed artillery gun systems (ATAGS) for the Army, in a major boost for home-grown capability to manufacture such heavy-duty howitzers. The deal for 307 howitzers, which have a strike range up to 45km, and 327 gun-



towing vehicles, to arm 15 artillery regiments of the Army, will now be inked early next

week. Bharat Forge and Tata Advanced Systems will produce the ATAGS, the

first indigenously designed and developed 155mm/52-calibre artillery gun by DRDO. Bharat Forge will manufacture 60% of the guns as it emerged as the L-1 (lowest bidder), while Tata will produce the remaining 40%. “ATAGS will replace outdated 105mm and 130mm guns. It will enhance the Army's operational capabilities along the borders with China and Pakistan with its cut-

ting-edge technology and superior firepower,” an official said. “Over 65% of its components are sourced domestically, including key subsystems such as the barrel, muzzle brake, breech mechanism, firing and recoil system, & ammunition handling mechanism,” he added.first to report that the ATAGS deal would be inked within this fiscal after the CCS clearance. Orders for ATAGS.