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**Rahul Gandhi says China has grabbed 4,000 sqkm, Anurag Thakur hits back**



**Vatika Times**  
**NEW DELHI:** Leader of opposition Rahul Gandhi on Thursday slammed the govt, claiming that China had taken over 4,000 sqkm of Indian territory, and also sought answers from the Centre on the issue of import duties imposed by the US, saying it would "completely devastate" the Indian economy. Speaking in Lok Sabha, Rahul said the govt must give answers as to "what it is doing about our land and about these tariffs that our ally has imposed on us". BJP member Anurag Thakur hit back at the Congress MP, saying "not an inch of land" has been given to China during BJP's tenure and that it was during Congress's tenure China had occupied Indian territory. On celebration of the 75th anniversary of India-China diplomatic ties, Rahul said, "China is sitting on 4,000 sqkm of our territory. I was shocked some time back to see that our foreign secretary (Misri) was cutting a cake with the Chinese ambassador. The question is - what exactly is happening to this territory of 4,000 sqkm that China has taken?" Referring to the Galwan incident, Rahul said 20 jawans were martyred in 2020. He said, "There is a celebration taking place over their martyrdom."

## Parliament passes Waqf Amendment Bill 2025



**Vatika Times**  
**NEW DELHI:** Parliament approved the Waqf (Amendment) Bill, 2025 in the early hours of Friday following an extensive discussion in the Rajya Sabha. The bill secured passage in the Rajya Sabha with 128 votes in favour and 95 against, following its approval in the Lok Sabha supported by 288 MPs while 232 against. The legislation now awaits President Droupadi Murmu's assent to become law. Following the advocacy of Union home minister Amit Shah and parliamentary affairs minister Kiren Rijiju in the lower house, BJP presi-

dent JP Nadda led with a spirited debate in the Rajya Sabha that began on Thursday, concluded with the bill receiving majority support on Friday. The amended Waqf Bill reduces the mandatory contribution of Waqf institutions to boards from 7 per cent to 5 per cent, whilst implementing mandatory audits by state-appointed auditors for institutions earning above Rs 1 lakh. To enhance administrative efficiency and transparency, the bill establishes an automated centralised portal for Waqf property management. Reverting to pre-2013 regulations, the bill enables

practising Muslims with minimum five years of religious observance to dedicate their property to the Waqf. The legislation safeguards women's interests by ensuring they receive their inheritance prior to Waqf declarations, with specific provisions protecting widows, divorced women and orphans. For properties claimed as Waqf, the bill mandates investigations by officers holding positions above the collector rank. The legislation advocates for diversity by proposing the inclusion of non-Muslim members in both central and state Waqf boards.

## Waqf bill seeks to complete unfinished tasks of previous governments: Rijiju

**Vatika Times**  
**NEW DELHI:** Minority affairs minister Kiren Rijiju on Thursday refuted the opposition's charge of the govt bulldozing an "anti-Muslim" legislation, and said the new waqf law was aimed at better management of waqf properties and to accomplish "unfulfilled tasks of previous govts". When the bill was taken up in RS, some opposition MPs were wearing black as a mark of protest. INDIA bloc

parties alleged that the bill was "unconstitutional" and aimed at targeting Muslims. Congress, TMC, DMK, AAP, Shiv Sena (UBT), Samajwadi Party, RJD and Left parties questioned the govt's intent behind bringing the legislation. Leader of the House and BJP president J P Nadda pointed out that other Muslim-dominated countries, including Malaysia, Saudi Arabia and Iran had changed their laws for better

management of waqf properties. "When these Muslim nations are digitising waqf properties and making them accountable, then what is the problem if it is being done in India?" he said, adding that with the amendments, the govt has tried to ensure that waqf properties are in the right hands and used for the benefit of Muslims. Nadda said Muslim women became second-grade citizens during UPA's term.

## Sanjeev Sanyal sacked as GIPE chancellor, fresh row breaks out

**Vatika Times**  
**Pune:** A governance dispute has escalated at Gokhale Institute of Politics and Economics (GIPE) in Pune after trustees removed Tuesday economist Sanjeev Sanyal as chancellor, replacing him with Bombay HC's ex-judge SC Dharmadhikari, reports Ardhra Nair. Interim VC Shankar Das challenged the decision Thursday, calling it a violation of UGC reg-

ulations. In a letter to GIPE's parent organisation Servants of India Society, Das declared any appointment replacing Sanyal "null and void". Justice Dharmadhikari confirmed his appointment, saying he accepted it "with humility for an opportunity to serve such a renowned institution". Sanyal, a member of EAC to the PM, did not respond to calls or messages.

## 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.

## Supreme Court verdict out, ED probe into West Bengal job scam to shift gears

**Vatika Times**  
**NEW DELHI:** The SC judgment cancelling recruitment of more than 25,000 teachers by West Bengal govt is likely to spur on Enforcement Directorate to speed up the investigation it had to pause into cases of alleged money laundering against TMC functionaries. "The investigation, which was stalled because case was pending in SC, will be pursued with vigour, and wrongdoers will be pun-



ished," an official associated with the probe said, asserting the SC verdict marked a validation of ED probe. There are indications the probe against TMC functionaries, including a very senior one, is expected to pick pace and

fresh summons will be issued against other accused and suspects very soon. Sources said searches conducted by ED in this case in Aug 2023 had led to seizure of "crucial evidence", including those allegedly pointing to the involvement of many senior TMC functionaries, including one "particularly close" to CM Mamata Banerjee. The agency had also tracked a company involved in laundering.

## Centre's Rs 1 lakh crore urban infra fund challenges states to think like startups

**The Budget** proposes an Urban Challenge Fund (UCF) of Rs 1 lakh crore to encourage states to think innovatively towards attaining sustainable urbanisation and redevelopment goals in existing cities. The grant is expected to infuse around Rs 4 lakh crore for infrastructure development, achieving saturation and implementing redevelopment projects. An allocation of Rs 10,000 crore is proposed for 2025-'26," FM Nirmala Sitharaman said in her speech. UCF would help implement proposals for 'Cities as Growth Hubs', 'Creative Redevelopment of Cities' and 'Water and Sanitation' proposals, the FM said.

## IPL 2025: Venkatesh Iyer, Vaibhav Arora heroics lead KKR to dominating 80-run victory

**Vatika Times**  
**NEW DELHI:** Kolkata Knight Riders (KKR) delivered a resounding performance, defeating Sunrisers Hyderabad (SRH) by 80 runs in the 15th match of IPL 2025 on Thursday at Eden Gardens, Kolkata. The victory was shaped by Venkatesh Iyer's explosive batting and Vaibhav Arora's fiery bowling, both playing key roles in KKR's dominance. Venkatesh Iyer led the charge with a scintillating 60 off 29 balls, smashing seven fours and three sixes at an incredible strike rate of 206.90. Iyer walked in when KKR was 97/3 in the 11th over, following Ajinkya Rahane's dismissal. He quickly turned the momentum in KKR's favour, forming a crucial partnership with Angkrish Raghuvanshi (50 off 32). Iyer's ability to attack spinners and pacers alike

ensured KKR accelerated in the final overs. His innings ended in the 19th over, caught by Aniket Verma off Harshal Patel, but he had already powered KKR to an imposing 200/6 in 20 overs. Defending 200, Vaibhav Arora struck in his very first over, dismissing dangerous Travis Head. He continued his lethal spell, removing Ishan Kishan (2) and Heinrich Klaasen (33), breaking SRH's resistance. His figures of 3/29 put KKR in complete control. He later went on to win the Player of the Match award. SRH crumbled under KKR's bowling pressure, getting bowled out for 120 in 16.4 overs. Apart from Klaasen (33) and Kamindu Mendis (27), no batter could make a significant impact. Harshit Rana, Varun Chakaravathy, Sunil Narine, and Andre Russell provided crucial breakthroughs.

**Vatika Times**  
**NEW DELHI**  
**As** he departed for Thailand to participate in the 6th Bimstec summit, PM Narendra Modi asserted India's Northeast lies at the heart of the inter-regional group, underlining the primacy of the north-eastern states in the region, days after Bangladesh chief adviser Muhammad Yunus said in China the "7 sisters" are landlocked with no way of reaching the ocean. Modi's remark came ahead of a likely bilateral meeting between the two on Friday on the summit's margins. Modi and Yunus came face to face for the first time at the dinner hosted by Thailand PM Paetongtarn Shinawatra. Modi to meet



Yunus today, claim top Bangladesh officials. Modi was seated between Yunus and Nepal PM KP Sharma Oli. An Indian govt source speaking on condition of anonymity said the meeting, as sought by Dhaka, is "in the works". Senior officials in Dhaka were quoted as saying that the leaders would meet on Friday afternoon, shortly after the Bimstec summit. The meeting, if it happens, would be the first between the lead-

ers since the interim govt took charge in Bangladesh in Aug 2025. Separately, in a Bimstec ministerial, Jaishankar said that the North-East had emerged as a connectivity hub for the Bimstec and the completion of the India-Myanmar-Thailand trilateral highway will connect the region all the way to the Pacific Ocean. This, he said, would be a veritable game-changer. Yunus's office had clarified on Wednesday that his

remarks about India's North-East had been made with "honest intentions" but were interpreted wrongly. The fact that he was speaking in China, while inviting Beijing to take advantage of Bangladesh's geographical location, raised eyebrows in India. Modi had last week written to Yunus on Bangladesh National Day, extending his felicitations and underlining the significance of working together on the basis of mutual sensitivity to each other's interests and concerns. India also remains concerned about the law-and-order situation in Bangladesh, and the threat to minorities amid increasing radicalisation in the country.

## Become a leader in project management with IIT Delhi's Project Management

**Vatika Times**  
**NEW DELHI:** In a world driven by rapid technological advancements and ever-evolving market dynamics, project management has become the cornerstone of organisational success. A 33% growth rate in project management jobs is expected by 2027, resulting in 21.7 million project management jobs in India, as per NASSCOM1. This signifies an explosive demand for skilled project management professionals. Whether it's launching new products, streamlining processes, or driving innovation, businesses are increasingly reliant on adept project managers to navigate complexity and uncertainty. Companies need qualified project managers who can deliver on time, within budget, and with high standard.

## J&K Police identifies 200 social media handles involved in radicalisation

**Vatika Times**  
**SRINAGAR:** Jammu and Kashmir Police has identified 200 social media handles operated from within and outside the country, which are involved in radicalisation and glorifying terrorism. The cyber cell has launched a major crackdown against the social media handles involved in "anti-national propaganda and radicalisation", a police spokesperson said, adding that the operation has been going on for the past three

months. "Adverse social media handles operating across multiple platforms, including those managed from outside the country, have been identified and targeted through legal and preventive action. During this period, 200 adverse social media handles engaged in spreading misinformation and extremist content have been identified, with 100 of them operating from outside the country," the spokesperson said. A number of social

media accounts involved in anti-national propaganda, radicalisation and glorification of terrorists have been blocked, and legal action has been initiated against key propagators, with multiple FIRs filed under relevant criminal laws, police said. Many people influenced by online propaganda have been counselled and handed back to their families as part of a de-radicalisation initiative, police further informed, but did not specify the number of such people.



Editorial

Indian Ocean ambitions  
Focus on 5 key areas

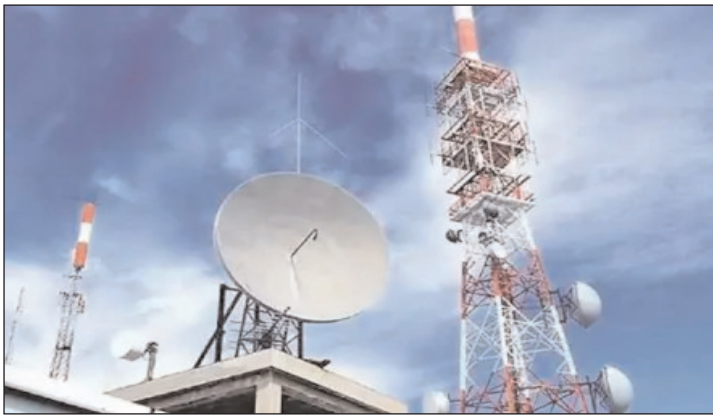
Ritu Walia

As India approaches its 75th Republic Day, the nation has achieved a significant milestone in strengthening its naval capabilities. In an exceptional move reflecting strategic foresight, Prime Minister Narendra Modi recently commissioned three advanced naval platforms in a single day: a destroyer, a frigate, and a submarine. However, in a fast-changing security environment in the Indo-Pacific, the developments in naval capabilities must be measured in a relative context— capabilities of arch rivals and a swiftly evolving security domain, that is. Now, five points need to be underscored in this context. The commissioning of advanced naval platforms highlights India's aspiration to establish itself as a net security provider in the Indian Ocean Region (IOR). Over the years, India's maritime security strategy has significantly evolved. The 2015 Security and Growth for All in the Region (SAGAR) vision reflects India's dedication to fostering regional cooperation in the Indo-Pacific. This vision is supported by initiatives such as the Indian Ocean Rim Association (IORA) and the Indian Ocean Island Countries (IOIC), which emphasise coastal connectivity and sustainable development. PM Modi's address at the 2018 Shangri-La Dialogue further reinforced India's strategic perspective for the Indo-Pacific. The SAGAR vision has gained traction through frameworks such as the Indo-Pacific Oceans Initiative (IPOI) and the Information Fusion Centre for the Indian Ocean Region (IFC-IOR), aiming to tackle regional security issues and counter China's expanding influence. While China's People's Liberation Army Navy (PLAN) has grown to become the world's largest by fleet size, it still lacks the operational capabilities and combat experience of the United States. India's navy, although the smallest of its armed forces, has consistently demonstrated efficiency and timely acquisitions. Compared to the Indian Air Force, which faces critical squadron shortages, the navy pragmatically acknowledges domestic limitations in engine development. It relies on foreign collaborations to fill gaps, ensuring progress. However, I'll turn to that later. To establish itself as a net security provider, the Indian Navy must sustain the momentum it has recently achieved in naval defence exports. Although this initiative began in earnest only in 2011, it gained significant traction after 2016. India has transitioned from being a cautious supplier of naval equipment, primarily targeting countries such as Mauritius, Sri Lanka, and the Philippines, to a more prominent player in defence exports. For many years, India's exports to nations such as Seychelles, the Maldives, Mauritius, and Sri Lanka were limited to refurbished ex-navy and coast guard vessels. However, this trend has undergone a remarkable transformation in recent years. Naval ships, as of 2024, account for over 61 per cent of India's total defence exports. This shift highlights India's growing capability to manufacture advanced platforms and its determination to emerge as a dependable supplier of defence equipment to neighbouring countries. This development is a critical component of India's regional and maritime strategy, especially given China's rapid ascent in modernising PLAN and expanding its influence in the Indian Ocean by providing naval assets to smaller nations. China has already established itself as the leading defence exporter to both Pakistan and Bangladesh. It delivered two Ming-class submarines to Bangladesh in 2017, gifted a P625 Frigate to Sri Lanka in 2019, and committed to exporting Yuan-class submarines to Thailand. Although the Thai deal encountered difficulties when Germany refused to supply key propulsion components.



Saariq

The problem of slowing expenditure in these two areas should not have been difficult to fix. Either effective monitoring of spending is lacking, or there are serious problems with project execution, reflecting the poor expenditure-absorbing capacity of these two sectors. This is borne out by a relatively good performance of the Indian Railways, which accounts for over 22 per cent of this year's capex. At ~1.68 trillion, the Indian Railways' capex is just about 1 per cent lower than its spending during April-November 2023. With regard to the transfer of special assistance as loans to states for their capex and additional central assistance for their externally aided projects, the Union government's performance was slightly better. In the April-November 2024-25 period, these transfers rose by about 5 per cent, although much lower than the budgeted increase of 41 per cent. In other words, a decision to transfer the equity amount promised to BSNL would increase the government's capex by a significant margin. Why this money has not been transferred is puzzling. Last year, against a budgeted BSNL equity infusion of ~0.53 trillion, the actual infusion was higher at ~0.65 trillion. This year, no action on this front even after eight months is a puzzle as this failure also contributes significantly to the decline in the Centre's capex. More importantly, the Budget for 2024-25 had allocated a significant amount of ~0.66 tril-



lion for capex on central sector schemes and projects. Of this, a large chunk, estimated at ~0.62 trillion, was earmarked for new schemes that the government would announce during the year. However, in the first eight months of the current year, only 4 percent of that total outlay has been used up, leaving ~0.63 trillion yet to be spent. It is likely that the government may not need this amount or it may have kept its powder dry to meet any new schemes that it might announce later in the year, for which such capital allocations will be useful. For the Union finance ministry, currently busy preparing the Budget for 2025-26, such a state of play with regard to slowing capital expenditure could well be an opportunity. With tax revenue growth slowing in the last few months, the possibility of an upside earlier expected on the revenue front may be receding rapidly. Revenue expenditure is also rising at a rate higher than the budgeted 6 per cent. If the fiscal deficit target of 4.9 per cent of gross domestic product (GDP) has to be met for 2024-25, which the govern-

ment must in view of the uncertainties and challenges emerging both domestically and globally, the finance ministry may see in the composition of the current year's capex a sliver of hope. The finance ministry should not spend ~0.83 trillion for equity infusion into BSNL. Instead, it should ask the telephone company to raise resources from the market. The ministry should also desist from spending the remaining ~0.6 trillion earmarked for capital allocation to new schemes. Saving about ~1.43 trillion (a little less than half a percent of GDP) will be a cushion against other expenditure slippages and revenue shortfall. Not too many tears would be shed for a squeeze on capex if the hit is primarily on infusing equity into a state-owned enterprise and on new schemes that are yet to be announced. Quite ironically, a slowdown in the government's capex may well turn out to be an opportunity. The Union government's capital expenditure (capex) continues to be a cause for concern. Of course, the extent of its decline has reduced somewhat — from

35 per cent at the end of the first quarter of the current financial year to 15 per cent at the end of six months. But the latest number for the April-November 2024-25 period shows that the Union government's capex was still 12 per cent lower than what it was in the same period of 2023-24. Instead of aiming for the targeted 17 per cent growth to ~11.11 trillion in capex for 2024-25, the government will have to strive hard to at least cross the figure of ~9.48 trillion reached last year. What has led to this decline? A widely held view is that the seven-phase general elections, which began on April 19 and ended on June 1 last year, caused a slowdown in capex. But if that indeed is the reason, the decline in capex in the first quarter should have been reversed in the second quarter of 2024-25. And certainly, the first two months of the third quarter should have raised the trajectory of capex growth to a higher level. There has been some improvement, but a 12 per cent decline in the April-November 2024-25 period is no comfort. Look at the slightly different seen in the Union government's revenue expenditure growth during the same period. The Budget for 2024-25 had projected a rise of over 6 per cent to ~37.1 trillion in revenue expenditure. At the end of June 2024, the growth was just about 2 per cent, but it has been rising since then, reaching 4.2 per cent by the end of the first six months of 2024-25 and climbing even higher to 7.8

per cent during April-November 2024-25. So, if revenue expenditure has gained momentum, why has capex failed to follow suit? A close analysis of the government's capex numbers presents an interesting picture. Over 90 per cent of the Centre's total capex during 2024-25 was accounted for by just six sectors — roads, railways, defence, telecom, transfer to states and new schemes. Their share in total capex in 2023-24 was a little less at 87 per cent. But the 12 per cent decline in the first eight months of 2024-25 is primarily the result of a marked slowdown in only two of these six areas — roads and defence, which accounted for over 40 per cent of the total capex outlay for 2024-25. Capex on the construction of roads and highways fell by 16 per cent, while defence saw a decline of 15 per cent. This is serious and has worrying implications for both infrastructure and defence. In contrast, such transfers during the entire 2023-24 had risen sharply by about 24 per cent to ~1.15 trillion. It appears that these transfers will take a hit in the current year and for the first time since this initiative to help states boost their capex was undertaken a couple of years ago. Significantly, this has not yet adversely impacted the states in a big way. The capex of 25 states (accounting for 95 per cent of all the states' and Union territories' total capex budget) has risen by just about 1 per cent in the April-November 2024-25 period.

The right-wing parties in Israel's ruling coalition

Radhika Verma

The right-wing parties in Israel's ruling coalition also threatened to bring down the Netanyahu government if he agreed to a ceasefire deal. Indeed, one right-wing leader, Ben Gvir, has openly admitted to successfully blocking previous attempts. Trump's pressure to agree to the ceasefire has come as a shock to right-wing Israelis, who hailed his election victory in November. In his first term, Trump moved the US embassy from Tel Aviv to Jerusalem and recognised Israel's sovereignty over the Golan Heights, a Syrian territory occupied by Israel after the 1967 war with Arabs. When Trump announced the appointment of an Evangelical Christian Mike Huckabee as his ambassador to Israel, many right-wing Israelis were thrilled, particularly those who wanted new Israeli settlements in Gaza. Huckabee is on record saying there is no such thing as the West Bank or the occupation. So, why has Trump pushed for the ceasefire? Apart from taking cred-

it for ending one of the most brutal wars in recent history, Trump may like to focus on larger issues, like relations with China and ending the Russia-Ukrainian conflict. In the Middle East, he wants Saudi Arabia to recognise Israel, which will be a huge achievement of his administration. With the continuing war in Gaza and the terrible sufferings of Palestinians at the hands of Israel, Saudis could not afford to consider having diplomatic ties with Israel. But Trump is unpredictable, which is also a reason for both Hamas and Israel to accept the ceasefire deal. Turkey, Egypt and Qatar—the host of ceasefire negotiations—pressured Hamas to accept the agreement. And while Netanyahu may have defied Biden for so long, he could not do the same to Trump and must keep him on his side. Starting on Sunday, January 19, the ceasefire will last 42 days. It will see the exchange of 33 Israeli hostages detained by Hamas and Palestinians held in Israeli prisons.

Why G7 has lost its way is that it has become geopolitically .

Suman Singh

Anwar Ibrahim, Malaysia's prime minister said, "We are considering BRICS because we believe that the cooperation of Southern countries within the Global South is highly beneficial." There is a small fact of history that G7 members should reflect on. In the 2000s, many BRICS leaders like PM Manmohan Singh, President Hu Jintao, President Lula, and President Thabo Mbeki were invited to attend G7 meetings as "guests". Yet, instead of treating these BRICS leaders as peers who deserved equal respect, the G7 leaders treated them as supplicants and kept them waiting outside as the G7 deliberated amongst themselves. Even a nice man like Manmohan Singh felt offended by this and said, "We were not active participants in the G8 processes. In fact, the G8 communique#233; was issued even before our meeting and we did make the point that in future, if similar meetings have to take place, then we should get a chance to discuss issues of our concern before the G8 meeting so that our point of view can be reflected in the thought processes of the G8. And I said we have come here not as petitioners, but as partners in an equitable, just and fair management of the global comity of nations . which we accept as the reality in the globalised world. "The third reason why G7 has lost its way is that it has become geopolitically .incompetent. The two most painful wars of recent times are the Ukraine and the Gaza wars. There's no question that Russia's invasion of Ukraine is illegal. And there's no question that Israel has a right to defend itself from the heinous attack by Hamas on innocent Israeli civilians. Yet future historians will record that both wars could have been prevented if the G7 had shown geopolitical competence.It's striking that two of

America's greatest strategic thinkers of the 20th century, George Kennan and Henry Kissinger, warned that Russia could react adversely to NATO expansion. Indeed, as far back as 1998, George Kennan told Tom Friedman of the New York Times, "I think it is the beginning of a new Cold War. I think the Russians will react quite adversely, and it will affect their policies. I think it is a tragic mistake. There was no reason for this whatsoever. No one was threatening anybody else. This expansion would make the Founding Fathers of this country turn over in their graves. We have signed up to protect a whole series of countries, even though we have neither the resources nor the intention to do so in any serious way. (NATO expansion) was simply a light-hearted action by a Senate that has no real interest in foreign affairs... Our differences in the Cold War were with the Soviet Communist regime. And now we are turning our backs on the very people who mounted the greatest bloodless revolution in history to remove that Soviet regime." Kennan's warning was stark and clear. The Europeans ignored his advice. Now they are paying the price for doing so.Nothing reflects the global isolation of the G7 (and its fellow European partners) more than the fact that 87 percent of the world's population have not followed the West in imposing sanctions on Russia. Many European leaders have loudly claimed that they have "isolated" Russia. The reality is that when it comes to G7 sanctions on Russia, the G7 has effectively isolated themselves from the global mainstream. Clearly, this calls for deeper self-reflection by G7 leaders.Even before the re-election of Donald Trump in November 2024, the G7 was losing its way in a new multipolar and multi-civilisational world order. The election of Donald Trump.

Spotlight on daughter Saima

Rashi Singh

But some of the mud will stick. That's the tragedy for the daughter of Bangladesh's founding father Sheikh Mujibur Rahman—even her staunchest supporters admit her chances of ever returning to her motherland look very slim. Not just her niece, several other members of Sheikh Hasina's family are also under investigation for corruption that, some estimates say, totals a mind-boggling \$5 billion. The corruption case is linked to an alleged land grab in Dhaka and, more infamously, to a Russian-funded nuclear power plant. In 2013, Sheikh Hasina travelled to Moscow to

seal the deal and was photographed standing beside President Vladimir Putin, Siddiq, and other members of her family. When questioned about her presence in Moscow, Siddiq tried to explain it as a family event, but the photo was impossible to dismiss. Apart from family, powerful ministers and industry leaders—allegedly with Sheikh Hasina's blessings or blind eye—also cost Bangladesh billions. A white paper on the economy, presented in Dhaka by a specially appointed finance committee in December, put the cost of corruption across public and private sectors at a staggering

sum. Perhaps the most striking was the claim that "illicit financial outflows averaged \$16 billion annually from 2009 to 2023—more than double the combined foreign aid and FDI inflows." Whether investigations into this immense corruption have yielded documentary evidence or not is open to debate. But for now, Chief Adviser Mohammed Yunus has made his administration's objective clear. "The theft of billions of dollars in public funds has left Bangladesh with a significant financial deficit," Yunus said in a statement this week. "The funds stolen from Bangladesh belong to its people. We will

continue to work with our international partners to ensure that justice is done." Bangladesh's current dispensation has also moved court against Sheikh Hasina on charges of "crimes against humanity." In October, the International Criminal Tribunal (ICT)—that she herself founded—issued an arrest warrant against her and 45 others for the deaths of an estimated 1,000 people in the violence that preceded her ouster on 5 August. "Sheikh Hasina was at the helm of those who committed massacres, killings, and crimes against humanity in July and August," the chief prosecutor



## Satellite toll system to be factory-fitted, phased launch

**Delhi:** This week, the government launched GNSS-based toll collection using vehicle-mounted OBUs. Once fully operational across roadways, the new system will enable nonstop traffic and eliminate toll plazas and gates. The system promises a better roadway experience but will take two years to implement. The new toll system's main feature is that a satellite or constellation of satellites will track cars and calculate the user fee based on their distance. That implies vehicles won't stop at barriers for electronic toll deduction. This week, the road transport and roads ministry allowed GNSS-OBU toll collection in the NH Fee Rules. The toll system will leverage India's satellite-based navigation system. This tracking device can be retrofitted or factory-



### BJP claims Tamil Nadu liquor fraud worth Rs 1,000 crore, DMK denies it

**Delhi:** The BJP has accused the Tamil Nadu government, led by Chief Minister MK Stalin, of a Rs 1,000-crore liquor fraud through the Tamil Nadu State Marketing Corporation. The ruling Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam DMK denies the BJP's assertions that Enforcement Directorate raids installed.

This unit will connect with 'centralised/zonal toll charger' software deployed along highways. This 'toll charg-

er' will receive distance and time data from car OBUs. Fintech corporations, the "issuer entity," will onboard these OBUs with the 'toll

have revealed massive financial irregularities. The BJP further claimed that CM Stalin is spreading falsehoods regarding the three-language policy and other national problems to distract from the fraud. DMK presented the Tamil Nadu Budget 2025-26 in the state Assembly on the same day as the claims.

## TN governor calls two-language policy 'rigid', DMK responds

**Delhi:** The governor claimed the southern Tamil Nadu region was rich in manpower and natural resources but treated like neglected backyards. The ruling Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam lashed out at Tamil Nadu governor RN Ravi for criticizing the state's two-language policy and said it denied young people in the south employment and opportunity. While touring Thoothukudi and Tirunelveli, the governor claimed Tamil Nadu's southern regions were rich in human and natural resources but were presently treated like neglected backyards. "Despite its industrial



potential, this region feels neglected and deprived of opportunities. The state government's two-language strategy makes young people here feel disadvantaged compared to those from neighboring states. They deem it unfair that they cannot study other South Indian

languages besides Hindi. Children must have the option to study language. He accused the governor of "repeatedly spewing hatred against Tamil, Tamil Nadu, and Tamil Thai Vazhthu" (the state anthem) over prior disputes. Governor Ravi has been hostile to Tamil Nadu because he cannot

## Gzb fast rail station may provide co-working spaces

**Delhi:** NCR opened a co-working space at Ghaziabad's Namo Bharat station concourse. The area will serve 42 people and 11 organizations with 42 open workstations, 11 private cabins, and two meeting spaces. An NCRTC spokesman said

video conferencing, wireless screen sharing, and high-speed fiber-optic internet are available. "IoT-enabled workspaces will have smart lighting, climate control, and meeting room scheduling. QR scan-and-use hot desks, vending machines, and feed-

back gathering will be available. The official stated that integrating these technologies will give professionals a future-ready, connected, and efficient co-working experience. This cost-effective strategy will allow startups, small enterprises.

## Population-based delimitation could affect seats

**Delhi:** Amid war on delimitation and National Education Policy (NEP), Tamil Nadu chief minister MK Stalin on Monday made an unusual appeal, urging state residents to have children 'immediately.' Stalin said that population-based delimitation could affect TN's parliamentary seats and requested citizens to consider his appeal seriously, setting aside personal reservations. The CM was attending wedding ceremony of Nagai district party secretary. "Earlier, we used to say, take your time and have a baby. But now the situation has changed, and we should say it now. We implemented family planning successfully, and now we are facing such a situation," Stalin said while addressing the gathering at the event. The chief minister specifically addressed



newly married couples, encouraging them to start families quickly to ensure adequate political representation post-delimitation. He acknowledged the state's successful family planning initiatives but expressed worry about their current implications. Delimitation, a constitutional process in India, involves redrawing parliamentary and assembly constituen-

cies to ensure equal population representation across electoral districts. This process determines how many representatives each state gets in Parliament based on population size. The process is guided by specific constitutional provisions under Articles 82 and 170 of the Indian Constitution. Article 82 mandates that Parliament must enact a Delimitation Act after each

### Don't quash proceedings in economic offences without trial: Supreme Court

**NEW DELHI:** Observing that proceedings in economic offences should not be quashed by courts at a preliminary stage without trial, Supreme Court on Monday refused a plea of high-profile former Gujarat cadre IAS officer Pradeep Sharma for discharge in a money laundering case. While turning down Sharma's plea in both corruption and money laundering cases, the apex court also held that it was not mandatory for police to conduct preliminary inquiry before the registration of an FIR in corruption cases as pleaded by the former IAS officer.

## CDS take on China's sixth-generation fighter aircrafts

**Delhi:** The Chief of Defence Staff (CDS) General Anil Chauhan raised doubts over China's claims about their sixth-generation fighter aircraft, stating that these aircraft are still under development. CDS Chauhan, when questioned about Chinese sixth-generation fighter jet claims, told news agency ANI that while numerous nations are working on sixth-generation programmes, he personally believes all are considerably far from completion. He suggested that nations might be displaying



these technologies as part of their tactical approach. "It's very difficult to see these kinds of platforms with six-generation capability. What we are talking about is by external viewing of an aircraft and that too with a few seconds clip which will not give you an idea that this is six generation aircraft. In fact, a

large number of countries are pursuing a six-generation program and that's my personal belief that all of them are some distance away. But sometime back we had heard about the capabilities of WS 10 or WS 15 engines which are there on 5th generation aircraft for the Chinese," General Chauhan said. "Sometime back, we had also heard about Chinese hiring a number of ex-pilots of the American and the British Air Force. They wanted to refine their drills and their systems,

## Telangana assembly passes 2 bills to up backward classes quota to 42%

**Delhi :** An eight-hour reservation debate in the Telangana assembly on Monday culminated in the passage of two landmark bills that aim to extend the quantum of reservation in education, govt jobs and rural and urban self-governance from 50% to 70%, breaching Supreme Court's cap on quotas. CM A Revanth Reddy showcased political unanimity in passing the bills – BRS, BJP, AIMIM and CPI backed the move – as a sign that the state's reservation framework deserved to be enshrined with a constitutional amendment during the ongoing session of Parliament. The first of the proposed laws – Telangana Backward Classes, Scheduled Castes & Scheduled Tribes (reservation of seats and appointments) Bill 2025 – proposes a 42% quota for BCs, 18% for SCs and



10% for STs, up from the existing 29% for BCs, 15% for SCs and 6% for STs. **T'gana banks on door-to-door survey data to build quota case** Telangana Backward Classes (reservation of seats in rural and urban local bodies) Bill 2025 extends the 42% BC quota to rural and urban local bodies. Before this, BC reservation in local bodies ranged from 18% to 23%, depending on population of each municipality or panchayat. Revanth put his hand up to lead an all-party delegation to PM Modi and other senior MPs to press for the

proposed constitutional amendment. He said empirical data from a door-to-door survey by state govt would drive this amendment. The data, which includes information on BCs, SCs, and STs, is being presented as a bullet-proof argument for exceeding the 50% cap on reservations, a step Supreme Court had indicated could be considered if the numbers backed it. Speaker Gaddam said the initial plan was to earmark 15% for SCs, which was increased to 18% based on a suggestion by Akbaruddin Owaisi.

## Gujjar brothers' deaths rock J&K assembly

**SRINAGAR:** Mysterious deaths of two tribal Gujjar brothers, whose bodies were recovered days apart recently after a month of disappearance, rocked J&K assembly Monday. Opposition legislators and those of governing National Conference (NC), many waving placards, sought an inquiry



into the "suspicious deaths". Unlike in other states, the Omar Abdullah-led NC govt does not control J&K police,

who are under the Centre-appointed lieutenant-governor (LG) Manoj Sinha in the Union Territory. The MLAs also pressed for action against cops for allegedly beating up protesting women mourners after the second body was found in a decomposed condition Sunday in a river in J&K's

Kulgam district. The other had been found nearby on March 13. Showkat Ahmad Bajad and brother Riyaz had been missing since Feb 13. A relative of the brothers who had accompanied them to a wedding in the Mir Bazar area of the same district the day all three went missing.

### Rishikesh to get two Oberoi properties

**W DELHI:** Hospitality major Oberoi Group will open two properties in Rishikesh, including a 80-key "vilas" and a 120-room Trident. The properties will come up in partnership with Ladhani Group and are a part of Oberoi's strategic expansion plans. The two resorts in Rishikesh to be managed by EIH (Oberoi Group's parent company) are in addition to the 19 properties previously announced as part of EIH Ltd's growth strategy, that includes 16 hotels.

**Delhi:** Telecom minister Jyotiraditya Scindia introduced three projects, including the National Broadband Mission 2.0 and Sanchar Saathi mobile app, to improve connection and consumer convenience. The Sanchar Saathi software lets users report suspicious calls and SMS from phone logs. To prevent unauthorized use, users can identify and manage all mobile connections granted in their name. Other functions include blocking, tracing, and recovering lost or stolen



mobile phones and verifying their legitimacy to ensure users buy legitimate gadgets. As an extension of the DoT's 2023 Sanchar Saathi platform, the app has disconnected 2.75 crore fraudulent mobile connections and secured over 25 lakh lost or stolen

devices. The National internet Mission (NBM) 2.0 seeks to position India at the forefront of digital transformation with high-speed internet and meaningful connectivity for everybody. The plan extends operational optical fibre cable (OFC) connectivity to 270,000 villages by

2030 with 95% uptime from 50,000, improves fixed broadband download speeds, and provides broadband connectivity to 90% of anchor institutions (such as schools and Panchayat offices). Other goals include providing 100 Mbps download speed nationwide, reducing Right of Way application average disposal time to 30 days by 2030 from 60 days, increasing rural internet subscribers per 100 people ering 30% of mobile towers with sustainable energy by 2030.



Max Fashion Makes a Grand Debut at Lakmé Fashion Week with Kalki Koechlin Owning the Runway

Vatika Times  
HISAR / PANIPAT: Max Fashion made a bold and transformative debut at the 25th edition of Lakmé Fashion Week x FDCI, with their muse Kalki Koechlin leading the way. This moment marked a pivotal change in Indian fashion, with Max Fashion redefining high-street style on one of the country's most prestigious runways. More than just a runway moment, this was a cultural reckoning—A statement that global fashion is for everyone, embracing style that is accessible, trend-driven, and effortlessly wearable. With the launch of its Sicilian Summer and Amalfi Escape collections, Max Fashion didn't just redefine high-street fashion—it leveled the playing field, turning aspiration into accessible for millions. "Max Fashion's debut at Lakmé Fashion Week



isn't just a milestone; it's a bold affirmation of who we are as a brand," says Pallavi Pandey,Vice President and Head of Marketing, MAX. "We've always believed that fashion should be accessible to all. With Kalki Koechlin as our muse, we're celebrating style as a form of self-expression that belongs to everyone. This debut is about making trend-driven fashion available to millions, whether they shop in-store or online. It's a celebration of style, confidence, and individuality." From the moment the first model stepped onto the runway, it

was clear that this wasn't just another collection launch—it was a movement. A collective breath was held, a ripple of awe coursed through the audience as Kalki Koechlin stepped onto the runway. Draped in a statement look that radiated confidence, rebellion, and effortless style, Kalki didn't just walk the runway—she owned it. There was no theatrics, no forced grandeur—just raw, unshakable presence. The moment transcended fashion—it was about transformation. Every step revealed a fresh side of you, inviting the world to meet your New New You.

Celebrate the Spirit of Punjab at AIRIA Mall's Baisakhi Da Mela

Vatika Times  
Gurugram : AIRIA Mall brings back the much-loved Baisakhi Da Mela for its fourth edition, promising ten days of festive cheer from April 4th to 13th. Visitors can look forward to a vibrant celebration that brings alive the rich cultural heritage of Punjab through interactive games, engaging activities, and traditional performances that capture the essence of Baisakhi. This year, the weekends will be especially lively, with a host of free events for all age groups. From energetic Bhangra



performances and traditional Turban Tying to the ever-popular Lassi Challenge, the festivities offer a unique blend of fun, culture, and community spirit—making AIRIA Mall the perfect destination for families and friends to come together and celebrate. Every evening, guests

can enjoy an array of interactive games and activities, including Ring Toss, Balloon Shooting, Hit the Pyramid, Pottery Making, and Kite Making, available for a nominal fee. Join us at AIRIA Mall for Baisakhi Da Mela 4.0 and revel in the joy, culture, and vibrancy of this wonder-

Traffic police ASI died of heart attack

DILPREET WALIA  
Karnal: Traffic police ASI Vedprakash died of a heart attack on Wednesday. It is worth mentioning that Vedprakash was serving Haryana Police for the last 35 years. He was 56 years old. He was serving in Karnal for about 13 years. At around 4 am in the morning, he suddenly felt pain in his chest, after which he was immediately



admitted to the hospital, at around 4:30 in the evening he had a heart attack again and the doctors declared him dead. After getting the information, the city police

reached the spot. The police took the body into custody and sent it for postmortem. Today after the postmortem, the body has been handed over to the family members.

Flipkart reinforces its commitment to fostering the India's Startup Ecosystem at Startup Mahakumbh 2025

Vatika Times  
HARYANA : Flipkart, India's homegrown e-commerce marketplace, is proud to be a part of Startup Mahakumbh 2025, one of the country's largest startup gatherings that will shape the future of India's startup ecosystem. The landmark event that is returning with its second edition is taking place at Bharat Mandapam, New Delhi, from April 3-5, 2025. With the theme 'Startup India @ 2047: Unfolding the Bharat Story'. The event highlights India's journey towards its vision for Atmanirbhar and Viksit Bharat. Startup Mahakumbh 2025 brings together over 3,000 startups, 1,000



investors, and 50,000+ business visitors from more than 50 countries. On this occasion, Rajneesh Kumar, Chief Corporate Affairs Officer, Flipkart Group, said: "As a homegrown company, Flipkart remains deeply committed to fostering and advancing India's startup ecosystem. Through Flipkart Ventures, we are furthering our commitment to nurtur-

ing emerging startups by providing investments, mentorship, and access to our extensive ecosystem. Platforms like Startup Mahakumbh 2025 and the government's progressive policies, serve as a testament to India's unstoppable entrepreneurial spirit. At Flipkart we are proud to be a part of this transformative journey to make India a start-up power-

house and support the next wave of innovators." Flipkart has played a critical role in shaping the country's startup landscape since 2007 – empowering entrepreneurs, MSMEs, and nurturing unicorns that have redefined the digital economy. Through its venture arm, Flipkart Ventures, the company is driving innovation by making early-stage investments and offering capital, mentorship, and operational expertise. Startups also gain access to Flipkart's vast ecosystem, tools, market insights, and industry networks – enabling them to scale sustainably and unlock long-term growth.

Food testing lab should be set up in Dharmakshetra Kurukshetra : Naveen Jindal

Jasbir Singh Duggal  
Kurukshetra: MP Naveen Jindal today demanded in Lok Sabha to set up a food testing lab in Kurukshetra under One District, One Food Testing Lab Scheme and demand-based skilling model for youth instead of supply-based model. During Question Hour today, MP Naveen Jindal said, it is necessary to have a modern food testing lab in every district to ensure protection of public health and consumer rights. Kurukshetra is an agriculture-dominated and rapidly developing urban area, where such a facility is very much needed. Along with this, MP



Naveen Jindal said that 65% of India's population is below the age of 35 years. There is no dearth of jobs in our country, but skill mismatch is a big challenge - that is, the youth do not have the skills that today's industries need. If we have to prepare India for the future, then we will have to adopt a demand-based skilling model instead of a supply-based model. Naveen Jindal demanded

a National Skill Census - because until we do not have accurate data, neither the right policy will be made nor the solution will be found. Responding to the questions of MP Naveen Jindal in the Lok Sabha today, Union Minister of Food and Consumer Affairs Shri Chirag Paswan said that the proposal to set up a lab in Kurukshetra is reasonable and the Ministry will soon take appropriate action on it.MP Naveen Jindal expressed gratitude and welcomed the positive answer of the Minister and said, I express my gratitude to the Minister.

Students of Karnal ITI will be able to get employment in Japan : Rakesh Bhatia



DILPREET WALIA  
Karnal: Babu Mool Chand Jain Industrial Training Institute Principal Rakesh Bhatia said that on Thursday, Ms. Yoko from Japan visited the institute along with Rahul Mishra and shared her experiences with the students. Along with this, she also got information about the trades running in the institute. They also discussed about giving jobs to ITI students in different industries in Japan in future. The Principal told that

due to the efforts of the Department of Youth, Entrepreneurship and Skill Employment, Ms. Yoko and Rahul Mishra from Japan visited and talked to the students. The Principal said that this is a historic step by the department, as a result of which in the coming years hundreds of students of ITI Karnal will be able to easily go to Japan for employment. He told that Additional Director of the Department Sanjeev Sharma contributed to

this. This has been possible due to his tireless efforts. As per the rules of Haryana Government and the department, BMCJ GOVT. ITI Karnal will leave no stone unturned for this work in future. On this occasion, Vice Principal Meenakshi Sharma, Vice Principal Jaswinder Sandhu, Office Superintendent Ashok Kumar, Class Instructor Deshraj, Shyampal, Mukesh, Mahendra, Malkhan Singh NCC Officer were present.

Complete the development works going on in rural areas within the stipulated time period : Virender Chaudhary

Jasbir Singh Duggal  
Kurukshetra: Zila Parishad Chief Executive Officer Virender Chaudhary said that the development works going on in rural areas should be completed within the stipulated time period. Send the reports related to the completion of these works to the administration on time, so that these reports can be reviewed in the next meeting. CEO Virender Chaudhary was addressing the officers in the review meeting of development works of rural areas in Panchayat Bhawan Zila Parishad office. He said that a committee of Disha has been formed by



the government to complete the development works on time and monitor them. In this meeting of Disha, MP Naveen Jindal has already reviewed the development works twice and will review the development works for the third time in the coming month. Regarding this review meeting, the officers should send the report after completing the works related to their respective areas as

soon as possible. While giving the target to the concerned officers till April 15, he said that all the development works should be completed at a fast pace under the guidance of Deputy Commissioner Neha Singh. For this, all the officers will need to work with full dedication. The departments whose work is not satisfactory have been given time till April 15 to complete the work.

Bloody conflict due to mutual rivalry : Ex-army man killed, two injured

Jasbir Singh Duggal  
Kurukshetra/Shahabad: A bloody conflict broke out between two parties in village



Tangaur of sub-division Shahabad over the issue of drainage of dirty water. Ex-army man Ashok Rana was killed by spear attack, while two others were seriously injured. According to complainant Vikas Kumar, there was a dispute on the same issue with Narender of the village two days ago, which turned into a violent fight on Thursday morning. Narender along with his brother Ravinder alias Bachhi, Vijay and Vikrant attacked Vikas and his uncle Ashok Rana. Ashok Rana died on the spot due to the spear attack. Police have registered a case of murder and attempt to murder against the four accused, but all the accused are absconding. Security has been increased due to tension in the village, while the condition of injured Manjeet remains critical. Vikas Kumar told the police in his complaint that Narender of the village puts cow dung in the drain in front of his house, and he had told him several times not to do so. Two days ago, Vikas and his uncle, former soldier Ashok Rana, had an argument with Narender over this matter. On Thursday morning, when Vikas was going to duty on his motorcycle, Narender came from the front with grass loaded on his tractor and stopped the motor cycle by blocking it with the tractor. After this, Narender got down from the tractor and went towards Vikas with a stick and attacked him while abusing him. Hearing the noise, Narender's brother Ravinder alias Bachchi and his relative Vijay reached there with weapons (sword and spear) and all three together attacked Vikas.



Over 1,000 crypto heists have netted hackers \$12.7 billion.

**Delhi:** Data indicated that cyber thieves have stolen over \$1.71 billion this year, bringing total losses to \$12.7 billion spanning more than 1,000 heists. Cryptocurrencies' great value and anonymity attract criminals, driving the value of criminal crypto transactions to alarming highs, according to CryptoPresales.com. According to Comparitech data, hackers stole over \$1 billion in five of the past 10 years, including 2024, demonstrating the continued battle for law enforcement and regulators to manage these crimes. Crypto heists increased 15 times in the past decade, from 12 in 2014 to 176 this year. The disparity is even greater than the 283 crypto heists reported in 2023, the most ever. A decade of crypto heists is disturbing, even though the annual number has fallen. Research has found 1,008 crypto heists since 2014, costing the sector over \$12.7 bil-



lion. Data shows that almost 75% of these losses occurred in the last four years, with 2022 and 2023 leading the way. Exploits, hacks, and flash loan attacks account for approximately 65% of crypto heists, according to statistics. "So far, there have been 395 exploits, 271 hacks targeting systems or networks, and 220 flash loan attacks, which exploit smart contract bugs or manipulate crypto prices," the research stated. Despite fears about North Korea-linked hackers stealing bitcoin, South Korea and the US are researching ways to protect against them. Bitcoin's price rose to \$100,000 .

Honda and Nissan merge to form auto powerhouse

**Delhi:** Honda, Nissan, and Mitsubishi Motors plan to unite, producing the world's third-largest carmaker by sales. The merger addresses industrial difficulties caused by increased electrification and developing technology. Smaller alliance member Mitsubishi Motors joined discussions on a strategic cooperation after signing an MOU. Mitsubishi plans to decide on its integration role. by January 2025. The

**Delhi:** The powerful GST Council may have to delay a decision on the middle class-focused issue of waiving goods and services tax (GST) on term insurance and lowering health insurance rates from 18% to 5% due to opposition from numerous states. However, it may raise the second-hand vehicle charge from 12% to 18%, rejecting demands to cut it to 5% for electric vehicles. Due to concerns from states like West Bengal, Kerala, and Karnataka, insurance has not received the backing expected while there is no consensus on



adjusting pricing. Bihar deputy chief minister Samrat Chaudhary led a GoM to modify prices. The Centre will need to work hard on Saturday to convince states to agree to Chaudhary's GoM's insurance tax adjustments. States worry that lower rates may reduce revenue, especially since the compensating cess was removed to compen-

sate for gaps. The Centre and states collected Rs 16,400 crore from GST on life and health insurance in 2023-24, down somewhat from the year before. Revenue loss could reach Rs 2,500 crore yearly. Since the anti-profiteering clause has been removed, it is unclear how the GST Council can ensure that consumers benefit from lower taxes.

Adani Defence & Aerospace buys Air Works for Rs 400 crore

**Delhi:** Adani Defence & Aerospace said that it had reached a formal agreement to acquire Air Works, India's largest private-sector MRO provider, for Rs 400 crore."Adani Defence Systems & Technologies Ltd (ADSTL) has signed a

share purchase agreement to acquire 85.8 per cent shareholding in Air Works India (Engineering) Private Ltd," a press release said. Air Works maintains narrow-body, turboprop, and rotary aircraft in Hosur, Mumbai, and Kochi

with regulatory permits from over 20 countries. The statement stated Air Works, a civil aviation industry leader, has deep defence MRO capabilities, executing projects for major Indian Navy and Air Force aircraft.

Media and travel dominate political parties' poll expenses

**Delhi:** According to Election Commission audited reports, political parties spent 2023-24 on ads, helicopter flights, and media consultants. Offering insights into their spending during a year of many state elections. The reports may only cover part of the 2024 Lok Sabha elections' spending patterns, announced on March 16. Karnataka, Chhattisgarh, Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan, Telangana, and Mizoram had assembly elections during this time. With a budget of 1,754 crore, the BJP prioritized media presence, spending roughly 58% on commercials and electronic media. Party advertising and publicity costs were 591.39 crore and electronic media 434.84 crore. Press conference expenses increased to 90.99 lakh from



Party advertising and publicity costs were 591.39 crore and electronic media 434.84 crore. Press conference expenses increased to 90.99 lakh from 71.60 lakh last year.

From April 1, 2023 to March 31, 2024, the party won three state assembly elections and lost Karnataka. With 240 Lok Sabha seats, it returned to

power as part of the National Democratic Alliance coalition without a majority. With 619.67 crore in election expenses, the Congress prioritized ground operations.

NCLAT accepts Sapphire Media's Big 92.7 FM purchase

**Delhi:** The National Company Law Appellate Tribunal (NCLAT) affirmed Sapphire Media's resolution plan to acquire Big 92.7 FM, owned by Reliance Broadcast Network Limited, dismissing Radio Mirchi, Orange FM, and others' petitions.

NCLAT Bench Chair Justice Ashok Bhushan and Technical Member Barun Mitra said, "After considering the submissions, we find no grounds to interfere with the NCLT's order dated May 6, 2024, and consequently, the appeals are dismissed."

Canon targets chip companies opening India operations



**Delhi:** Japanese image and optical products giant Canon India President and CEO Toshiaki Nomura feels its semiconductor lithography equipment for chip production has a bright promise in India and is in negotiations with firms putting up facilities here. Canon did not identify names but said there is huge potential since several chip manufacturers are considering India for semiconductor manufacturing. Many chipmakers are considering India as a new manufacturing location.

Nomura informed us that they are discussing our product and service with all chip manufacturers. He said this is a "good opportunity for us" for the Tokyo-based business to contribute its technology, goods, and services to this Indian market area. "We install equipment to make chips using our technology and goods.

We help chipmakers create strong India facilities. Once the chip manufacturer builds the facility in India, we will install our equipment and contribute to the Indian semiconductor industry with our good product and service," Nomura stated. Negotiations are underway.

Indian gold demand is dampened by price fluctuations

**Delhi:** This week, unpredictable pricing in India delayed gold purchases, while rising rates in China may balance seasonal demand. A Chennai jeweller claimed buyers are waiting for gold prices to fall after two weeks of volatility. After climbing to Rs 79,120 last week, Indian 10 grams prices dipped to Rs 75,459 (\$887.28) this week. Indian dealers offered a discount of up to \$8 an ounce over official domestic pricing, including 6% import and 3% sales levies, down from \$9 last week. "This week, jewellers awaited the Fed's interest rate cut. "The rupee's record low surprised them," said a Mumbai-based private bullion importing bank trader. India's gold imports are expected to drop sharply in December



as gold prices rise and families choose lighter, lower-carat jewelry. Swiss gold exports surged in November due to increased supplies to India and China and Hong Kong compared to October. According to an independent analyst, high gold prices also lowered demand in other Asian countries, notably top customer China, which gave \$5 per ounce reductions to the international price. A trader said gold was sold at a \$2.00 premium in Hong Kong.

Honda proposes CAFE compliant EVs and hybrids

**Delhi:** A top Honda Cars India executive said the next stage-3 of the Corporate Average Fuel Efficiency (CAFE) regulations will tighten pollution standards, therefore the company will sell hybrid and electric cars in the future years. It wants to launch three new electric vehicles by 2026-27 to align its India portfolio with its global electrification aspirations. "We are currently

Indian steel imports from China reached record high

**Delhi:** Provisional government statistics revealed that India's completed steel imports from China reached an all-time high in the first eight months of the fiscal year to March 2025, raising fears among domestic mills over cheap Chinese supplies. With India, the world's second-largest crude steel producer, a net importer, finished steel imports reached an eight-year high. Data revealed India shipped 6.5 million metric tons of completed steel, up 26.6% year-over-year. Data indicated China shipped 1.96 million metric tons of steel to India in April-November, rising 22.8% year-over-year. Beijing exported mostly stainless steel, hot-rolled coil, plates, electrical sheets, galvanized plain or corrugated sheets, pipes, bars,



" New Delhi is investigating whether to levy a 25% safeguard duty to control unbridled steel imports. India began importing steel in the financial year ending March 2024 "

and rods. The report showed that Japanese finished steel imports more than doubled to 1.4 million metric tons in April-November, a six-year high. India imported 79% of finished steel from China, Japan, and South Korea. After hot-rolled coils, bars and rods were the most imported non-flat steel products. New Delhi is investigating whether

to levy a 25% safeguard duty to control unbridled steel imports. India began importing steel in the financial year ending March 2024, and imports have gradually climbed. New Delhi joins a growing list of countries considering import restrictions as cheap Chinese steel has forced India's smaller factories to reduce operations and jobs.

NHPC invests 25,500 cr in Bihar 1,000 MW solar project

**Delhi:** NHPC Ltd.'s chairman and managing director Raj Kumar Chaudhary announced that the country's largest hydropower company will invest Rs 5,500 crore in a 1,000-megawatt solar power project in Bihar. At the Bihar Business Connect 2024 investor forum, the business and state government signed an investment MoU. "We have proposed to invest Rs 5,500 crore in setting up a 1,000 MW solar power project," stated. The project might be launched in 1.5-2 years after land purchase. Land is essential for solar projects. He urged the state government to help acquire land so we could finish the project on schedule. The company's website says it has roughly 7 gigawatts of active hydropower projects and 9.3 under construction. Chaudhary said NHPC plans to build a modest solar plant to create green hydrogen. "The green hydrogen produced will be used to power passenger buses," stated. When burned, green hydrogen creates no carbon and just water, making it the cleanest energy source. He stated NHPC will fund the green hydrogen bus. The state government will administer it as part of the government's sustainable energy plan.





## NEET-UG 2025 uncertainty is worrying candidates

**Delhi:** NEET-UG 2025 uncertainty is worrying candidates and officials. The National Testing Agency (NTA) posted the exam syllabus online on December 30, 2024. However, the link sent students to an obsolete bulletin from a prior exam cycle, raising issues about the agency's readiness and administration. Delays in announcing registration dates and the slow registration procedure have worried candidates and Ministry of Education and NTA staff. NTA insiders blamed the delays on a "complete mess" and "lack of confidentiality" in both logistical and administrative processes, which might "potentially undermine the agency's credibility". Usually, NEET-UG registration opens between mid-Nov and mid-Dec. Since mid-Jan, no formal dates have been provided, alarming the ministry. The delayed timeline reduces time for reserving exam cen-



ters, verifying them, and installing strict security measures. Education ministry officials questioned whether "NTA can manage these tasks effectively within the shortened time-frame". A source claimed "This has sparked discussions about the agency's ability to uphold integrity and smooth functioning of one of India's most critical entrance exams." Precedent exists for the arrest. After various test centres were accused of paper leaks, NEET-UG 2024 was criticized. These occurrences sparked significant scrutiny of NTA's processes and security protocols. These scandals tar-

nished the agency's reputation and functioning. "Such admissions have led to fears that the agency's credibility could be further undermined if corrective measures are not implemented swiftly," a source added. Delays and organizational challenges have upset millions of candidates and highlighted the NTA's operating efficiency. As the exam approaches, NTA is under pressure to streamline its processes and reestablish trust to guarantee NEET-UG 2025 runs well. The MoE is reportedly monitoring NEET-UG 2025 to ensure transparency, security, and timeliness.

## DU will discuss the Viksit Bharat curriculum and Gita-based courses

**Delhi:** According to officials, the standing committee of Delhi University (DU) will meet to evaluate suggestions for a number of value addition courses (VAC), including four that are centered on the Bhagavad Gita and one called An Introduction to Viksit Bharat. The committee's emphasis on incorporating modern applications of Indian philosophy and development topics into the curriculum is highlighted in the agenda, which was made public on Wednesday.

With themes like "Gita for Holistic Life," "Gita and Leadership Excellence,"



"Gita for Sustainable Universe," and "Gita for Navigating Life Challenges," four of the six VACs that are being considered are centered around the Bhagavad Gita. Based on Karmayoga, Jnanayoga, and Bhaktiyoga, the Gita for Holistic Life syllabus suggests teachings on self-management, resolving problems in modern life, and methods of action,

knowledge, and devotion. The course will also include practical components. The other courses will cover similar thematic applications of Gita's teachings to leadership, sustainability, and life's problems. Gita may undoubtedly be able to offer us some direction, but it seems ridiculous to introduce so many VACs on Gita. In addition to practical elements like field trips to communities, self-help groups, and farmers' organizations, the proposed chapters will address the role of technology, infrastructure, agriculture, and sustainability, he said.

## Pradhan defends UGC 2025 draft, calls Cong claims 'false'

**Delhi:** The University Grants Commission (UGC)'s proposed rules on faculty recruitment and promotions in higher education planted seeds of a new political conflict between Tamil Nadu and Kerala and the Centre. Compared to the June 30, 2010 gazette notification, the vice

appointment process appears unchanged. The states' argument that the new legislation will provide chancellors (governors) more VC selection discretion has caused controversy. Kerala called the draft regulations "an overreach by the central govt, rendering states

powerless in the higher education sector," but M K Stalin declared preparations to dispute the governor's VC appointment powers. UGC draft regulations a "direct attack on federalism and state rights" since they offer state governors substantial authority.

## The GST Council voted to exempt gene therapy used to cure cancer from taxes

**Delhi:** The GST Council voted to exempt gene therapy used to cure cancer from taxes. and postponed a proposal for lower rates while lowering the tariff on fortified rice kernels used in PDS to 5%. The council determined that 18% GST would be applied to the margin of suppliers for all used cars, including electric vehicles. Even though there won't be any tax transactions involving private citizens, businesses or used car sellers would be subject to the fee. According to Sitharaman, states desired a greater fee, but the Center had suggested a 5% tax on EVs. The GST Council issued a number of clarifications, one of which was that ready-to-eat



**The council determined that 18% GST would be applied to the margin of suppliers for all used cars, including electric vehicles**

popcorn would be subject to a 12% tax, similar to the namkeen tax, if it were pre-packaged with salt and spices.

Caramelized sugar will be subject to an 18% tax. In a similar vein, the council stated that as voucher transactions were

neither a delivery of commodities nor services, they would not be subject to taxes. It also made it clear that small enterprises that pay rent to unregistered landlords and are covered by the reverse charge system will not be required. he council determined that 18% GST would be applied to the margin of suppliers for all used cars, including electric vehicles. Even though there won't be any tax transactions involving private citizens, businesses or used car sellers would be subject to the fee. According to Sitharaman, states desired a greater fee, but the Center had suggested a 5% tax on EVs

## Starbucks workers expand strike across several US cities

**Starbucks** workers have extended their ongoing strike to four more cities, including New York, according to the union that represents more than 10,000 coffee shop workers. The strike stemmed from failed negotiations between Starbucks and union representatives, with disputes over wages, staffing levels, and work schedules remaining unresolved. According to news agency Reuters, the five-day strike, which began on , initially impacted Starbucks

locations in Los Angeles, Chicago, and Seattle. As of Saturday, the industrial action has expanded to include New Jersey, New York, Philadelphia, and St. Louis. While the union did not specify the location of the walkout in New Jersey, it confirmed that the strike continues to disrupt operations in the newly added cities.

The union's strike spans in 10 cities, including Columbus, Denver and Pittsburgh, during the festive period, potentially affect-

ing the company's Christmas revenue. The workers United had earlier indicated that the industrial action could extend to "hundreds of stores". Eve. Discussions between Starbucks and the union began in April. The company recently reported conducting over eight negotiation sessions, resulting in 30 agreements. The coffee chain manages more than 11,000 outlets across the United States, with approximately 200,000 staff members.

## UGC bans 3 private universities from PhD admissions for 5 years

**Due to** academic misconduct and UGC PhD regulations, OPJS University (Churu), Sunrise University (Alwar), and Singhania University (Jhunjhunu) have been forbidden from accepting PhD students for five years (2025-26 to 2029-30). Admissions at three Rajasthan universities were suspended immediately. Following admission exam protocols, Research Advisory Committee (RAC) creation, and thesis evaluation criteria, the UGC found their practices inadequate. Another 30 are being examined. The UGC said, "After analysing/ examining/ evaluating the information/ data submitted by the universities, the Standing Committee has found that three universities did not



follow the provisions of the UGC PhD regulations and also the academic norms for the award of PhD degrees... the responses received from these universities were not found satisfactory." UGC chair M Jagadeesh Kumar stressed PhD program integrity and said additional Indian universities are being reviewed. To maintain Indian higher education's reputation, violations may result in similar punishments. PhD programs should be held to the

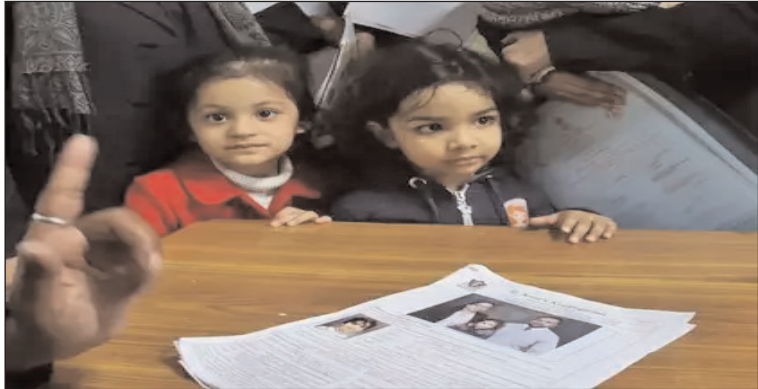
highest standards by universities. Institutions that violate UGC's PhD regulations will be punished. We are also inspecting PhD programs at other universities. Those that breach PhD regulations will also be punished.

Incorrect institutions must be barred from admitting PhD candidates. We must protect Indian higher education's integrity and worldwide standing "UGC chair M Jagadeesh Kumar stated.

## Admission is based on points from various categories

**"Nursery admissions began. The Directorate of Education (DoE) announced in November that the second list would be revealed on February 3"**

**Delhi:** The first list for 2025-26 nursery admission at Delhi's private unaided schools. Initially, major school lists had 100 to 200 pupils. Nursery admissions began November 28, 2024. The Directorate of Education (DoE) announced in November that the second



list would be revealed on February 3. All admissions will be completed by March 14.

Parents now have four to five days to accept admission, verify, and pay costs. Schools vary, but ours

gives parents four days to pay fees. We will then work on the second list, depending on the vacancy. Tania Joshi, principal of The Indian School in Sadiq Nagar, south Delhi, said their list of 114 kids was released Friday.

Jyoti Arora, principal of Mount Abu Public School in Rohini, northwest Delhi, claimed that based on prior trends, 20-25% of first-list candidates will not take admissions. 100 students are on the first list. We will see some rejections since parents apply to numerous institutions and occasionally wish to wait for their first choice, Arora said.

According to DoE, admission is based on points from various categories. Most schools consider distance between the student's home and school, if the candidate has siblings in the same school, and whether anyone in the

## IIT Kharagpur teachers petition governors. Restore HoD positions

**Delhi:** The IIT Kharagpur Teachers' Association (IITTA) urged the institute's board of governors to expunge show-cause notices issued to 86 faculty members, restore their administrative positions, and protect the association's office bearers from arbitrary or retaliatory actions amid the faculty-administration dispute. In September, the IIT Kharagpur teachers' associa-



tion accused director Virendra Kumar Tewari of "nepotism" and "arbitrary faculty recruitment" in a letter to the Union Ministry of

Education, sparking a confrontation. They wanted an academically qualified, inclusive governance-experienced successor. When the administration sent show-cause notices to IITTA office bearers and disciplined them for not answering within seven days, tensions rose. Show cause notices were sent to 86 academic members who signed a petition supporting the IITTA, wors-

ening the situation. The IITTA said several of the 86 academic department heads were replaced. The administration also said people who answered or apologized would not be punished. After an unusual general body meeting, the IITTA approached the board of governors. They worry the administration may act fast and deny office bearers a fair hearing.



## TN should appeal SC ruling on domicile quota

**Delhi:** A day after the Supreme Court banned domicile-based reservation in specialized and higher education including PG medical courses, MK Stalin's Tamil Nadu government declared it would file a review petition to vindicate its rights and uphold social justice. Health minister Ma Subramanian said the SC order would affect the state's 69% reservation and quotas for in-service applicants in government medical colleges and minorities in self-financing medical colleges. He said that the order would violate state rights. The Union government receives 15% of undergraduate medical seats and 50% of postgraduate medical and super speciality seats through the state quota each year. "All super spe-



cialty seats were lost. "TN gave government doctors a quota for super speciality courses after a court battle," he told reporters. He stated the Centre takes seats unfilled due to a lack of candidates. He said states invest fully in PG and super speciality medical education but share 50% of all-India quota seats. "Now, the judgment deprives us of all seats," Subramanian told reporters. According to him, the verdict will have a major impact on 2025-26 admissions but not 2024.

### BBL: Melbourne Stars sign Adam Milne

**Melbourne:** The Melbourne Stars have signed New Zealand fast bowler Adam Milne to play in the Big Bash League (BBL) before Christmas. He will replace Pakistan leg-spinner Osama Mir, who will not be able to play in the first three matches of this season. The Stars are set to announce a new captain this week after Glenn Maxwell became captain at the end of last season. Maxwell is unlikely to be fit for the first match against the Perth Scorchers on December 15.

## This IIM Got Rs 54 Lakh Highest Salary, Rs 5 Lakh Summer

**Delhi:** IIMs and other premier management institutes are conducting their final placement drives. Final placement season at IIM Mumbai began on November 25 and ended. Microsoft offered the highest remuneration, Rs 54 lakh per year. Coca-Cola paid a record Rs 5 lakh for a two-month summer internship. This year, 78 firms offered 373 jobs at IIM Mumbai's final placement season. Popular brands include Amazon, Microsoft, and Coca-Cola. IIM Mumbai placements saw a 15% boost in average stipend, according to a report. Top 10% of the



cohort received an average pay of Rs 48 lakh in job placements. Additionally, the top 50% of the batch received an average remuneration of Rs 35 lakh. IIM Mumbai ranks sixth in NIRF 2024. After being known as NITIE

Mumbai and then NIIE, it became the Indian Institute of Management in 2023, becoming the 21st IIM in the country. MBA registration at IIM Mumbai began on November 4. Registration ends January 31, 2025.

## Exam centers to get CCTVs from NIOS to reduce malpractices

**Delhi:** To ensure transparent and seamless assessments, the Board of Secondary Education (BSE) will use AI-powered CCTV cameras and web-casting of the annual High School Certificate (HSC) exam 2024. Pauses, violations of rules, such as logistical issues in storing or distributing ques-

tion papers, cheating, malpractice, invigilator incompetence, or cell phone use in HSC exam centers, can now be identified quickly. The board has strategically placed AI-supported CCTV cameras and web-casting for real-time test hall surveillance. Advanced features in

these cameras can detect strange behavior in the medical room. "The annual matric examination 2024 will be completely hi-tech and technology-enabled to make the process transparent and error-free," stated BSE secretary Nihar Ranjan Mohanty.

## Fewer dropouts, but school retention issues

**Delhi :**The Economic Survey 2024-25 released in Parliament shows that less than half of Indian students complete higher secondary education, despite declining dropout rates across all levels. Dropout rates were 1.9% for primary (Classes I to V), 5.2% for upper primary (Classes VI to VIII), and 14.1% for secondary. Retention rates—the percentage of children who stayed enrolled since first grade—were 85.4% for primary, 78% for elementary, 63.8% for secondary, and 45.6% for higher secondary.



According to the education ministry's Unified District Information System for Education-Plus (UDISE+ 2023-24) report, India's enormous educational system serves 248 million students in 1.5 million schools with 9.8 million instructors. Government schools make up 69% of schools, enroll 50% of pupils, and employ 51% of teachers. The research showed 22.5% private schools, 32.6% student enrollment, and 38% teachers. Digital infrastructure has improved. Computers in schools rose from 38.5% in 2019-20 to 57.2% in 2023-2024, while internet connectivity rose from 22.3% to 53.9%. The poll said the NEP 2020 is based on the idea that "education and human capital development are among the foundational pillars of development." The union government introduced NEP on July 29, 2020, to modernize the education system from school to higher education while maintaining it "rooted in Indianness". Higher education enrollment rose 26.5% to 43.3 million in 2021-22 from 3.42 crore in 2014-15, according to the poll. The poll found that tripling educational infrastructure would be needed to meet the government's 2035 goal of 50% GER in higher education.

## India's servers will host DeepSeek's AI models for security

**Delhi :**The Indian government said it will host Chinese start-up DeepSeek's AI models on its computers to monitor security and safety. The country increased its efforts to give computers to entrepreneurs and researchers to accelerate the development of localized AI 'foundational models' or tech solutions to offset US and Chinese AI developments. IT and electronics minister Ashwini Vaishnaw said the government is buying 18,693 GPUs to provide "affordable compute" to large and growing IT enterprises and AI researchers. Foundation models are AI solutions educated on large datasets to fulfill several tasks. The models are adaptable and can be cus-



tomized for special uses. Vaishnaw noted that DeepSeek was constructed with 2,000 GPUs, therefore the Rs 10,372 crore IndiaAI mission's high-tech GPUs are enough to power India's AI quest. He dismissed concerns about India being late in its AI quest, saying it has US assis-

tance as a valued partner. We are punctual. Computer access is most vital. This is now accessible. We are fit. Getting the computer facility was crucial to the goal." He added India is optimistic Nvidia will provide GPUs regularly despite US government limitations on some countries.

"I'm reiterating that we are seen as a trusted country, we're seen as a country which respects IP rights, (and) we're seen as a country which understands the technological development prospects and all the points related to that." DeepSeek's recent popularity hasn't concerned the government. The good news is that DeepSeek is open source and we will soon host it on Indian servers like we did Llama. Everything open source can be hosted on our servers to ensure data privacy. He said we'll do that soon. Vaishnaw claimed preparations have begun. "The team has worked out the details on how many servers are required, how much capacity is required."

## Kerala cuts minority scholarships due to financial difficulties

**Delhi :** Kerala's government has cut minority community scholarships by 50%, putting thousands of students' education at risk, citing the financial crisis. Nine of the 11 minority welfare scholarship programs originally allotted Rs 13.6 crore are affected by the decision. The Government says the plan size reduction is a priority, but the disproportionate cut to minority student educational support raises questions about governmental priorities and social justice. Twitter shares The Prof Joseph Mundassery Scholarship, which received Rs 5.2 crore this



year, suffered most. It has saved Muslim, Sikh, Jain, and Parsi high-achieving children by paying Rs 10,000 to those who scored A-Plus in all SSLC subjects and Rs 15,000 to those who scored 80% in upper secondary or 75% in vocational higher secondary. It ensured that bright students from underprivileged backgrounds were not forced to drop

out due to financial constraints by prioritizing BPL students and providing provisions to economically weaker API students. The crucial API Abdul Kalam Scholarship for minority students has also been cut in half. Those admitted to government-approved colleges on merit, with priority for BPL families, receive the Rs 6,000 grant.

## The government of Maharashtra says it would not pay for eggs for the midday meal

**Delhi :**The opposition vehemently criticized the decision, as Maharashtra became the latest BJP-ruled state to ban eggs from midday meals for students in grades 1 through 8. The school education department changed the list of foods served during midday meals in a government resolution this week, eliminating the inclusion of sugar and eggs. Rather, it instructed schools to serve nachni satttu and "egg pulao" as optional meals. Nonetheless, it stated that these things, as well as sugar for desserts, had to be organized by the general public without the need for further government support. The state has changed the list to adhere to the meal items prescribed by the Center, accord-



ing to an official who defended the action. While some states use their own resources to offer eggs, the federal government, which provides 60% of the funding for midday meals, does not include them in its list. Goa and Madhya Pradesh recently banned eggs due to criticism from some groups. Aaditya Thackeray, a Sena (UBT) MLA, criticized the move and questioned why the government chose to substitute rice kheer and nachni satttu for eggs and sugar.

### Adani cancels \$533mn US port loan in Sri Lanka

**Delhi:** After US securities and wire fraud allegations, Gautam Adani's Adani Ports and Special Economic Zone withdrew from a finance deal with a US agency for a Sri Lankan port terminal project and used its own resources. After the US indictment, American loans are harder to get. The US International Development Finance Corporation (IDFC) agreed to lend \$553 million to Sri Lanka. 's

## Indian students in Canada panic as Ottawa requests docus again

**Delhi:** Indian students in Canada have reported receiving emails to resubmit study permits, visas, and educational records, including marks and attendance. IRCC, a federal department that handles foreign students, issued a request that panicked international students, many of whom have two-year visas. In response to the inflow of overseas students, IRCC is tightening its financial criteria and considering limitations on admissions. I was surprised by the email. My visa is valid till 2026, however I was requested to resubmit all my documentation. "Avinash Kaushik, "They even want proof of attendance, marks, where we are working part-time, etc.," he said. Punjabi students reported a similar increase in emails last week. Some were



**Indian students have made up a large portion of Canada's rising international student enrollment. The ministry of external affairs reports that Canada has 4.2 lakh Indian students, followed by the US with 3.3 lakh.**

required to verify their credentials at IRCC headquarters in person. "Many students are confused and worried," Indian students have made up a large portion of Canada's rising international student enrollment. The ministry of external affairs reports that Canada has 4.2 lakh Indian students, followed by the US with 3.3 lakh. The sudden

email flood left pupils unsure about their future. "We chose Canada for its welcoming environment, but this unfair," said Adilabad-based business management student in British Columbia. Students want IRCC to clarify and resolve their concerns. For now, urge students to submit documents quickly to avoid difficulties. "

## IIT Kharagpur teachers petition governors. Restore HoD positions

**Delhi:** The IIT Kharagpur Teachers' Association (IITTA) urged the institute's board of governors to expunge show-cause notices issued to 86 faculty members, restore their administrative positions, and protect the association's office bearers from arbitrary or retaliatory actions amid the faculty-administration dispute. In September, the IIT Kharagpur teachers' association accused director Virendra Kumar Tewari of "nepotism" and "arbitrary faculty recruitment" in a letter to the Union Ministry of Education, sparking a confrontation. They wanted an academically qualified, inclusive governance-experienced successor. When the administration sent show-cause notices to IITTA office bearers and disciplined them for not answering within seven days, tensions rose. Show cause notices were sent to 86 academic members who signed a petition supporting the IITTA, worsening the situation. The IITTA said several of the 86 academic department heads were replaced. The administration also said people who answered or apologized would not be punished. After an unusual general body meeting the IITTA approached the board of governors. They worry the administration may act fast and deny office bearers a fair hearing, further undermining trust.





Microsoft’s AI-powered “first line of defense against scams”

Microsoft’s AI-powered “first line of defense against scams” is now available for these users. Microsoft has started to roll out a new feature in its Edge browser called “scareware blocker” to protect users from increasingly sophisticated online scams, particularly those employing scareware tactics. The company announced the feature at its Ignite conference last November and is now inviting users to preview and test it.

What is a scareware scam

Scareware scams employ aggressive web pages designed to deceive users into believing their system is infected with malware. These scams often pressure victims to call fake tech support numbers, potentially leading to financial loss and compromised personal information. Microsoft says that its data revealed a significant rise in online scams, with Edge blocking five times more scams in



2024 compared to just three years prior. While Edge currently utilizes Microsoft Defender SmartScreen to block known scams, the new scareware blocker aims to provide a proactive defense against emerging threats.

How does Microsoft’s scareware blocker work

Microsoft says that its scareware blocker leverages a machine learning model to identify the characteristics of scareware scams and empowers users to regain control of their browsing experience. “Scareware blocker adds a new, first line of defense to help protect the users exposed to a new scam if it attempts to open a full screen page. Scareware

blocker uses a machine learning model that runs on the local computer. The model uses computer vision to compare full screen pages to thousands of sample scams that the scam-fighting community shared with us. The model runs locally, without saving or sending images to the cloud,” Microsoft said. Users can then choose to report the malicious site to Microsoft, contributing to the improvement of Defender SmartScreen’s ability to detect and block similar scams across the web. Users can also report false positives, helping to refine the scareware blocker’s accuracy and reduce the likelihood of legitimate pages being mistakenly.

HDFC Bank’s home loan business head to lead Poonawalla Fincorp

MUMBAI: HDFC Bank’s mortgage business head Arvind Kapil has filed papers to take charge as MD & CEO of Poonawalla Fincorp. Kapil is a 25-year veteran of HDFC Bank and was placed in charge of the legacy housing finance business of HDFC after its merger with the bank last year. “Given the sheer size of the mortgage portfolio (Rs 7.5 lakh crore) and the material importance of distribution, we believe there is key managerial personnel risk (for HDFC Bank),” said Suresh Ganapathy of Macquarie. He noted that this is the second



major exit in mortgages with the head of HDFC sales Santosh Nair quitting to join Bandhan Bank last month. Poonawalla Fincorp, in a statement to stock exchanges, said that Kapil will join the company on June 24, subject to approvals. Shares of Poonawalla Fincorp rose 1.5% after the announcement. Before

taking charge of the Rs 7.5-lakh-crore mortgage business at HDFC Bank, Kapil led the retail lending business at the bank, which included unsecured loan20s, auto loans, two-wheeler loans, retail working capital loans, gold loans, loans against shares, home loans, microfinance, and business loans.

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.

Tinder now has a dating safety guide in Indian languages

Tinder has unveiled a comprehensive Dating Safety Guide in four Indian languages: Hindi, Marathi, Kannada, and Bengali. Initially introduced in English, this initiative aims to enhance accessibility for a broader audience within India.

The collaboration between Tinder and the Centre for Social Research (CSR), a non-profit organization dedicated to safety and gender equality, has resulted in the development of this guide. It serves as a valuable resource for users, providing guidance on navigating online and in-person dating scenarios with enhanced safety measures. The guide encompasses practical tips on identifying potential red flags, compre-



hending consent, and utilizing safety features such as Photo Verification, Unmatch, and Block Contacts. According to a survey conducted by Tinder, Indian users frequently express concerns regarding safety prior to meeting a potential match. Approximately 37% of

users indicated a preference for engaging in video calls with their matches before scheduling a date. In light of these concerns, Tinder aims to provide additional support and enhance the safety and confidence of its users. Effective from February 2025, Tinder users in India.

Foreign insurers gain ownership via 100% FDI

Delhi: 100% FDI will attract new capital, as multinationals can now invest without worrying about control or Indian partners. The capital gains tax rate of 12% applies to ULIP proceeds, which do not benefit from tax exemptions, instead of the higher marginal tax rate of 30%. Crop cover reinsurance is exempt from service tax, and the threshold for tax deduction at source on insurance commission has risen from Rs 15,000 to Rs 20,000. M Nagraju, financial services secretary, said the FDI relaxation was one of the suggested insurance measures. , and the modifications would

WhatsApp claims Israeli spyware Paragon targets users

Delhi: After the hack, WhatsApp issued Paragon a cease-and-desist letter. WhatsApp stated it “will continue to protect people’s ability to communicate privately.” Paragon wouldn’t comment. WhatsApp officials reported a hacking attempt on 90 users. A number of civil society and media figures were targeted, although the official did not specify who or where. He said WhatsApp has stopped the hacking and was referring targets to Citizen Lab. Officials would not reveal how they determined



Paragon was responsible for the hack. He claimed law enforcement and industry partners were informed but declined to elaborate. Paragon sells high-end surveillance software to government clients, claiming it is essential to combating crime and defending national security. However, journalists, activists, opposition

politicians, and at least 50 US officials have found surveillance capabilities on their phones, raising fears about the technology’s unregulated expansion. Paragon, which was apparently acquired by Florida-based investment group AE Industrial Partners last month, has strived to identify as a responsible industry actor.

Google makes its most advanced AI chatbot Gemini 2.0 available to everyone

Google has publicly released its latest AI models, Gemini 2.0, which include Flash, Pro Experimental, and Flash-Lite versions. These models offer enhanced capabilities such as large context windows, code execution, and cost-efficiency. The focus is on developing agentic AI systems capable of understanding complex tasks and improving response accuracy. Google makes its most advanced AI chatbot Gemini 2.0 available to everyone: Top features of the ChatGPT and Deepseek rival Google has made its latest artificial intelligence models, Gemini 2.0, available .



The National Critical Mineral Mission gets 16,300 crore from the cabinet

Delhi :The Union Cabinet, led by Prime Minister Narendra Modi, launched the National Critical Mineral Mission (NCMM) with a 16,300 crore expenditure and a projected 18,000 crore investment from PSUs and other businesses. "Several crucial decisions have created new scientific and technology prospects for our children, future generations, and the economy. Minister told a Cabinet briefing that PM Modi the National Critical Minerals Mission today.

Price pressure caps senior citizen health premium hikes at 10%

As medicare policy rates skyrocket for seniors over 60, Irdai has ordered insurers not to raise senior people’ health premiums by more than 10% without approval. Before canceling senior health coverage, insurers must get regulator clearance. As healthcare prices rise, insurers are



advised to standardize hospital empanelment and negoti-

ate package rates like the government’s PM Jan Arogya Yojana. Irdai reported a large increase in prices for various health insurance policies for subscribers over 60. Premium rates depend on projected claims, administrative expenditures, and acquisition costs, the regulator said. Private

insurance doesn’t standardize hospitalization expenses, unlike PMJAY, which negotiates consistent package rates, which drives these rises. Seniors have reported virtually doubling their costs when entering a higher age category during an insurer’s pricing change.

GTA 6 publisher Take-Two's CEO Strauss

Take-Two CEO Strauss Zelnick remains optimistic as his company gears up for major releases like Grand Theft Auto (GTA) 6 and Mafia: The Old Country. However, the video game industry faces uncertainty due to President Donald Trump’s proposed tariffs. In a recent interview, Zelnick said that while he isn’t worried about tariffs affecting game sales, however, video game consoles may take a hit.



What Take-Two CEO said about Trump’s tariffsIn an interview with VentureBeat, Zelnick said: “I’m not sure it would affect physical discs. I do

think the tariffs could be a negative for console sales. As an economist, I’m not a big fan of trade wars. I do think there are moments where tariffs

make sense. I’m encouraged by the pause in Mexico and Canada. But I’m a free trader so generally speaking I don’t think tariffs are the right way to build or tax an economy.” The Entertainment Software Association (ESA) also warned that Trump’s tariffs could severely hurt video game sales and urged the government to find a better solution. In a statement on its website, ESA said: “Video games are one

of the most popular and beloved forms of entertainment for Americans of all ages. Tariffs on video game devices and related products would negatively impact hundreds of millions of Americans and would harm the industry’s significant contributions to the US economy. We look forward to working with the Administration and Congress to find ways to sustain the economic growth supported by our sector.”