



Inspiration: Late. Dr. L.C. Wallia

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Constitution is supreme, all its wings must work together: CJI Bhushan Gavai

" He was glad that the country has not only strengthened, but developed on the social and economic justice fronts. Referring to his judgment against 'bulldozer justice', he said the right to shelter is supreme"

Vatika Times

MUMBAI: Amidst the debate over the timelines set by the SC for governors and the President, Chief Justice of India Bhushan Gavai on Sunday said neither the judiciary nor the executive or the legislature had an upper hand, but rather it is the Constitution of India that is "supreme" and "all the three wings have to work together as per the Constitution. The statement comes barely days after President Droupadi Murmu sent a 14-point Presidential Reference to SC asking if the court can "impose" timelines and prescribe the conduct of governors and the President when handling state bills sent for assent or reserved for consideration. Centre had accused SC of stepping into executive domain. Justice Gavai, who



took oath as the 52nd CJI last week, was speaking at a felicitation function organised by the Bar Council of Maharashtra and Goa. Justice Gavai said, "The basic structure is strong, and all three pillars of the Constitution are equal. And all the organs of the Constitution must reciprocate and give due respect to each other," he said. Parliament has the power to amend the Constitution, but it cannot touch the "basic structure", he said. The 'basic structure' doctrine holds that certain fundamental features of the Constitution, such as its supremacy, the rule of law, and independence of the judiciary, cannot be amended or abrogated by Parliament through a constitutional

amendment.

Right to shelter is fundamental right: CJI on bulldozer justiceThe recent Presidential Reference invoked SC's advisory jurisdiction under Article 143 (1) of the Constitution to determine if timelines can be set. The President's move stemmed from a May 8 judgment by an SC bench of Justices J B Pardiwala and R Mahadevan on a petition by the Tamil Nadu govt challenging the governor's delay in clearing bills passed a second time by the legislature and his move to reserve them for the President's consideration. The reference pointed out that "there are conflicting judgments of the Supreme Court as to whether the assent of the President of India under Article 201 of the

Constitution of India is justiciable or not". In April, while hearing two matters before his elevation as CJI, Justice Gavai had observed, "As it is, we are alleged of encroaching upon the parliamentary and executive functions." The executive had questioned apparent judicial overreach while hearing a matter over violence in West Bengal. In another matter regarding explicit online content, Justice Gavai had orally observed that it was for the Union to frame rules in that regard. "As it is, we are now criticised that we are interfering with the executive's function, the legislative functions," he had said.

Gavai on Sunday said he was glad that the country has not only strengthened, but developed on the social and economic justice fronts. Referring to his judgment against 'bulldozer justice', he said the right to shelter is supreme. "The right to shelter is a fundamental right. Whether a person is accused of any crime or convicted, the family's house, if legally occupied, cannot be removed or demolished. The rule of law has to be followed." Regarding his visits to various areas across the country, including Maharashtra, he said.



Union Home Minister Amit Shah inaugurated and laid the foundation stone of various development projects of Ahmedabad Municipal Corporation in Ahmedabad on Sunday. He praised the action of the Indian military force in Operation Sindoor. He also gave a befitting reply to Pakistan.

Trump Jr's buddy pushes group's biz in Pak, Bangladesh & Turkiye

Vatika Times

NEW DELHI: US President Donald Trump's interest in Pakistan seems to go deeper than just the cryptocurrency venture his aides have been found pushing for recently with Islamabad for his family firm. It has now emerged that Gentry Beach, a hunting buddy and college friend of Donald Trump Jr, the US President's son, visited Pakistan in Jan and later Bangladesh and Turkiye, and came back to brief

Trump Sr and his close aides at Mar-a-Lago about the "amazing place called Pakistan" and a potential to cut deals worth billions of dollars in explorations of rare earth minerals, oil & gas, and real estate. Pakistan Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif hosted him twice, first in Islamabad in Jan in the presence of his senior cabinet colleagues, including the ministers for finance and foreign affairs, and again.

Pakistan's China-borrowed air def system remained unused: Shah

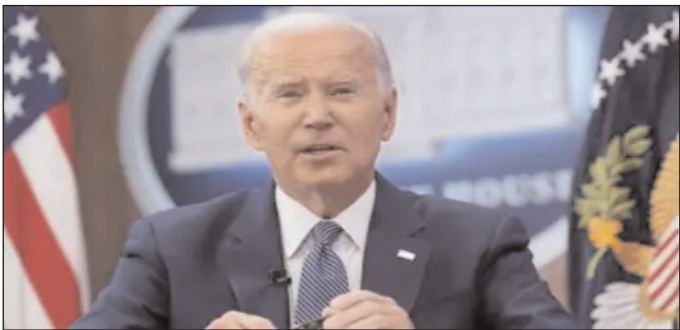
GANDHINAGAR:

Operation Sindoor dismantled terrorist infrastructure inside Pakistan and exposed Islamabad's long-standing denial of harbouring terrorism, Union home minister Amit Shah said Sunday in Ahmedabad. "As our indigenously developed BrahMos (supersonic cruise missile) destroyed Pakistan's airbases, its air defence system — borrowed from China — remained unused," he said.

Former US President Biden diagnosed with 'aggressive' prostate cancer

Vatika Times

NEW DELHI: Former President Joe Biden, 82, has been diagnosed with prostate cancer after a routine physical exam revealed a nodule. Doctors confirmed the cancer has spread to his bones but is hormone-sensitive, allowing for effective management. Biden and his family are reviewing treatment options, adding to his medical history that includes past skin cancer treatments and public scrutiny over his health. Former US President Joe Biden diagnosed with 'aggressive' prostate cancer Former US President Joe Biden has been diagnosed with prostate cancer, his office announced on Sunday. His diagnosis follows recent medical checks



that revealed a worrying development. Biden was seen by doctors earlier this week after showing urinary symptoms. A routine physical exam had uncovered a small nodule in his prostate, prompting further tests. By Friday, doctors confirmed the presence of prostate cancer, with cells having already spread to his bones. "While this represents a more aggressive form of the disease, the cancer

appears to be hormone-sensitive which allows for effective management," his office said in a statement. "The President and his family are reviewing treatment options with his physicians." Prostate cancers are rated with a Gleason score from 1 to 10, showing how abnormal the cancer cells look compared to healthy ones. Biden's score of 9 means his cancer is very aggressive.

US Embassy in India issues Permanent Ban on traveling to the United States warning

Vatika Times

NEW DELHI:

US Embassy in India has issued a Permanent Ban warning. The American embassy's warning comes via a social media post on Twitter from the embassy's official account, US Embassy India. This is the third Twitter post regarding illegal immigration made by the US embassy in India this month so far. It is not clear what exactly is the reason behind these special and frequent warning messages. In a new policy change under the Donald Trump government, all foreign nationals staying in the US for over 30 days are required to register with the Federal government.



Failing to do so, may not only result in deportation but also Visa cancellation and more. What the warnings by the US Embassy in India say The latest warning from the American embassy reads: "If you remain in the United States beyond your authorised period of stay, you could be deported and

could face a permanent ban on traveling to the United States in the future." Earlier this month in another related post from the US Embassy in India handle reads, "The U.S. government has launched a coordinated interagency effort to combat fraud and end illegal immigration.

Those found guilty of visa fraud will face permanent bans from entering the United States. New visa restriction policies apply to individuals and foreign governments who facilitate illegal immigration." Not directly linked to Indians travelling to America, but another post on illegal immigration was shared by the embassy in May beginning. "The United States is working to reduce border threats at home and abroad in partnership with outmigration and transit countries. We also thank our partners for supporting U.S. efforts to deter illegal immigration by facilitating the return of deportees," the post read.

There's no 'expiry date' for pause in military hostilities: Army on Pakistan

Vatika Times

NEW DELHI: The understanding with Pakistan to cease cross-border military hostilities does not have an "expiry date", Indian Army said on Sunday, rejecting reports from Islamabad that the "ceasefire" was being extended periodically. India has made it clear that the ongoing truce, which came into effect at 5 pm on May 10 after India's deep precision strikes on nine Pakistani airbases as well as a few radar sites earlier that day, is con-



ditional and depends on Islamabad's behaviour. The Indian Army also said that no further talks were scheduled between its DGMO Lt-General Rajiv Ghai and his Pakistani counterpart, Major

General Kashif Abdullah. **India continues to stress there's only a pause in Operation Sindoor** Stressing that India has kept Pakistan "on probation" to ascertain

whether it ceases cross-border terror, defence minister Rajnath Singh had said on Friday, "If Pakistan's behaviour improves, it is fine. But if there is any disturbance, harshest punishment will be given." "As far as continuation of the break in hostilities is concerned, as decided in the interaction between the DGMOs of May 12, there is no expiry date to it," the Army added, in a brief statement on Sunday. The two countries have decided to continue

their confidence building measures to gradually reduce the high alertness levels between the rival militaries ranged against each other all along the western front. "This is being done to ensure neither side fires or initiates any aggressive and inimical action," an official said. On May 10, the two sides had also agreed to "consider immediate measures" to ensure troop reduction along the Line of Control as well as the international boundary.

Reforms plans at risk if you up tension with India: IMF to Pakistan

Vatika Times

New Delhi: Days after clearing fresh assistance despite India's strong opposition, International Monetary Fund (IMF) has flagged that heightened tension with its neighbour could increase the "enterprise risk" for Pakistan's agreed reforms, while also cautioning about "reputational risk" due to a perception of fund diversion. Setting out 11 new structural benchmarks for reforms under the bailout scheme, the multi-lateral agency



warned "an intensification of political or social tensions" could also impact policy and reform implementation, in what was probably a reference to internal conflicts in Pakistan. India's concern, however, has more to do with the way Pakistan is being provided assistance despite its strong links with terror, as pointed

out by Rajnath Singh last week. He had sounded an alert about possible diversion of funds by Pakistan govt to rebuild terror bases destroyed by Indian forces, and called for a rethink of the IMF assistance. In the midst of Operation Sindoor, at the IMF board meeting on May 9, India had red-flagged disbursement of \$1 billion loan to Pakistan, along with fresh assistance of \$1.4 billion in the name of climate resilience, but the US and European countries backed the proposal and approved it.

Editorial

Deep State is the convenient bogeyman of modern politics

Ritu Walia

Circa 1900: Rudyard Kipling wrote Kim, placing the eponymous hero at the centre of the Great Game of espionage between the British Empire and Russia in the 19th century. The book is set after the Second Anglo-Afghan War, which ended in 1881, but before the Third, likely in the period 1893–98. Kim, short for Kimball O’Hara, is an impoverished Irish orphan who lives on the streets of Lahore and works for Mahbub Ali, a Pashtun horse trader. He later befriends an aged Tibetan lama, accompanies him on his journey along the Grand Trunk Road, learns about the Great Game, and is eventually recruited by Mahbub Ali, who works for the British Secret Service in their quest to extend influence in both Afghanistan and Tibet. Whether or not the Great Game—the expression used by British imperialists to describe the perceived expansion of Russian influence in Afghanistan, Central Asia, and Tibet—actually existed, the fact remains that surveys were undertaken, expeditions mounted, spymasters recruited, and novels written, even as soldiers lost their lives. Taking a cue from Viceroy George Curzon, all pro-establishment papers—from the Civil and Military Gazette of Lahore to The Pioneer of Lucknow, The Statesman of Calcutta (now Kolkata), and The Times of India of Bombay (now Mumbai)—concurred that Tsarist Russia posed a real threat to the jewel in Britain’s crown. A hundred and twenty years later, historians remain sceptical of Curzon’s assertions. Is the hue and cry about the Deep State similar to the Great Game? Whether or not it exists, whether it operates in all countries, and whether the ‘deep state’ of one country is connected with others through the dark web or entrenched corporate interests remains unclear, as the discourse is more ideological than empirical. Sometimes, those who claim to be part of the deep state ascribe to themselves a larger-than-life role in state affairs—for example, AS Dulat and Asad Durrani in their 2018 book The Spy Chronicles: RAW, ISI and the Illusion of Peace. Their claim to be arbiters of one of the most tense and difficult relationships in the region has been widely critiqued by reviewers. The term first gained wide currency in the context of Türkiye as derin devlet, which literally translates to “deep state” in English. In Türkiye, it refers to a non-elected military elite dominating elected governments, especially when they attempt to dismantle the secular foundations of the Republic, established by Mustafa Kemal Pasha after the abolition of the caliphate in 1923. In Pakistan, “deep state” refers to a government controlled by powerful military leaders, as documented by Stephen Cohen in The Idea of Pakistan and Ishtiaq Ahmed in Pakistan: The Garrison State. Elected governments in Pakistan have rarely exercised real control over defense and foreign policy. In the US, Democrats and Republicans accuse each other of controlling the ‘deep state’. Democrats claim the pro-Republican arms lobby and military-industrial complex constitute the deep state, while Republicans argue that Ivy League universities promote ‘wokeism’ and diversity, equity, and inclusion narratives that, according to Donald Trump, undermine America’s greatness. Trump has accused the deep state within the Democratic regime of election interference, citing the Freedom Medal awarded to George Soros as evidence. However, skeptics argue that if the deep state were so powerful, how could Daksh Patel dismantle it simply by firing ‘interns and associates’ whose tenure is co-terminus with that of President Biden? Ultimately, the deep state serves as a convenient scapegoat.



Climate hypocrisy: West’s moral high ground

Ravi Singh

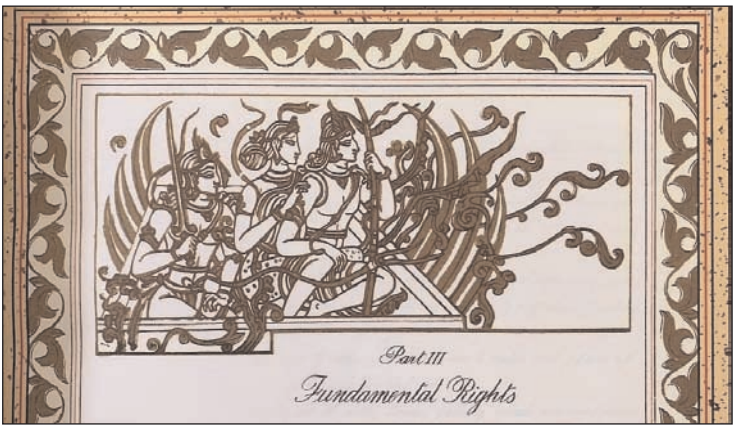
In 2019, during the UN Climate Action Summit in New York, leaders from industrialised nations delivered impassioned speeches about the urgency of addressing climate change. Yet, behind closed doors, they continued to approve new fossil fuel projects and delay meaningful climate finance commitments. This dichotomy highlights a fundamental hypocrisy in global climate politics: The West often preaches sustainability but falls short in practice, prioritising economic interests over environmental imperatives. As the count-

down to the COP29 climate summit in Azerbaijan this November continues, the Bonn Climate Change Conference in Germany concluded in a stalemate last week. Nations disagreed on the size and scope of loss and damage financing, representing a significant setback in global climate negotiations. The Bonn talks did not achieve meaningful progress on climate financing, underscoring a persistent issue: industrialised nations, which bear the greatest responsibility for the current climate crisis, resisted calls from Global South countries to compensate those who suf-

fer the most but have contributed the least to greenhouse gas emissions. Over a decade ago, developed nations pledged to mobilise \$100 billion annually by 2020 to support climate action in developing countries. Copenhagen Accord in 2009 and reiterated in the Paris Agreement, has not been met. The Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) reported that climate finance reached only \$79.6 billion in 2019. It was only in 2022 that developed countries provided and mobilised \$115.9 billion in climate finance for

Suman Singh

During a thought-provoking talk, Supreme Court Justice Abhay Oka posed several persuasive queries about Article 32 of the Constitution, which protects the ability to petition the Supreme Court directly to have one’s fundamental rights upheld. With an astounding 83,418 cases pending in the highest court, Justice Oka wondered if writ petitions filed under Article 32 need to be filtered. He made reference to the potential use of “rational tests” to choose which circumstances covered by this clause should be considered. Though it is important to thoroughly understand the relevance of this provision before moving further, this is an intriguing concept that is worth investigating. It is helpful to remember Dr. BR Ambedkar’s remarks from the December 9, 1948, Constituent Assembly Debate in order to understand the significance of Article 32: “I could not refer to any other article except this one if I were asked to name any particular article in this Constitution as the most important—an article without which this Constitution would be a nullity.” It is the essence of the Constitution, its essen-



tial core. It is obvious that Article 32 was highly valued by the Constitution’s framers, and with good cause. A right to petition the Supreme Court to uphold the fundamental rights guaranteed by the Constitution is “guaranteed” by this provision. Any proclamation of rights would have been meaningless and empty without a meaningful legal recourse for enforcement. As a result, the Supreme Court of India has more jurisdiction under Article 32 than courts in comparable locations. It gives the court the authority to grant writs as well as any other directives or orders required to successfully uphold basic rights. Suddenly, those writs that had previously been at the mercy of a legislator were an essential part of the framework for upholding fundamental rights. Over the course of the next twenty years, the

Supreme Court has emphasized the importance of safeguarding and upholding fundamental rights to prevent them from being degraded to the status of “playthings of a special majority” in a number of following constitutional issues. The 1970s then brought about a paradigm shift when the Supreme Court introduced the new process of Public Interest Litigation (PIL). This paradigm change disregarded the idea that the only people who could file a lawsuit in court were those who were directly and personally impacted by executive acts. As a result, this measure gave the poor and disenfranchised access to our nation’s top court. But as of June 15, 2023, there were 2,912 writ petitions, 32,761 special leave petitions, and 25,228 appeals awaiting hearing before the Supreme Court as a

result of this as well. In addition, there were almost 60,000 written petitions sent in only the previous year. It is worthwhile to consider the possibility of an Article 32 petition filtration system. If that’s the case, how may this appear? It is possible that the Supreme Court will create standards or examination procedures to assess listing petitions, taking into account elements like the precise basic right that was violated, the urgency of the request, and the petitioner’s socioeconomic background, or a mix of all three. However, there are many challenges and complexity involved in creating such criteria for Article 32 petitions. Setting priorities and differentiating between situations of bonded labor, caste-based discrimination, illegal arrests, housing evictions, and possible closure of minority educational institutions is a difficult undertaking. Which of these problems is more critical? Is it more important to protect cultural customs than to stop prejudice based on caste, for example? Which basic right is more important, and why? Should petitions under Article 32 pertaining to privacy take precedence over cases alleging wrong-

ful detention? Can such applications be redirected to the higher courts by the Supreme Court? These are difficult questions that should be carefully considered before topic matter or urgency are utilized as filters. Marginalized populations have historically waited at the back of the line to receive justice. Therefore, giving petitioners’ socioeconomic backgrounds first priority when publishing Article 32 petitions may hasten marginalized groups’ access to justice. Giving preference to one group over another, however, might go against Article 32 of the Constitution, which guarantees everyone the equal enforcement of fundamental rights regardless of social standing. Article 32 is distinct from all other provisions, after all. Without any restrictions or conditions, it “guarantees” its protection to everyone. It would be appropriate to adopt criteria or tests for accepting petitions under Article 32 only after addressing constitutional issues pertaining to the hierarchy of fundamental rights. All things considered, the primary difficulty is striking a balance between the enormous backlog and the preservation of justice.

There has been a rise in women adventure groups

Lipi Singh

As a solo traveller and outdoor professional, I often feel uneasy about my safety during personal trips. The challenges include poorly lit pathways, inadequate sanitation facilities, and a significant shortage of female guides and support staff. These issues are faced by women across India, which highlights the urgent need for improved infrastructure to ensure women’s safety in adventure travel. A March 2024 survey of 1,214 women revealed that 29 per cent of the participants were concerned about route or destination security, another 29 per cent worried about physical comfort, 23 per cent feared vehicle breakdowns, and 19 per

cent were anxious about sexual harassment. Over the last decade, there has been a rise in women adventure groups and solo female travellers, with many choosing outdoor thrills over traditional vacations. However, there are only a handful of women-led adventure tourism companies and the industry is yet to fully cater to the needs of its women consumers. The adventure tourism industry must make women’s safety a central focus instead of treating it as an afterthought. A large number of women graduate each year from institutions offering skill training in various adventure disciplines (mountaineering, skiing, scuba diving, and paragliding) in

India. However, there remains a notable shortage of female guides and support staff. Encouraging more women to step into these roles is essential for creating a diverse and welcoming environment. At present, only a few companies hire women as guides, but the advantages are substantial. Female guides offer insights and sensitivities that are often missing in male guides. Not only do female guides reshape traditional power dynamics in the industry, they also create a more comfortable and empowering environment for women travellers, especially in remote areas. In the male-dominated outdoor industry, gender sensitivity training.

China’s name change spree in Xinjiang and Tibet continues unabated

Saariq

The Chinese Central government has not only been devising but also religiously implementing the policy to change the names of streets, villages, places, and townships in the country, especially in the minority-dominated areas in its western part. The Tibet Autonomous Region (TAR) and the Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region (XUAR) have borne the maximum brunt in this process. For example, in Chinese academic parlance, Tibet has been described as Xijang since 2023. This Chinese trick has two mottoes: firstly, China deliberately attempts to dilute the culture of the minority people, or perhaps aims at stamping out ethno-religious or ethno-cultural identities of the minorities, particularly the Uyghurs and Tibetans; and secondly, it wants to expand the process of sinification by dint of imposing the overarching Chinese communist ideology on the minority people. In a joint report published recently by Human Rights Watch (HRW) and a Norway-based Uyghur organisation (Uyghur Help), the Chinese atrocities on Uyghur culture and identity have come to light time and again. According to the report, the Chinese Central Government has been “systemati-

cally changing hundreds of village names” bearing historical, religious, and cultural meanings for Uyghurs into new names that faithfully reflect the ideology of the Communist Party of China (CCP). It is important to note herewith that the name-changing spree in Tibet and Xinjiang by the Chinese can be traced back to the end of the 2000s, particularly after the Tibet unrest in March 2008 and the Urumqi riots (5 July 2009) in XUAR. Along with the stern policy of “Strike Hard, Maximum Pressure” in both Tibet and Xinjiang, it led to massive securitisation and surveillance in both the restive regions in the later period. The Chinese authorities have meted out excesses against Tibetans and Uyghurs. They slyly began one of the government-sponsored measures of “cultural erasure” of the Uyghurs and Tibetans as part of their sinification design. It has been an uphill task for these hapless minorities to maintain their centuries-old unique culture against 75 years of Chinese onslaught. The HRW Report gives detailed information, elaborating that as many as 3,600 of a total of 25,000 villages in Xinjiang (almost 15 per cent of the total villages) have witnessed name change

in the last one and a half decades (from 2009 to 2023). In 630 villages (nearly one-fifth of the total of 3,600 villages), the names bearing the religion, culture, and history of Uyghurs have witnessed change. The popular Uyghur names, such as Mazar (shrine), Hoja (Sufi teacher), Meschit (mosque), Haniqa (Sufi meeting place), Gumbaz (dome), Orda (palace), Xelpe (Khalifa), Wap (Islamic Foundation), Hajj (pilgrimage to Mecca), Dutar (an Uyghur music instrument) and Sultan (Emir), are now replaced with pejorative Chinese names such as Hongxing (Red Star), Qianjin (Forward), Hongqi (Red Flag), Youyi (Friendship), Guangming (Light), Bostan (Oasis), Hexie (harmony), Tuanjie (unity) and Xingfu (happiness). It is found to be a classic case of sinification that Chinese authorities have been imposing on minority nationalities, especially against Uyghurs and Tibetans, since Qing rule. The process of sinification has taken on a new tone and tenor since the communist takeover of Xinjiang in 1949. However, what is not reported in the media is the renaming of some famous streets in the capital, Urumqi, and Kashgar, as confirmed news.

States not in favour of bringing ATF under GST: Sitharaman



NEW DELHI: Union finance minister Nirmala Sitharaman on that the states have rejected the proposal to include aviation turbine fuel (ATF) within the GST framework. The finance minister during the media briefing after the 55th GST Council meeting, said that the states were hesitant as they viewed ATF as part of the crude petroleum diesel category, making it difficult to isolate. Additionally, she indicated that the decision regarding GST reduction on insurance premiums remains pending, as

the Group of Ministers (GoM) requires additional time for analysis. The minister said that several inputs, including feedback from the insurance regulator IRDAI, are still awaited. Meanwhile, she confirmed that the GST Council has postponed rate rationalisation decisions, citing the GoM's need for a thorough assessment. However, the Council provided recommendations for GST rate adjustments on specific items, including fortified rice kernels and gene therapy.

No GST on bank penal charges

During the media briefing, the Finance Minister clarified that banks and financial institutions would not need to collect GST on penalty charges imposed on borrowers. GST Council Meeting on December 21: Top Announcements Key decisions from the 55th GST council meeting include: * Fortified rice karto 5 per cent * Gene therapy receives GST exemption* Revised definition proposed for pre-packaged and labelled.

In relief to taxpayers, HC orders extension of date for revised return

MUMBAI: Scores of taxpayers, including the salaried, who were unable to claim an income-tax rebate in their tax returns for the assessment year 2024-25 (financial year ended March 31, 2024), owing to software changes in the filing platform (filing utility) made by the Income-Tax (I-T) department, stand to benefit by an interim order passed by the Bombay High Court. Additional time has been granted to these taxpayers to file a revised return and claim a tax refund. A Public Interest Litigation (PIL) filed by The Chamber of Tax Consultants challenged



disabling of Section 87A rebate claims through the filing utility. The PIL, contended made to the tax filing utility after July 5, 2024, arbitrarily prevented taxpayers from claiming the rebate under Section 87A. This rebate, introduced to provide tax relief to individuals with an income below a specified

threshold, has long been considered a cornerstone of equitable taxation. Under section 87A, a taxpayer with a total income of up to Rs 5 lakh under the old regime and up to Rs 7 lakh under the new regime was entitled to a tax rebate of Rs 12,500 and Rs 25,000, respectively.

How audit reports upend political fortunes

NEW DELHI: Political parties and CAG reports have shared a hot and cold relationship in Indian politics over the decades. Interestingly, the two become quite inseparable when the elections approach. Delhi witnessed this recently when audit report of exorbitant spending on CM's official residence, injected

into public consciousness as 'sheeshmahal' scam, was one of the key reasons that helped the Bharatiya Janata Party seal the fate of Aam Aadmi Party. A simple look at the CAG website and the number of reports released in a year shows a drop by almost half, relatively during poll years, exception being 2014. This

indicates how the ruling parties have done their best to keep the report away from the public glare, while the opposition has ensured it puts a spotlight on it. So, while several reports collective consciousness of the public towards parties like the Congress and the AAP, many other reports were carefull brushed.

Big nexus working in ONGC to defy PM Modi's make in India

ONGC is choosing a French Partner/Vendor for HPCC project on nomination basis. A French company namely Duke getting work on the HPCC project worth more than 400 cr on nomination basis due to nexus with some higher officials sitting in ONGC and Ministry. There are multiple India Companies which can provide cut throat competition if open tender is floated. It will not only give a boost to the Indian Company but also save Crores of rupees of Govt Exchequer. As per highly placed sources in the ONGC department, it has been informed that the formalities are being completed in a fast track mode and the process of giving work order to a French company on nomination basis is in the last leg. The work order is likely to be finalised & awarded on or before 30th of December 2024. This offering of such a big project without a tender is defying PM Modi's Make in India vision and it is also lacking transparency in the award process. The way ONGC is going to award work orders to a French company for HPCC is raising several serious questions. In case ONGC issues a tender for this work and chooses an Indian company then employment on a large scale can be generated for our people. It is also to be noted that ONGC will pay the French company in foreign currency.

FPIs shift from buyers to sellers this week, offloads equities worth Rs 977 crore

Foreign portfolio investors (FPIs), after starting the week as net buyers shifted to become net sellers, resulting in negative net investment of Rs 977 crore this week, as per National Securities Depository Limited (NSDL) data. The FPIs from December 16 to 20, bought equities worth Rs 3,126 crore in the first two trading sessions. However, they changed their trend in the following three sessions, offloading equities worth over Rs 4,103 crore. Additionally, the overall December FPI investment remained positive.

Britannica didn't just survive. It's an AI company now

For nearly 250 years, the Encyclopaedia Britannica was a bookshelf-busting series of gilt-lettered tomes, often purchased to show that its owners cared about knowledge. It was the sort of physical media expected to die in the internet era, and indeed, the encyclopedia's publisher announced that it was ending the print edition in 2012. Skeptics wondered how Britannica the company could survive in the age of Wikipedia. The answer was to adapt to the times. Britannica Group runs websites, including Britannica.com and the online Merriam-Webster dictionary, and sells educational software to schools and libraries. It also sells artificial intelligence



It also sells artificial intelligence agent software that underpins apps like customer service chatbots and data retrieval. Britannica has figured out not only how to survive, but also how to do well financially.

agent software that underpins apps like customer service chatbots and data retrieval. Britannica has figured out not only how to survive, but also how to do well financially.

KKR invests in Behrouz Biryani parent

MUMBAI: Private equity giant KKR has invested in cloud kitchen startup Rebel Foods, which owns brands like Behrouz Biryani and Faasos. The deal amount was not disclosed but it is understood to be a secondary transaction conducted at a lower valuation of around \$800 million. KKR said it will back the firm's expansion.

Google proposes fix to solve search monopoly

WASHINGTON: Google said Friday what it thought should change to address a ruling that it had illegally maintained a monopoly over online search: not much. It follows the landmark ruling in Aug by judge Amit P Mehta of the US district court for the district of Columbia, who said Google had illegally maintained a monopoly in online search by paying companies like Apple and Samsung to be the search engine that automatically appears when users open a web browser or a smartphone. The govt then



asked the judge to force Google to sell Chrome, the world's most popular browser, among other remedies. In Google's own proposal to fix the search monopoly, it asked Mehta to allow it to continue to pay other companies for its search engine to get prime placement. But it said those agreements should be less restric-

tive than in the past. Apple, for example, could select different search engines to come up automatically for iPhone and iPad users, said Lee-Anne Mulholland, the company's VP of regulatory affairs, in a blog post. Cellphone makers using Google's popular operating system, Android, could also install multiple search..

Tesla recalling 700,000 vehicles due to tire pressure monitoring system

Tesla is recalling almost 700,000 vehicles because of an issue with the warning light on the tire pressure monitoring system. According to a letter Thursday from the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration, the recall includes certain 2024 Cybertruck, 2017-2025 Model 3, and 2020-2025 Model Y vehicles. The issue is that the tire pressure monitoring system warning light on the vehicles may not remain illuminated between drive cycles, failing to warn the driver of low tire pressure. Driving with improperly inflated tires can increase the risk of a crash. The Elon Musk-led automaker said it's providing a free software update to fix the problem. Owner notification letters are expected to be mailed



on Feb.15, 2025. Tesla customer service can be reached at 1-877-798-3752 for more information. Individuals may also call the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration Vehicle Safety Hotline at 1-888-327-4236 or visit their website at www.nhtsa.gov. Tesla has been dealing with recalls throughout the year. Its Cybertruck is now up to its seventh recall of the year, with one last month that involved around 2,400 vehicles. Musk's Tesla delivered the first dozen or so of its futuristic

'No impact of suspension of MFN status'

NEW DELHI: Swiss major Nestle said suspension of MFN (most favoured nation) status given to India by Switzerland will have no impact on the company. Switzerland recently suspended MFN status under the Double Taxation Avoidance Agreement. A Nestle India spokesperson said: "The matter is not a Nestle specific issue."

Cybertruck pickups.

Space-tech funding fall of cliff in , industry expects recovery

CHENNAI: Indian space-tech startups funding declined in 2024 (YTD), for the first time since 2018, despite the overall tech startup funding scenario improving 6% with \$11.3 billion investments. Space funding fell more than 53% with a \$59 million equity raise compared to \$128 million last year, data sourced from Tracxn shows. While seed stage funding rose, early-stage funding dropped 65%. Despite the govt opening up certain domains in the sector in February, equity from foreign funds, full round amounts where at least one foreign investor has participated, fell 65% to \$43.2 million. But industry stakeholders see this as a blip and are hopeful of revival based on growing appetite from govt and private players and



Vishesh Rajaram, managing partner at Speciale Invest, a firm with multiple space bets, said year-on-year comparison to the sector will not show the full picture since the gestation period is longer.

increasing commercialisation by startups. Vishesh Rajaram, managing partner at Speciale Invest, a firm with multiple space bets, said year-on-year comparison to the sector will not show the full picture since the gestation period is longer. "Space startups do not need growth capital every year and it cannot be compared

like consumer-tech companies. Overall momentum of the ecosystem is good with startups crossing significant milestones. Also, the number of venture firms interested in the sector has gone up," he said. o-founder of Tracxn, gence platform, said, "While there is a slight increase this year it is still lower than the \$25.4 billion in 2022.

Andhra, PhysicsWallah ink Rs 1,000 crore deal to set up varsity of innovation

NEW DELHI: The Andhra Pradesh government and EdTech company PhysicsWallah have signed an agreement to set up a University of Innovation (Uoi) at an investment of up to Rs 1,000 crore. The Uoi is set to emerge as the first institute of eminence in the state and aligns with Chief Minister N Chandrababu Naidu's aim to provide the state's youth with education in Artificial Intelligence (AI) and other emerging technologies. "We are committed to investing up to Rs 1,000 crores by GSV Ventures - US and other investors, the purpose is to create an institution that combines academic learning with industry relevance. The Uoi will help learners with the skills they might need in a constantly evolving job market, in an attempt to foster entrepreneurship and innovation," said PhysicsWallah founder and chief executive Alakh Pandey in a press release on Friday. The Uoi will work towards blending academic excellence, innovation, and research, focusing on addressing key challenges in education and employability. Following a hub and spoke model, the varsity will serve as a central hub with satellite centres across the southern state serving as spokes. Further, in a bid to keep the curriculum aligned with the market, PhysicsWallah is collaborating with industry partners like Amazon. Web Services India Pvt Ltd to provide industry-relevant education.



Health First: Rural Camp Highlights the Hidden Risks of Hypertension

Free Health Camp Organized by D.R. Jain Neurocare & Multi Specialty Hospital

Vatika Times Kurukshetra: D.R. Jain Neurocare & Multi Specialty Hospital organized a free general medical camp at Shri Bhagwan Parshuram Dharamshala in Sandhir village. Hospital Director and Brain & Spine Neurosurgeon Dr. Himanshu Jain addressed the issue of high blood pressure, calling it a “silent killer.”



He said that around 46% of people don't even know they have high blood pressure. Dr. Jain explained that symptoms such as headaches, dizziness, blurred vision, fatigue, chest pain, and nosebleeds often go unnoticed. He emphasized

that poor diet, high salt intake, junk food, alcohol, smoking, stress, obesity, lack of exercise, and inadequate sleep contribute to rising blood pressure levels. Managing these lifestyle factors through healthy eating, yoga,

meditation, and regular exercise can help control hypertension, he added. The health camp, led by Dr. Sanjay Sharma, was the hospital's 2001st free medical initiative. A total of 104 patients received free consultations, checkups, blood sugar

and hemoglobin tests, pulse checks, and medicines. Village Sarpanch Dharpal honored Dr. Jain, Dr. Rajesh Kumar, and Dr. Sanjay Sharma, saying that having expert doctors in the village was a blessing. He stressed the importance of health awareness and timely checkups for rural residents. Ram Kripalu Das of Tyagi Ashram arranged refreshments for the medical team. Volunteers who contributed included Avadh Bihari Das, Rakesh Sharma, Raj Krishan Sharma, Pardeep Sikri, Monica (Coordinator), Anju (GNM), Deepanshu Yadav, Riya, Parveen, Saurabh, Mohit, and Ajay.

Mango Day Magic : Kidzee School Kids Drenched in the Sweet Shades of Summer

Jasbir Singh Duggal Kurukshetra: Kidzee School, Kalyan Nagar, turned into a mango wonderland as the school celebrated Mango Day with immense joy and excitement. From Playway to Grade 5, every child participated enthusiastically, making the event a delightful burst of colors, smiles, and learning.

School Manager Mr. Aditya Vats shared that the little Nursery kids expressed their happiness by wearing bright yellow outfits, looking like tiny drops of sunshine. The KG students added charm to the celebration by reciting mango-themed poems, showcasing their talent with innocence and joy. Students from Grade 1 to 5 explored interesting facts about India's national fruit—the



mango. As part of the fun-filled day, the children learned how to cut and creatively decorate mangoes. They also tried their hands at making refreshing mango shakes and enjoyed sipping the sweet treats they made. The entire school echoed with laughter and the aroma of ripe mangoes, as students flaunted their yellow outfits with pride and cheer. School Principal Mrs. Ekjot Kaur said

that such activities are organized regularly to make learning joyful and engaging for children. She added that the children were also introduced to various types, colors, and flavors of mangoes, helping them appreciate the richness and variety of this much-loved fruit. The celebration was graced by the presence of all students and school staff, making Mango Day a truly memorable and flavorful experience for everyone.

Dhanwantari Jayanti Should Be Observed as National Ayurveda Day

Vatika Times Kurukshetra: Shri Krishna Ayurveda Welfare Association has opposed the AYUSH Ministry's proposal to celebrate National Ayurveda Day on September 23 each year. Association President Dr. Suresh Sharma said that traditionally, the day has been observed on Dhanwantari Jayanti, which falls on Trayodashi (two days before Diwali) and honors Lord Dhanwantari, the divine father of Ayurveda. He noted that September 23 is observed as Shaheed Diwas in Haryana, in memory of Raja Rao Tula Ram Singh and his brave Ahir soldiers who fought against the British in the 1857 revolt. He



stated that celebrating a joyous occasion like Ayurveda Day on a solemn day of remembrance is inappropriate. The Association has decided to write to the AYUSH Ministry, requesting that Dhanwantari Jayanti be reinstated as the official date. General Secretary Dr. Pankaj Kaushik emphasized that Dhanwantari Jayanti embodies the soul of Ayurveda and brings spiritual and cultural significance. He also pointed out that

September 23 is the death anniversary of Pandit Satyanarayan Shastri (1887–1969), a legendary Ayurvedic scholar and personal physician to India's first President, Dr. Rajender Parsad. Shastri was honored with the Padma Bhushan in 1954 for his contributions to Ayurveda. Dr. Sharma further urged the AYUSH Ministry to consult with Ayurvedic doctors and organizations before finalizing such decisions.

Health plan for 70+ may cost govt Rs 5k crore



Delhi: Indian estimates imply that providing health coverage to persons 70 and older, regardless of income, will cost the central exchequer Rs 4,000 crore or Rs 5,000 crore more. The government budgeted Rs 7500 for the Ayushman Bharat-PM Jan Aarogya Yojana (AB-PMJAY), which covers 12 crore poor and vulnerable families for Rs 5 lakhs in 2023-24. Expanding the policy to include those over 70 will likely add 3.5 to 4 crore beneficiaries, sources added. Between 5.5 and 6 crore persons in the country are 70 or older. Poor and vulnerable households make up 2 crore of them covered by AB-PMJAY. So, it's estimated that the actual number of beneficiaries to be included in the new plan, a poll promise made by the BJP and mentioned in the

President's address to parliament, will be around 3.5 to 4 crores. "The source added that the government was committed to fulfilling its promise and that the union budget 2024-25 may include the expansion of AB-PMJAY to include all senior citizens aged 70 and older. The National Health Authority (NHA), which implements AB-PMJAY, is preparing the scheme's growth mechanisms and budgetary ramifications. "Including persons 70 and older, regardless of income, is crucial to universal health coverage. An official claimed it will also evaluate the inclusion of the missing middle class. AB-PMJAY is supported 60:40 by the state and the centre. Some states are paying more because they expanded the system to include seniors.

Delhi has practically exhausted groundwater

Delhi: While Delhi is facing a water crisis and civic authorities endeavor to boost groundwater availability, the Central Ground Water Board (CGWB) reported that yearly recharge and groundwater for extraction had declined. The analysis anticipated Delhi's net annual groundwater recharge in at 0.38 billion cubic meters (bcm), 0.34 of which was accessible for extraction. Alarming, most groundwater has been removed. It means 99.1% of groundwater is extracted. The groundwater recharge was 0.41 bcm, with 0.37 bcm available for extraction and 0.36 bcm pulled out. The analysis showed Delhi's groundwater extraction rising from 98.16% in 2022 to 99.13% in 2023 despite a drop in recharging. While some places have made headway in maintaining safe groundwater levels, Delhi still struggles to properly manage its groundwater resources.



Jat Sabha to Address Hindu Marriage Act Amendment Seriously with Support of 36 Communities : Dr. Shyokand



Jasbir Singh Duggal Kurukshetra: A serious discussion on pressing social issues such as same-sex marriage, love marriages, same-gotra weddings, marriages in nearby villages, and live-in relationships was held today at Jat Dharamshala, Kurukshetra. The event witnessed participation from representatives of 41 khaps from Delhi, Haryana, Uttar Pradesh, and Rajasthan, along with chosen successors from every community of Haryana's 36 biradaris. Dr. Krishan Shyokand, President of the Dharamshala, stated that the Jat Sabha, with the collective support of all 36 communities, will take the issue of Hindu Marriage Act amendment seriously. A 21-member committee was formed during the 3-hour-long meeting. This committee will soon convene again to expand its structure and engage with the Chief Minister of Haryana, Prime Minister of India, Governor of Haryana, President of India, and the Hon'ble Supreme Court to seek permanent solutions on these matters. Master Jitender, founder of Jan Sahayog Sanstha, informed that a blood donation camp was also organized in collaboration with Jat Dharamshala Kurukshetra, Swatantra Group Seva Samiti, Jat Employees Association, and Jan Sahayog Kurukshetra. A total of 87 donors registered, and 78 blood units were collected. Dr. Shyokand also announced that the International Jat Sabha will soon renovate the Dharamshala to promote tourism and offer better facilities to visitors from across the country. The organization will also conduct regular blood donation drives, health camps, and awareness programs in collaboration with the Kurukshetra district administration. In the education sector, the Dharamshala aims to support meritorious students by providing free coaching facilities. Prominent attendees included Raghubir Nain, Sanjay Deshwal, Gurnam Saharan, Ashok Malik, Jagmat Hooda, and many others from various khaps and social organizations.

Links of Espionage for Pakistan Now Emerge from Kurukshetra Too

Jasbir Singh Duggal Kurukshetra: In a major development, an employee of the Haryana Sikh Gurdwara Management Committee (HSGMC) has been detained by the Special Task Force (STF) on suspicion of spying for Pakistan. The late-night operation on Saturday was captured on video, which has now surfaced. In the footage, plainclothes policemen can be seen escorting the youth, with two other individuals walking behind them. According to sources, the STF team from



Hisar apprehended Harkirat Singh at around 8:30 PM on Saturday night from outside his residence. This incident suggests that the web of espionage for Pakistan may now extend to the religious city of Kurukshetra. The detained youth, Harkirat Singh, is associated with the IT wing of the HSGMC and also serves as a supervisor in the travel department.

Kritika Tops Jai Bharati Vidya Mandir with 94.6% Marks

Jasbir Singh Duggal Kurukshetra: Jai Bharati Vidya Mandir once again achieved a 100% result in the Haryana Board Class 10 examinations this year. School Director Om Gopal Sharma shared that a total of 35 students appeared for the board exam. Among them, Kritika secured the first position in the school with 94.6%, followed by Devki with 92.6% and Sneha with 90.4%, securing the second and third positions respectively. Out of the 35 students, 16 students including Kritika, Devki, Sneha, Mahak, Rashmi, Prachi,



Neha, Aarti, Devika, Pratishtha, Divesh, Harshit, Neeraj, Pratigya, Veeru, and Preeti made it to the merit list. The remaining students passed with first division

marks, performing exceptionally well. Principal Neha Sharma congratulated both students and teachers by distributing sweets and encouraged all students to keep working hard to

achieve success. During the celebration, sweets were distributed among all the students, who joyfully shared them with one another to express their happiness.

Govt reduces vehicle threshold to widen NHs to 4, 6 & 8 lanes

NEW DELHI: Government will undertake the expansion of 25,000 km of two-lane highways to four lanes, involving an investment of Rs 10 lakh crore over the next two years, said road transport minister Nitin Gadkari in the Lok Sabha on Thursday. He also announced the decision to reduce the traffic threshold of NH stretches to qualify for expansion to four, six and eight lanes. Replying to a question on multi-laning of NHs, Gadkari said two-lane stretches carrying more than 12,000 passenger car units (PCUs) per day will qualify to be expanded to four-lane roads, which was earlier 12,500 PCUs. Four-lane highways that breach the 20,000 PCUs per day limit will qualify for six-laning and those with more than 30,000 will be widened to eight lanes.PCUs is a metric used to measure the impact of different vehicles on traffic flow, converting heterogeneous traffic into a standardised, homogeneous stream for analysis and planning. While a standard passenger car is



typically assigned a PCU value of 1, a heavy truck might have a PCU value of 2-4. Sources the official decision on the revised eligibility criteria for NH expansion will be out soon for planning of the next phase of highway development. Gadkari said govt has prepared the detailed project reports (DPRs) of 3,500 km two-lane highways for expansion to four lanes and preparation of DPRs for another 21,500 will start soon.This gains importance considering govt's increased thrust on building wider highways that can meet the projected traffic demand. In the past 11 years, the length of 4-lane highways has been increased by 163%.

Foodgrain output set to scale new peak in 2025

NEW DELHI: India is poised to achieve new heights in foodgrain production in 2025, driven by favourable monsoon, though significant challenges persist in pulses and oilseeds production as the country's agricultural sector shows signs of robust recovery. The Agriculture Ministry's initial projections paint an optimistic picture, with kharif (summer) foodgrain production estimated at a record 164.7 million tonnes.

Concept of family eroding, country on brink of 'one person, one family'

NEW DELHI: Expressing concern over the erosion of family values, with children and parents litigating in court over maintenance and ownership of property, the Supreme Court on Thursday said that the country was on the brink of following a 'one person, one family' concept. It also held that parents could be allowed to evict children from their self-acquired property only if it was necessary to ensure their (parent) protection."In India, we believe in Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam i.e. the earth, as a whole, is one family. However, today we are not even able to retain unity in the immediate family... The very concept



of 'family' is being eroded and we are on the brink of 'one person, one family'," a bench of Justices Pankaj Mithal and S N Bhatti said while adjudicating a property dispute between a man and his parents who had sought his eviction from their house. The court said Maintenance and Welfare of Parents and Senior Citizens Act does not talk about evic-

tion but it could be done if it was necessary and expedient to ensure protection of senior citizens. The court set aside an order of an appellate tribunal under the Act which had directed eviction of a man from the premises of his parent's house as sought by them. SC noted that the man was taking care of his parents and was providing them.

LG hands over job letter to sister of bus conductor killed in terror attack

JAMMU: Jammu and Kashmir lieutenant governor Manoj Sinha on handed over a job appointment letter to the sister of a bus conductor killed in a terror attack on the bus carrying pilgrims in Reasi on June 9 last year. Sinha also



assured all possible assistance to the bereaved family of slain Arjun Sharma. Besides Sharma, the

bus driver and seven pilgrims were killed and 41 injured in the terror attack on the bus returning from Shiv Khori cave to Katra. The terrorists kept on firing on the pilgrims even after the bus plunged into a deep gorge.

Two-day long Sanawar Military Literature Festival kicks off

Ludhiana: The two-day Sanawar Military Literature Festival commenced at The Lawrence School, Sanawar, celebrating courage, legacy, and gender inclusion in the armed forces. The event brought together military veterans, authors, historians, and students to explore the impact of military literature on society and national identity. In his address, Headmaster Himmat Singh Dhillion highlighted Sanawar's 178-year legacy in shaping brave individuals who served in both British and Indian armies. A key session focused on "The Role and Legacy of Women in the Armed Forces," featuring inspiring voices like Major Priya Jhingan, Squadron Leader Phagun Rishi, and



author Ambreen Zaidi, who emphasized inclusion, resilience, and the silent sacrifices of military families. The "OS War Heroes Samvad" session paid tribute to Sanawar's alumni, with veterans like Brigadier Pradeep Sharma and Captain Dilsher Singh

Randhawa sharing powerful battlefield stories. Another session, "The Clarion Call," featured tales of bravery and discipline by senior officers, leaving students deeply inspired. The festival continues with inter-school events, including the Basantar Memorial English

Declamation and a poetry contest. It will conclude with the unveiling of The Lawrence School, Sanawar—Military Heritage, 1847–2024, a coffee table book by Lt. Gen. Mohit Wadhwa, celebrating the school's historic military legacy.

Cabinet likely to approve new 120-km Patna-Sasaram highway

NEW DELHI: The Cabinet on is likely to approve a new 120-km greenfield highway from Patna to Sasaram in poll-bound Bihar. The four-lane access-controlled highway project would cost around Rs 3,700 crore. Officials said the National Highways Authority of India (NHA) had started preparatory work more than a year ago on this key project, which will improve connectivity between Patna, Ara and Sasaram. The new highway will be built in the public private partnership mode and



would be completed in three years from the date of start of construction. has learnt that the land acquisition work is almost complete and the project would be bid out soon after Cabinet approval. The new highway will improve connectivity from Patna to Varanasi and Lucknow as well.

Sources said the govt is likely to roll out several highway, railway and other infrastructure projects in the state, where assembly election is scheduled later this year. The BJP-led NDA would focus on winning the confidence of voters by expediting development projects. The govt in the 2024-25 full Budget.

Film pulled in India as edits requested would lose essence of film

LONDON: The BAFTA and Oscar-nominated gritty, poignant movie "Santosh", which explores misogyny, caste bigotry, systemic corruption and Islamophobia in rural north India, will not be screened at all in India in the foreseeable future. Good Chaos, the UK producers of Santosh, told in a statement: "The Central Board of Film Certification of India saw 'Santosh' and asked that the filmmaker make considerable edits, which the team felt were impossible while retaining the essence of the film. Therefore there will be no theatrical release for the film in India in the foreseeable future." Shahani Goswami, daughter of economist and journalist Omkar Goswami, the lead actress in the movie, told on Thursday she was very disappointed the movie would not



be shown in India.Goswami plays Santosh, whose policeman husband was killed in a riot and she applies for and gets his position as a compassionate appointment. Soon she finds herself dealing with the case of a young Dalit girl who has been raped and murdered and has to learn how to survive in a patriarchal police force.Goswami said: "I can only add that it's really sad that a film that is about an aspect of our world, our reality, cannot be seen by the large cross-section of our people, despite the great response

we've had whenever it's shown in festivals in India. It's a film that would have and could have done well at the theatre, but given the circumstances, it now is not possible. So that's very disheartening. And everyone I know seems to be very disappointed with this situation as it's been a film that so many people have waited to watch here in India." The Hindi-language feature had its South Asia premiere at the MAMI Mumbai Film Festival 2024, where it screened in the South Asia competition section.

SC to hear plea seeking FIR into cash discovery at Justice Varma's residence

NEW DELHI: The Supreme Court is slated to hear on a plea seeking a direction to Delhi Police to lodge an FIR over the alleged discovery of semi-burnt stash of cash from the official residence of high court judge Yashwant Varma. According to the SC's cause list for Friday, a bench of Justices Abhay S Oka and Ujjal Bhuyan is scheduled to hear the matter. A bench headed by Chief Justice Sanjiv Khanna on Wednesday had refused urgent hearing after lawyer Mathews J Nedumpara mentioned the plea. The plea was filed by Nedumpara and three others on Sunday seeking a direction to police to lodge an FIR in the matter. The plea also challenges the 1991 judgement in the K Veeraswami case, in which the top court



ruled that no criminal proceedings could be initiated against a judge of the high court or the top court without the prior nod of the Chief Justice of India.The alleged cash discovery happened following a fire at Varma's Lutyens Delhi residence at around 11.35 pm on March 14, prompting the fire officers to rush to the spot.On Tuesday, the three members of a Supreme Court-appointed in-house committee visited the residence of Justice Varma, commencing its inquiry in the matter. In the wake of the con-

troversy, the apex court Collegium recommended the repatriation of Justice Varma to his parent Allahabad High Court. He was already de-rostered by the Delhi High Court following a directive from the CJI. On March 22, the CJI constituted the three-member committee to conduct an in-house inquiry into allegations and decided to upload on the SC website the inquiry report of Chief Justice D K Upadhyaya of the Delhi High Court. It included photos and videos of the alleged discovery of a huge stash of cash.

Authorities bar night-long prayers at Srinagar's Jamia Masjid

SRINAGAR: Kashmir's chief priest Mirwaiz Umar Farooq and PDP president Mehbooba Mufti on condemned the administration's decision to disallow night-long Shab-e-Qadr prayers at Jamia Masjid in Srinagar. In a post on X, the Mirwaiz said the authorities had conveyed to the mosque management committee that the masjid would be closed to the people for the Laila-tul-Qadar prayers on the intervening night of Thursday and Friday. "It is extremely regrettable and condemnable that the insensitivity of those in power will deprive tens of thousands of Muslims, who for generations visit Jamia Masjid on this night, of spiritual solace and worship, causing them and me great grief and dismay," the Mirwaiz said. "Preventing people from offering prayers at the Jamia Masjid on this holy night is deeply painful," he added.Mehbooba said the decision belied claims of normalcy in Kashmir. "The shutdown of Jamia Masjid on the sacred night of Laila-tul-Qadr represents another example of collective punishment imposed on Kashmiris. The govt which claims & celebrates that it has eradicated separatism persists in viewing every Kashmiri as a potential separatist. Their false narrative of having restored total normalcy is exposed when a historic mosque is closed off to worshippers on a night so deeply cherished .



On two years, Indian firms will invest 11-15% on smart tech



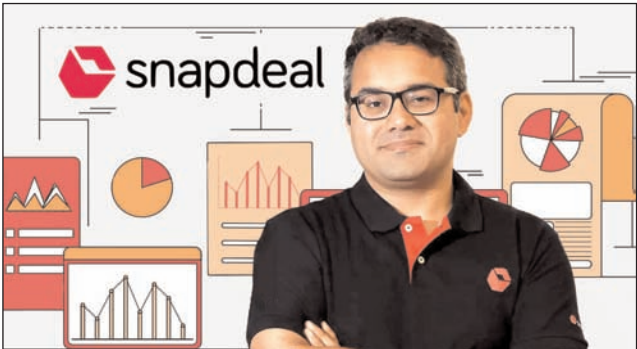
Delhi: According to a Confederation of Indian Industry Manufacturing Competitiveness Study, most manufacturers recognize technology adoption as a key driver of profitability and competitiveness, although many invest less than 10% of their budgets. In the next two years, the report expects increasing investment in IoT, robots, and Big Data, aiming 11-15% of budgets. It stated high prices, unclear ROI, and legacy system integration remain challenges for SMEs. The research also stresses the importance of work-

force upskilling to close the skills gap and facilitate advanced technology adoption. Manufacturing Competitiveness Study by the Confederation of Indian Industry (CII) examined how smart technologies have transformed India's manufacturing sector. The research, 'Smart Manufacturing: Unlocking India's Potential,' emphasizes the sector's digital revolution and its importance in achieving the ambitious goal of 25% manufacturing GDP share in the near future. The report shows how IoT, AI, ML, robotics,

and automation are transforming manufacturing, boosting efficiency, innovation, and global competitiveness. Semiconductors, Aerospace, and Automotive are leading the way in implementing these technologies, while Textiles and Food Processing are gradually digitizing. To overcome these barriers, the study suggests public-private partnerships to establish shared technology hubs, technology budget increases, industry-academia collaboration, and supportive policies to promote smart manufacturing.

FY24 Snapdeal loss drops to Rs 160 crore

Snapdeal's FY24 loss was Rs 160.38 crore, down from Rs 282.20 crore in FY23. Snapdeal snapdeal Additionally, the company's FY24 EBITDA loss fell 88% to Rs 16 crore. That was Rs 144 crore in FY23. The company's loss decreased due to lower expenses. The company spent Rs 540.76 crore in FY24. FY23: Rs 687.93 crore. The company spent Rs 158.4 crore on employee benefits in FY24, down 48.5% YoY. FY23: Rs 307.53 crore. The company's advertising spending fell 23.5% YoY to Rs 70.37 crore. Snapdeal's operational income rose 2.1% to Rs 379.76 crore in FY24 from Rs 371.96 crore in FY23. The company's major income source is market services at Rs 252.55 crore. YoY, it fell 9.6% from FY23. The company's FY24 enablement income rose 14.8% to Rs 103.36 million. The company's other income rose 8 times to Rs 23.85 crore last year. Snapdeal cut its Unicommerce investment, per the stock exchange filing. The



Adani Defence & Aerospace buys Air Works for Rs 400 crore

Delhi: Ahmedabad Adani Defence & Aerospace reached a binding agreement to acquire Air Works, India's largest private-sector MRO company, 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 air-

craft 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. "The acquisition enhances the Adani Group's capabilities in the defence MRO sector, solidifying its position in India's airborne defence ecosystem," it added. It said that this strategic

company raised Rs 33 crore from the secondary sale of 3.4% stake in May-June 2024 before the IPO and Rs 81 crore from the August 2024 IPO offer for sale of 9.2% equity. A significant Indian e-commerce platform is Snapdeal. Snapdeal, founded in 2010, serves over 10 crore Indian value shoppers online.

Food storage expansion in NE states approved by government

Delhi: Union Minister of Consumer Affairs, Food and Public Distribution, and New and Renewable Energy Pralhad Joshi stressed the need to strengthen Centrally-sponsored scheme execution. The Union minister met with Tripura Chief Minister Dr. Manik Saha and approved the state



g o v e r n - m e n t ' s p r o p o s a l t o o p e n a F o o d C o r p o r a t i o n o f I n d i a (F C I) r e g i o n a l o f f i c e i n A g a r t a l a . H e a l s o r e v i e w e d t h e i m p l e m e n t a t i o n o f C e n t r a l l y - s p o n s o r e d s c h e m e s l i k e P r a d h a n M a n t r i S u r y a G h a r M u f t B i j l i Y o j a n a a n d P M K i s a n U r j a S u r a k s h a e v a m U t t h a n M a h a b h i y a n . A P r i v a t e E n t r e p r e n e u r s G u a r a n t e e (P E G) p r o j e c t w a s a p p r o v e d b y t h e I n d i a n g o v e r n m e n t t o i n c r e a s e s t o r a g e s p a c e i n t h e N o r t h e a s t . T h i s p r o j e c t w i l l t r i p l e F C I ' s s t o r a g e c a p a c i t y i n T r i p u r a b y b u i l d i n g 7 0 , 0 0 0 M T i n t w o y e a r s , s a i d t h e m i n i s t e r . J o s h i r e v i e w e d a T r i p u r a R e n e w a b l e E n e r g y D e v e l o p m e n t A g e n c y p r o j e c t i n C h a r i l a m , S e p a h i j a l a . T h e m i n i s t e r s t a t e d t h e c o u n t r y g e n e r a t e d 2 1 4 G W o f r e n e w a b l e e n e r g y a n d a i m s t o r e a c h 5 0 0 G W b y 2 0 3 0 . T r i p u r a a d v a n c e d i n r e n e w a b l e e n e r g y . B e f o r e 2 0 1 8 , 2 . 5 M W o f s t a t e e l e c t r i c i t y c a m e f r o m s o l a r . I n t h e l a s t 6 . 5 y e a r s o f B J P c o n t r o l , r e n e w a b l e e l e c t r i c i t y g e n e r a t i o n r e a c h e d 2 0 . 5 M W , c l a i m e d t h e m i n i s t e r .

Indian mutual fund women investors gain 2.5 times

Delhi: A survey found that women investors in the Indian mutual fund (MF) business, notably from smaller cities and villages, had expanded more than 2.5 times year-on-year amid the stock market boom. Research shows that women's financial inclusion is rising in urban and emerging regions, with tier 4 cities seeing over 140% growth in MF participation. We had excellent growth across all segments in 2024, but two stood out. Number of women investors doubled this year. And the number of portfolios over 1 crore doubled this year," Metro, tier 1, 2, and 3 cities had over 100% growth in women's MF participation. Women MF investors are most prevalent in Delhi, Mumbai, Kolkata (Metro) and Pune, Lucknow, Nagpur, Ahmedabad,



“ Women's SIP contributions are 25% higher than men's, and female SIP investors now make up one in four ”

and Jaipur (Non-Metro). "Women's SIP contributions are 25% higher than men's, and female SIP investors now make up one in four (compared to one in five last year)," the data stated. SIP contributions aver-

age Rs 2,500 per month, demonstrating a concentration on long-term wealth. 50 percent of women SIP investors are under 30, 33 percent are 30-40, and 17 percent are 40 or beyond.

Naidu takes a step back, says no action can be taken until concrete proof

Delhi: More than a month after pledging action regarding US bribery allegations involving the Adani Group and the previous Y S Jaganmohan Reddy government, Andhra Pradesh Chief Minister N Chandrababu Naidu has now adopted a cautious stance, stating that action requires substantial evidence and awaits the US case outcome. "We can't back out of contracts unless concrete proof is available. We will have to pay a stiff penalty.

E-Shram worker registrations reach 30 crore, NCS portal adds 3.89 crore jobs

Delhi: Unorganized labor gained access to social sector initiatives through the eShram site. Registrations averaged 60,000 a day in October, climbing rapidly. Twelve social security/welfare schemes are connected and mapped using eShram. ONORC, IGNDPS, IGN-WPS, NFBS, and MGN-REGA are among these. The integration of other schemes with eShram will continue in phases. The Ministry of Labour and Employment stated the platform lets agencies



verify workers' eligibility, ensure scheme saturation, and target potential beneficiaries at State and District levels using eShram data. To target welfare scheme delivery and saturation to workers, eShram shares registrant details with all

states/union territories. The National Career Service (NCS) is now a 'one stop platform' for career services like private and government jobs, online and offline job fairs, skill/training programs, and more.

Life microinsurance premium in India exceeds Rs 10,000 crore

Delhi: India's life insurance micro-insurance premiums topped Rs 10,000 crore for the first time in FY24, according to industry data. Microinsurance aids low-income people with affordable items. The Insurance Regulatory and Development Authority of India (IRDAI) reported that life insurance's micro-insurance segment's new business premium (NBP) rose 23.5% to Rs 10,860.39 crore in FY24. Individual NBP fell 23.78% to Rs 152.57 crore, while group NBP rose 24.61% to Rs 10,707.82 crore. IRDAI reported 102,000 micro-insurance agents in FY24. About 19,166 are public-sector life insurers and the rest private.

The research showed that 4.49% of micro-insurance agents are NGOs, 0.25 percent self-help groups, 0.24 percent microfinance institutions,



0.12 percent business correspondents, and others 94.90%. Over 21 lakh people have received life insurance through the Pradhan Mantri Jeevan Jyoti Bima Yojana (PMJJBY). PMJJBY term life insurance was launched in May 2015. This policy pays Rs 2 lakh to the insured's family in the event of death. The scheme enrolled 21.67 crore by October 20. The total claims were 860,575, totaling Rs 17,211.50. India's insurance market expanded 11% annually to \$130 billion in FY2020-23, outpacing China and Thailand, which grew less than 5%.

Adani Group exits Wilmar JV for \$2bn

Delhi: For \$2 billion, Gautam Adani's Ahmedabad-based conglomerate is selling Adani Wilmar, its staples business, to Wilmar International of Singapore to raise funds. This fund inflow should meet the group's infrastructure business liquidity needs. Adani Enterprises and Adani Commodities own 44% of Adani Wilmar, which owns Fortune sunflower oil and Kohinoor basmati rice. Wilmar would buy 31% at Rs 305 per share of the group's 44%, boosting its holding to 75% in Mumbai-listed Adani Wilmar. Wilmar will buy the chunk at \$1.4 billion, down 7.2% from Monday's close. Indian regulations limit promoters' equity to 75% and require public shareholders to own 25%. Along with 12% public ownership, the remaining 13% interest will be offered for sale. This ends the group's 25-year staples presence. Following the transaction, the company will be called AWL, AWL Agri Business, or Fortune Agri Business. The transaction comes one month after US prosecutors accused Gautam Adani of securities and wire fraud for a \$265 million Indian power contract bribery scam, which the group denied. The sale of Adani Wilmar will boost the group's primary infrastructure.



'Conspiracy under Islamic Jihad': Bajrang Dal storms Haridwar college

NEW DELHI: Bajrang Dal on stormed the Rishikul Ayurvedic College in Haridwar protesting against party organised by some Muslim students on the campus. The saffron outfit alleged a conspiracy being hatched in the "religious city" under "Islamic Jihad." The college administration is investigating the matter.

"A conspiracy is being hatched in the religious city under Islamic Jihad. If the management does not initiate steps for the expulsion of the guilty students within three days, then the Bajrang Dal will be



forced to escalate the protest," Bajrang Dal office bearer Amit Kumar said. Kumar claimed that the party was deliberately organized in the "Hindu religious city" as part of a conspiracy to bring outsiders onto the college campus. He claimed that municipal corporation bylaws already pro-

hibit non-Hindus from organizing such events in the Haridwar area. "Rishikul Ayurvedic College has historical importance. This medical college was established under R i s h i k u l Vidyapeeth, established by Pandit Mahamana Madan Mohan Malviya. Students from all over the country

come here to get medical education," he said. The college director DC Singh said that he had received a complaint about students organizing a party on campus without administrative approval. "Some students had brought food items there. We went and stopped the party," he said.

Why Trump supporters are going crazy about Sriram Krishnan

The appointment of Sriram Krishnan as a Senior Policy Advisor for Artificial Intelligence in the White House has ignited a heated debate among political factions, particularly in the Trump-supporting Make America Great Again (MAGA) base. The uproar, which combines critiques of Krishnan's policies, broader immigration reform, and allegations of betrayal of conservative ideals, underscores the tension between nationalism and pragmatism in a globalized economy. This piece explores the key issues fueling the controversy. Trump's Surprising Appointment of Sriram Krishnan In a move that caught many by surprise, former President Donald Trump appointed tech entrepreneur Sriram Krishnan as a special envoy to advance US policy on artificial intelligence (AI). Krishnan's background as a prominent figure in Silicon



Valley, with extensive experience at leading tech companies, was seen by some as a strategic decision to bolster America's leadership in AI. However, the appointment quickly became a flashpoint for controversy. Critics from the far-right, particularly those aligned with MAGA ideologies, viewed Krishnan as a symbol of Silicon Valley elitism and a proponent of immigration policies that they claim disadvantage American workers. Trump, long associated with a tough stance on immigration, faced accusations of hypocrisy for aligning with a figure perceived to represent globalist ideals.

US gay couple get 100 years in prison for raping adopted sons

A gay couple from Georgia, William Zullo, 34 and Zachary Zullo, 36, were sentenced to 100 years imprisonment without the possibility of parole for committing sexual offences against their adopted sons, according to the Walton County District Attorney's office. "These two Defendants truly created a house of horrors and put their extremely dark desires above every-

Suriname ex-dictator and fugitive Desi Bouterse dead at 79

PARAMARIABO: Desi Bouterse, the former dictator and later elected president of Suriname, who became a fugitive of justice for the killing of political opponents, has died at 79, the government said Wednesday. Still popular with the poor and working class of the South American nation, Bouterse, who died Tuesday, rose to power after a 1980 coup as a young sergeant major in the army. He stepped down in 1987 under international pressure in the wake of political violence he was accused of orchestrating. He returned to power in



1990 after a second coup, this time without bloodshed. Bouterse left a year later, then was elected president of the former Dutch colony in 2010 and ruled for a decade. Current President Chan Santokhi offered condolences to Bouterse's loved ones and urged people to "maintain calm." He said citizens were awaiting "more detailed and

definitive information from official channels" on the late leader's passing. Rumors began to spread around midnight about the former strongman's sudden death after a short illness at his hideout. His body was transferred by unknown people to his residence in the capital Paramaribo, where his family and National Democratic Party (NDP) supporters gathered early Christmas Day to bid farewell. Doctor Rabindernath Khoenkhoen, speaking to reporters, did not provide details on the cause of death.

France President names 2024's fourth government amid political turmoil

French President Emmanuel Macron appointed a new government, led by Prime Minister Francois Bayrou. This is Macron's sixth prime minister since taking office and his fourth this year. The new government is said to be aimed at

addressing France's political and economic challenges. It includes figures from the center and right, but no members of the left-wing New Popular Front. Elisabeth, a former prime minister, will serve as education minister. Manuel Valls,

another former prime minister, returns to government as overseas territories minister. Gerald Darmanin, the former interior minister, is the new justice minister. Sebastien Lecornu will stay as defense minister and Jean-Noel continues as foreign minister.

Maniac stabs woman in NYC subway; victim says no one came to her help

In another frenzied attack in the subway, a woman was stabbed by a maniac at Grand Central Terminal on Christmas Eve and the victim said no one helped her when the attacker plunged the knife into her throat. 26-year-old Imani-Ciara Pizzaro was face-timing when she was attacked by the suspect, identified as 28-year-old Brooklyn native Jason Sargeant. "What's your problem?" the attacker said as he cut her throat with a small knife before kicking his phone away. "I ran for help, there was no police" The victim said her fellow passengers just froze after the attack and police



were seen nowhere in sight. "I wish there were cops in Grand Central when I was attacked, there were none. I was running for help and there was no one there. There are usually cops in four different spots and I ran to each one of them but none were there," the victim said to New York Post. No one called 911, the woman revealed adding that it was her neighbor with whom she

US welcomes poll plan by Bangladesh

DHAKA: The US welcomed the Bangladesh interim govt's announcement regarding the next national elections and said it would advocate for "free and fair" polls conducted in a "peaceful" manner. "So, we appreciate the steps that have been taken by the interim govt to prepare for elections that will ultimately allow the Bangladeshi people to choose their own govt representatives," said US principal deputy spokesperson Vedant Patel while responding to a question during a regular briefing at the US state department on Dec 18.

was Facetiming when the attack took place who called 911. A 42-year-old man was slashed in the wrist and the attacker then ran further into Grand Central towards the central ticket booth yelling "I hate all of you". Pizarro recounted her harrowing experience of finding no help in the station and then getting out of the station and reaching the Roosevelt Hotel where she was treated. After Pizzaro was stabbed, witnesses pointed out Sargeant to MTA police within the station. He was arrested and the weapon was recovered. Sargeant has three prior arrests for criminal mischief, fare beating, and assaulting.

Luigi Mangione sleeping on a 2-inch thick mattress in jail, no pillow: Report

A prison consultant revealed how Luigi Mangione's Christmas is going in jail. Prison consultant Sam Mangel who is working with other inmates at the Metropolitan Detention Center revealed that Luigi Mangione is sleeping on a mattress that's 2 inches thick at best and has no separate pillow. The mattress has a little bump in the end for a pillow, the consultant told People. He is not working with Mangione but his revelations are based on what generally happens to other prisoners. For example,



Mangel revealed that Mangione's Christmas meal must have been green beans and a meal of Cornish hen. Mangel said depending on which section Mangion has been housed in, he could either be entirely alone or have some form of company. It was not known whether Mangione was removed from protective custody where

inmates are initially taken for monitoring purposes. Mangel revealed that if he is in protective custody, he will be alone in his cell on Christmas day with his food being provided to him through a sliding window. High-profile units like Diddy and Bankman-Fried have provision for an hour-long visit from family members on Christmas Day. "While you're allowed to hug the person when they come in, you can't be next to them, you have to face them [when seated]," Mangel says. Inmates in this section are typically given a holiday bag.

Pak minister defends military trial of civilians

ISLAMABAD: A Pakistani minister on Wednesday defended the military trial of civilians, saying that such courts were competent to deal with the cases related to attacks on army facilities. Information minister Attaullah Tarar also urged the opposition Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) led by Imran Khan to refrain from politicising or disputing the issue of military trials. "When an attack is carried out on a defence institution or its property is set ablaze, it becomes the responsibility of the relevant authorities to apprehend the culprits. Just as railway police handle crimes on railway premises, military courts address offences targeting military assets. So, when attacks on military assets occur, the Military Act is enforced," he said



while addressing a press conference. Tarar criticised Khan's party for using military courts as a political tool, aiming to create controversy around them. He clarified that military courts only handle cases involving attacks on defence establishments, citing incidents such as the attack on the Corps Commander's House in Lahore. The minister also criticised the PTI for changing its stance regarding trials of civilians in the military courts, recalling that during Khan's tenure, military court trials were praised.

Why was Harry left red-faced over Meghan actions in docu-series?

Prince Harry was reportedly left "red-faced" with anger over Meghan Markle's reenactment of her first curtsy to the late Queen Elizabeth II in a viral clip from their Netflix docuseries, a body language expert claimed. The series, titled Harry & Meghan, featured Markle recounting the meeting with the late monarch, which took place at the Royal Lodge in Windsor.

"The statements praising the military courts

Kabul claims Pak airstrikes killed 46 civilians in Afghanistan

ISLAMABAD: The interim Afghan Taliban govt claimed on Wednesday that 46 people, mostly women and children, were killed in airstrikes by Pakistani fighter jets on civilians in eastern Afghanistan late Tuesday night. Pakistani security officials said the airstrikes took place in Murgha and Laman areas of Barmal district, in Afghanistan's eastern Paktika province near Pakistan's volatile South Waziristan tribal district, on alleged camps of the banned Tehreek-i-Taliban Pakistan (TTP). This has been the fourth time in the past few years that Pakistan has conducted airstrikes inside Afghanistan, and the second time since March 2024. "Last night (Tuesday), Pakistan bombarded four points in Barmal district of Paktika



"The Pakistani side should understand that such arbitrary measures are not a solution to any problem," Enayatullah Khowarazami. "

province. The total number of dead is 46, most of whom were children and women," said Zabihullah Mujahid, spokesperson for the Afghan Taliban govt. He added that six others, mostly children, were wounded. Condemning the airstrikes, the Afghan defence ministry called them "barbaric" and a clear "aggression". It stated that several

refugees, including women and children, were killed and injured. "The Pakistani side should understand that such arbitrary measures are not a solution to any problem," Enayatullah Khowarazami, spokesperson for Afghanistan's defence ministry, wrote on social media platform 'X'. "The Islamic Emirate.

Amid H-1B row, David Sacks' crucial reminder to MAGA; Elon Musk reacts

David Sacks who will be working with Sriram Krishnan on artificial intelligence on the part of the incoming Donald Trump administration issued a reminder to the MAGA exponents amid the ongoing H-1B row. Sacks



reminded that in 2022, it was the same Krishnan, Sacks and Elon Musk who were working toward restoring the then-Twitter (now X) accounts of the MAGA people. "Many were grateful at the time," David Sacks wrote targeting Laura Loomer who has been at the center of this new flashpoint over Indian immigrants in the US and the H-1B. "Since people are digging up old tweets, here's one of @sriramk working with me and @elonmusk to restore free speech on Twitter and get MAGA their accounts back. Many were grateful at the time. Merry Christmas and Happy Hanukkah!" David Sacks wrote. Elon Musk reacted to it saying 'good times' as he has been supporting Krishnan's call to remove the country caps for green cards.

What is the H-1B row and how are David Sacks, Krishnan and Laura Loomer part of it?

Sriram Krishnan recently suggested to Elon Musk that anything to remove country caps for green cards would be huge. This was before his nomination for the AI role. MAGA activist Laura Loomer called out Sriram Krishnan for undermining America First and opening jobs for more Indians by removing the cap on H-1B. David Sacks clarified that Sriram did not say he wanted to remove all caps on green cards. "He said he wants to remove "country" caps on green cards. Right now, every country in the world gets allocated the same number of green cards, no matter how many qualified applicants it has.

12 years after life term, SC acquits Tamil Nadu man of burning wife to death

NEW DELHI: Twelve years after being convicted and sentenced to life imprisonment for allegedly burning his wife to death in Tamil Nadu, apex court has acquitted the man after noting that there was inconsistency in dying declarations of the deceased and also there was no other evidence to prove his culpability. A bench of Justices Sudhanshu Dhulia and Ahsanuddin Amanullah said that conviction could not happen if there were major contradictions in the dying declaration of the deceased and there was no other substantial evidence against the accused. "If a dying declaration is surrounded by doubt or there are inconsistent dying declarations by the deceased, then courts must look for corroborative evidence to find out which dying declaration is to be believed. This will depend upon the facts of the case and courts are



required to act cautiously in such cases. The matter at hand is one such case. In the present case, the deceased had given two statements which are totally different from her subsequent statements including the statement made before judicial magistrate, which has been considered a dying declaration based on which the appellant has been convicted," the bench said. In this case, the deceased, in her first statement did not blame her husband and said she caught fire while cooking but later on told the magistrate that her husband had poured kerosene on her and set her on fire. After examining state-

Gold's relevance as asset class to rise: CEA

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

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

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

ernment to give benefits directly by cutting out middlemen at the 49th Civil Accounts Day festivities. It was said "Everything is direct payment, so no middlemen, no unborn children getting allowances." All recipients have their funds deposited into accounts that have been biometrically verified. Out of the 1200 national and state schemes, DBT is in charge of 1100. By going digital, PFMS has made all financial transactions more transparent and efficient, doing away with

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

EU, India will sign FTA by year-end

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

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

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

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

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



When oil prices drop every month, US stocks go up

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



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

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

Manufacturing activity slows to a 14-month low in February

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

Keep existing FY interest rate at 8.25%: EPFO board

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



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

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

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

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

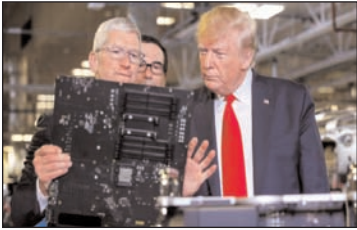


NGT requests DPCC report after plea says unlawful dyeing units continue.

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

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

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



pany's current activity is unclear. The amount includes

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

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

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

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

breached his fiduciary duty as director of Byju's Alpha, according to the court. The court's clear recognition that Riju Ravindran, Camshaft, and Byju's engaged in a worldwide fraud including the theft of \$533 million is something we are grateful for. In a statement, the lenders hailed this as a major victory in their fight to reclaim the stolen assets that properly belong to them. Byju successfully obtained a \$1.2 billion

five-year term loan from Glas Trust through the establishment of his Alpha special purpose financial organization. Having defaulted on its loans , Byju's Alpha was placed under trusteeship in March 2023. A group of 37 banks and other lending organizations gave Byju \$1.2 billion. Byju's Alpha's limited partnership interest in Camshaft Capital was transferred to William Morton's hedge fund, Camshaft Capital Fund.

Mittal's \$976 million Airtel stake sale

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

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