



Inspiration: Late. Dr. L.C. Wallia

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Indian in Space: A 41-year wait that won't repeat

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NEW DELHI:

After a 41-year gap, India celebrates Group Captain Shubhanshu Shukla as its second astronaut, following Rakesh Sharma's 1984 mission. Shukla's flight signifies India's growing ambition in space exploration, closely tied to the Gaganyaan program. ISRO is developing indigenous technologies for crew safety and astronaut training, aiming for self-reliance in future missions. Indian in Space: A 41-year wait that won't repeat Rakesh Sharma (left) and Shubhanshu Shukla When Wing Commander (ret'd) Rakesh Sharma soared into space aboard a Soviet spacecraft in April 1984, Group Captain Shubhanshu Shukla wasn't even born. It would be another year-and-a-half before he entered the world — by which time Sharma's feat had already become part of the national consciousness, a story told in classrooms and remembered with pride. Now, 41 years later, Shukla has followed in his footsteps, becoming only the second Indian to travel to space. The long gap between the two milestones tells a story of shift-



ing priorities, geopolitical turns, and the slow grind of building independent capability. But while it took over four decades for India to send another one of its own beyond the atmosphere, the next journey will not take as long. Unlike Sharma, who flew as part of a Soviet mission when India lacked its own programme, Shukla's spaceflight is tied closely to India's growing ambitions in human space exploration. Though Ax-4 is still international in nature, it comes at a time when the country's own human spaceflight programme — Gaganyaan — is beginning to take concrete shape. The Indian Space Research Organisation (Isro) has already developed key

technologies for crew safety, including a successful test of the crew escape system and a high-altitude abort demonstration. The first uncrewed Gaganyaan mission is planned for later this year, and more such missions will follow to test systems rigorously before humans are sent aboard. Unlike the past, when India depended on partnerships for crewed missions, the current roadmap envisages a self-reliant human spaceflight capability. Isro's Gaganyaan is designed to carry a crew to an orbit of 400km and return them safely after a mission duration of up to seven days. Final decisions on how many crew members would go and for how many days will come later. The spacecraft

will launch atop a modified version of the LVM3 rocket, which has already demonstrated its reliability in placing payloads in space. Training of astronauts will also become largely home-grown. While Sharma trained in the Soviet Union, and Shukla trained partly in the US for this mission, India now has a dedicated astronaut training facility in Bengaluru, which will be enhanced in the coming years. This will allow future Indian astronauts to be selected, trained, and flown from home soil. The broader goal extends beyond low-Earth orbit. Over the next two decades, India aims to build long-term human presence capabilities, develop space station modules, and implement lunar crewed missions. But those are plans for the future. What's certain for now is that with institutional structures, flight-tested hardware, and committed investment, India's return to space with its own people aboard will no longer be an event separated by generations. Shukla's spaceflight marks the end of a long silence. The next Indian in space, it appears, won't have to wait four decades.



Traffic on Jammu-Srinagar national highway was restored after a three-hour closure on Tuesday due to rain-triggered mudslides near Ramban. Meanwhile, nine people trapped in the swollen Tawi river were rescued in a joint operation by police, SDRF and local volunteers.

Fuels to be available at select Reliance, Adani companies' outlets

Vatika Times

DELHI: Adani Total Gas and Reliance BP Mobility have formed an alliance to offer their respective fuels at each other's retail outlets, marking another collaborative venture between two of India's prominent conglomerates, Adani and Reliance. Previously, Reliance Industries acquired a 26% stake in Adani Power's subsidiary, Mahan Energy, for Rs 50 crore. The latest collaboration enables Adani Total Gas to sell Reliance BP's petrol and diesel at

their stations, while Reliance BP will distribute Adani's CNG at their outlets. This arrangement plugs gaps in both companies' fuel distribution networks. PSU oil companies follow a similar practice in various cities, particularly Delhi, where CNG retailers have installed dispensing units at petrol pumps. Adani Total manages 650 CNG stations nationwide, while also offering compressed biogas, EV charging facilities and LNG for transportation.

Musk 'not really leaving,' says Trump - Key updates from joint press conference

Vatika Times

NEW DELHI:

In the press conference, US President Trump hailed Musk and said, "My friend has done a fantastic job." The presser kicked off with President Trump praising Musk, saying he had done an "excellent job." Trump then remarked, "Our government can be a bit unpleasant sometimes," to which Musk replied, "Yes, occasionally." "Today its about a man named Elon, one of the greatest innovators.

After English, a lesson in French: Tharoor slams Pakistan in Russia

Vatika Times

NEW DELHI: Congress MP Shashi Tharoor, widely recognised for his eloquence in English, drew widespread praise this week for speaking fluent French while strongly criticising Pakistan's inclusion in an upcoming anti-terrorism conference organised by Russia. During a meeting in Moscow with Russian Liberal Democratic Party chairman Leonid Slutsky, Tharoor responded in French to Slutsky's remarks regarding a proposed summit on combating terrorism. Slutsky had announced Russia's plans to host a conference early next year involving the parliamentary heads of six countries: Turkey, Iran, Russia, India, Pakistan, and China. He emphasised the need for



concrete action, not just discussion, on the issue of terrorism. In a striking moment, Tharoor replied in French, directly addressing the problem of Pakistan's involvement. "There is a country that unfortunately provides a safe haven for these terrorist groups," Tharoor said. "They have their headquarters, they train terrorists in their country, fund them, arm them, and send them to

other nations. It's difficult for us to ignore the fact that they enjoy patronage in Pakistan. The video of Tharoor's French-language exchange with Slutsky quickly went viral on social media, earning him praise for both his linguistic skill and diplomatic clarity. Following the meeting, Tharoor posted on X: "Good to renew my acquaintance with my Russian counterpart.

Vatika Times

NEW DELHI: Congress on Wednesday launched a scathing attack on Prime Minister Narendra Modi after US President Donald Trump, yet again, claimed that he stopped the war between India and Pakistan using trade as leverage. Congress leader Pawan Khera said that PM Modi will undermine India's interests for a little praise. "From China to the US, the world knows that the greatest weakness of Prime Minister Modi is applause, approval, validation," Khera wrote in a social media post on X. "Just praise him a little and Modi will undermine India's interests - giving



clean chits to China and surrendering to threats of the US," he added. This comes after Trump, once again, claimed that he ended the war between India and Pakistan through a series of calls. "The most important of all, India and Pakistan...I ended that with a series of phone calls on trade. I said if you're going to go fighting each

other, we're not doing any trade deal. The General from Pakistan was in my office last week," Trump said. "Prime Minister Modi is a great friend of mine. He's a great gentleman, he's a great man. I got them to reason, and I said, we're not doing a trade deal if you're going to fight. They said, no, I want to do the trade deal. We stopped the nuclear

war," he added. However, India has firmly denied any foreign mediation in its engagement with Pakistan. In a conversation with President Trump, Prime Minister Narendra Modi clarified that India rejects any form of external mediation in its bilateral matters with Pakistan. India will never countenance any form of mediation in its relations with Pakistan and there was no discussion at any level between India and the US about the proposed trade deal, or American intervention, during the events that unfolded after Operation Sindoor, PM Modi told Trump in his recent telephonic conversation.

Rohit credits this player for T20 World Cup title win

Vatika Times

NEW DELHI: Rohit Sharma, who bid farewell to T20Is following India's historic ICC Men's T20 World Cup 2024 title win, has opened up about the key player that paved the way for India's triumph over South Africa in the final. In a heartfelt interaction with Star Sports, the Indian skipper lauded his team's grit and composure under pressure, singling out one particular player for his defining role. While the skipper handed Virat Kohli praise, it was Axar Patel that was deemed



the 'game changer' in the tense final. India ended an 11-year wait for an ICC title by defeating South Africa in a tense final at the Kensington Oval in Barbados, on June 29, 2024. The Men in Blue were crowned T20 world champions for the first time since the inaugural edition in 2007, and it marked their first ICC trophy

overall since the 2013 Champions Trophy. Batting first in a high-stakes contest, India posted 176/7, thanks to a composed knock from Kohli and a crucial counterattack by Axar Patel in the middle overs. South Africa, despite a strong start and being favourites heading into the death overs, fell just short in a nerve-wracking

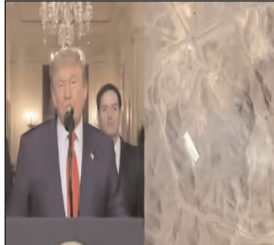
chase, finishing on 169/8. Reflecting on the final, Rohit said, "Not many people are talking about his (Axar's) knock. But, that knock was a game changer. To get 47 off 31 in that time was very very crucial." Axar's 47 off 31 balls, including timely boundaries when India were wobbling, shifted the momentum in India's favour. His partnership with Kohli stabilised the innings before Hardik Pandya and Shivam Dube added finishing touches. Sharma also hailed Kohli for anchoring the innings, saying, "And

then obviously we needed one guy to stick around. Virat did that job perfectly. Batted the entire innings throughout, which was really good, because Shivam, Axar, Hardik, they can come and play their role." Kohli's 76 from 59 balls, a crucial display in the most important game earned him the Player of the Match. The bowlers, led by Jasprit Bumrah and Arshdeep Singh, then held their nerve in the death overs to seal a long-awaited ICC title and end India's trophy drought in global tournaments.

Trump says Israeli agents inspected Iran's nuclear site; saw 'total obliteration'

Vatika Times

NEW DELHI: US President Donald Trump on Wednesday claimed that Israel may have sent agents to inspect Iran's Fordo nuclear site following recent American airstrikes. He said the site suffered "total obliteration" and warned that further action would follow if Tehran were to resume uranium enrichment. While speaking to reporters at the Nato summit in The Hague, Trump said, "You know they have guys that go in there after the hit, and they said it was



total obliteration." He said that Israel is currently assessing the damage inflicted on the sites. "Israel is doing a report on it now, I understand, and I was told that they said it was total obliteration. I believe it was total obliteration, and I believe they didn't have a chance to get anything out because we acted fast," he

added. Israeli officials, while responding to remarks made by Trump, told Kan public broadcaster, that they were not aware of any Israeli operation at Fordo nuclear site after the US strikes. Earlier in the week a leaked Pentagon intelligence report intelligently reported by CNN, suggested that US strikes on Iranian nuclear facilities might have left core components largely intact, and that Iran's nuclear program has essentially only been set back only by months.

Editorial

Is the hue and cry about the Deep State similar to the Great Game?

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 Ish tiaq 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 scape-goat for anything that goes wrong political parties.



Language has mystical powers



Radhika
Power is in the words. Language has mystical powers. I enjoy playing with words. Those words are hot. You can be moved to tears by words. You can find humor in words. Moreover, there are few things that can convey the planet and all its inhabitants as vividly and comprehensively as words. During the 2009 austerity drive of the Congress-led UPA administration, Tharoor was embroiled in controversy for his response to a query regarding flying "cattle class" to Kerala. His statement, "Absolutely, in cattle class out of solidarity with all our holy cows!" caused a political storm following his response. Tharoor, an accomplished writer of numerous best-selling books on Indian society and politics, was forced to clarify that he did not want to offend economy class passengers after the Congress party swiftly censured him. After 16 years, Tharoor is now again in trouble for comments he made in an interview. In response to a Malayalam report that he had claimed, "We have many leaders, but many feel that there are no ordinary workers," Tharoor clarified that he had really said, "several workers feel there is an absence of a leader in Kerala's Congress." "You should not think that I have no option to spend my time. I have options," Tharoor added earlier in the interview. I have speeches, books, and invitations to speak all around the globe. Some saw his comments as a covert signal to the highest levels of Congress that he was thinking about other political paths. Amidst the upcoming Assembly elections in the state next year,

Tharoor is now facing accusations of "crossing the line" from the top leaders of the Congress's faction-ridden Kerala unit, putting him in the center of a maelstrom. Because of this, Shashi Tharoor has been named this week's ThePrint Newsmaker. Actually, Tharoor's essay praising the new industrial policies of the Left-led Kerala government had already been a hot topic before the interview controversy erupted. Tharoor had stated that, during the course of 18 months last year, Kerala's startup ecosystem was valued at an astounding \$1.7 billion, which is five times higher than the worldwide average for the same time period. While the fact that this change has started happening under an LDF government run by communists is shocking, it is not totally unexpected. "The path to growth and prosperity for their people lies in capitalism, entrepreneurship, and initiative, not in red flags, strikes, and agitations," he said in the post, comparing the Communists

in Kerala to their West Bengali counterparts at the turn of the century. While he disagrees that the state's industrial climate has changed generally, Tharoor defended himself by saying that "when something good emerges, even if only in one area, it is petty not to acknowledge it" in response to attacks from Kerala Congress officials over the piece. Tharoor, a former UN diplomat, has had a tumultuous political career with the Congress since his 2009 victory in the Lok Sabha elections from the Thiruvananthapuram constituency. Mostly because he had a habit of saying things that went against the party line. However, he consistently gets himself into problems by more than simply his words. In 2009, as the UPA was implementing its austerity measures, Tharoor and then-External Affairs Minister SM Krishna came under fire from the government for allegedly residing in a five-star hotel in Delhi while their official quarters were still being prepared.

Tharoor lost his position in the Manmohan Singh government's council of ministers in 2010 due to the scandal surrounding the sweat equity provided to Sunanda Pushkar, his then-girlfriend and later-wife, by a consortium that owned the Kochi club of the Indian Premier League. His ordination as a junior minister was renewed in 2012. Tharoor was thrust into his gravest professional crisis in January 2014, when Pushkar was discovered dead in a luxurious Delhi hotel. room—months prior to the Lok Sabha elections. He was initially charged with murder by the Delhi Police, but in 2021, a local court found him not guilty. Tharoor disproved the idea that he was merely an elite figure without popular support by obtaining substantial electoral support despite dealing with several challenges. He will be serving as a member of parliament for the Thiruvananthapuram constituency from 2009 to 2024. This seat is heavily populated by members of the Bharatiya

Janata Party (BJP) and the Left. The Congress Working Committee (CWC), the top decision-making forum of the party, also inducted him in 2023. Additionally, Tharoor ran for Congress president in 2022, but he lost to Mallikarjun Kharge, who was widely believed to have the support of the Gandhi family. After identifying as a "Liberal but not Leftist," Tharoor has often discovered that his opinions on several matters, including religion and foreign policy, differ from those of the Gandhi family or the Congress high command. The point was elaborated in a column that Tharoor penned last year in which he said that he and those like him do not neatly fit within the economic Left or the cultural Right's paradigm. "I was a supporter of the Swatantra Party when I was a student because of its social liberalism and free-market economic views. After it fell apart, I couldn't find a way to express my ideas within the party system. I stayed outside of politics until the post-liberalization era produced a Congress that was drastically different from the statist Congress I had opposed in the 1970s and early 1980s," Tharoor wrote. In the book, Tharoor criticises almost every member of the Gandhi family, including Indira, Rajiv, and Sonia. In his analysis of Indira, he concluded that while she was adept at gaining and keeping power, she was utterly unable to use it for greater good. Aside from the catchy campaign slogans, she lacked a genuine platform or vision. To Indira Gandhi, he referred to Sanjay in the book. He described Sonia as "a builder's daughter from Turino.

Registration, and complaints against waqf boards

Saariq
When the Waqf Amendment Bill 2024 was first tabled in the Lok Sabha on 8 August last year, it triggered fears within the Muslim community, as it was perceived to have been introduced without adequate consultation with stakeholders. After all, the issue of waqfs—Muslim institutions through which property is bequeathed for religious or charitable purposes—is sensitive because it involves socio-religious spaces such as qabristans, masjids, idgahs, and madrasas.æAs such, the government and Parliament were exhorted to adopt procedures that allayed rather than stoked the fears of Muslims. In this backdrop, the decision to refer the bill to a joint committee of both Houses of Parliament was welcome. The 31-member committee, drawn from across party lines, received 97,27,772 memoranda overall. There were representations from various ministries and depart-

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

Illicit Foreign Funding: Secret Weapon Advancing a Radical Islamist Agenda in UK

Suman Singh
Prior to the UK general elections, a media investigation revealed that five of the six major British political parties had taken illicit foreign funds. To minimise excessive foreign influence, British legislation compels parties to refund unlawful donations within 30 days and disclose any failures to the Electoral Commission. Only people on the electoral roll can make donations, with a minimum limit of £500. However, the Bureau of Investigative Journalism discovered that the Conservative Party, Reform UK, Liberal Democrats, Green Party, and Scottish National Party failed to prevent or identify these donations, which were made through an assortment of modest payments totalling more than £500 from a foreign source. As per the report, only the Labour Party successfully blocked such unlawful donations. Election law expert Gavin Millar criticised the self-policing method as ineffective and illogical because it relies on beneficiaries to enforce the law. Concerns had grown in the run-up to the 2024 UK general election about foreign players funding political non-governmental organisations (NGOs). Despite precise laws deliberate to prevent excessive foreign influence, some NGOs with significant influence in UK politics have evidently received large amounts of funding from international sources. These contributions, which are frequently routed through intricate channels to avoid detection, undermine the integrity of the democratic process and threaten to influence election results in favour of foreign interests. The current legal system, which relies mainly on self-policing, is

deeply inadequate, allowing foreign funders to have hidden power over British politics. Several controversial groups in the British community receive funding from ambiguous sources, which they utilise to spread their propaganda and operations throughout the country. One prominent example is the Muslim Council of Britain (MCB), an umbrella group that represents over 500 interconnected mosques and Muslim organisations. MCB has a notorious history of sponsoring and supporting extremist actions, prompting consecutive British administrations to adopt a “non-engagement” stance with the organisation since 2009. Notably, the MCB backed a declaration in Istanbul calling for jihad in reaction to Israel’s activities in Gaza and backing Hamas attacks on foreign forces, possibly involving British troops. Another outfit of concern is the Hizb ut-Tahrir, which is secretively operational in the UK despite being banned in many countries due to its disruptive ideology and links to terrorist acts. Hizb ut-Tahrir has been accused of radicalising young Muslims and pushing for the formation of a global caliphate through non-democratic means. Its financing roots are opaque, leading to suspicions of foreign financial aid intended to destabilise communities. Islamic Relief Worldwide, headquartered in the United Kingdom, has been accused of supporting terrorist entities, especially Hamas. The organisation denies these allegations. However, both Israel and the United Arab Emirates have blacklisted Islamic Relief Worldwide over concerns about the misuse of charitable .

BJP goes ‘headless’ – Why Modi-Shah can’t decide Nadda’s successor

Mahesh Singh
That’s as hilarious as it can get but it gives us an inkling of how the ‘system’ is responding to the poll results. Be that as it may, Modi would have us believe the first scenario—that he is convinced that the 2024 election results were not a reflection on his governance and so he has retained the same old team. The Bharatiya Janata Party, therefore, needs to explain the loss of 63 seats—from 303 in 2019 to 240 in 2024. The PM hasn’t said it in as many words, though. Signals from the ruling party are on the contrary—that it sees the 2024 mandate as a vindication of its politics and organisational prowess. If at all,

blame the individuals for the party’s performances in some states – say, Yogi Adityanath in Uttar Pradesh and Devendra Fadnavis in Maharashtra. Or, for that matter, blame the Opposition’s ‘propaganda’ for a section of the backward classes and Dalits abandoning the BJP. This message from the BJP came out loud and clear . on Friday when party president JP Nadda appointed in-charges and co-in-charges in 23 states and co-ordinator and joint co-ordinator for Northeastern states. Most of them were reassigned to the same job. Whether their performance was so outstanding that they deserved to be re-appointed is beside the point The issue is

that Nadda made those appointments five days after his term as party president was supposedly over. His three-year-term had ended in January 2023. It was extended till June 2024. Such a long extension was ostensibly in view of the general election, but one has to be extremely credulous to buy that. He could have been simply re-elected for a full-fledged second term. Given that the BJP president’s term is three years, Nadda was virtually halfway through his second tenure. Even that got over on 30 June, technically. You may recall that BJP leader Subramanian Swamy had threatened to take legal action against the party for lack of

“internal elections” and extension of Nadda’s term as convention to the party constitution. Swamy had written to the Election Commission about it and informed Nadda about it in a letter dated 6 February 2024. Within two weeks, the BJP national convention amended the party constitution, authorising the parliamentary board to make decisions about the president – including the term and extension – in emergencies. Incidentally, the party never officially announced the decision. Going by this reported amendment, the parliamentary board had the power to give another extension to Nadda beyond 30 June. Only that nobody seems .

Union Minister Prof. S.P. Singh Baghel Pays Reverent Visit to Maa Bhadrakali Shaktipeeth in Kurukshetra

Jasbir Singh Duggal
Kurukshetra: Union Minister of State in the Government of India, Prof. S.P. Singh Baghel, today visited the revered Maa Bhadrakali Shaktipeeth in Kurukshetra. The Minister offered ceremonial prayers at the sacred shrine, seeking blessings from the Divine Mother for the well-being and prosperity of the nation.

Arriving at the temple at 4 PM, Prof. Baghel was accorded a grand welcome by the temple committee with garlands, floral bouquets, and resonant Vedic chants. In the presence of Peethadheeshwar Pandit Satpal Sharma and chief priestess Shimla Devi, the Minister performed traditional rituals at the sanctified Devi Koop, offering sacred betel leaves and invoking the blessings of Maa Bhadrakali.

Inside the sanctum sanctorum, he presented the Goddess with a red chunari, coconut, vermillion, five types of dry fruits, fresh fruits, and red garments. A ceremonial abhishek was conducted on the silver idol of the



Goddess using a holy mixture of panchamrit—milk, curd, ghee, honey, butter—along with rose water, sandalwood, saffron, and Ganga jal. Following the rituals, the Peethadheeshwar honored Prof. Baghel with Maa's sacred red chunari, a silver locket, and a floral garland as a token of divine blessings. The Minister also participated in the traditional panchdeep aarti, tied a protective mauli thread, and prayed for national unity, prosperity, and public welfare. He worshipped

the symbolic young girl (Shaivil Shakti) as a representation of the goddess and offered oblations in the special Amavasya Mahakali Havan being performed at the temple. Speaking on the occasion, Prof. Baghel expressed his long-standing desire to visit the shrine, stating, "I had wished to visit this sacred temple for years, and today I feel truly blessed to have received Maa's divine call." He emphasized that Maa Bhadrakali is not only a symbol of divine power but

also a source of inspiration for national defense, social harmony, and public welfare. "This is not merely a temple of Shakti; it is a vibrant epicenter of faith and spiritual energy," he added. The Minister also shared that he has already visited 30 of the 51 Shaktipeeths and 11 of the 12 Jyotirlingas. He later offered oil at the adjacent Shani temple as well. Accompanying the Minister were his senior private secretary Himanshu

Sarasvati Board Chairman Dhuman Singh Kirmach, Nomadic Tribe Development Board Chairman Jai Singh Pal, Zila Parishad Chairperson Kanwaljit Kaur, former district president Rajkumar Saini, and Ravinder Sangwan. Prominent members of the temple committee, including Vice President Dr. M.K. Maudgil, Snehil Sharma, Devi Dayal Sharma, Dinesh Kansal, Jeevan Maudgil, Rampal Lathar, Ramkumar, Vijay Pujari, and Anil Master, were also present.



KU VC Speaks on Research Excellence in Higher Education at AIU Conference



Jasbir Singh Duggal
Kurukshetra: During the second day of Association of Indian Universities' (AIU) National Conference of Vice-Chancellors, hosted at Amity University, Noida, on June 23–24, Prof Som Nath Sachdeva, while speaking as the chairperson of the special session "Enhancing Research Quality in Higher Educational Institutions," emphasized that India must shift its focus from the sheer volume of research to its quality, relevance, and global impact if it aspires to become a true Vishwaguru—a global leader in knowledge. Prof. Sachdeva remarked that despite India having over 1,100 universities and 43,000 colleges, the country's research output still falls short in terms of international citations and impact. Prof. Sachdeva outlined the broader vision of a dynamic research culture, emphasizing the need for increased funding, stronger research ecosystems, advanced training and skill development, and active collaboration with industry.

Advocate Dhami Strongly Objects to Haryana Government Referring to Baba Banda Singh Bahadar as ‘Veer Banda Bairagi’

Jasbir Singh Duggal
Kurukshetra/Amritsar: President of the Shiromani Gurdwara Parbandhak Committee (SGPC), Advocate Harjinder Singh Dhami, has expressed strong objection to the Haryana government for referring to Baba Banda Singh Bahadar as "Veer Banda Bairagi" in a tribute advertisement issued on the occasion of his martyrdom day. Advocate Dhami stated that this act by the government is not only a violation of Sikh principles but also a grave insult to the life and martyrdom of



Baba Banda Singh Bahadar. He said this reference deeply hurts Sikh sentiments. He emphasized that Baba Banda

Singh Bahadar, under the blessings of Sri Guru Gobind Singh Ji, fought against the Mughal Empire. Under his leadership, the Sikhs avenged the martyrdom of the Guru's Sahibzadas by overthrowing the tyrannical regime. Advocate Dhami noted that Baba Banda Singh Bahadar established the first Sikh rule and abolished the feudal land system, granting land ownership rights to farmers—a major step towards social equality. The SGPC President said that Baba Banda Singh Bahadar renounced the Bairagi attire and became

a devout initiated Sikh of Sri Guru Gobind Singh Ji. Referring to him as "Veer Banda Bairagi" distorts historical truth. He alleged this appears to be a deliberate attempt to undermine Sikh identity and distort Sikh history. He further said the Haryana government's action is a misrepresentation of Sikh history and a disrespect to Sikh martyrs. Advocate Dhami demanded that the Haryana government refrain from such actions that distort Sikh history and take strict action against the officials responsible.

Administrator Appointed at Shrimad Devi Bhagwati Bala Sundari Temple

Jasbir Singh Duggal
Shahabad Markanda: An administrator has been appointed with immediate effect for the Shrimad Devi Bhagwati Bala Sundari Temple, Shahabad Markanda. Following a hearing of the complainant and the temple management, the District Registrar of Cooperative Societies, Kurukshetra, issued an order appointing T.R. Gautam as the administrator. In the order, the outgoing management committee has been directed to hand



over complete charge and all records of the temple to the administrator. The administrator will oversee the temple's day-to-day affairs and will conduct the temple elections independently

and fairly, as per the rules. This information was shared by the complainant and founding members of the temple, Vijay Bhushan Garg and Ashutosh Garg.

CM Nayab Singh Saini Flags Off M3M Foundation’s ‘Neev Se Shikhar Tak’

Vatika Times
Kurukshetra: In a heartfelt tribute to Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi's 11 years of inspiring leadership, M3M Foundation has launched a powerful initiative to uplift dreams. The Foundation has selected 11 underprivileged girls from Haryana and is sponsoring their free Basic Mountaineering Course at the Atal Bihari Vajpayee Institute of Mountaineering and Allied Sports, Manali, scheduled from July 1 to July 26, 2025. The initiative, titled 'Neev Se Shikhar Tak' (From Foundation to Summit), is aimed at empowering girls from economically weaker sections through exposure to challenging disciplines like mountaineering. The 11 girls were short-listed from over 200 applications received from across the state.



M3M Foundation plans to conduct this programme regularly. Over the next two years, four such camps will be held, and ultimately, 5 selected girls will get a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to trek Mount Everest. Hon'ble Chief Minister of Haryana, Shri Nayab Singh Saini, flagged off the selected participants from Kurukshetra and honoured them in an inspiring ceremony. He was joined by Mr. Aishwarya Mahajan, President, M3M Foundation, and Dr. Payal Kanodia, Chairperson, M3M

Foundation. Dr. Payal Kanodia expressed, "We believe that every child, given the right opportunity, can overcome barriers and shine. 'Neev Se Shikhar Tak' is not just a programme—it's a journey of confidence, courage, and capability. We are proud to enable these young girls to dream higher and climb stronger." The initiative echoes the spirit of national missions like 'Beti Bachao, Beti Padhao' and 'Skill India', exemplifying how socially responsible institutions can play a transformative role in nation-building.

State Government Working in Mission Mode: CM

Jasbir Singh Duggal
Kurukshetra: Chief Minister Shri Nayab Singh Saini stated that he became an MLA due to the people of Ladwa constituency, and today, he holds the position of Chief Minister because of them. "Every resident of Ladwa is now a member of my family," he said. He further added that he has given clear instructions to all officers to listen to public issues and resolve them without delay. Development projects worth ₹110 crore have been initiated in Ladwa constituency over the past four months. The Chief Minister was directly interacting with villagers at the community center in Kishanpura and the Gurudwara in Girdarpur, located in Kurukshetra district, on Wednesday. CM Saini said that a state-of-the-art hospital with all modern



facilities would be constructed in each district to ensure that citizens have access to all kinds of treatments in government hospitals. These hospitals are planned to be inaugurated on August 15. A committee will also be formed in each hospital to oversee patient referrals. The government is committed to ensuring quality healthcare for the public. He highlighted that the government is purchasing all crops at MSP to support farmers and is also implementing the "Bhavantar Bharpai

Yojana" to cover the gap in crop prices. Additionally, efforts are underway to provide housing for the underprivileged. The BJP government is operating in mission mode throughout Haryana. Responding to the demands made by the sarpanch of Kishanpura, the Chief Minister announced that all the demands would be fulfilled and allocated ₹21 lakh for the village's development. He acknowledged the village's severe drainage issues and assured they would be

addressed on priority. He also asked the sarpanch of Girdarpur to submit a written list of issues and demands and announced ₹21 lakh for that village as well. He emphasized that the event was organized to directly engage with residents of the constituency. He expressed gratitude for the immense love and respect shown by the people of the state, which helped the BJP form the government in Haryana for the third time. "This is my first visit to your village after voting," he said, thanking

the villagers for their support in forming the government. CM Saini also noted that today marks 50 years since the declaration of the Emergency in India, calling it a "Day of Constitutional Murder." He described it as the gravest form of oppression since independence, comparable to British rule. "People lived in constant fear, and nearly one lakh individuals were forcibly sterilized. Many had to flee their homes and take shelter in sugarcane fields," he recalled. He emphasized that future generations must be aware of such historical events to prevent a repeat of that dark chapter. Deputy Commissioner Neha Singh, Superintendent of Police Nitish Aggarwal, Chairman Shri Dharmveer Mirzapur, and other dignitaries were present on the occasion.

Google under CCI investigation over gaming firm complaint

Delhi: India's Google regulatory issues are growing. In 2022, the Competition Commission of India (CCI) fined the US tech giant for abuse of dominant position in its Play Store and Android mobile device ecosystem. Now, the fairplay regulator is investigating a complaint filed by gaming company WinZO. CCI directed its investigation arm to investigate and report within 60 days after finding a prima facie case. "Based on the facts and circumstances of the case, the commission believes Google is in violation and justifies further inquiry. The CCI bench, chaired by Ravneet Kaur and three members, ordered the director general to investigate. A Google spokesman declined to comment. WinZO, an online gaming company, claimed that Google's Play Store prohibits Real Money Game hosting. "Due to Google's unreasonable and



restrictive policy, all apps offering real money games of skill are only available for download from their website (a process called sideloading)," it told CCI. On Android devices, using this process to reach WinZO displays a disclaimer/warning, tarnishing its image. WinZO stated warnings are without validity and "completely illegal" and cost the company. It also claimed Google displays another "baseless warning" when users pay for skill-based games. "Such payment warnings are arbitrary as Google has not set any criteria for displaying them," WinZO complained to CCI.

US retailers utilize Trump tariff threats to boost sales

Delhi: Local media stated that many US businesses are advising clients to buy now before President-elect Donald Trump's proposed tariffs hike prices. Trump threatened 60% tariffs on all Chinese goods and 10% to 20% tariffs on other goods during his campaign. He announced plans to impose 25% tariffs on Mexican and Canadian imports and 10% on Chinese imports. According to Xinhua,

The Union government wants 100% FDI in insurance

Delhi: The Union Finance Ministry proposed raising the insurance sector's FDI ceiling from 74% to 100% in a consultation paper. The insurance FDI limit was raised from 49% to 74% in February 2021. The government said the proposal to alter insurance legislation will make insurance more affordable, grow the insurance industry, and streamline corporate operations.

An office memorandum dated November 26 proposed lifting the FDI ceiling in Indian insurance businesses from 74% to 100% and



allowing insurers to conduct one or more kinds of insurance business and associated or incidental operations. The suggestion also cut foreign reinsurers' Net Owned Funds from Rs 5,000 crore to Rs 1,000 crore. IRDAI can also set lesser entry capital (Rs 50 crore) for underserved or unserved regions on

a case-by-case basis. The sector regulator is trying to increase capital in this capital-intensive industry. The Chairman of IRDAI suggests that the insurance market requires 50,000 crore yearly to double penetration in the country. Insurance penetration is the ratio of annual premiums issued to GDP.

Gold loans rise 50% in seven months

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

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

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

Airtel, Vodafone-Idea, and Reliance Jio struggle to reach a crucial Telecom Regulatory

Delhi: As Airtel, Vodafone-Idea, and Reliance Jio struggle to reach a crucial Telecom Regulatory Authority of India deadline, Indian mobile subscribers may experience OTP delays. The telecom watchdog extended the deadline for spam and phishing traceability requirements to December 1, 2024. Telecom companies must now track all commercial messages, including OTPs, to combat fraud. Telecom companies can block scams by identifying message sources. However, missing this deadline could delay or prohibit OTPs, harming banking, e-commerce, and social networking. The TRAI imple-



"The TRAI implementation timeframe is phased. Operators will notify chain declaration violators daily until November 30. All non-compliant messages will be prohibited starting December 1"

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30. All non-compliant messages will be prohibited starting December 1.

A former employee being sued by Google India for disclosing Pixel secrets

Delhi: Google and its subsidiary in India filed a lawsuit in the US against former Bengaluru office employee Harshit Roy for revealing trade secrets that were considered confidential. In order to prevent Roy from further disseminating the stolen trade secrets that had irreparably harmed Google, Google hired an outside investigator to find him. Among the information that was revealed were comprehensive specifications of proprietary hardware.

New Honda Amaze Variants and Top Features

Delhi: India will launch the third-generation Amaze on December 4, 2024, and unofficial bookings have begun. The car is arriving at dealer yards nationwide ahead of its much-anticipated launch. It will rival the new Maruti Suzuki Dzire, Tata Tigor, and Hyundai Aura. The 2025 Honda Amaze will come in three variants—V, VX, and ZX—with many interior and exterior changes. Since its inception in India over a decade ago, the Amaze has been a popular sedan. Several new features and technolo-



gies will be added. The top model will have a floating touchscreen infotainment system with wireless Apple CarPlay and Android Auto connectivity, automatic climate control, ADAS technology, six airbags, reversing camera, wireless smartphone charger, multi-functional steering wheel with mount-

ed controls, rear AC vents, dual cup holders, type-c charging ports, and more. However, an electric sunroof, motorized seats, and 360-degree camera will be missing. It will keep its 1.2L four-cylinder VTEC naturally aspirated petrol engine, which produces 90 PS, and no major mechanical alterations.

French energy giant Total puts Adani Gp investments on hold

Delhi: Total Energies, a French oil company, has suspended investments in Adani Group entities pending the conclusion of US bribery allegations against its founder. The Paris-based company, which owns key investments in Adani Group's renewable energy and gas distribution operations, said it was unaware of the US solar power corruption inquiry. "Total Energies rejects corruption in any form," it declared. "This indictment does not target Adani Green Energy (AGEL) itself, nor any AGEL-related companies." Total Energies claimed it learned about Gautam Adani's and others' indictment from US public pronouncements. Gautam



Adani, his nephew and Adani Green Energy executive director Sagar Adani, and others are accused of a \$265m bribery scam. Total Energies bought 19.7% of Adani Green Energy in January 2021. It invested \$444 million in an equal joint venture with the Indian company to acquire three 1,150MW operational renewable assets in September. Additionally, it owns 37.4% of Adani Total Gas, which supplies

NBCC India will buy sick PSUs and redevelop land banks

Delhi: Two sources say NBCC India Ltd. wants to buy defunct public sector undertakings (PSUs) to redevelop and monetize their land. The state-run construction company wants to leverage its success in developing land for government-owned companies. Developer is in talks to acquire non-operanew entity to monetize their land banks.

CNG to cars .

"Vi was accused of not paying its second bank guarantee"

Delhi: Government sources claimed the Union Cabinet has agreed in principle to waive bank guarantee requirements for telecom companies' deferred spectrum payments, but with strict conditions. The waiver will require telcos to pay three months' instalments in addition to their annual fees. Sources said the government will give up its right to collect Rs 30,000 crore in bank guarantees upfront. The Cabinet waived the requirement for telcos to buy spectrum in six auctions between 2012 and 2022. Spectrum auction regulations from 2022 and 2024 removed the necessity. Airtel and Jio would guarantee Rs 2,300 crore and Rs 4,000 crore. Vodafone Idea (Vi) spectrum auction moratorium ends in October 2025. Current



"Vi was accused of not paying its second bank guarantee of Rs 350 crore for spectrum purchased in a 2012 auction. November 1 was the payment deadline"

rules required the corporation to file bank guarantees 13 months before the next payment due date. The DoT requested bank guarantees from Vi for the September 2025 spectrum payment of Rs 24,747 crore. The DoT also asked the finance ministry to exempt operators from bank guarantees for spectrum payments. The waiver should help Vi. Telco shares

increased 7.8% intraday to Rs 7.53. After opening higher, Airtel shares fell 0.1% to Rs 1,577. Vi was accused of not paying its second bank guarantee of Rs 350 crore for spectrum purchased in a 2012 auction. November 1. was the payment deadline. Vi skipped the payment of about Rs 4,600 crore in 2016 auction guarantees two months earlier.

Tgana rejects Adani's 100-cr contribution

Delhi: Telangana chief minister A Revanth Reddy announced that the state government will not accept the ₹100 crore CSR donation from the Adani Group for the Young India Skills University in Ranga Reddy district, citing current circumstances and controversies. We thank you for committing 100 crore to Young India Skills University on behalf of your Foundation via letter. We have not sought donors for physical transfers of monies since the university did not acquire the IT exemption under section 80G, Ranjan wrote. The official added that he was "instructed by the chief minister not to seek the transfer of funds in view of the present circumstances and arising controversies". According to the US Department of Justice indictment, Adani executives and Azure Power executives bribed Indian government officials in five states to win solar energy supply contracts worth over \$2 billion over 20 years between 2020 and 2024. The scam purportedly started in Odisha and spread to Andhra Pradesh, Tamil Nadu, Chhattisgarh, and Jammu & Kashmir. The Telangana chief minister said everyone may lawfully invest, despite accusations that the state government accepted Adani Group funding.Reddy said Congress leader Rahul Gandhi has stated that the company. that wins the bids according to the regulations will invest.

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



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

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

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

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

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



carrier Manta Air, South African Airways, Turkish Cargo and Virgin Atlantic. "The collaboration will utilise Air Transport's comprehensive network and proficiency to fortify Oman Air's presence and augment customer service across the Indian market," Interglobe stated in a press release issued this week. "Oman Air,

distinguished for its exemplary products and services across the Middle East, Indian Subcontinent, Asia, and Europe, presently operates over 90 weekly flights to 10 Indian cities from its hub in Muscat. To strengthen Oman Air's Indian operations, Interglobe Air Transport will provide extensive sales and service.

Gold loans rise 50% in seven months

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

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

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

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



those of regulatory bodies in central universities. Last year, Centre had decided to bring

all institutions that receive over 50% govt funds under its jurisdiction. TISS, a centrally

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

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

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

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

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

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



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

or faster delivery," said FarEye co-founder and COO Gautam Kumar. **Your favorite Tupperware is bankrupt.**

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

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

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

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

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



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

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

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

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



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

Pran Pratishtha of Bhagwan Sri Ramakrishna begins with traditional Bengali rituals at Kalibari

Chandigarh: The sacred Pran Pratishtha ceremony of Bhagwan Sri Ramakrishna commenced on a deeply spiritual note at Kalibari, Sector 47 with the traditional Bengali ritual of Adhibhas on Saturday. Monks from various centres of the Ramakrishna Mission (RKM) gathered to initiate the pre-consecration ceremonies, infusing the temple with profound spiritual energy. The Adhibhas ritual, a significant component of the Pran Pratishtha which symbolizes the invocation of divine presence into the idol. It involves sanctifying the idol through immersion in water, grains and other sacred substances to purify it and preparing it to receive divine energy. The solemn rites were accompanied by Vedic chants, devotional music and the presence of the RKM monastic fraterni-



ty, creating a spiritually charged atmosphere. The Executive Committee of Kalibari Chandigarh led by President Pranob Sen and General Secretary Rajesh Roy extended a warm welcome to Swami Shantatmananda ji of Ramakrishna Mission, Gurugram and Swami Sukhananda ji of Ramakrishna Mission, Bhuj. Both revered monks will serve as Tantradarhak—spiritual anchors of the pran pratishtha which is scheduled for Sunday. Their leadership at the helm of the rituals signifies the deep-rooted

traditions of the Ramakrishna Order. Later in the evening, audiences were spell-bound by the soul-stirring dance drama titled “Siddhartha to Buddha – The Divine Leela of Sri Ramakrishna.” Conceptualized and directed by Amrita Ganguly, the performance brought together 53 artists who captivated the audience for nearly two hours. The production drew deep parallels between the journeys of Gautam Buddha and Sri Ramakrishna, highlighting their shared quest for universal truth and spiritual awakening.

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

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



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

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

NHAI orders testing of SMA material

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

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

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

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

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



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

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

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

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

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



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

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

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

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



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

Globe Civil Projects files draft papers with Sebi for IPO

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

North India Indira Gandhi Kompte Games kicks off with massive youth participation



Chandigarh: The two-day North India Indira Gandhi Kompte Games in association with Chandigarh Athletics Association kicks off at Sports Complex, Sector 7 on Saturday. The event saw participation from over 400 athletes across various age groups and disciplines which reflect the spirit of youth engagement and promoting a drug-free lifestyle.In the Under-18 boys' 200 metres, Bobby clinched gold, followed by Surkhab and Ajay. In

the Under-16 boys category, Prashant Lohoriya emerged victorious with Lakshya finishing second. Among the girls, Manpreet Kaur secured the Under-18 title while Heeral Saini won the Under-16 race. Gusar Kaur bagged the Under-14 girls title and Sanket Singh showcased his prowess by winning both the Under-14 boys 200m and long jump events. Aarya claimed top honours in the Under-14 girls long

jump. In the 3000 metres Under-18 category, Aarav and Harnoor Tomar took top positions in boys and girls events respectively. Jaskirat and Samisha triumphed in the Under-16 long jump events for boys and girls. Senior officials from the Chandigarh Athletics Association felicitated the winners in the presence of Games Manager Karan Bhardwaj. Track and field events will continue on Sunday.

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

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

UBT will run alone in civic polls amid INDIA rumblings

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



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

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

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

New prison factories will employ 100 more prisoners

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

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

"We plan to

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

Mahesh Vishnupant Kothe passed away after a heart attack

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

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

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

Indian shooters start Junior World Championships with two golds

Delhi: Indian shooters started their ISSF Junior World Championship Rifle/Pistol/Shotgun campaign in the Peruvian capital with two team golds in both men and women's 10m air pistol. With two golds India led the medal tally after competition day one, with Romania and Chinese Taipei winning the two golds and five other nations winning medals. Umesh , Pradhyumn, and Mukesh , the junior men's three, led India to the top of the 10m air pistol men's team category with 1726

points. Romania finished second, 10 points behind, Umesh shot 580 and Pradhyumn 578 but finished sixth and eighth, respectively. Luca of Romania won gold and Hsieh Hsiang-Chen of Taiwan silver. Mukesh scored 574 to finish eighth in qualifying. Kanishka Dagar, Lakshita, and Anjali Chaudhary won the junior women's 10m air pistol team gold with 1708. They beat Azerbaijan by one point and bronze-winning Ukraine by four. Kanishka and Kanika, who shot 573 but with lower inner 10s.

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



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

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

Vijay claims DMK betrayed Tamil Nadu voters



TN proposes tougher sexual offense laws

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

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

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

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

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

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



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

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

The Delhi prison department will modernize

Delhi: The Delhi prison department will modernize and add factories to employ 100 more prisoners. New paper, carpentry, and oil production units are planned by the department. The units will make eco-friendly products like custom-printed paper carry bags, file covers, and stationery, as well as beautifully packaged coconut, sesame, almond, and mustard oils. "The new jail factory units aim to deploy over 100 inmates and emphasize 'earn while studying' A prison official stated new high-tech equipment will be purchased. Officials say Tihar jail number 2 has

six units: carpentry, oil, paper, weaving, tailoring, and baking. Mandoli and other jails have weaving, jute bags, perfume, pickles, confecti carpentry, and underwear facilities. Different facilities employ over 2,500 convicts. Last year, 215 inmates joined jail number 2's industries, mostly for carpentry, followed by bakery and paper.

"We plan to increase the number of units so that more inmates can receive vocational training," he stated. "This will enable them to start their life anew upon their release." Prisoners earned Rs 1.7 crore last year per-

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

than normal but in the other five, April temperatures were either close to normal (four years) or below normal (one year). These two months were chosen for the analysis because Feb is the last month of winter in north India, while April marks the beginning of full-blown summer conditions in the region. March is usually a month of transition."There is no direct one-to-one relationship between temperatures in Feb and April. Temperatures in these two months depend on multiple factors, including largescale signals such as presence of El Nino (or La Nina) and synop-

tic features such as the frequency, intensity and duration of western disturbances," said Mrutyunjay , director-general of India Meteorological Department. Trends in recent years exemplify the absence of a link between temperatures in Feb and April. In 2023, north India experienced record heat in Feb but April was cooler than normal. Feb that year was the warmest since 1901, with the average maximum temperature 3.5 degrees above the mean during 1971-2024. However, April that year turned out to be the coolest in eight years, with average

maximum temperatures nearly 1 degree below the mean during 1971-2024. The reverse happened in 2022. April of that year in north India was the hottest on record, while temperatures in Feb were close to normal."In the years when a strong El Nino (or La Nina) prevails, there can be a link between temperatures in the two months. This year, however, we have a weak La Nina that's not expected to influence temperatures," Mohapatra said. Another factor that's increasingly playing a role in making both months hotter in general is climate change.

Delhi is set to be among the three warmest in the last 15 years

Candidates won't get poll booth CCTV footage: EC

NEW DELHI: Election Commission has brought changes in electoral rules to specify that CCTV footage of poll booths will not come under the category of "documents" to be made available to contestants and general public. Before the amendment, the provision under Section 93(2) of the Conduct of Election Rules said "all other papers relating to the election shall be open to public inspection" with court permission. Congress was quick to latch on to the changes and accused the Modi govt and EC of hurting transparency and eroding the integrity of the electoral process, but the poll panel said it was done to protect the privacy of voters and for their safety. The changes were triggered after the Punjab and Haryana high court recently directed EC to provide copies of required documents related to the Haryana assembly elections to advocate Mehmood Pracha.



Congress to contest EC's poll rules tweak in courts 'right away' He had filed a petition seeking the videography, CCTV camera footage, and copies of Forms 17-C Parts I and II related to the conduct of elections. The existing rules do not contain any specific obligation on part of EC to provide any videographic record or CCTV footage to the public. The detailed rules have a list of records which can be made public, after directions from a competent court. Friday's amendment has added a line where Section 93, in sub-section (2), in clause (a), after the word 'papers', the words 'as specified in these

Gold's relevance as asset class to rise: CEA

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

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

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



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

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

EU, India will sign FTA by year-end

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

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

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



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

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



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

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

Manufacturing activity slows to a 14-month low in February

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

Keep existing FY interest rate at 8.25%: EPFO board

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



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

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

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

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



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

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

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

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



pany's current activity is unclear. The amount includes

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

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

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

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



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

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

Mittal's \$976 million Airtel stake sale

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

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