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UNIQUE GIFT OF KRIYAYOGA ASHRAM AND RESEARCH INSTITUTE TO GIVE IMPETUS TO WORLD BUILDING AND HUMAN DEVELOPMENT.

## Congress gave Muslims quota via backdoor in Karnataka: PM Modi

**Congress's decision to declare all Muslims in Karnataka as "backward", on a par with OBCs**



**BHOPAL:** PM Modi on Thursday accused Congress of including Muslims as a whole in the OBC list in Karnataka "through the backdoor" and promoting reservation on religious lines in violation of the Constitution. He said when the Constitution was drafted, to protect the unity and integrity of the country, it was decided that there won't be religion-based reservation. He said Congress's decision to declare all Muslims in Karnataka as "backward", on a par with OBCs, was inimical to the interests of backward classes. "Babasaheb Ambedkar, the architect of the Constitution, was against reservation on

religious lines, but Congress... stabbed him in the back," PM said. "Reservation to Muslims was unlawful. It's an alarm bell for OBC communities of the entire country," he said. Responding to Modi's statement, Karnataka CM Siddaramaiah wrote on X, "It's true that in Karnataka, Muslims have been included in the 2B category for backward classes. This is not something done now. It has been based on the reports of Backward Classes Commissions. This reservation has been in place for the past three decades." Neither the BJP gov't previously in power in the state, nor the Narendra Modi-led

Union gov't that has been in power for the past 10 years has questioned this reservation. Moreover, no one, including BJP, has challenged it in court," Karnataka CM Siddaramaiah wrote on X. He was reacting to a comment of PM Modi on reservation in Karnataka. "Overnight, all Muslims, regardless of wealth or social status, were turned into OBCs by the signing of a piece of paper. OBCs reservation rights were snatched clandestinely and illegally and given to Muslims. This was against the principles of Babasaheb Ambedkar," PM said in Morena on his second day of electioneering in Madhya

Pradesh. National Commission for Backward Classes (NCBC) chairperson Hansraj Ahir took cognisance of the matter and summoned the Karnataka chief secretary for not submitting the report based on which Muslims were included in the OBC category on the grounds of religion. In Morena, Modi was relentless in his attack on Congress. "Congress wants to implement the Karnataka model in the entire country. Congress hatched a conspiracy against Scheduled Castes, tribals and backward classes. On Dec 19, 2011, during the Congress-led UPA regime, the Union gov't brought a note in the cabinet meeting to cut into the 27% OBC reservation and make place for religion-based quota. Two days later, gov't issued an order which was later quashed by Andhra Pradesh High Court. Congress went to Supreme Court but got no relief," he said.

## EC sends notices to BJP, Cong chiefs over Modi, Rahul speeches

**NEW DELHI:** Setting a new trend to make party presidents accountable for alleged violation of the model code of conduct by their candidates and star campaigners, Election Commission on Thursday issued notices to the chiefs of BJP and Congress seeking their response to alleged violations made by Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Congress leader Rahul Gandhi. EC sought their replies by Monday morning. Though the EC notice didn't mention the names of PM Modi and Rahul, saying it has received representations alleging violation of poll code by "some of the star campaigners" in speeches made during poll campaigns, complaints against them have been attached with the notices sent to BJP president JP Nadda and his Congress counterpart Mallikarjun Kharge. While Congress has complained against the PM, BJP has lodged a complaint against



Rahul seeking action. Congress had complained against Modi's speech at Rajasthan's Banswara over the weekend, in which he said the opposition party plans to "redistribute wealth to infiltrators" and made a reference to Muslims. It had also complained about Modi referring to the Congress manifesto as one with "Muslim League imprint" and alleging that the party plans to divide the country should it win the elections. In its complaint against Rahul filed last week, BJP alleged that Congress had made "derisive and obnoxious" utterances

against the PM. Besides, it had also cited instances of Rahul's speech in Kottayam (Kerala), in which he said, "... how can you tell the people of not to speak Tamil (and) the people of Kerala not to speak Malayalam... BJP does this with language, place, caste, and religion... whenever they get an opportunity, they divide the country..." The EC notices and orders available on its websites show that on two earlier occasions — in separate cases involving Congress spokesperson Supriya Shrinete and party MP Randeep Singh

**Cong: Govt wants to scrap SC/ST quota**

**NEW DELHI:** Expressing alarm at a three-year delay in conducting the 2021 decadal census, Congress on Thursday alleged Modi gov't of wanting to scrap SC/ST reservations and said that is the intent behind the unprecedented postponement in holding the national headcount. Congress also accused PM Modi of lying, saying 'inheritance tax' is not on the party agenda and it was Rajiv Gandhi who ended the said tax in 1985, while BJP netas, led by Arun Jaitley and Jayant Sinha.

## WhatsApp to Delhi HC: Will exit India if told to break encryption

**WhatsApp** has told the Delhi High Court that the messaging platform will effectively shut down in India if it is forced to break message encryption. The Meta-owned company said that the end-to-end encryption protects user privacy by ensuring only the sender and recipient can access message content. "As a platform, we are saying, if we are told to break encryption, then WhatsApp goes," Tejas Karia, appearing for WhatsApp, told a Division Bench. Karia said that people use WhatsApp because of the privacy features that it offers. WhatsApp has more than 400 million users in India, making it the largest market for the platform. "India (is) a country that's at the forefront... You're leading the world in terms of how people and businesses have embraced messaging," Meta CEO Mark Zuckerberg had said in a virtual address at Meta's annual event last year. WhatsApp and Facebook parent company Meta are challenging the Information Technology (Intermediary Guidelines and Digital Media Ethics Code) Rules 2021, which requires them to trace chats and identify message originators. The companies argue that the law weakens encryption and violates user privacy protections under the Indian Constitution. The messaging platform argued that the rules undermines encryption of content as well as the privacy of the users. It also violates fundamental rights of the users guaranteed under Articles 14, 19, and 21 of the Constitution of India. "There is no such rule anywhere else in the world. Not even in Brazil. We will have to keep a complete chain and we don't know which messages will be asked to be decrypted.

## Shah targets Naveen government, calls his tenure Odisha's 'lost years'

**BHUBANESHWAR:** Union home minister Amit Shah on Thursday launched a scathing attack on Odisha CM Naveen Patnaik's governance, describing his uninterrupted tenure since 2000 as the "lost years". Addressing an election rally in Sonepur, Shah urged people to oust Naveen's BJD gov't and help form the state's first BJP gov't for accelerated



development. "Some people are studying the development of all states in the country. They had asked about the country, I asked them about the situation in Odisha. They said the 20-odd years of Naveen

babu's gov't are lost years in the state's history. Odisha remains at the same place where it was 20 years ago," Shah said. Shah targets Naveen gov't, calls his tenure Odisha's 'lost years' Asserting confidence in BJP's prospects, Shah said the party would win at least 20 of the 21 Lok Sabha seats in the state and get the majority in the assembly.

## SC verdict today on 100% EVM-VVPAT verification

**NEW DELHI:** Supreme Court will deliver its verdict on Friday on petitions seeking 100% matching of votes cast on EVMs with VVPATs. A bench of Justices Sanjiv Khanna and Dipankar Datta is to pass the order. The SC website says there will be two separate judgments penned by the two judges. The petitioners have backed their demand by raising suspicion over the probability of hacking and



manipulation of machines and sought that 100% matching of EVM counts and VVPATs will help allay all doubts. During the previous hearing on April 18, the bench had said that it would intervene if there was

any possibility to improve the present system of voting and counting, but made it clear that it cannot pass orders pertaining to EVMs only on the basis of suspicion of their hacking and manipulation. The bench had virtually ruled out a return to the ballot paper, saying there was a huge drawback with that system and the use of EVMs the test of time with increasing voting percentage.

## The experience of the five sheaths in the inner being through Kriyayoga meditation is the Panchkoshi Parikrama: Swami Shri Yogi Satyam

**Prayagraj:** In Kriyayoga meditation, the seeker experiences the five sheaths in the inner being. He experiences that his form is a subtle universe in which the visible and invisible world is situated in a supernatural form. Through the practice of Kriyayoga, the seeker experiences the supernatural presence of all creations like sky, air, fire, water, earth, plants, animals, humans, gods and goddesses etc. in his form. This is the experience of the five sheaths within oneself which is called Panchkoshi Parikrama. The meaning of Panchkoshi



Parikrama is that a person concentrates on the five sheaths (atramaaya, pranamaya, manomaya, gyanamaya, anandamaya) present in his form and experiences unity with the visible and invisible world. In Kriya Yoga meditation, when the practitioner awakens the Annamaya, Pranamaya, Manomaya, Gyanmaya and Anandmaya sheaths present in his nature, he becomes completely one with the plant world, animal world, human beings and gods and goddesses and finally experiences the emptiness of distance between himself and the Supreme Being. The aim of all creations

in the universe is to attain the knowledge of the form, that is, to realize one's omnipresent, infinite and Supreme Being. In the supernatural act of the manifestation of the omnipresent, omniscient existence of God, the transformation of air, water, stones etc. takes place into plants, animals into humans, humans into gods and goddesses and finally the transformation of gods and goddesses into the Supreme Being takes place. This is the manifestation of the supernatural state of becoming one from many.

## ED attaches Rs 74cr assets of Sanjay Raut associate in Patra Chawl case

**NEW DELHI:** ED on Wednesday said it had attached properties worth Rs 74 crore of Pravin Raut, a close associate of Shiv Sena (Uddhav) Rajya Sabha MP Sanjay Raut, in a money laundering case related to the redevelopment of Patra Chawl. in Goregaon, Mumbai. Both Pravin Raut and Sanjay Raut were arrested in the case in 2022 and are out on bail. Total attachment in the case has gone up to Rs 117 crore. The latest attached properties consist of several land parcels of Pravin Raut and his close associates in and around Palghar, Dapoli, Raigad and Thane. ED had earlier attached properties worth Rs 11 crore.

## Government won't resort to 'rob Peter to pay Paul' policy, AG tells SC

**NEW DELHI:** Attorney general R Venkataramani told SC on Thursday that government would never adopt the Marxist egalitarian policy of 'rob Peter to pay Paul' in achieving the ideals of distributing community resources for the common good envisaged under Article 39(b) in Directive Principles of State Policy of the Constitution. The law officer's statement echoed prima facie views of a nine-judge bench of CJI D Y Chandrachud and Justices Hrishikesh Roy, B V Nagarathna, S Dhulia, J B Pardiwala, Manoj Misra, R Bindal, S C Sharma, and A G Masih, which Wednesday had said it would not go by

Marxist interpretation of Article 39(b) to include privately owned properties as part of community resources. The AG built on the SC's remark that in certain circumstances, community resources would include privately owned natural resources, such as forests, lakes and mines. He said the two phrases — 'community resources' and 'public good' — were intrinsically connected and no private property could be acquired through a law, seeking to advance the objectives of Article 39(b), unless it satisfied the 'distribution for common good' purpose. "The overarching and underlying principle governing distribution is furtherance of common good.



## 20 Students of AESL Prayagraj secure over 99 Percentile in JEE Main

Prayagraj: Aakash Educational Services Limited (AESL), the national leader in test preparatory services, proudly unveils the exceptional achievement of its 20 Prayagraj-based students who scored 99 percentile and above in the Joint Entrance Examination (JEE) Main 2024 second session.

Among the notable achievers, Zaman Husain has secured 99.97 percentile (100 percentile in Physics) and AIR 500. Additionally, Meher Gupta secured 99.91, Aryan Soni 99.89, Utkarsh Singh 99.87, Samridhi Suman 99.78 and Naitik Jaiswal 99.57 percentile. Also, 14 other students have secured 99 and above percentile.

Their stellar performance not only underscores their unwavering

commitment but also brings to the fore their profound grasp of the subjects tested in one of India's most challenging examinations. The unveiling of their extraordinary accomplishment by the National Testing Agency late night on April 24, 2024 has set a new benchmark of excellence.

Enrolled in Aakash's renowned classroom program, these exceptional students embarked on a rigorous journey to conquer the formidable IIT JEE, recognized globally as one of the toughest entrance examinations. Their ascent is a testament to their relentless dedication in mastering core concepts and adhering to a disciplined study regimen. Expressing their heartfelt gratitude, they acknowledged, "Our success is in-

debted to Aakash for its meticulously crafted content and coaching, pivotal in our journey. Without their unwavering guidance,

(AESL), extends his heartfelt congratulations to the students, emphasizing, "Their remarkable performance is a testament to

success in their future endeavors."

JEE (Main) is structured in two sessions to provide students with multiple op-

tional Institutes of Technology (IITs) and other Centrally-aided engineering colleges across India. Participation in JEE Main is a prerequisite for appearing in JEE Advanced.

Aakash offers comprehensive IIT-JEE coaching through various course formats tailored for high school and higher secondary school students. Recently, Aakash has intensified its focus on developing Computer-Based Training. Its innovative iTutor platform delivers recorded video lectures, enabling students to engage in self-paced learning and catch up on missed sessions. Moreover, mock tests simulate real exam conditions, equipping students with the necessary familiarity and confidence to tackle the examination effectively.



mastering numerous subjects within a condensed timeframe would have been an insurmountable challenge."

Dr. HR Rao, Regional Director, Aakash Educational Services Limited

AESL'S commitment and determination to providing students with comprehensive coaching and innovative learning solutions, empowering them to excel in competitive examinations. We wish them continued

opportunities to enhance their scores. While JEE Advanced exclusively facilitates admissions to the prestigious Indian Institutes of Technology (IITs), JEE Main serves as the gateway to numerous Na-

## Bahuguna led proletarian class: Varshney

Prayagraj: Former spokesperson of UP Congress Committee Kishore Varshney has described former Chief Minister of the state Hemwati Nandan Bahuguna as a leader of the proletariat class. While garlanding the statue in the morning on his 105th birth anniversary at Fire Brigade Square, he said that Bahuguna, who made his mark as a labor leader, was very popular among students, youth, teachers, minorities and intellectuals. Along with the state, he was also known for the development of Prayagraj. As Union Minister of Communications, Petroleum and Chemicals, he did many things for the benefit of the common man.

## Accused arrested, 10 liters of illegal raw liquor recovered

Prayagraj: Accused by police station Holagarh police team Lal Saroj son of Ram Kishore, resident of Jhawni, Pura Rajapur Chaubara, police station Holagarh, on 24.04.2024, Pura Pulia of Jhawni under police station Holagarh area arrested accused with 10 liters of illegal raw liquor. On the basis of the above arrest/seizure, FIR No. 69/24 Section 60 Excise Act was registered at Holagarh police station and necessary action was taken as per rules.

## Bullion businessman committed suicide by jumping into river

Deceased has two children

Mirzapur: Police discovered the body of a youth who jumped into the Ganga from the Chunar Pakka Bridge under Chunar Kotwali area late on Wednesday night from the Ganga river with the help of local divers. After the post-mortem, the police handed over the body of the deceased to the family. Rohit Seth (35), son of Brijesh Kumar Seth, resident of Saraynandan Khojwa of Varanasi district, had jumped into the Ganga from the Chunar Pakka bridge on Wednesday night. Chunar police took the help of local divers. His body was recovered from the Ganga river on Thursday. The deceased was the only child of his parents. He got married eight years ago. Deceased's wife Priyanka had gone to her maternal home for her sister's wedding. The deceased has two children Ansh (7) and Aanvi (2). The family members who reached the information told that he used to run a gold and silver jewelry shop. Police completed the post-mortem on the complaint of uncle Rajesh Kumar Seth. Chunar Kotwal Narendra Kumar Singh said that due to a dispute with his wife, Varanasi resident Rohit Seth committed suicide by jumping from a concrete bridge. The body was recovered with the help of divers and legal action is being taken.

## To cross 400, 300 votes will have to be increased at every booth

Varanasi: Union Home and Cooperation Minister Amit Shah inaugurated the Central Election Office of Prime Minister Narendra Modi in Varanasi, Uttar Pradesh. All the activities of the 2024 Lok Sabha elections will be operated from this central election office. On this occasion, Amit Shah gave this message to the workers that, 'In the last 10 years, the people of Kashi, the city of knowledge, art and salvation, have always welcomed Modi ji with open arms.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi has handed over the responsibility of preparations for the 2024 Lok Sabha elections to Amit Shah, who took the Bharatiya Janata Party from zero to the top. The world knows that when Shah decides, he makes the impossible possible. The Modi-Shah duo has strengthened the BJP even in those parts of the country where the BJP was weak. Varanasi is still the parliamentary constituency of Modi ji, the beloved leader of the masses, so the victory of the BJP is certain there. The whole country knows that the far-sightedness, patriotism, hard work and decision making ability of Modi Ji and Amit Shah is unmatched. In the last 10 years, many such decisions were taken which no one had even tried to touch since independence.

Amit Shah, the Chanakya of Indian politics, made it clear to the workers that the responsibility of realizing Modi Ji's target of crossing 400 lies on the BJP workers of the entire country. The target of crossing 400 can be achieved only by an increase of 300 votes at every booth. The workers will also be responsible for conveying the achievements of the Modi government to every voter. Ever since Modi Ji has chosen Kashi as his parliamentary constituency, Kashi has been transformed.

## BSP declares 3 more candidates in UP

Placed its bet on Thakur Prasad Yadav in Rae Bareilly

Lucknow: Bahujan Samaj Party (BSP) on Thursday released the eighth list of candidates in Uttar Pradesh. While the names of three candidates were announced in this list, BSP has placed its bet on Thakur Prasad Yadav in Rae Bareilly. Brijesh Kumar Sonkar from Bahraich reserved seat, Qamar Hayat Ansari from Ambedkar Nagar Lok Sabha seat and Thakur Yadav from Rae Bareilly seat were announced. Thakur Prasad Yadav is called the cadre leader of BSP. With the entry of Thakur, who has also tried his luck in the assembly elections from BSP, will be successful in getting its base vote in Rae Bareilly.

## Rivals set their respective huts on fire, several injured in group clash; 4 apprehended

Police team has arrested four people from the spot

Kanpur: Five people were injured during a dispute between two parties in village Pachor Majra Bhauwapur of Chaubepur police station area on Thursday. Not only this, both sides set each other's hut on fire. Police arrived on information and admitted the injured to the hospital. Police have arrested four people from the spot. Police force has been deployed to maintain peace in the village. Additional Deputy Commissioner of Police West Vijendra Dwivedi said that five people were injured during a fight between two parties over possession of land on Thursday in village Pachor Majra Bhauwapur of Chaubepur police station area. Injured have been admitted to the hospital for treatment. The police team has arrested four people from the spot. Vijendra Dwivedi said that earlier too there had been a dispute between the two parties, in which the police has also taken legal action. Both the parties have also filled the bond, in which it was promised that both the parties would not dispute. But again both the sides clashed with each other. The bond amount paid by both the parties will now be recovered. During interrogation, the villagers said that both the parties themselves set fire to their huts to strengthen their respective positions. However, investigation into the matter is ongoing. Further legal action will be taken on the basis of facts and evidence.

## Abhilasha addresses Matr Shakti

Prayagraj: Outgoing Mayor of Prayagraj Abhilasha Gupta Nandi ji participated as the chief guest in the huge women's conference organized by Bharatiya Janata Party Uttar Pradesh in support of BJP candidate from 44-Akbarpur Lok Sabha of Kanpur district Shri Devendra Singh Bhole ji and addressed by lighting the lamp. In her address, she said - Addressing the Matr Shakti (mother powers) present in large numbers on the said occasion, giving detailed information about the work done by the Modi government in the last 10 years and in the last 7

years in UP, the double engine government has done all-round development in

people trust only the guarantee of Modi ji. Along with this, by pressing the lotus



the state and has made the country and the state clean. It has been presented in a beautiful and supernatural manner, due to which

flower button for Akbarpur Lok Sabha candidate Shri Devendra Singh Bhole ji, he was made victorious with huge votes and by making

Modi ji the Prime Minister again, he called for Modi ji's guarantee to reach every poor. On this occasion, senior BJP leaders, former minister Premlata Katiyar ji, District President Deepu Pandey ji, Mahila Morcha State Vice President Mrs. Rita Shastri ji, State Minister Mrs. Vijaya Tiwari ji, Lok Sabha in-charge Mrs. Preeti Tiwari ji, District President Mahila Morcha Mrs. Saroj Singh ji and Anita Tripathi. Regional Vice President Bundelkhand Anita Gupta, Assembly Chief Seema Tiwari, BJP Mahila Morcha officials, Mandal Presidents and maternal powers were present.

## Sanjeevani Welfare Society hosts SWS Arts meet

Prayagraj: On behalf of Sanjeevani Welfare Society, a SWS Arts meeting was organized at the center of Dr. Rahul Shukla in which the chief guest was Mr. Shrawan Shukla, Secretary of Sanjeevani Welfare Society and SWS Arts director and actor Saqib Siddiqui was present! In this meeting, Dr. Shrawan Shukla appreciated the growing work of SWS Arts. He said that the directors of SWS Arts, Saqib Siddiqui and Annu Vishwakarma. The efforts

that we make to make people aware about AYUSH system through our work are commendable. Shrawan Shukla said that it is expected from all the people present in the meeting that whoever has been given the responsibility of SWS will fulfill his responsibility well and by working in SWS Arts films or web series, they can enhance their talent well. Arts Director Saqib Siddiqui said that along with this, an awareness campaign will be run among the people for the



upcoming elections and will appeal to them to cast their

vote because it is our democratic right which everyone

should celebrate like a festival and use their vote. Try

to strengthen the country by doing taxes. Saqib Siddiqui appealed to the people to vote. In the meeting, Annu Vishwakarma was appointed as the Secretary of SWS Arts and Dr. Rahul Shukla was appointed as the advisor. Among the people present in the meeting were Dr. Pankaj Yadav, Dr. Rahul Shukla, Shreya Mehta, Tanjim Khan, Mithlesh Vishwakarma, Manoj Rajput, Dr. Sharwant Shukla, Sarjit Gautam, Deepak Rajput etc. were present.

## Jawa Yezdi Motorcycles brings its Mega Service Camp

Varanasi: Jawa Yezdi Motorcycles is set to extend its highly successful Mega Service Camp to Varanasi, Uttar Pradesh. Following the successful phase I of service camps across states, the phase II of service camps will further expand to more cities. This event will take place in

health check-up and a free replacement of select parts. Leading original equipment suppliers, including Motul, Amaron, and Ceat Tyres, will be actively participating to assist customers. In a continued commitment to long-term customer satisfaction, Jawa Yezdi Motorcycles is offering compli-

bikes by the end of June. Looking ahead, Jawa will organize Mega Service camps (Phase II) in multiple cities across the country in the coming months. The next camp will be organized in Nagpur, Dehradun, Faridabad and Indore. This initiative reaffirms the brand's commitment to pri-



Varanasi from April 19th to April 20th, exclusively catering to Jawa motorcycle owners of the 2019 and 2020 models in the region. The service camp will be held at: Shree Enterprises -S 25/272-1 Mahaveer mandir road Bhojubeer, Varanasi, Uttar Pradesh -221002"

As part of the camp, owners of 2019-2020 Jawa motorcycles are entitled to a comprehensive vehicle

mentary extended warranties based on the motorcycles' health evaluation. Additionally, a designated zone will be set up for owners interested in upgrading their motorcycles to assess the exchange value.

Building on the success of phase I service camps, which have already serviced over 6250 Jawa motorcycles, Jawa anticipates servicing around 10,000

oritzing customer satisfaction and providing an unmatched ownership experience.

Owners of Jawa Yezdi Motorcycles are encouraged to reserve their slots at the nearest brand dealership. Don't miss the opportunity to ensure your motorcycle receives top-notch care and experience the commitment to customer satisfaction firsthand.

## Uttar Pradesh Pioneers India's Energy Revolution with Prepaid Smart Meters

Varanasi: The adoption of prepaid smart meters marks a paradigm shift in the management and consumption of energy. As part of the government's ambitious plan to replace 25 crore conventional meters with smart equivalents, the move towards prepaid smart meters holds the promise of enhanced consumer services, improved billing efficiency and thereby delivering tangible benefits for both consumers and utilities alike. Uttar Pradesh is spearheading a transformative shift in the energy sector, leading the nation with its pioneering deployment of prepaid smart meters.

Mr. R K Chaudhary, Vice President of the India Industries Association, emphasised the benefits of smart meters for consumers and utilities, stating, "Smart meters empower industries with real-time insights, enabling optimized operations, cost reduction, and enhanced efficiency through AMI, IoT, and AI. They streamline processes, minimize errors, ensure

consistent energy supply, and encourage energy-efficient practices aligned with sustainability goals."

Commenting on the widespread installation of prepaid smart meters, a senior official from Purvanchal Vidyut Vitran Nigam Limited stated, "This technology is crucial for driving operational efficiency while significantly enhancing the overall customer experience. It offers increased transparency, empowering consumers to track, monitor, and control their power consumption."

As of January 2024, India has installed 8.6 million smart consumer meters, with 3.02 million installed during 2023-24 alone, nearly doubling the previous year's installations. With the government mandating a complete smart metering system by 2025, replacing all 250 million existing meters, the pace of smart meter awards and installations is set to accelerate. Of the 222 million smart meters sanctioned, around 100 million have been awarded as of December 2023, and approximately 123

million more are expected to be awarded soon, presenting significant opportunities for meter manufacturers and AMISPs. Bihar leads with 2,609,485 installations, followed by Assam with 1,200,619, Uttar Pradesh with 1,186,953, Madhya Pradesh with 702,020, and Haryana with 853,683 smart meters installed.

These advanced devices not only offer real-time insights to the discoms but also provide consumers consumption analysis and control, enabling them to make informed decisions and shape a more sustainable energy future. Uttar Pradesh's embrace of prepaid smart meters is in line with India's broader power sector reforms, showcasing a commitment to efficiency and innovation. Uttar Pradesh's proactive approach towards energy sustainability solidifies its position as a trailblazer in the field, setting a precedent for the entire nation and propelling India towards a greener and more efficient energy landscape.



# Commr expressed unhappiness with substandard work seen in road construction

## DIRECTED THE APPROPRIATE OFFICIALS TO RECTIFY IT

Prayagraj: Divisional Commissioner Vijay Vishwas Pant today inspected the various works being done in view of Mahakumbh 2025 in the presence of all the concerned officials. First of all, the works of constructing 50 KLD fecal sludge co-treatment plant in the existing 16 MLD Jhansi STP complex were inspected by Jal Nigam. During the inspection, third party inspection of the material being used in the works was done to further improve the reinforcement of rafts of the retaining wall. Instructions were given to deploy manpower in two shifts to con-

duct continuous investigation and complete the work within the stipulated time limit. In the same sequence, the works related to the sewer line being built towards Jhansi were also inspected. During inspection, instructions were given to execute backfilling work in compacted layer sequentially as per code provision, deploy manpower in two shifts and indicate the instructions more clearly in the site-order book.

He also inspected the work being done to connect the 2700 meter long black ramp to Chhatnag Interlocking Approach Road, under which in-



structions were given to immediately dispose of the rejected GSB from the site and maintain stage passing register, checklist, ma-

terial testing report/register at the site. Given. The works of 110 meter long concrete ghat being built at Dashashwamedh Ghat

were also inspected and instructions were given to set up a testing laboratory at the site for mandatory testing of construction

materials. Instructions were also given to conduct concrete cube test in TPIA laboratory to evaluate the compressive strength of concrete used at the site. Divisional Commissioner also inspected the construction work of the road being built from Teliarganj Shivkuti Police Check Post to the banks of Ganga. During the inspection, the thickness of the lean concrete and the lap length of the drain steel were found to be sub-standard, on which he expressed his displeasure and directed the concerned officials to get it rectified as soon as possible.

## Drain tapping and treatment works reviewed

Prayagraj: With a view to making the water of Ganga and Yamuna rivers more clean and pure in Prayagraj, the progress review of various drain tapping and treatment works is being reviewed today by Secretary, Namami Gange and Rural Water Supply Department and Manag-



ing Director, Uttar Pradesh Jal Nigam Rural Dr. Rajshekhar and It was held under the joint chairmanship of Divisional Commissioner Shri Vijay Vishwas Pant in the Gandhi Auditorium located in the Divisional Commissioner's office. In the meeting, while discussing point wise all the works being done for drain tapping and treatment, instructions were given to complete all the works within the prescribed time limit and it was asked to ensure the BOD and COD levels in water as per the standards at every place.

## MP polls: DCP Shraddha reviews security at border

Prayagraj: Deputy Commissioner of Police, Yamunanagar Zone Commissionerate Prayagraj, in view of the peaceful and safe conduct of the Lok Sabha elections to be held in the state of Madhya Pradesh, checked the barrier of Yamunanagar Zone Prayagraj located on the inter-state border of Uttar Pradesh and Madhya Pradesh. Deputy Commissioner of Police Yamunanagar



Zone Commissionerate Prayagraj Shraddha Narendra Pandey, in view of the peaceful and safe conduct of the Lok Sabha elections to be held in the state of Madhya Pradesh tomorrow on 26.04.2024, Yamunanagar Zone Prayagraj, located on the interstate border of Uttar Pradesh and Madhya Pradesh. The barriers were checked and in view of the upcoming Lok Sabha elections, the campaign being run under "Operation Clean" and the orders and instructions of the Election Commission were informed and necessary guidelines were given to the concerned for strict compliance.

## ICAR publication exhibition inaugurated at SHUATS

Prayagraj: The ICAR (Indian Council of Agricultural Research) Publication Exhibition was inaugurated today at the Central Library of Sam Higginbottom University of Agriculture, Technology and

Sciences (SHUATS), Prayagraj. The event was inaugurated by the Pro Vice-Chancellor (Admin) Prof. (Dr.) Biswaroop Mehera, as the chief guest. In his inaugural address, Prof. Mehera

spoke about the importance of Libraries & agricultural research. He commended ICAR for its efforts in disseminating knowledge, promoting innovation in agriculture and upholding this kind of Exhibition. The exhibition has provided showcases of latest publications and research outputs in the field of agriculture. The ICAR Publication Exhibition is a valuable opportunity for students, researchers, faculty, to learn about the latest advancements in agricultural research. Librarian Christophar Sudhir George, Sam Higginbottom University of Agriculture, Technology and Sciences (SHUATS) highlighted the significance of the exhibition. During the exhibition a large number of students, research scholars and faculty members were present.



Sciences (SHUATS), Prayagraj. The event was inaugurated by the Pro Vice-Chancellor (Admin) Prof. (Dr.) Biswaroop Mehera, as the chief guest. In his inaugural address, Prof. Mehera

spoke about the importance of Libraries & agricultural research. He commended ICAR for its efforts in disseminating knowledge, promoting innovation in agriculture and upholding this kind of Exhibition. The exhibition has provided showcases of latest publications and research outputs in the field of agriculture. The ICAR Publication Exhibition is a valuable opportunity for students, researchers, faculty, to learn about the latest advancements in agricultural research. Librarian Christophar Sudhir George, Sam Higginbottom University of Agriculture, Technology and Sciences (SHUATS) highlighted the significance of the exhibition. During the exhibition a large number of students, research scholars and faculty members were present.

## Grand closing of 10 day painting workshop in Chandrashekhar Azad Park

Prayagraj: The 10-day summer painting art and craft workshop organized by Samman Culture Art Foundation UP organization concluded on Thursday. Chief guest, patron of the organization, Ram Kailash Kushwaha, engineer, North Central Railway, Prayagraj, special guest, Satish

Maurya, Control Room Police Lines, Prayagraj, welcomed the guest, artist Neeraj Kumar Kushwaha, secretary of the organization. The Chief Guest, after seeing the photo display of the artwork made by the participating artists in the workshop organized by the organization on the life ideal of Mahatma Buddha, said that this artwork is clearly visible in the light of his feelings and his simple form of expression, as if it is a reflection of his life. Have meaningful results. Workshop coordinator Ravindra Kushwaha, former executive member, State Lalit Kala Academy, Lucknow, said that in the 10-day workshop, 10 trainers trained artist children. The trainers included Shumbul

Parveen, Shubham Kushwaha, Rishi Srivastava, Poonam Kushwaha, Ashish Kumar, Ratri Maurya. A painting competition was also conducted and according to the judge of the competition, artist Qasim Farooqui got first place. Pratiksha Singh II. Krutika Srivastava was the third Shubhi

Kushwaha, she was awarded with certificate and medal by the organization. Participating artists included Poonam Pandey, Anamika Kushwaha, Shubhi Kushwaha, Rukhsar Fatima, Upadhyay, Kajal Jaiswal, Saanvi Mohan, Palak Singh, Pramod Bharti, Arshiya Bano, Shubhi Farooqui, Ayash, Atharva Kushwaha, and Samarth Kushwaha participated, the organization wishes a bright future for all these participants.



## Bahuguna never compromised on principles, says son Shekhar on his b'anniv

### TRIBUTE MEET HELD AT FIRE BRIGADE CROSSING

Prayagraj: On the 105th anniversary of former Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Hemwati Nandan Bahuguna's birth, Congressmen and people from all backgrounds paid extravagant tributes to him. In the morning, his son Shekhar Bahuguna and son-in-law PC Joshi, as well as others present, paid respect by garlanding Bahuguna's statue.

Many top politicians from various parties, as well as influential individuals, paid respect to Bahuguna's memory. On this day, a 'tribute meet' was held at Fire Brigade Crossing, where his son, Shekhar Bahuguna, and his wife Vinita Bahuguna, and

INDIA alliance candidate Ujjawal Raman Singh offered floral tributes. On this day, an all-religious prayer meeting was also organized. Speaking on the event, AICC member Shekhar Bahuguna highlighted Hemvati Nandan Bahuguna's contributions to the city's overall growth. He stated that the late Bahuguna's personality resembled a combination of Mahatma Gandhi and Netaji Subhash Chandra Bose. Bahuguna ji, like Gandhi, was a great proponent of the idea of religious equality and unity in diversity, and he, like Netaji Subhash Chandra Bose, had a strong drive and aptitude to take

on new problems. He stated that following indepen-



dence, numerous leaders changed parties on occasion during legislative history. Some abandoned one

party for reasons of principle and joined another,

Until 1980, no MP resigned from Parliament by switching parties. Hemwati Nandan Bahuguna, the working president of the All India Congress Committee in 1980, was the country's first leader to do this. He was elected as an MP from Garhwal on a Congress ticket. He stated that Bahuguna's decision to form the cabinet immediately following the elections was due to disagreements with Indira Gandhi, and that after a few months, he resigned from the Congress, stating that he was also resigning from the MP membership of the party on whose symbol he had won the elections on moral

grounds. He resigned from his position as an MP. There was no anti-defection law in the nation at the time, and Bahuguna was under no need to resign from his MP post owing to defection law, but he did so out of morals. He described Bahuguna as a brave leader who never compromised his ideals. "He never gave up, no matter what the cost was, and he never wavered from his ideals. When he died on March 17, 1989, the country's prominent writer Khushwant Singh wrote in homage that, after Gandhi and Nehru, India had lost a real secular leader," he opined prior to signing off.

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## 4 students selected in placement drive in Utthan Shambhunath Institution

Prayagraj: Shaivya Rai, a B.Pharm final year student in Utthan Shambhunath Institution, was selected for the post of Management Trainee in Cipla Company, in the same sequence, BBA final year student in Suvaidha Group of Company Sakshi Mishra and Harshita Gupta were selected for the post of Sales Associate, and BCA final year student Harshita Kesarwani was selected for the post of Trainee Associate in IGT Solutions Pvt. Ltd. On this occasion, President of the institute Dr. Dharendra Kumar and Secretary Dr. Kaushal Kumar Tiwari were present. They congratulated the selected students. Dr. Malay Tiwari (Director SIM and Coordinator), Prof. JP Mishra (Dean Training and Placement), Prof. Pankaj Tiwari (Head CRC) congratulated all the selected students, on this occasion Dr. Nitin Dwivedi, Prateek Kumar Singh, Kumkum Shukla, Suchi Srivastava etc. were present.



## PRSU to destroy 25 lakh answer sheets from odd semester exams

Prayagraj: Prof Rajendra Singh (Raju Bhaiya) State University (PRSU), Prayagraj, is set to destroy around 25 lakh answer sheets from its odd semester exams. The university administration has issued a notice stating that the process for destroying answer sheets from the odd semester of the 2023-24 academic session will commence soon. The university has requested information on RTI applications and court cases related to these answer sheets by April 26. Based on the information gathered, some answer sheets will be preserved separately, while the rest will be destroyed, according to university officials. The university has completed a new warehouse this year, with a capacity to store 80 lakh answer sheets. Answer sheets not slated for destruction

will be stored in this facility. PRSU, formerly known as Allahabad State University, was established in 2016. It has 703 affiliated colleges, including 373 in Prayagraj, 79 in Kaushambi, 80 in Fatehpur, and 171 in Pratapgarh. The vice chancellor, Prof. Akhilesh Kumar Singh, mentioned that answer sheets are typically destroyed within three to six months of exam results being declared. With 5.25 lakh students enrolled across various courses in the university and its affiliated colleges, the odd semester exams alone produce about 25 lakh answer sheets. He added that the warehouse currently stores 25 lakh answer sheets from odd semester exams, another 25 lakh from even semester exams, and an additional set of answer sheets from a previous semester. This brings the total count of stored answer sheets in the warehouse to 75 lakh.

## Curtains draw over Addl Project Director's 2-day inspection

### Gave necessary instructions for improvement

Prayagraj: In order to understand the academic quality and actual implementation of the financial process and system, in order to understand the instructions given by the Uttar Pradesh Government, Additional Project Director Rajendra Prasad inspected more than half a dozen different categories in two days. Schools were inspected and reviewed. The 2-day tour program of the Additional Project Director concluded today at Samagra Shiksha Abhiyan Office Mumfordganj

Prayagraj in which he held a joint review meeting of Block Education Officers, Accounts Officer and SRG with District Basic Education Officer Praveen Kumar Tiwari and DIOS. In this series, the schools of development block Kaurihar were first inspected on Wednesday in which the quality level of Upper Primary School Fatehpur Kayasthan, Primary School Nawabganj and PM Shri Vidyalyaya Chafri was checked. The inspectors appeared satisfied with the educational quality in

Chafri. On Wednesday, Block ARP Jai Singh, Prabhaskar Sharma,



Shashikant Mishra and Block Education Officer Mauaima and Soraon were also present with you. During this period, Kasturba

Gandhi Girls School, Handia was also inspected. During the second day

School Ulda Manda were inspected on Thursday. In which, along with the educational quality, the financial arrangements were also inspected and the process of bill vouchers and payment was checked. This inspection is being done by the Uttar Pradesh Government to observe the actual ground arrangements of the schools and the scope for improvement in them. Block Education Officer Karchana Om Prakash Mishra was present along with Additional Director in Thursday's inspection program.



## Editorial

### Desperation is pushing Pakistan and Iran to mend ties

**Kautilya**, father of Indian strategy and statecraft, had given a useful advice: If you have two enemies, then become friends with the lesser one temporarily so that you can fully focus on tackling the challenge from the mightier one. It seems Iran and Pakistan have taken a leaf out of his book and that's why after a very rough patch in their relations, they are finally burying the hatchet. Their relations had become sour after a tit-for-tat cross-border strikes early this year over Pakistan's failure to rein in anti-Iranian terror groups in its territory. But after that rocky road, Iran and Pakistan are mending their bilateral ties these days. Iran's President Ebrahim Raisi is currently on a visit to Pakistan. The last Iranian President to do so was President Hassan Rouhani who visited Pakistan in 2016 which was eight long years ago. Raisi's visit is coming closely on the heels of rising tensions in the West Asian region with his country, Iran, caught in a conflict with Israel provoked by the latter's attack on its consulate in Damascus, Syria. Israel's airstrikes had taken out a top commander in Iran's elite Revolutionary Guards Mohammed Reza Zahedi, leading Iran to retaliate with a reciprocal attack. The overwhelming attack included use of hundreds of drones, cruise and ballistic missiles by Iran which were successfully intercepted by Israel's own air-defence mechanism along with some help from the United States, UK and Jordan. All this has happened in the background of the Israeli offensive against Hamas in Gaza after last year's brutal terrorist attack on Israeli civilians. Although Israel's war in Gaza is still going strong, it seems the current round of Iran-Israel escalation is over with Israel choosing to scale back its operation against Iran to avoid a war. Nevertheless, the region is currently fraught with tensions and Iranian President's visit to Pakistan may be seen in the light of the heat that Iran is facing in its neighbourhood. Although Pakistan is traditionally an ally of the Arabs with Saudi Arabia and not Iran its partner of preference in the region, the two still have a commonality and that's their shared love for a pan-Islamic identity. Iran, despite being a Shia-dominated country, shares a close connection with Sunni-dominated Pakistan over matters that concern the Islamic world. In fact, both countries consider religion as central to their national identities and hence have a worldview which is tainted by the spirit of ummah (Islamic global solidarity).

Iran was one of the first countries to officially recognise Pakistan after India's Partition in 1947 and likewise Pakistan had also quickly termed the Islamic revolution in Iran led by Imam Khomeini as legitimate. At a time when Iran is alienated in a troubled neighbourhood, Raisi's visit to a fellow Islamic country is great for optics as well as psychological relief. None of the other Islamic countries have come to Iran's support and that leaves it desperate for some validation for its actions. Meanwhile, Pakistan too has a similar logic in accepting Iran's olive branch. While Pakistan is already surrounded by multiple troubles including a fledgling economic situation, waning popularity of the military leadership, tensions with India as well as the threat from an emboldened Tehrik-e-Taliban, its best bet is to decimate at least one challenge on its border and that includes a back-to-normal relationship with Iran. However, there is another logic to Iran-Pakistan's mutual outreach. This one has to do with economy. American sanctions have crippled Iran's economy with it even facing a back-to-back recession in recent years. The current economic situation is also precarious with a limited appetite in the country for some actual war-waging. Iran does have the largest source of natural gas after Russia.



### Vikrant Massey's 12th Fail: How it became a surprise hit of 2023

There are many reasons as to why Vikrant Massey and Vidhu Vinod Chopra's 12th Fail was a success both theatrically and on the digital platform. It's a must watch and there are enough reasons for it. There are reasons why 12th Fail managed to pass with flying colours despite not having anything that is fancy. **Don't underestimate our audience**

We must understand that viewers have evolved with the OTT giving us the much needed exposure to world cinema. They are no longer happy to be fed on garbage for long. And rightly so because filmmakers have underestimated the cinema appreciation taste



of the audiences for long. So, when we have takers for a misogynistic film like Animal, we have viewers for a brilliant film like 12th Fail. **The brilliant craftsman called Vikrant Massey**  
Vikrant Massey the best actor of 2023 and may be even 2024. His honest portrayal of

IPS officer Manoj Sharma was real and heart wrenching. It is only Massey who could do justice to it. He is the man who with his display of nuanced craft can make you laugh and cry at the same time. No doubt, the film which is now streaming on OTT has miraculously topped IMDb charts. When Indian cinema was thriving on ugly machoism, Vikrant Massey did an honest performance of a hardworking village boy and stole our hearts.

**Vikrant Massey's 12th Fail Inspirational story**  
It's a true story of an underdog, IPS officer Manoj Sharma which gives hope to millions of viewers. A boy coming from

an extremely humble background, who studied in a village and makes it to becoming an IPS officer. His struggles are lessons that many of us coming from a comparatively privileged can learn from. True to its purpose, 12th Fail shows how from being a dog walker, a toilet cleaner to sleeping on the streets, Manoj Kumar Sharma, the real IPS officer has done it all to achieve his dream.

**A Vidhu Vinod Chopra film**  
Nobody knows his craft the way Vidhu Vinod Chopra does. An honest depiction of an underdog, he made sure that 12th Fail is done with the intention of the youth getting inspired.

# Defence spending shoots up as conflicts rise globally: What it means for India

As Ukraine and West Asia remain in active conflict and countries in Europe, East Asia, and also South Asia continue to feel threatened, global military expenditure is expected to continue to rise. Many states announced record military expenditure increases in the last year. The significant increases reflect high security concerns and the need for improving military strength and deterrence. The Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI) has begun releasing data for the year gone by.

India remains among the highly threatened nations. It has two nuclear-armed neighbours, and with both, it has had serious boundary disputes and fought wars. Yet, the emerging global power has maintained a balance between military spending and developmental expenditure. The figures showcase global tensions and hotspots. **Global defence expenditure 2023**  
Total global military expenditure reached an all-time high of \$2443 billion in 2023, an increase of 6.8 per cent in real terms from 2022. This was the steepest year-on-year increase since 2009. The 10 largest spenders in 2023 were led by the United States, China, and Russia, all of whom increased their military spending.

It was the ninth consecutive year of a rise in military spending. Also, it was the first



time since 2009 that military expenditure went up in all five of the geographical regions. Particularly large increases were seen in Europe, Asia, Oceania, and West Asia. Clearly, there is a deterioration in peace and security. As the states prioritise military expenditure and strength, there is a risk of a spiral effect in the neighbourhood.

**Russia-Ukraine dynamics**  
Russia's military spending increased by 24 per cent to an estimated \$109 billion in 2023, marking a 57 per cent rise since 2014, the year that Russia annexed Crimea. The Russian 2023 military expenditure was 16 per cent of total government spending and 5.9 per cent of GDP.

Russia's military and war-related spending is set to rise sharply in 2024 under new federal budget plans for 2024-26 signed into law by President Vladimir Putin in November 2023. The plans suggest that the Russian gov-

ernment is committed to pursuing the war to a successful conclusion. Some have questioned the economic assumptions, though. Russia's rising debt burden has also meant reduced allocations to some key social spending, including housing, education, and healthcare. Ukraine was the 8th largest military spender in 2023. Yearly spending surged 51 per cent to reach \$64.8 billion. It represented 58 per cent of total government annual spending. Interestingly, this spending was 59 per cent of Russia's defence expenditure. Ukraine also received at least \$35 billion in military aid during the year, including \$25.4 billion from the USA. When combining the two, it became 91 per cent of Russian spending.

**NATO defence expenditure**  
The US remains NATO's major spender, but European members have increased their share. In 2023, the 31 NATO members accounted for

\$1,341 billion, equal to 55 per cent of the global military expenditure. The US' military spending rose by 2.3 per cent and reached \$916 billion in 2023. This was 68 per cent of NATO's total military spending. European NATO members increased their military expenditure, and their combined share was now 28 per cent of NATO, the highest in a decade. The remaining 4 per cent was from Canada and Turkey. The perception in Europe is that Putin is strong, autocratic, and ambitious, and the war in Ukraine has brought the Russian threat closer to NATO. The US has been asking Europeans to take greater charge of their security. After all, the US has to concentrate a little more on Chinese expansion and bolster security in the Indo-Pacific. Nearly a decade ago, European NATO members had formally committed to target spending 2 per cent of GDP on the military. As many as 11 out of 31 NATO members actually hit or crossed the 2 per cent level in 2023, the highest number since the commitment was made. Another target set by NATO was that at least 20 per cent of military spending be towards 'Capital' expenditure for new equipment. This was met by 28 NATO members in 2023, up from 7 in 2014.

**China and its threatened neighbours**  
China's military rise is the most watched and analysed

subject globally. The US and China's neighbourhood, especially India, Japan, South Korea, and the Philippines, monitor all military power projection-related activities in China. There is a general belief that China spends around 40 per cent outside the formal military budget under other code-heads that directly contribute to military power. All the neighbouring countries increased their defence budgets to reduce the growing military power gap with China. China continues to be the world's second-largest military spender. The official military budget was estimated at \$296 billion for the military in 2023. It was an increase of 6 per cent from 2022.

It was 29th consecutive year-on-year rise. China's was half of the total military spending across the Asia and Oceania region. Japan's 2023 defence budget was \$50.2 billion, an 11 per cent increase over 2022. Japan shed its pacifist approach last year. It is re-looking at Article 9 (enacted in 1947) of their constitution that forbids offensive weapons. It plans to increase its defence budget further and bring it up to 2 per cent of GDP by 2027. Taiwan's military expenditure also grew by 11 per cent, reaching \$16.6 billion. During the same period, Pakistan's military spending dropped to \$8.5 billion in 2023, relegating it to the 30th position globally.

### Why yellow metal is hitting record prices

**Gold.** The very word has a primeval pull. With the yellow metal hitting record prices of \$2,400 per troy ounce this year, the glitter has a polish that goes way beyond the accountants' mundane matrices of supply and demand.

It's today's charged, war-crazed global geopolitics at work. Put another way, a lot of that demand for gold has to do with wars, and a global, especially Chinese, response to the hegemony of the US dollar. Readers may be surprised to know that not only is China the world's biggest gold consumer, it is also the world's biggest producer of the shiny stuff. Now as the Chinese economy has spluttered with manufacturing slowing and property doomed, money has moved—and as money does, it has found a new road that is paved with gold. Media reports say

that Chinese gold jewellery consumption has increased by a staggering 10 per cent this year and their coin and gold bar purchases have risen by a breath-taking 30 per cent. The real push, however, has been geopolitically motivated. China is moving away from the dollar and for the last two years its central bank has been continuously buying gold. Beijing views gold as a bigger part of its future holdings. The dominance of the US dollar grants America significant economic and political leverage. By amassing gold reserves, China is essentially hedging against potential challenges to the dollar's pre-eminence in the future. Other central banks, particularly in emerging economies, are also bulking up their gold stockpiles, seeking a safe asset in a world grappling with rising

geopolitical tensions. China is not alone. For, gold is a shiny hedge in stormy seas. Imagine the global financial system as a vast ocean. During calm periods, investor confidence is high, and capital flows freely. But when geopolitical storms erupt, uncertainty reigns, as currencies weaken, investors seek refuge in safe harbours. This is where gold takes centre stage. Unlike traditional assets like stocks or bonds, gold's value is independent of any single issuer or economy. It's perceived as a physical asset with intrinsic value, a life raft in the tumultuous seas of financial uncertainty. It is for this reason that the RBI has also increased its gold holding, buying 13 tonnes of the shine in January-February 2024. A smart move that added \$3 billion to foreign reserves on account of gold.

### Is Chicago Forum back in the reckoning in Rahul's Congress?

**Sam Pitroda**, chairman of the Indian Overseas Congress, is once again the eye of a political storm having advocated an inheritance tax law in the country, even as a beleaguered Congress sought to distance itself from the comments saying his views do not always reflect the position of the party. d a clarification over his statement on inheritance tax, claiming that his remarks were twisted to deflect attention from the "core issues". During 2019 Lok Sabha, Pitroda had scored a self-gold of sorts when he had told ANI about the 1984 anti-Sikh riots, "Hua to hua" (whatever had happened) in a matter of fact 'so what' manner. There are many in the Congress who feel Pitroda's insensitive and politically incorrect instance had contributed to the party's poor showing in the Lok Sabha polls. The role of Sam Pitroda in Rahul Gandhi's inner circle of advisors has raised many eyebrows within the grand old party. Pitroda, as head of the AICC's Overseas chapters, is often seen as instrumental in the former AICC chief's frequent tours abroad. In March 2023, Pitroda was a regular fixture at Rahul's interactions at Cambridge, London and other places in the United Kingdom. A section of the Congress leaders then had felt Rahul was 'ill-advised' to travel abroad soon after his impressive first round of Bharat Jodo Yatra. Instead of trying to convert the 'liberals' and Leftists and the Indian diaspora in UK, Rahul could have focused more on domestic politics, poll-bound Karnataka or in strengthening the Opposition unity. Pitroda, a US-based engineer-turned-policy-maker, was Rajiv Gandhi's blue-eyed boy. He was responsible for finalising telecommunication policies and computerisation programmes. In the recent years, Pitroda's clout has reportedly gone up many folds because Rahul Gandhi views him as a fatherly figure. In his autobiography, Dreaming Big: My Journey to



Connect India, Pitroda has given a graphic account of how he met Rajiv Gandhi in 1985 when the Indian prime minister was visiting the US to invite the technocrat to work with him. Pitroda recalled telling the Indian ambassador then, "Please tell the PM that I'm going to be in Washington with my wife. We would very much like to meet him." The ambassador was not sure, pointing that Rajiv Gandhi's schedule was solidly booked. "I understand," Pitroda remembers telling the ambassador, "Just say that Sam Pitroda would like to see him (Rajiv)." Born in Anand, Gujarat, Pitroda had travelled from Chicago to Washington along with wife Anu and three friends, Prakash Desai, Rajiv Desai and Dr Divyesh Mehta. "We were being tourists and seeing some of the sights, when I heard from the ambassador that Rajiv was free for half an hour—between Caspar Weinberger, the then defence secretary, and George P. Schultz, the then secretary of state. All of us were free to come," Pitroda wrote in his memoirs illustrating the comfort he had with Rajiv Gandhi. During the meeting, Rajiv reportedly told Pitroda's wife: "Anu, I know Sam wants to come to India. I want you to make sure the children's admission to school is taken care of. It's very important, and Sam may not understand these things in Delhi. Let me know. It's essential to get them into the right school." Pitroda goes on to add, "He (Rajiv) was speaking to Anu in exactly the sort of language.



## With the blessings of the public, Dr. Sushil Gupta will be crowned with victory: Ma. Satbir Goyat

**Kaithal:** Aam Aadmi Party Education Wing State Vice President Master Satbir Goyat said that BJP leaders should answer the questions of the public instead of running away from them. During its 10 year tenure, BJP has done nothing except making false statements and misleading the public. He said that the public is asking the same questions which the BJP had made to the public in the last elections, but in the intoxication of power, instead of fulfilling the promises, the BJP government has left no stone unturned in sabotaging the interests of the public. mother. Satbir Goyat is continuously campaigning day and night in various villages of Kurukshetra Lok Sabha constituency in favor of India Alliance candidate Dr. Sushil Gupta from Kurukshetra Lok Sabha constituency and appealing to people of every section with folded hands to vote in



favor of Dr. Sushil Gupta. Is. AAP leader Goyat said that Dr. Sushil Gupta, rich in positive thinking and down to earth, has settled in the hearts of the people due to his honest, clean, friendly and friendly image and people of every section of the society are openly supporting Dr. Sushil Gupta. Cooperation is being done. With the blessings of the public, Dr. Sushil Gupta will be crowned victorious in the elections. He alleged that the BJP, which came to power on the basis of false promises, has not fulfilled them, so with what right is it asking

for votes from the public in the Lok Sabha elections. The public will no longer fall under any false illusion of BJP. He said that the candidates of India Alliance will show the way home to BJP by winning the elections with the blessings of the public on all the 10 Lok Sabha seats of Haryana including Kurukshetra. Under the BJP government, farmers, employees, s a r p a n c h e s , Anganwadi workers, Asha workers, laborers and every section of the society demonstrated with their demands and tried to raise their voice, but at the behest.

## AI inside most apps you use

AI is being used by nine in 10 internet users in India, thanks to the enormous computing capabilities on their phones, connectivity, and cloud infrastructure, finds a study by marketing data and analytics firm Kantar. The current AI user base of the country stands at 724 million and is poised to grow at 6% on a year-on-year basis. These are users who have used any of the AI features like image filters, personalised recommendations, and smart devices. Social media and fitness apps are taking the lead in terms of driving AI adoption, with the highest number of AI-led features embedded in



related applications. Entertainment apps are a close second. AI is also touching digital commerce and pharmacy apps. Kantar anticipates that many more digital commerce and entertainment apps will adopt AI features to enhance the quality of customer experience and stay in line with emerging trends. Adoption remains slow in BFSI, job search and short video apps segments, the study

showed.

Usage of AI tech is expectedly higher among the youth (19-24 years). But those who are 45 and above are also keeping up, with usage for the cohort at about 81%.

Even as consumers embrace AI, the technology's usage is not as rampant among marketers due to privacy and safety concerns, Deepender Rana, executive MD (insights), South Asia and Puneet Avasthi, senior ED (insights), South Asia, at Kantar told TOI in an interaction. About 60% of the organisations surveyed by the firm said that they rarely or never use AI.

## Masala row: Govt inspects facilities of spice makers, regulator says

**NEW DELHI:** Following the suspension of sales of certain products by spice makers MDH and Everest in Hong Kong and Singapore due to alleged high levels of a cancer-causing pesticide, the government has now initiated inspections of their facilities to

ensure compliance with quality standards. The spices export regulator has confirmed that inspections are underway at the facilities of MDH and Everest to verify adherence to regulatory standards. The move comes as a response to concerns

raised regarding the quality of spices produced by these companies. In a statement, the spices export regulator said that they are collaborating with the companies to identify the root cause of the issue and propose corrective measures.

## Conspiracy against PM amounts to treason: Delhi high court

**NEW DELHI:** Conspiracy against the Prime Minister amounted to treason and a person cannot be accused of such a serious offence irresponsibly without any cogent material, the Delhi high court Wednesday said.

The court was hearing a lawsuit filed by BJD MP Pinaki Misra against lawyer Jai Anant Dehadrai, seeking to restrain him from making "false and defamatory" tweets and statements. Dehadrai had alleged that Misra, along with expelled TMC MP Mahua Moitra, had conspired



against the Prime Minister. Pulling up Dehadrai, Justice Jasmeet Singh orally observed: "When you say conspiracy against the Prime Minister, it is troublesome. You can't be trigger happy... Conspiracy against the Prime Minister is an

offence against the state, (it is) treason... It has serious repercussions on the general public." The court said that Dehadrai should await the outcome of his complaint to the authorities before he makes such allegations. "The allegation of con-

spiring against the prime minister cannot be made irresponsibly and needs to be based on cogent and substantive reasons," the court further said. Following Justice Singh's remarks, Dehadrai and his counsel assured the court that he would not make further statements in relation to Misra "conspiring" against the Prime Minister till the next date of hearing. The court said CBI was already looking into the allegations, and the dispute between Dehadrai and Moitra was also pending before the HC. Taking the statement.

## Fortis Healthcare: Expanding Horizons in Mental Wellness

**GURUGRAM :** Fortis Healthcare today achieved a significant milestone in India's mental healthcare landscape with the launch of 'Adayu Mindfulness', a dedicated vertical for comprehensive Mental Healthcare along with an exclusive collaboration of United We Care and Adayu - AI Powered Holistic Mental Health Solution with World's most Advanced Virtual Psychological First Aid. This collaboration will leverage the power of artificial intelligence to enhance mental well-being and accessibility of care for individuals



everywhere, powering it further by Adayu's trained team of mental health experts to provide holistic care. This visionary initiative reaffirms Fortis Healthcare's commitment to transformative healthcare solutions and underscores its role as a trailblazer in revolutionizing

mental healthcare services across India. Dr. Ashutosh Raghuvanshi, MD & CEO, Fortis Healthcare, said "Fortis Healthcare is uniquely committed to integrating mental health into mainstream healthcare, a vision we have been cultivating for over a decade. Today, we take

a significant step forward with the launch of our dedicated mental health vertical, 'Adayu Mindfulness'. This new initiative not only emphasises our commitment to addressing the pervasive challenge of mental health but also showcases our innovative approach by integrating AI technology through our partnership with 'United We Care'. This collaboration is set to transform the accessibility of mental health services, making comprehensive care available at the touch of a button.

## 2024 Jawa Perak Unveiled: Elevating the Bobber Experience with Enhanced Performance and Unmatched Comfort

**GURUGRAM :** The recently launched 2024 Jawa Perak showcases significant enhancements to its spirited 334cc, liquid-cooled engine. These advancements aim to elevate the overall rider experience, highlighting Jawa Yezdi Motorcycles' commitment to customer-driven learnings, innovation and excellence in research and development. Noteworthy improvements include the implementation of micro geometry modifications to the gear tooth, resulting in superior meshing quality for reduced noise, vibration, and harshness (NVH) levels. Additionally, the new gearbox covers contribute to a refined sound emission from the gearbox, further



enhancing NVH characteristics and overall ride comfort. The 2024 Jawa Perak also boasts a new crankshaft that delivers a significant reduction in engine stress levels resulting in a more sophisticated ride. Complemented by an Assist & Slipper (A&S) clutch for effortless shifting and seamless transitions, the new Perak delivers an authentic bobber experience. Furthermore, riders can expect enhanced versatility

with improved gear ratios and throttle mapping, catering to diverse usage scenarios from urban commuting to spirited highway cruising. Other notable features include an updated piston skirt profile and the cast iron liner in the cylinder block for improved NVH and reduced friction, sportier suspension for agile handling, a robust chassis for spirited riding, class-leading braking capabilities.

## Radio City to Redefine Entertainment with their launch on JioTV

**KARNAL :** Radio City, a trailblazer in vibrant music and engaging content, is thrilled to announce its debut on JioTV. This pioneering fusion marks a significant milestone as Radio City becomes the first-ever radio station in the country to introduce a 24x7 video channel under the banner of RC Studio. This launch on JioTV not only extends the reach of Radio City but also provides advertisers with limitless opportunities to engage with a nationwide audience. Through this association, Radio City will be able to reach out to JioTV's massive audience base across the country. The JioTV mobile app - which has over 1,000 channels in more than 16 languages and 12 genres from over 200 broadcasters is avail-



able to all the Jio subscribers across the country. Through this launch, Radio City will touch the nerves of the younger, digitally savvy generation, leveraging their attraction to screens to reignite their interest in radio. By embracing the new digital platform, Radio City will deliver phenomenal content that echoes with the Gen Z. RC Studio will also be available on connected TVs through JioTV+ which comes as a part of JioFiber and AirFiber. This initiative will be pivotal

in bridging the gap between different audience segments and expanding Radio City's reach to a larger demographic, creating a more inclusive and vibrant entertainment approach. The launch of RC Studio propels Radio City into the digital era by enriching the entertainment experience for its audience with the JioTV app which is now also available on MyJio app and JioBharat phones. Ashit Kukian, CEO of Radio City, expressed his excitement: "In

this exciting juncture of innovation and expansion, I am thrilled to announce the launch of our pioneering channel, RC Studio, on JioTV and JioTV+.

The launch marks a historic point in our journey, reflecting our brand's evolution and commitment to 'Radigitalization'. Our RC Studio's tagline, 'Mast Raho', encapsulates our dedication to crafting a comprehensive digital experience that caters to our existing and new audiences. Radio City has always been a frontrunner when it comes to innovative concepts, and with this launch on JioTV, we are forging the future of entertainment by providing a platform that ignites excitement and engages viewers and brands alike in ways like never before!"

## 19 years on, 20 get life imprisonment for double murder in poll violence

**VILLUPURAM:** Villupuram additional district judge S Rajasimmavaran sentenced 20 people to life imprisonment on Tuesday for murdering two people in violence during local body polls at a village near Villupuram in 2005. Those sentenced include an advocate, a police constable, and a government servant. The judge fined them Rs 50,000 each. The families of the two victims were awarded compensation of Rs 5 lakh each. Six others accused of the double murder died during the prosecution, enmity prevailed between Kulasekaran (59) and Nakkeeran (49) over enjoying poramboke land (unassessed land, owned by govt) in the village. Nakkeeran had contested 2005 local body polls and another villager, Sekar, contested against him. Kulasekaran supported Sekar.



## Vi got a new lease of life, says Birla

**MUMBAI:** Aditya Birla Group chairman Kumar Mangalam Birla said the Rs 18,000-crore fund-raise has given Vodafone Idea a "fresh lease of life", and set the stage for a "smart turnaround". "Vi is not just a telecom company, it's a national asset with 215 million users and about 8,000 MHz spectrum," said Birla. Investors in Vodafone Idea made a 26% return within a week as the shares of the telecom services company, which were offered at Rs 11 apiece in an FPO, closed at Rs 13.9 on the BSE. The proceeds from the fund-raise, which was garnered through a follow-on public offering (FPO), will be used to upgrade the loss-making and debt-saddled network's infrastructure, which will enhance operational efficiencies leading to better performance. Vi got a new lease of life, says Birla. "The cycle of investment will trigger the cycle of growth," said



Birla at the company's fund-raise), India's largest FPO, marks one such turning point for the industry," said Birla. Vi's journey to this point has been shaped significantly by govt's reform package, which has been encouraging a competitive three-player market. "A nation of 1.4 billion people deserves three private telecom players," said Birla. A few years ago, the company had inched towards bankruptcy. The govt, then, converted the company's dues into equity, thus becoming its largest shareholder. Birla, who had given up his directorship in 2021, returned to the board of Vi in 2023 after govt's rescue package.

## Will come after you if ...': Rajeev warning to Tharoor

**NEW DELHI:** Union minister Rajeev Chandrasekhar, the BJP candidate for Thiruvananthapuram, warned his Congress rival Tharoor against resorting to personal attacks during the election campaign. Chandrasekhar accused Tharoor of engaging in "third-rate politics" by spreading falsehoods and instilling fear in the minds of the people. acknowledging the importance of free speech under Article 19, Chandrasekhar emphasized that crossing the line into personal attacks on his integrity would not be tolerated. He asserted his determi-

nation to take legal action against such attempts, ensuring that consequences are served under the law. "He (Dr Shashi Tharoor) relies upon this type of third-rate politics, putting fear in people's minds and telling lies. In any case, I have clearly said that everybody is free to do politics. Article 19 protects everybody's free speech. But, if you trespass into lying about my personal integrity, then I will come after you. I will ensure under the law that the consequences will be served on you," he stated. Earlier in April, Rajeev Chandrasekhar issued a legal notice to

sitting MP Shashi Tharoor for levelling cash-for-vote allegations against him. , who expressed shock over the allegations made by Tharoor on a television show, demanded that he withdraw his statement and tender an unconditional apology. The notice further suggested that Tharoor had concocted these allegations to influence voters in Thiruvananthapuram and subvert the process of free and fair elections. Chandrasekhar expressed shock over the allegations made by Tharoor on a television show and demanded that he withdraw his statement.

## Landslide hits Arunachal road to China border

**Guwahati:** A stretch of NH-313 linking Hunli and Anini in Arunachal Pradesh's Anini district caved in due to a landslide triggered by heavy rains Wednesday, disrupting traffic and surface communication. Dibang Valley district,



bordering China, was

cut off from the mainland following the incident. This crucial highway segment, connecting Roing in Lower Dibang Valley to Anini, located approximately 83km from India-China border, sustained heavy damage.

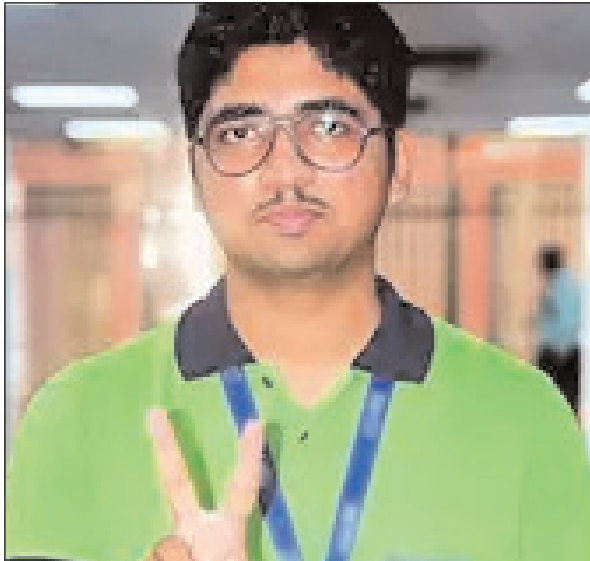
## CAPSULES

### sed to share password': What ED said in SC while opposing Kejriwal's plea against arrest

**NEW DELHI:** The Enforcement Directorate (ED) has informed the Supreme Court that Delhi chief minister Arvind Kejriwal played a central role in the excise policy case, acting as the "kingpin and key conspirator." The probe agency asserted that arresting an individual based on evidence of an offense does not undermine the principles of free and fair elections. According to the ED, Kejriwal allegedly collaborated with his ministers and AAP leaders, and was involved in "demanding kickbacks" from liquor businessmen in return for favors granted through the policy. The agency filed an affidavit in the Supreme Court in response to Kejriwal's plea challenging his arrest, stating that he failed to cooperate with the ED despite being summoned multiple times in connection with the excise policy case. On April 15, the top court had sought a response from the ED by April 24 on Kejriwal's plea challenging his arrest in the case. "The Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) is the major beneficiary of the proceeds of crime generated in the Delhi liquor scam. Part of the proceeds of crime to the tune of cash of Rs 45 cr approx. has been utilised in the election campaign of AAP in Goa Assembly elections 2022," it said. "AAP has committed the offence of money laundering through Arvind Kejriwal and the offences thus are covered by section 70, PMLA 2002. He is also involved in demand of kickbacks which have inter-alia generated further proceeds of crime," it said.

## Stretched resources for his tuition, says farmer whose son topped JEE

**NAGPUR:** Nilkrishna Gajare, who secured the all India rank 1 in JEE (Mains) exam Thursday, said studying computer science at IIT Bombay was his dream. The 18-year-old prepared for the exam at a coaching institute in Nagpur with a 75% scholarship. Maintaining a balance between studies and personal well-being, Nilkrishna said he exercises and meditates in his free time and stays away from social media. "I only had WhatsApp to communicate with teachers. I would



wake up at 5am and hit the bed by 10pm. Apart from attending tuition classes, I would study for seven hours," he said. Supporting him every step of the way is his father Nilkumar

Gajare, who had to drop out after class 12. Despite relying on farming for a livelihood, Nilkumar ensured Nilkrishna had access to education, even mobilising extra funds for his son's accommodation in Nagpur. "In our younger days, achieving our aspirations was impossible. Farming is my livelihood, and I barely earn Rs 1.5 lakh to Rs 2 lakh annually. This income supports my family of six. We've had to stretch our resources to ensure his education," Nilkumar said.

## NCBC calls Karnataka top babu on Muslim quota

**NEW DELHI:** National Commission for Backward Classes (NCBC) chairperson Hansraj Ahir has summoned Karnataka's chief secretary to explain the basis on which the entire Muslim community was included in the OBC category in the state even as BJP sharpened its charge of Muslim appeasement against Congress. While PM Narendra Modi accused Congress of trying to "snatch" the reservation rights of OBCs and give it to their "vote banks", Uttar Pradesh CM Yogi Adityanath said it was very unfortunate and

an attempt at "Islamisation of India". "This is a part of despicable attempts at Islamisation of India and pushing it towards divisions. When the UPA govt came to power, it made such attempts at that time too. BJP had carried out a massive agitation. So, be it Justice Verma committee report or the Sachar committee report, they were all attempts by Congress to loot the reservation of OBCs, SCs and STs," Adityanath said. NCBC has summoned the Karnataka chief secretary and sought a detailed report on what basis the Muslim com-

munity as a whole was being treated as educationally and socially backward for the purpose of 4% reservation in education and appointments under category 2B. Moreover, the state govt is providing reservation to 17 socially and educationally backward Muslim castes under category 1 and 19 backward Muslim castes under category 2A. The commission has sought survey reports from the state to understand the basis for giving reservation to the Muslim community as a whole under category 2B. Ahir said replies received from the state.

### MEA rejects US report on human rights abuses in India, calls it 'deeply biased'

**NEW DELHI:** The ministry of external affairs on Thursday rejected US state department's report on alleged human rights abuses in India and called it "deeply biased". Addressing a press conference, MEA spokesperson Randhir Jaiswal said, "This report is deeply biased and reflects a poor understanding of India. We attach no value to it and urge you to do the same." Earlier this week, US state department released a report alleging, "significant human rights abuses.

## Lok Sabha Election Phase 2: 13 states to go to polls on April 26

**NEW DELHI:** Voting for 89 seats across 13 states will be conducted for the second phase of the Lok Sabha election 2024 on Friday, April 26. The campaigning for Phase 2 ended on Wednesday, April 24. In Phase 2 of the Lok Sabha elections, polling is scheduled in all 20 seats of Kerala, 14 of the 28 seats in Karnataka, 13 seats in Rajasthan, eight seats each in Maharashtra and Uttar Pradesh, seven seats in Madhya Pradesh, five seats each in Assam and Bihar, three seats each in Chhattisgarh and West Bengal, and one seat each in Manipur, Tripura and Jammu and Kashmir. As per the poll commission, a total of 2633 nominations were filed for 88 parliamentary constituencies across 12 States and UTs going



for polls in phase 2 for the Lok Sabha Elections. The last date for filing nominations for phase 2 for all 12 States and UTs was April 4. State-wise list of constituencies: States going to polls on April 19: Assam: 5 out of state's 14 seats (Karimganj, Silchar, Mangaldoi, Nagaon, and Kaliabor); Bihar: 4 out of state's 40 seats (Kishanganj, Katihar, Purnia, and Bhagalpur); Chhattisgarh: 3 out of state's 11 seats (Rajnandgaon, Mahasamund, Kanker); Karnataka: 14 out of state's 28 seats (Udupi

## 'Blatant lie': Siddaramaiah slams PM, defends 4% Muslim quota in Karnataka

**NEW DELHI:** Karnataka CM Siddaramaiah on Wednesday criticised PM Narendra Modi for making "illegal allegations" against Congress regarding transfer reservation quota from backward classes to Muslims calling it a "blatant lie". "Prime Minister Modi's claim that the Congress has transferred the reservation quota from backward classes and Dalits to Muslims is a blatant lie," he said in a post on X. "It stems from ignorance but also indicative of his desperation born from a fear of defeat. No leader in the history of our country has ever demeaned the office of the Prime Minister to such a low level", he added.



Highlighting that the reservation for Muslims has been in place for the "past three decades", he said, "It's true that in Karnataka, Muslims have been included in the 2B category for backward classes. This is not something done now. based on the reports of the Backward Classes Commissions starting the L. G. Havanur in 1974. This reservation has been in

place for the past three decades." Calling out PM Modi to "apologise to nation", he said, "Being in a position of responsibility, Prime Minister Modi must either these irresponsible allegations with evidence or apologise to the nation." PM Modi said at a rally in Tonk Rajasthan that the Congress tried to extend reservation

### 'Kejriwal being monitored 24 hours by PMO and LG'

**NEW DELHI:** Aam Aadmi Party MP Sanjay Singh on Thursday wrote two separate letters to Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Delhi LG VK Saxena, alleging that Delhi chief minister Arvind Kejriwal, who is currently lodged in Tihar jail.

### Former Jharkhand CM Soren's wife Kalpana to contest bypoll from Gandey

**NEW DELHI:** The Jharkhand Mukti Morcha (JMM) announced on Thursday that Kalpana Soren, the wife of former chief minister Hemant Soren who is currently in jail, will be contesting the bypoll for the Gandey assembly seat. The seat, located in Giridih district, became vacant after JMM MLA Sarfaraz Ahmad resigned. Kalpana, who is a homemaker, holds both M.Tech and MBA degrees. She completed her schooling in Baripada, Odisha's Mayurbhanj district, and pursued her engineering and MBA education at different institutions in Bhubaneswar. Her entry into politics was marked by her speech at the JMM's 51st foundation day celebration in Giridih district on March 4. During her address, she alleged that a conspiracy had been hatched by opponents since the formation of the Hemant Soren-led coalition govt.



## Flop pair of do ladkon ki jodi': PM Modi takes dig at alliance of Rahul, Akhilesh

**NEW DELHI:** Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Thursday took a dig at Rahul Gandhi and Akhilesh Yadav, who have joined hands for Lok Sabha elections in Uttar Pradesh, describing them as flop pair of "Do ladkon ki jodi."

The Prime Minister, who did not take the names of the two, alleged that their friendship is based on "politics of appeasement." "Can you expect development from flop pair of 'Do ladkon ki jodi'," PM Modi said at an election rally in Uttar Pradesh as he accused them of wanting to snatch the rights of the OBC through the back door. "The friendship between the two boys in UP is based on politics of appeasement. Both talk of the OBC in their speeches but they want to snatch away their rights from the back door and strengthen their (own) vote bank," he alleged. "The Congress govern-



ment in Karnataka has overnight turned all the Muslim castes in Karnataka into OBCs by stamping a paper and told them to become the owners of this 27 per cent and loot it. They have robbed the rights of the OBCs. The Congress intends to play the same game in UP, to perform the same feat, wherever they get a chance in the country, they want to secretly rob the rights of the OBCs, SCs, and STs from the back door and give them away. And in this, the Samajwadi Party is also fully supporting them," PM Modi said. "SP and

Congress want to snatch the rights that are granted to these communities by the Constitution and give it to their vote banks. For the vote bank, Samajwadi Party is betraying Yadavs and backward communities. Both Congress and SP are drenched in appeasement politics and have similar thinking. In speeches, they talk about OBC, but through the back door, want to give their rights to their vote banks," the Prime Minister said. Prime Minister Modi renewed his 'Mangalsutra' attack and said under the rule of Akhilesh.

## 11 students end lives in Andhra & MP after poor exam results

**HYDERABAD/BHOPAL:** Seven students - five girls and two boys - in Telangana and four in MP ended their lives after intermediate (class XI-XII) and class X board examination results were announced in both states on Wednesday. Most of the students had flunked one or more papers. In Telangana, TOI found that most of students who died by suicide had opted for science stream and had appeared for their intermediate first-year exams. A teenager from

Medak district failed to clear the chemistry paper for a second time. In Khammam, a teenager who had opted for Physics-Chemistry-Mathematics (PCM) stream could not clear her Maths B paper. A 17-year-old boy in Kollur was found dead on a lake bund while a 16-year-old student from Hydershakote near Rajendranagar, who had lost her mother a few years ago, also took the extreme step after learning about the results.

One case was reported from Mahabubabad, where a girl in Inter second-year failed in her commerce paper. In MP, two class X students - a girl in Gwalior and a boy in Sehore, both aged 16 - and two from class XII - an 18-year-old in Sikarpura area of Burhanpur, and a 19 year-old tribal student in Khargone - ended their lives. Most of them had failed in maths. Two other class X students in Betul are on ventilator after surviving suicide attempts.

## Election code no bar for govt to execute court orders: HC

**Chandigarh:** Punjab and Haryana HC has made it clear that the model code of conduct issued by the Election Commission is not a bar for governments in complying with orders passed by the HC. The HC clarified this as a few appointments, to be



made in compliance with court orders, had been halted by adminis-

trative heads of departments of states and Chandigarh UT, citing model code of conduct. "Therefore, it has become necessary to clarify that no code of conduct issued by the EC can be permitted to stand in the way of execution of the orders.

## CAPSULES

### Two more held in Punjab over firing at Salman home



**MUMBAI:** Crime branch Thursday arrested two men from Punjab for allegedly providing illegal firearms and cartridges to the two shooters who had fired at actor Salman Khan's Bandra residence, and also indicated an "international connection". Police also brought four witnesses from Bihar who are expected to provide statements before a magistrate, that could be relied on against the accused during the trial. The accused were identified as Subhash Chander (37) and Anuj Thapan (32), who are from jailed gangster Lawrence Bishnoi's village. Police said Thapan has a criminal past and knows Bishnoi personally. According to police, the duo travelled to Mumbai, stayed with shooters Vikas Kumar Gupta and Sagar Kumar Pal, and provided them with the guns. Joint commissioner of police (crime) Lakhmi Gautam said, "We will be able to gather more information once they are in our custody."

## PM Modi accepts Meloni's invite to G7 meet in Italy in June

**NEW DELHI:** Prime Minister Narendra Modi has accepted the invitation of his Italian counterpart, Georgia Meloni, to attend the G7 Summit Outreach Sessions to be held in June in Puglia, Italy. PM Modi thanked Meloni for the invite when he called to greet her on Italy's Liberation Day, according to govt. The invitation, midway through Lok Sabha elections, is seen to be in line with the assessment in foreign capitals about Modi being the favourite for the contest. During the conversation, the two leaders



reaffirmed their commitment to further strengthening the strategic partnership and exchanged views on regional and global issues of mutual interest.

The two PMs also discussed carrying forward the outcomes of India's G20 presidency, especially support for Global South, to the G7 Summit under Italy's presidency.

G7 Summit will take place on June 13-15, shortly after the outcome of Indian elections. Earlier in the day, MEA said a G7 invite had been received and that the matter was under consideration. "We know that the G7 meeting is to be held in Italy. We have received the invitation. But, at this point in time, it's a matter which is under consideration and we will come to know of details as and when we have more details to share with you, we will bring it up to you," said the MEA spokesperson.

## Gujarat judge accused of forging colleagues' resignation letters

**AHMEDABAD:** Gujarat high court has reserved the verdict on the dismissal of a judge allegedly involved in forging the resignation letters of two other judges. The case involves a civil judge and judicial magistrate first class (JMFC), who was posted in Limbdi court in Surandranagar district, where the principal district judge received resignation letters from two judges in Sept 2021. One of the judges was an additional sessions judge and the other a



JMFC. Both judges were surprised when the principal district judge inquired about the resignation letters. While one judge lodged an FIR with Limbdi police station, the other complaint was registered with Surendranagar's Division city police sta-

tion. Both FIRs were filed against unknown persons. A police investigation later found that the civil judge was allegedly involved in forging the resignation letters of the two judges. The judge unsuccessfully approached the high court for anticipatory

bail claiming that he was being framed. After HC rejected the judge's anticipatory bail applications, a petition was filed in Supreme Court. The accused judge was inducted into the judicial service in 2013 with a two-years probation period. In 2022, the judge was terminated from service and high court's administrative side justified the sacking citing poor performance till 2018 and other complaints. The judge challenged the dismissal.

## Stored umbilical cord solves mystery of twin deaths



**New Delhi:** An ancient custom of preserving a part of the umbilical cord of a newborn helped crack a 14-year-old mystery that had foxed many doctors. Earlier in 2010, Prakash and Sarita (name changed), a couple from Haryana, had their first baby by normal delivery. Ten days later the baby developed fever and breathing difficulty. He was admitted to Neonatal ICU and was put on ventilatory support. However, the baby passed away at six weeks due to pneumo-

nia and sepsis. In 2021, after four miscarriages, the couple had another baby by caesarean section who too developed the same symptoms and died 3.5 months later due to respiratory failure. The mystery behind the two deaths and multiple miscarriages was solved recently with the help of the umbilical cord - a flexible, tubular formation between the foetus and the placenta of the mother - that the couple had preserved. Genetic analysis of the cord identified a mutation in CTFR gene which

causes Cystic Fibrosis. The same mutation was checked in asymptomatic parents, and they were found to be carriers. "Having one with mutation often does not cause symptoms. But both the babies had received a mutated cystic fibrosis transmembrane conductance regulator (CFTR) gene from both parents leading to the disease and complications," Dr Ranjana Mishra, senior consultant - medical genetics at Seeds of Innocens, a Delhi-based IVF clinic, said.

## SC: Man can be prosecuted for misappropriating streedhan

**NEW DELHI:** Reinforcing married women's right over 'streedhan', Supreme Court on Wednesday held that streedhan cannot become joint property of a couple, and a husband has no control over his wife's assets, which he may use during times of distress but must return to her. Adjudicating a matrimonial dispute over streedhan, a bench of Justices Sanjiv Khanna and Dipankar Datta said a woman has absolute rights over her streedhan — gifts given to a woman before, during, or after marriage, such as money, jewellery, land, utensils and other gifts from parents, parents-in-law, relatives and friends. "It is her absolute property with all rights to dispose of at her own pleasure.



The husband has no control over her streedhan. He may use it during times of his distress, but nonetheless, he has a moral obligation to restore the same or its value to his wife. Therefore, streedhan property does not become joint property of the wife and the husband, and the husband has no title or independent dominion over the property as its owner," the bench stated. The court noted that a man or his family members could be

prosecuted under Section 406 of IPC for criminal breach of trust if streedhan is dishonestly misappropriated. It also held that in such cases, the dispute should not be decided based on proof beyond reasonable doubt as in criminal cases, but on the preponderance of probabilities tending to draw an inference that the fact must be more probable. In this case, a woman alleged that her jewellery was taken away by her husband on the very first day of

marriage, and she approached the family court to retrieve her property after the relationship turned sour and they decided to separate. A family court in 2009 passed a verdict in her favour and ordered her husband to pay her Rs 8.9 lakh, but the Kerala High Court quashed the order and held that the wife failed to prove that her streedhan was taken away by him. The court, after examining the evidence, concluded that the family court's verdict was correct and directed that she be paid Rs 25 lakh, considering the passage of 15 years since the family court's verdict. It said that the high court erred in doubting her bona fide for approaching the court late.

## Probe Harni lake contract: Gujarat HC

**Gujarat HC** Thursday ordered an inquiry against the then Vadodara municipal commissioner for "illegally" awarding contract for Harni Motnath Lake development project, where 14 people, including 12 students and two teachers, died in a boat capsizing incident in Jan. The bench expressed its opinion that the then municipal commissioner was responsible for illegally granting contract to Kotia Projects for development of Harni Lake on a PPP model in 2015-16. HC asked the principal secretary of urban development dept to form a panel to find out the "role & responsibility of municipal commissioner instrumental in the grant of contract in favour of Kotia Projects." The inquiry will also determine the role and responsibility of other officials. The inquiry has to be completed within two months.



## Rajat, Kohli, spinners help Royal Challengers Bengaluru snap six-match losing streak

**NEW DELHI:** Rajat Patidar's explosive half-century and a strong performance from the spinners led Royal Challengers Bengaluru to a 35-run victory over Sunrisers Hyderabad in the IPL on Thursday, snapping their six-match losing streak.

Patidar's quick-fire 50 off 20 balls provided a sharp contrast to Virat Kohli's steady 51 off 43 balls, helping RCB post a total of 206 for seven after choosing to bat. Although the team had surpassed the 250-run mark three times this season, the usually strong SRH batting line-up fell short of expectations this time, finishing at 171 for eight in their 20 overs. This victory was crucial for RCB, who had lost seven of their first eight games. It marked SRH's third loss in eight matches. Considering the effectiveness of the spinners in the first innings, RCB opened the bowling with part-time off-spinner Will



Jacks. The English man had the destructive Travis Head (1 off 3) caught at third man to give RCB a massive boost. Head's opening partner Abhishek Sharma (31 off 13) did entertain the home crowd until his attempted slog ended up in the hands of wicketkeeper Dinesh Karthik. Left-arm spinner Swapnil Singh, making his RCB debut, struck twice in his first over removing the dangerous South Africa duo of Aiden Markram and Heinrich Klaasen. While Markram missed a full toss to be adjudged lbw, Klaasen was caught at mid-on after mistiming a lofted drive, leaving SRH at 56 for four in five

overs. Leggie Karn Sharma then dismissed Nitish Reddy and Abdul Samad to shut the door on the opposition. Earlier, Patidar did the bulk of the work in his 65-run stand with Kohli who was focused on giving the strike to his partner, an approach which was questioned by Sunil Gavaskar on air. Cameron Green (37 not out off 20) and Swapnil Singh (12 off 6) came up with timely strikes in the death overs to take RCB past 200. RCB were all guns blazing in the first three overs with Kohli and Faf du Plessis (25 off 12) going hard at the SRH bowlers, including opposition skipper Pat Cummins who conceded 19 run

## Tim, William shine as New Zealand beat Pakistan, lead series 2-1



**NEW DELHI:** Tim Robinson's explosive batting and William O'Rourke's outstanding bowling helped New Zealand secure a series lead with a four-run victory over Pakistan in the fourth T20I at the Gaddafi Stadium on Thursday. The thrilling match kept spectators captivated as New Zealand took an unassailable lead in the series at the picturesque Gaddafi Stadium. The inexperienced fast bowler made an early impact, dismissing Pakistan captain Babar Azam in the second over. Saim Ayub showed promise at the other end, but O'Rourke managed to dismiss him.

With Pakistan at 79/4 in the 10th over, Fakhar Zaman raised hopes of a win by aggressively tackling the opposing bowlers to keep the required run rate within reach. Fakhar was supported by Iftikhar Ahmed (23) and Imad Wasim (22\*), but Ben Sears turned the game around by dismissing Fakhar in the 18th over. Needing 28 runs in the last two overs, Imad nearly clinched the win for Pakistan with aggressive hitting. However, needing 10 runs from the final two deliveries, he only managed to score a four on the penultimate ball, falling short as New

Zealand secured a four-run win. Earlier in the match, Pakistan captain Babar Azam opted to bowl first after winning the toss. New Zealand's openers Tim Robinson and Tom Blundell began the innings strongly, reaching 50 runs in the fifth over. Blundell was dismissed for 28 in the same over, having hit five fours in his innings. Dean Foxcroft then joined Robinson, adding 38 runs before Robinson's impressive 51 off 36 balls came to an end in the 11th over. Foxcroft and Mark Chapman added a brief partnership before Chapman was dismissed for 8 in the 14th over.

## CAPSULES

### West Indies cricket team loads their own luggage in small tempo on arrival in Nepal

**NEW DELHI:** The West Indies A cricket team arrived in Nepal on Wednesday for a five-match T20I series beginning in Kirtipur on April 27. All five games in the series will be held at the Tribhuvan University International Cricket Ground in Kirtipur. Upon their arrival at the Kathmandu International Airport, the West Indies players were spotted loading their own luggage onto a small vehicle, commonly known as a 'chota haathi' in India. The five-match series is part of the West Indies' preparations for the ICC T20 World Cup 2024. The West Indies, who are co-hosting the ICC T20 World Cup with the USA, are in Group C. Their group includes Papua New Guinea, Uganda, New Zealand, and Afghanistan. Meanwhile, Nepal is in Group D, alongside the Netherlands, Sri Lanka, South Africa, and Bangladesh.

### 'Exercise your right and cast your vote': Sunil Gavaskar appeals to Indian people

**Voting** for the second phase of the Lok Sabha elections will take place on Friday for 88 seats across 13 states. Legendary cricketer Sunil Gavaskar has urged Indian citizens to participate and cast their votes. On Thursday, the Election Commission of India shared a video on their social media featuring footage from the IPL 2024 match between Sunrisers Hyderabad and Royal Challengers Bengaluru, with Gavaskar's voice.

## Barcelona handed massive update on the future of head coach Xavi

**NEW DELHI:** Barcelona's head coach Xavi has decided to remain in his position, despite previously announcing his intention to leave at the end of the season due to the challenging nature of the job.

The Spanish club confirmed this news on Wednesday, following reports of meetings between Xavi, club president Joan Laporta, and sporting director Deco. The decision comes amidst a difficult period for Barcelona, who were recently eliminated from the Champions League by Paris Saint-Germain and fell 11 points behind Real Madrid in the La Liga title race after a 3-2 Clasico defeat. Xavi had expressed feeling "liberated" when he initially decided to step



down, citing the immense pressure and lack of appreciation for his work. He had mentioned that other coaches, such as Pep Guardiola, Ernesto Valverde, and Luis Enrique, had also experienced similar struggles. Barcelona appointed Xavi as their manager in November 2021, and he helped the club win the league title last

season. However, this season has been more challenging, with the team suffering a 4-1 defeat to Real in the Spanish Super Cup and being eliminated from the Copa del Rey by Athletic Bilbao. Financial issues have also plagued the club in recent years. Following Xavi's initial announcement to leave, there was a lack of experienced coaches linked to the job, with only Rafael Marquez, the current Barcelona B team manager, being considered a serious contender. Despite the team's inconsistent performance this season, there are promising signs for the future, with the emergence of young talents such as Lamine Yamal, Pau Cubarsi, and Fermin Lopez.

## 'I definitely wasn't in agreement with...': Green after RCB's second win in IPL 2024

**NEW DELHI:** Royal Challengers Bengaluru (RCB) secured a convincing victory over Sunrisers Hyderabad (SRH) by 35 runs in their IPL encounter on Thursday.

This was RCB's second win out of 9 games played so far as they snapped their six-match losing streak, with their last win coming exactly a month ago against Punjab Kings on March 25. Opting to bat first, RCB put up a formidable total of 206 for seven in their 20 overs, propelled by Virat Kohli's steady 51 and blistering contribu-



tions from Rajat Patidar (50 off 20 balls) and Cameron Green (37 not out off 20 balls). In response, SRH could only manage 171 for 8, falling short of the target. Shahbaz Ahmed's unbeaten 40, along with contributions from opener Abhishek

Sharma (31) and Pat Cummins (31), provided some resistance for SRH. RCB's bowlers played a crucial role in their victory, with Swapnil Singh (2/40), Karn Sharma (2/29), and Cameron Green (2/12) claiming two wickets each to restrict SRH's chase.

RCB all-rounder Green gave full credit to captain Faf du Plessis and coach Andy Flower for taking the decision to bat first, despite his disagreement on it.

"Always nice to be back to winning ways. I definitely wasn't in agreement with [batting first] so credit to the captain and coach. [On his best role in T20s] I am still young in my career so I'm trying to figure it out myself," Green said after the match in Hyderabad. "Of course I like to bat up the order but it depends on what the team needs."

## Atalanta make stupendous comeback against Fiorentina to

**NEW DELHI:** Atalanta seized their spot in the Coppa Italia final with a thrilling 4-1 victory over Fiorentina in the second leg of their semi-final clash on Wednesday. The win gave them a 4-2 aggregate triumph, setting up a

showdown with Juventus in Rome on May 15. Juventus, who have won the competition a record 14 times, advanced despite a 2-1 loss to Lazio in their second leg, progressing with a 3-2 aggregate score. Atalanta, fresh off their Europa League quarter-final elimination of Liverpool, reached their sixth Italian Cup final, with their only previous trophy coming in the 1962-63 season. Fiorentina had taken a 1-0 lead in the first leg at home, thanks to a strike from R o l a n d o Mandragora. However, Atalanta wasted no time in levelling the tie, with Teun Koopmeiners scoring in the eighth

minute. Gianluca Scamacca thought he had doubled the lead shortly after, but his goal was disallowed for a foul in the buildup. Atalanta continued to threaten, with Koopmeiners and Charles De Ketelaere both coming close before the break. Fiorentina's task became even more challenging when Nikola Milenkovic was sent off early in the second half for fouling Scamacca just outside the box. Despite being down to ten men, managed to equalise through Lucas Martinez Quarta's header from a free kick. However, Scamacca restored Atalanta's lead with a stunning.

## Arsenal thrash Chelsea 5-0 to secure top spot in Premier League standings

**NEW DELHI:** Kai Havertz and Ben White scored two goals each as Arsenal crushed Chelsea 5-0 on Tuesday, surging to the top of the Premier League standings and increasing the pressure on Liverpool and Manchester City. Leandro Trossard also found the back of the net in Arsenal's record-breaking victory over Chelsea, which puts the Gunners three points ahead of Liverpool and four points clear of Manchester City. Although Manchester City still control their own destiny with two games in hand, Arsenal's superior goal difference may prove decisive if it comes down to that. Liverpool, who have played one fewer match than Arsenal, face Everton in the Merseyside derby on Wednesday. "We have made our



people very proud, it is a big derby for us and I know what it means," said Arteta. The Arsenal manager acknowledged his team's strong start but noted their failure to convert all their chances and some sloppiness in certain areas. However, he praised their second-half performance, citing improved discipline and ruthless finishing. Chelsea suffered a significant setback before the match even began, as their key player Cole

Palmer was ruled out due to illness. Palmer has been involved in nearly half of Chelsea's Premier League goals this season, and his absence was keenly felt by the visitors. Despite an unbeaten run of eight league games prior to their FA Cup semi-final loss to Manchester City, Chelsea were outclassed by an Arsenal side eager to reassert their title credentials following a home defeat to Aston Villa. Mauricio Pochettino

expressed his disappointment with the result and his team's performance, stating, "Today we didn't compete against a team fighting for the Premier League. We need to be aware we need to compete in a different way." Arsenal started the match with incredible intensity, taking the lead within five minutes through Trossard, who has proven to be a more effective signing than Chelsea's January acquisition of Mykhailo Mudryk.

## Odisha FC come from behind to beat Mohun 2-1 in first leg of ISL

**KOLKATA:** Odisha FC maintained their unbeaten streak at home as they got the better of Shield winners Mohun Bagan Super Giants 2-1 in the first leg of their ISL semifinal in Bhubaneswar on Tuesday with both teams seeing the red card and losing a vital cog in their second leg plans.

In an electrifying start to the first leg, the fans at the Kalinga were treated to two goals in the opening 15 minutes. Manvir Singh got the visitors on the scoreboard when he was left unmarked to head in a Dimitri Petratos corner in the third minute after kickoff.

However, the lead did not last long for Antonio Habas's wards as the hosts got back into the game in a replay of the opener, albeit at the other end. It was Ahmed Jahouh, with his third assist of the season, who sent in a cross in front of goal from a corner.