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

## Election-eve confidence: Sitharaman shuns sweeteners, focuses on fiscal fitness

Vatika Times

The budget introduced by finance minister Nirmala Sitharaman sent out a strong message about the outcome of the 2024 Lok Sabha elections. It did not include any tax sweeteners or populist announcements and focused on showcasing the government's achievements, such as har ghar jal, electricity-for-all, and cooking gas-for-all schemes. It also highlighted the importance of social justice and fiscal discipline. FM Sitharaman unveils vision for Budget 2024: puts spotlight on 'GDP - Governance, Development, Performance' Budgets, especially the pre-poll vote-on-account version, have long been leveraged to send politically-loaded signals through their tax proposals and welfare schemes. Finance minister Nirmala Sitharaman's, on Thursday, also sent out a loud message - even though she steered



clear of electoral overtures in the form of tax sweeteners as well as sops. The budget, her sixth straight -- matching Morarji Desai's record -- signals the governing alliance's confidence about the outcome of the 2024 Lok Sabha elections and comes a day after PM Modi's "we'll be back" comment. It wasn't just that the FM said, "we expect that our government, based on its stupendous work, will be blessed again by the people with a resounding mandate"; the fact that there were no con-

cessions or giveaways drove home the message that this was not just a statement of hope. Classically, a 'vote-in-account' was meant to be just that - an account of receipts and expenditure and to seek parliamentary sanction for funds to keep the wheels of govt running till a full-fledged budget was presented after elections. Sitharaman said as much: "In keeping with convention, I do not propose to make any changes relating to taxation..." Modi has long derided the culture of freebies

or revdis, as he calls them. Rather than make the kind of populist announcements that have characterised the last several interim budgets, Sitharaman's 58-minute speech - her shortest - focused on showcasing what the govt sees as its key achievements and on outlining the approach to the next term that was taken as a given. FM Sitharaman unveils vision for Budget 2024: puts spotlight on 'GDP - Governance, Development, Performance' achievements cited were the implementation of "housing-for-all"

## Government to set up panel to tackle 'challenges' of population growth

NEW DELHI: The government will set up a "high-powered committee" to examine the "challenges arising from fast population growth and demographic changes". The committee will be mandated to make recommendations to address these challenges comprehensively in relation to the goal of 'Viksit Bharat', finance minister Nirmala Sitharaman said in her Interim Budget speech. Although the composition of the panel and terms of reference are



to be announced later, the government said it would go into the entire gamut of population-related issues. "When we talk about demography, it's an opportunity, it's a challenge.

The current numbers, how the changes are happening over a period of time, the committee will have a mandate to have an extensive consideration of those challenges and opportuni-

ties and come out with a specific set of recommendations," Ajay Seth, secretary, department of economic affairs, told a post-Budget press conference. Union Interim Budget 2024: Ayushman Bharat expanded to ASHA, Anganwadi workers Sources said there could be far-reaching recommendations to address the challenges arising out of demographic changes, urbanisation and other rapid changes in society.

## GST collections rose 9.3% to Rs 1,72,129 crore

NEW DELHI: "The GST collections are in line with the other macro-economic parameters, which indicate a significant uplift in economic activities, with even the IMF upgrading the growth forecast to 6.7% for FY 2023-24. The same collection trajectory in the next two months will ensure that

the tax collection targets for the year are comfortably surpassed," said MS Mani, partner at Deloitte. A part of the jump in collections in January may be on account of completion of audits and investigations related to earlier years, said analysts. "This consistent upward trend,

evident in surpassing key milestones, reflects the effectiveness of improved tax administration and heightened taxpayer compliance. Overall, these positive indicators pave the way for continued economic expansion," said Saurabh Agarwal, tax partner at consulting firm EY.

Tax experts expect the Centre and the states to undertake the next round of reforms after the general election, which could result in rationalisation of rates and reworking of slabs. "... over past seven years or so of the GST regime, the CAGR of collections has been at around 12%.

## US approves sales of top-notch drones to India overcoming token resistance from lawmakers over Pannun issue

WASHINGTON/NEW DELHI: The US state department on Thursday formally notified US Congress of its approval of the sale to India of 31 MQ-9B Drones and associated military equipment worth \$3.99 billion, overcoming token resistance from some lawmakers who, according to reports, wanted New Delhi to carry out a "meaningful investigation" into the alleged plot to kill Khalistani separatist Gurbhag Singh Pannun before signing off on the sale.

A report that some lawmakers, including some Indian-American legislators, had put a hold on the sale turned out to be exaggerated after the Defense Security Cooperation Agency (DSCA) delivered the required certification notifying the Congress of the possible sale on Thursday, just a day after the purported wrinkle. US officials nevertheless acknowledged that members of the Congress were consulted on the sale "to address questions that they might have" in what they said is a routine process. Illustrative of the fact that such legislative hurdles seldom derail the White House's overarching geopolitical goals, DSCA said in a statement that the proposed sale "will support the foreign policy and national security objectives of the US by helping to strengthen the US-Indian strategic relationship and to improve the security of a major defence partner which continues to be an important force for political stability, peace, and economic progress in the Indo-Pacific and South Asia region." "The proposed sale will improve India's capability to meet current and future threats by enabling unmanned surveillance and reconnaissance patrols in sea lanes of operation. India has demonstrated a commitment to modernising its military and will have no difficulty absorbing these articles.

## Only priest, not devotees, allowed into southern cellar: DM

Varanasi divisional commissioner Kaushal Raj Sharma on Thursday clarified that while a priest was granted access, devotees were not permitted inside the southern cellar of the Gyanvapi mosque, as per a court order. He refuted lawyer Vishnu Shankar Jain's claim that general devotees could enter the cellar to offer prayers, affirming that only the plaintiffs and the designat-



ed priest were allowed entry. Varanasi district court allowed regular worship of Shringar Gauri and other Hindu deities in the southern cellar of Varanasi's Gyanvapi Masjid.

A priest was allowed, but devotees weren't permitted inside the Gyanvapi mosque's southern cellar following a court order, Varanasi divisional commissioner Kaushal

Raj Sharma said Thursday. He dismissed lawyer Vishnu Shankar Jain's assertion that not only the plaintiffs and the assigned priest but also general devotees could enter the southern cellar to offer prayers. Advocate Jain represents cases of the Vyas Peeth priest and four women plaintiffs seeking worship rights at the southern cellar and goddess Shringar Gauri inside.

## Risking life for Rs 1.4 lakh/month: Queue grows for Israel jobs

Ek baar jaan ki baazi lagakar kya pata kismat khul jaaye? (Once we put our lives at stake, who knows, fortune might smile upon us?) Ravindra Yadav, a 27-year-old iron bender from UP's Lakhimpur Kheri, encapsulated the common sentiment among skilled labourers selected for jobs in war-scarred Israel, viewing the opportunity as a source of prosperity for their families. Israel's request for 10,000 ad hoc construction workers to alleviate a



labour shortage caused by its war with Hamas had prompted thousands of men from Haryana, Punjab, UP, Bihar, Rajasthan, MP and Delhi to converge on a recruitment centre in Rohtak between Jan 16 and 21. However, fewer than 400 passed the test, a source said. Faced with struggles to find jobs and meagre

earnings in India - Yadav currently earns just Rs 100 after 12 hours of work - masons, painters, electricians, plumbers, and even aspirants with university degrees expressed their readiness to venture into a country embroiled in war for the opportunity to pocket significantly more money - Rs 1.4 lakh a month. Yadav, a humanities graduate, shared his enthusiasm for securing a construction job in Israel, highlighting the financial benefits it offers.

## Reduced deficit, lower government debt set to push down interest

The provisional budget has set the stage for reduced home loan costs and lower interest rates overall, as indicated by financial institutions. The decrease in the fiscal deficit to 5.1% has resulted in borrowing being nearly Rs 1 lakh crore less than anticipated. Additionally, with a greater portion of government



expenditure directed towards capital expenditure (capex), the move is expected to be non-inflationary, facilitating poten-

tial future rate reductions by the RBI. Union Budget 2024: Sitharaman Aims at Fiscal Consolidation Amidst Growth Focus, Mixed Reactions to 5.8% Fiscal Deficit MUMBAI: The interim budget has laid the ground for cheaper home loans and lower interest rates in general, according to lenders. The lower fis-

cal deficit of 5.1% has meant borrowing is almost Rs 1 lakh crore lower than expected. Also, since more of the government spending is going towards capex, it will not be inflationary and would make it easier for RBI to reduce rates in future. By pegging the fiscal deficit at a lower level and pruning.

## Indian-American student dies in Ohio, probe on

NEW YORK: Police is investigating the death of an Indian-American student in Ohio, the Consulate General of India in New York said as it noted that foul play is not suspected in the case at this stage. "Deeply saddened by the unfortunate demise of Shreyas Reddy Benigeri, a student of Indian origin in Ohio. Police investigation is under way. At this stage, foul play is not suspected," the consulate said in a post on X Thursday. Benigeri was a student of the Lindner School of Business, Cincinnati. The consulate continues to remain in touch with the family and is extending all possible assistance to them, it said. The incident comes just days.

## Defence budget: Budget artillery for deep tech, LAC roads



The overall defence outlay for the next fiscal has been pegged at Rs 6.2 lakh crore (\$75 billion), which marks just a 4.7% hike over the 2023-24's budgetary estimates and actually goes into negative if revised estimates are taken into account. Capital expenditure of Rs 1.7 lakh crore for military modernisation, however, registered a 5.8% hike over last year's budgetary estimates and 9.4% over the revised ones. The revenue allocation meant for operational sustenance and commitments, in turn,

stood at Rs 92,088 crore. The defence budget works out to just 1.9% of the projected GDP for 2024-25 if the huge defence pension allocation of Rs 1.4 lakh crore for the 32 lakh ex-servicemen and retired defence civilians is considered. It drops to less than 1.5% if the pension bill is excluded. The FM said a scheme will be launched for "strengthening deep-tech technologies for defence purposes and expediting 'atmanirbharta' (self-reliance)". With deep-tech areas like artificial intelligence (AI).

## Final year BArch student of IIT(BHU) found dead

VARANASI: A student of IIT (BHU) in Varanasi was found dead in his hostel room late Wednesday, police said Thursday. Final-year BArch (architecture) student Utkarsh Raj, 23, was reportedly suffering from depression and undergoing counselling sessions. Utkarsh's father Rajendra Prasad is a section officer at BHU and the family is based



in Varanasi. IIT-BHU was yet to issue a statement. Police said some of Utkarsh's

friends broke open the door of his room when he didn't respond to their calls.



## FPIs pull out 13k crore from stocks in February



According to the data, foreign portfolio investors (FPIs) made a net withdrawal of Rs 13,047 crore in Indian equities this month (till Jan 19). They pulled out over Rs 24,000 crore from equities during Jan 17-19. Before this, FPIs made a net investment of Rs 66,134 crore in . "The US bond yield started rising with the 10-year yield rising from the recent level of 3.9% to 4.2% triggering capital outflows"

**NEW DELHI:** Foreign investors have adopted a cautious approach this month, offloading domestic equities worth Rs 13,000 crore in the first three weeks owing to high valuations of Indian stocks and surging US bond yields.

In contrast, foreign investors are bullish on the debt market and injected Rs 15,647 crore in the debt market during the period under review, data with the depositories showed.

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foreign portfolio investors (FPIs) made a net withdrawal of Rs 13,047 crore in Indian equities this month (till Jan 19). They pulled out over Rs 24,000 crore from equities during Jan 17-19. Before this, FPIs

made a net investment of Rs 66,134 crore in . "The US bond yield started rising with the 10-year yield rising from the recent level of 3.9% to 4.2% triggering capital outflows," V K Vijayakumar, chief

investment strategist at Geojit Financial Services, said, adding, "Also, since the valuations in India are high, FPIs used the excuse of less-than-expected results from HDFC Bank to press massive sales too."

## L-G urges the Department to amend the compensation structure for cooks

**Delhi:** The Department of Social Welfare was instructed by Delhi Lieutenant-Governor VK Saxena to carry out the Delhi High Court's ruling and pay cooks according to the updated pay scale established by the Seventh Pay Commission. Back in February 2016, the Central Administrative Tribunal (CAT) rendered a verdict that favored the cooks. The Delhi government then filed a case in the High Court challenging the CAT decision. In January of last year, the High Court ultimately ruled in favor of the cooks, according to officials. The chefs filed a contempt petition when the Delhi government refused to carry out the Delhi High Court's ruling, and in January 2024, the Delhi government eventually sent the file for the Lieutenant-General's



permission, according to Raj Niwas authorities. After clearing a file in this regard, the L-G noted that the department ought to have been more considerate of the requirements of its workers and shunned needless litigation and delays. According to an official citing the L-G, the department may be directed to determine the cost of litigation and assign responsibility to the officers and officials responsible for the delay in the current situation within a 15-day period. On May 7,

2014, the HC ordered the department to implement a new pay scale, Level 2 (Rs 19,900-Rs 63,200) of the Seventh Central Pay Commission pay matrix. The official continued, "The HC further stated that the order will have a prospective effect with regard to working personnel (at the post of cook). According to a different official, the HC rendered its verdict in January of last year, rejecting the department's appeal against the CAT's 2016 ruling. In addition, the workers had petitioned the HC in contempt for the department's failure to comply with its ruling. The department's heartless attitude left this handful of unfortunate cooks with little choice but to approach the court, according to The L-G.

## Deadline looms, just 78,000 property tags issued

**Delhi:** Even as the deadline for taxpayers to geotag their properties nears, only 78,000 tags have been issued so far, mostly in non-residential areas. The Municipal Corporation of Delhi has said that failure to geotag properties by Jan 31 will deprive taxpayers of rebates. MCD has around 14 lakh taxpayers and around 13 lakh properties have been issued the unique property identification code (UPIC) number. A majority of these are struggling to comply with the geotagging requirement. In unauthorised colonies, the

exercise doesn't even seem to have started. Queried about the response, MCD officials said that people were buying time and there would be a huge rush at the last moment. "The process is very simple and we are expecting that by the month-end, people will come forward to get their properties geo tagged.

We held over 200 camps, meetings with RWAs and market associations," said the official. At the beginning of Dec last year, MCD made geotagging of all categories of properties mandatory

if taxpayers were to avail property tax rebates. Taxpayers who failed to geotag their properties by Jan 31, 2024, would not be able to avail a 10% rebate on the lump sum advance payment of tax for the 2024-25 financial year by June 30. Geotagging of properties involves assigning a unique latitude-longitude marker to a property on a GIS map by selecting current location against any unique property identification code to ensure that the properties have their location geographically identified.

## The Delhi Jal Board will begin efforts to plug unlicensed borewells



**Delhi:** The Delhi Jal Board (DJB), which has formed 16 teams to investigate such activities throughout the city, will close down illegally operated borewells. The drive is a reaction to an ongoing case before the National Green Tribunal (NGT) concerning illicit groundwater exploitation. According to Delhi Pollution Control Committee (DPCC) regulations, extracting groundwater without prior approval is prohibited. The diameter of the pump, its capacity, and the reason for extracting groundwater are some of the variables that determine the penalty for violators. 41.49% of Delhi's land is deemed "over-exploited" according to a report by the Central Groundwater Board (CGWB) because of

extensive groundwater exploitation. The water utility has formed 16 teams to investigate unlawful borewell activities throughout the city as part of the Delhi Jal Board's (DJB) upcoming push to shut them, according to officials with knowledge of the situation. A sub-divisional magistrate, local assistant engineers and the executive engineer of DJB, as well as representatives from the tax department, make up the sealing teams. The district magistrate and DJB superintendent engineer will oversee each district's drive, according to a January 24 order from DJB CEO Cheshta Yadav. A top DJB official who was aware of the initiative stated that there will be 1-3 teams in each of Delhi's 11 revenue districts.

## Development in Greater Noida was opened by PM Modi

**Delhi:** During a rally in the Bulandshahr region of Uttar Pradesh, Prime Minister Narendra Modi officially opened the 750-acre "Integrated Industrial Township, Greater Noida" (IITGN). According to PM Modi, this smart township can compete with the world's top manufacturing centers since it has all the essential infrastructure needed for commerce, trade, and industry. The Integrated Industrial Township Greater Noida Limited (IIT-GNL), a joint venture between Delhi Mumbai Industrial Corridor (DMIC) and Greater Noida Authority, has created the IITGN at a cost of around Rs 1,700 crore. Prior to the 2024 Lok Sabha elections, PM Modi announced and dedicated a number of other development projects



## Cost-effective prosthesis to restore their voice

**NEW DELHI:** In what could prove to be a boon for patients who have lost their ability to speak due to throat cancer, All India Institute of Medical Sciences, in collaboration with IIT Delhi, has developed a cost-effective prosthesis to restore their voice. According to doctors, many throat cancer patients are unable to speak after the removal of their larynx due to advanced stages of laryngeal disease. Larynx, or voice box, contains vocal cords and helps a person speak, breathe and swallow. A study conducted on 20 patients over three years has yielded positive outcomes, said AIIMS doctors. Until now, patients have been implanted with commercially available voice prosthesis costing between Rs 20,000 and Rs 40,000. However, the AIIMS-IIT prosthesis is free of cost for AIIMS patients. Following successful trial completion and approvals, it may be made available for other patients and could cost a few hundred rupees. Dr Alok Thakar, head and professor of otolaryngology and head/neck surgery, said the aim of developing the device was to ensure patients who lost their voice due to cancer in the larynx can speak again without shelling out thousands of rupees on an artificial voice box. "During the tracheoesophageal puncture (TEP) procedure, we create a small hole in the wall between the trachea and esophagus, the tube that moves food from mouth to the stomach. A small one-way valve, called tracheoesophageal prosthesis, is placed inside the hole to direct air into the throat," he said, adding the valve is made of silicon.

He said the vocal cords are completely removed during total laryngectomy surgery and the sound source is lost. The TEP surgery with a prosthesis creates a path for air to move from lungs to the esophagus. This air causes the top of the esophagus to vibrate, producing a new tracheoesophageal voice, he explained. The device, weighing a few grams, enables throat cancer patients who had their larynx removed to speak.

Prof Rakesh Kumar from the ENT department said on an average, annually four-five out of 25 patients suffering from larynx cancer face voice box removal risk. Usually, cancer occurs in the 50-60 age group.

"It's not difficult to learn how to use the prosthesis. After surgery, patients just need guidance and practice. The prosthesis valve lasts six-eight months on an average. The replacement procedure doesn't require surgery. It is usually painless and can be done in OPD," he said. Doctors said TEP's main advantage is it generates the most intelligible, fluent and natural voice compared to other alaryngeal speech methods.

## The story of Lord Ram will be made a part of the new syllabus for madrassas

**Delhi:** The story of Lord Ram will be made a part of the new syllabus for madrassas affiliated to the Uttarakhand Waqf Board from the new academic session commencing this year. Of the 117 madrassas under the board, the new syllabus will be introduced initially in four madrassas in Dehradun, Haridwar, Nainital and Udham Singh Nagar districts. After the recruit-

ment of teachers, it would be taken up in the remaining 113 madrassas, officials said. "We'll teach the Quran as well as Ramayana. When we can tell our students about Lakshman, who gave up everything for his elder brother, then what is the need to tell them about Aurangzeb, who killed his brothers to get the throne? A proper dress code will also be introduced in the

four identified madrassas," Uttarakhand Waqf Board chairman Shadab Shams Shams added that the board would appoint principals for the four madrassas soon. "These principals would be authorised to recruit teachers well-versed with Ramayana so that they can teach the students well. We are making elaborate arrangements in this direction.

## Smart cards are Delhi Metro passengers' favorite

**Delhi:** The travel smart card was utilized by 73.6% of Delhi Metro riders in October. QR-based paper tickets were second at 24.6%, while 1.8% commuters used it, Paytm, and WhatsApp, according to DMRC data. About 45% of people use cashless purchases. This shows that individuals are adopting cashless or digital travel in big numbers, since DMRC has implemented many digital initiatives "DMRC official. He noted that smart cards are the most popular since people are used to them. DMRC has launched QR ticketing via its smartphone app, ticket vending machines

(TVM), ticket windows, WhatsApp, Paytm, and PhonePe, which support popular digital payment methods. NCMCs are available alongside smart cards. NCMC will soon be linked to Delhi Transport Corporation and Cluster Scheme buses and autos and Namoo Bharat trains. QR tickets via WhatsApp were introduced by DMRC on October 5.

Previously exclusively offered on Airport Express Line, this service now includes all stations, including Gurgaon Rapid Metro. Delhi Metro added Paytm-based QR code ticketing on October 12.

## DPCC has submitted an action-taken report to National Green Tribunal (NGT)

**New Delhi:** Delhi Pollution Control Committee (DPCC) has submitted an action-taken report to National Green Tribunal (NGT) on the pollution caused by dumping of construction and demolition waste near residential complexes in Vasant Kunj. In the report, DPCC stated to have issued a show cause notice to Delhi Development Authority (DDA) and Municipal Corporation of Delhi (MCD) and an environmental compensation of Rs 1 lakh was imposed. The tribunal had constituted a joint committee of DDA, DPCC and district magistrate (South West Delhi) in Sept 2022 to verify the factual position about heavy vehicular movement and dumping of construction material on the vacant land adjacent to Sector E-2, Vasant Kunj. After inspecting the area in Dec 2022, the committee issued directions under Air (Prevention and Control of



Pollution) Act, 1981 and Environmental (Protection) Act, 1986 along with Construction and Demolition Waste Rules, 2016 to DDA and MCD. As the issue remained unresolved, NGT in Nov 2023 ordered the DPCC to issue show cause notices and impose penalty on the DDA and MCD. "DPCC has issued show cause notice on Jan 5, 2024 for imposition of Environmental Damage Compensation of Rs 1,00,000 to

the superintendent engineer, DDA for past violations and damage to the environment," stated DPCC report dated Jan 11, uploaded on NGT website on Saturday. A similar show cause for damages of Rs one lakh was sent to MCD deputy commissioner (Najafgarh Zone), said the report, adding both agencies were yet to submit their replies to the concerned authority. In 2022, residents of Sector RE02 and E-1.



## The budget is for the benefit of the common man and the welfare of the poor: Ravibhushan Garg

**Kaithal:** BJP Intellectual Cell Haryana Co-Coordinator and former Kaithal District President Ravibhushan Garg termed the interim budget presented by the Union Finance Minister as a budget for the welfare of the common man and the welfare of the poor and said that this budget will provide complete relief to the entire society. The country and Haryana will benefit. Modi government is working on Sabka Saath, Sabka Vikas and Sabka Vishwas. This is a budget to accelerate the development of the country and increase employment. Speaking in an interview here, Ravibhushan Garg said that the objective of the Finance Minister's budget is to strengthen India's economic sector in line with Narendra Modi's resolve to make India the third largest economy in the world. This is a



**Said: Budget to accelerate the country's development and increase employment**

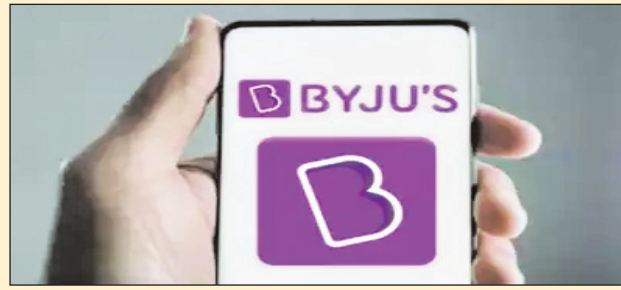
budget to accelerate the development of the country and increase employment. Through this budget, it has become clear that India will become the most developed country in the world by 2047, because at every point there are indications of how India is moving rapidly on the development journey. This budget is very important for the development of the people of the country. BJP former district president Ravibhushan Garg said that this budget is an excellent summary of the qualitative and quantitative transfor-

mation of the Indian economy in the last 10 years. This budget includes all the four pillars established for a developed India – farmers, youth, poor and women. Sanctioning 2 crore more houses under PM Awas Yojana, fixing the number of 3 crore for Lakhpati Didi Self Help Groups, many such schemes show that on one hand there are welfare schemes, on the other hand there are also expenditure schemes like infrastructure development. Are. Modi government is a true well-wisher of the people of the country and the state.

## Byju's to raise \$200 million through rights issue at a valuation of under \$250 million

**MUMBAI:** Troubled

edtech startup Byju's has launched a rights issue to raise \$200 million from existing investors at a valuation of about \$225 million-\$230 million, a 99% drop from its peak valuation of \$22 billion as it struggles with a funding crunch. In a statement, the company said that the funds will be used to clear immediate liabilities and meet operational requirements. "It has been 21 months since



our last external capital raise, during which we have cut our burn and worked to become a lean organisation, razor-focused on execution. This capital raise is essential to prevent any further value impairment and to equip the company with necessary resources to deliver on its mission," founder Byju Raveendran said in a note to shareholders which was reviewed. Raveendran claimed that the founders have infused over \$1.1 billion.

## APAC businesses to nearly triple spends on GenAI

**NEW DELHI:** Asia Pacific businesses are sprucing up investments in generative AI (GenAI) and projected to nearly triple spends on this technology to USD 3.4 billion in 2024 across Australia, New Zealand, China, Japan, India, and Singapore, according to

Inforsys Research. While the spending trails North America, APAC's adoption, effectiveness, and growth are among the highest globally, it said. "Companies across Asia-Pacific are quickly ramping up investments in generative AI and entering a higher stage of maturity," the IT major's research arm, Inforsys Knowledge Institute (IKI), said in the research. While APAC companies currently lag behind their North American counterparts in GenAI spending, the research forecasts

## Budget 2024 – Views of Shri Ashishkumar Chauhan, MD & CEO, NSE

**AMBALA:** I give the Interim Budget 10/10. The budget focuses on growth, welfarism and fiscal restraint, while ensuring continuity on policies and taxation. The focus on capacity building through higher spending on hard as well as soft infrastructure and consequently facilitating job creation has continued. At the same time, the budget provides enough for poor, farmers, women, and youth, which in turn bodes well for the overall economic growth, thereby keeping us in a good stead in an otherwise uncertain world. At 5.8%, the revised fiscal deficit for FY23-24 is an improvement from the budget estimate by 10bps. Fiscal consolidation continues to be the front and centre, with the fiscal deficit for FY24-25 brought down to 5.1%, bettering expectations and a commitment of a sub-4.5% target by FY25-26. The capex outlay has increased by 16.9% to a record high of Rs 11.11 lakh crore, implying 3.4% of GDP—the highest in 26 years, with strong focus on roads, transport, and railways. This implies a CAGR of 27% in the last five-year period. The quality of expenditure has also improved, with capital expenditure now comprising 23.3% of total expenditure—the highest in 30 years. A social security framework is in place today for the poor and needy with coverage on power.



## Reaction on Interim Budget of Mr. Abheek Barua, Chief Economist, HDFC Bank

**Chandigarh:** The Government stuck to the protocol of delivering no major big bang announcements in an interim budget. The finance minister delivered a balanced announcement with an account of the Governments' progress over the last few years while also laying down the roadmap ahead. The Government promised to continue its focus on infrastructure building – setting an allocation of 11.1 lakh crore rupees for 2024-25 -- along with targeting inclusive growth. Its roadmap for 2024-25 includes an extension of the rural housing scheme, push towards rooftop solarisation, housing for the middle class, and long-term low interest financing in sunrise



domains among other things. The push towards developing tourism at the state level is a welcome step, as it could also help greater job creation. The Government continued to remain fiscally prudent, estimating the fiscal deficit at 5.8% of GDP in 2023-24 – lower than the budgeted 5.9% of GDP. Moreover, it reduced

the fiscal deficit target to 5.1% of GDP for 2024-25, in an effort to achieve the medium-term target of 4.5% by 2025-26.

The fiscal target for 2024-25 translates into a lower gross market borrowing figure than expected and is likely to be positive for the bond market.

## Budget 2024 – Views of Shri Ashishkumar Chauhan, MD & CEO, NSE

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improved, with capital expenditure now comprising 23.3% of total expenditure—the highest in 30 years. A social security framework is in place today for the poor and needy with coverage on power, health, housing, cooking gas and financial inclusion. Overall, this is a positive budget for the markets, with continued focus on growth, prudence and transparency.

## Apeejay Surrendra Park Hotels Limited 920 crore Initial Public Offering to open on February 5, 2024

**GURUGRAM:** Apeejay Surrendra Park Hotels Limited ("The Park" or the "Company") shall open its Bid / Offer in relation to its initial public offer of Equity Shares on Monday, February 5th 2024.



The total offer size of Equity Shares aggregating up to ₹ 9,200 million [₹ 920 crore] comprises of fresh issue aggregating up to ₹ 6,000 million [₹ 600 crore] and Offer for Sale aggregating up to ₹ 3,200 million [₹ 320 crore] by Selling Shareholders. ("The Total Offer Size"). The Anchor Investor Bidding Date shall be Friday, February 2nd, 2024. The Bid/Offer will open on Monday, February 5th 2024 for subscription and will close on Wednesday, February 7th 2024.

The Price Band of the Offer has been fixed

at ₹ 147 to ₹ 155 per Equity Share. Bids can be made for a minimum of 96 Equity Shares and in multiples of 96 Equity Shares thereafter. The Company proposes to utilise net proceeds from fresh issue of Equity Shares towards repayment/prepayment, in full or in part of certain outstanding borrowings availed by Company and balance amount towards general corporate purposes ("Object of Issue"). The offer for sale comprises of sale of Equity

shares aggregating up to ₹ 2,960.00 million [₹ 296 crore] by Apeejay Private Limited (the "Promoter Group Selling Shareholder"), up to ₹ 230.00 million [₹ 23 crore] by RECP IV Park Hotel Investors Ltd and up to ₹ 10.00 million [₹ 1 crore] by RECP IV Park Hotel Co-Investors Ltd (the "Investor Selling Shareholders"). JM Financial Limited, Axis Capital Limited and ICICI Securities Limited are the Book Running Lead Managers or BRLMs to the Issue.

## Government should give farmers the right to decide the price of their crops themselves: Rajeev Arya

**Farmer laborers from all over the state participated in the meeting of United Kisan Morcha**

**Kaithal:** The meeting of Bharatiya Kisan Union Samyukt Kisan Mochi was held in Dhand office. Which was presided over by farmer leader Suresh Kumar Sharma, state executive member. Mainly, BKU National Advisor Ajit Singh Habdi, State General Secretary Bhura Ram Pabnawa, Hoshiar Singh Gill, President Dhana Bhagat and Youth BKU State



President Haryana Rajeev Arya Dhand participated in the meeting. Earlier today, the auspicious time was celebrated by performing Havan Yagya of BKU office Dhand. Whose ribbon was cut by farmer leader Ajit Singh Habari. Farmers and laborers from different places of Haryana participated in this program. In the program, all the farmer leaders discussed in detail the problems related to their

respective farmers. In the meeting, many farmers presented their problems to their farmer leaders, which were resolved on the spot by the farmer leaders. In which mainly the problem was given to the Executive Engineer Poondri of the Electricity Department. In which a committee was formed and asked to solve the problem and the farmers gave time till 12th February to the

department. Whatever protest demonstration takes place after this will be the responsibility of the department. Addressing the farmers in the meeting, farmer leaders Bhura Ram Pabnawa and Rajeev Arya Dhand said that reducing the weight of fertilizer bags is an anti-farmer step of the government. The government should reduce the weight of the bags and also reduce the rates. Farmers should have the right to decide the price of their crops themselves. Exploitation of farmers will not be tolerated under any circumstances.

## Medical devices: A case for make-in-TN

**Chennai**

Medical devices can become Tamil Nadu's next growth story in manufacturing. The sector's market size in India is projected to hit \$50 billion by 2030, though at present 75-80% of medical devices are imported from the US, China and Germany. It's this huge potential for growth that is drawing the attention of companies in Tamil Nadu with expertise in mechanical engineering, electronics, and information technology. There is a natural synergy between auto and electronic component sectors and the smart medical equipment industry. And with Tamil Nadu being the country's largest exporter in electronics, among the top three players in the IT sector, and an automotive hub, an ecosystem already exists. State industries secretary Arun Roy says multinational companies in medical devices manufacturing are showing interest in establishing facilities in Tamil Nadu



## Editorial

### New India champions and equity at Davos

As India's economic performance grows, its soft power grows in proportion. Prime Minister Narendra Modi as the charismatic leader of this 75-year-old republic and ancient civilisational culture, is thought to have answers to the dilemmas of the currently divided and troubled world. From a country that used to deliver unwanted lectures to the world, it is now much sought after. Modi's 'one world family' messaging during the recent G20 year hosted by India, ended by including the 55 nation African Union into its fold. India made the effort, achieved unanimity for the move, and successfully included the most exploited and savaged continent on earth onto the leading global platform where its ills can be addressed. Domestically, the inclusive tone is set by 'Sabka Saath, Sabka Vikas, Sabka Prayas, Sabka Viswas', despite the inevitable mockery and accusations of Hindu triumphalism. Together, these ideas resonate in an old-fashioned way in a world with two ongoing wars, one in Europe and the other in West Asia and the tendency to form opposing axes. A polarisation not seen since WWII is developing in a very worrisome way. Meanwhile, the fact that India has drawn closer to Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates, and Israel than ever before, in practical, material, ways, gives the lie to the criticism of Hindu communalism. In addition, America has become a firm strategic partner with military and technological benefits for both. France is now a firm friend and defence manufacturing partner too, along with Russia. Other relationships have also undergone massive positive transformations, such as the one with Japan. Modi, a grey eminence with unbounded energy, in his 73rd year now, is widely regarded as one of the most respected and influential voices in the pantheon of global leaders. With a gross domestic product growth of around 7 per cent per annum going forward, India is expected to occupy the 3rd position in the world by 2027. It will be behind only the US and China, with a GDP of \$10 trillion, up from its current \$4 trillion. It is the world's most successful economy now. By 2047, India's 100th year since Independence, it is expected to have become a highly developed country. It will also have multiples of its present per capita income for its vast population, expected to touch 1.70 billion by then. It is expected to have an economy of over \$30 trillion by then. That India's soft power is growing alongside all this is not surprising, nor is it unprecedented. Ancient India was fabled for its wealth, the greatest in the ancient world. That it set off a series of marauding conquests and occupations was the other side of the coin not likely to be repeated in the 21st century. Its cultural, civilisational and dharmic influence spread all over the Far East including China and Japan. Without any aggression, attempt at domination or conquest. West Asia was also heavily influenced by Indian learning and innovation. And not a few so called inventions and discoveries claimed by the West were shamelessly lifted from India without acknowledgement. Davos, used to hosting world's leaders, its finest minds and economic thinkers, for over half a century now, witnessed a major presence from India this year, building on the interest generated last year. This in the presence of leaders from 300 countries. The rate of foreign direct investment into India has trebled, and is slated to grow exponentially into high technology areas such as chip-making, defence manufacturing, artificial intelligence, and other relocations of manufacturing from China. For its latest soft power projection, India deployed the thoroughly confident and articulate Union Minister for Minority Affairs, Smriti Irani. She led the charge for global gender equality and equity.

## Union Home Minister's Internal Security strategy paying rich dividends

It is a mark of the present Union Home Minister's far-sightedness and dedicated leadership that in his direct guidance a three-fold strategy of strengthening the internal security of the country has already produced good results. In a nutshell, this can be described as combining development with security in dealing with Maoists, taking the zero tolerance approach to terrorism beyond 'policy' to the turf of 'action' and integrating internal security with border security and law & order management to ensure total handling of the task of securing the nation. With his hands-on approach, Amit Shah has lent speed to the efforts initiated in multiple spheres towards this objective and pursued them on an untiring note. This was reflected in his prompt visit to Sukma in Chhattisgarh in April 2021 to make an in-depth examination of the circumstances in which CPI (Maoist) had ambushed security forces led by CRPF in Sukma-Bijapur road and caused the death of 22 personnel, his address at the All India Police Science Congress at Dehradun in October this year, and the follow up directed by him on Police Technology Mission earlier announced by Prime Minister Modi at the DGPs Conference held at Lucknow in 2021. The crucial details of this strategy need to be highlighted to get a



proper understanding of what all was being done. The Home Minister has formulated a comprehensive strategy for tackling Left Wing extremism. While putting down the violence with all the might at the government's command, modernising police forces, providing them with helicopters and UAVs for surveillance and upgrading some 250 police stations in the Maoist-affected regions, had been given priority. The Centre has funded the development of road infrastructure, opened post offices, bank branches and ATMs and tried to enhance the financial inclusion of people there.

To improve connectivity, mobile towers have been installed in 34 districts affected by the Maoist problem. The Ministry of Home Affairs has created a separate Left Wing Extremism Division to monitor the implementation of the new policy framework evolved by the present regime to deal

with the problem. Tribal communities and Economically Backward groups were being exploited and even threatened by the Maoists to sustain the Protracted People's War against the Indian nation. The extremists take to targeting schools, health centres, railways, roads, and bridges to thwart the development schemes of the government. The Home Minister has highlighted the need for CRPF and other security forces to adopt a people-friendly behaviour, handle welfare schemes for the locals and keep avenues for talks open wherever possible taking the help of civil society groups if available. It is the multi-prong responses combining counter-insurgency operations and development work, that have enabled the government to drastically curb the violence of Maoists and wean the population from the ideological influence of CPI (Maoist) in the Dandakaranya hinterland of the country. The

Ministry of Home Affairs has been working on a 'National Policy and Action Plan' since 2015 to deal with Left Wing Extremism through a collaborative approach between the Centre and the states and there is no doubt that the leadership of the Union Home Minister has made all the difference. Addressing the Anti-Terrorism Conference organised by the National Investigation Agency (NIA) in October last, Shah perceptibly underscored the importance of dismantling not just terrorism but the entire 'terrorist ecosystem' involving cryptocurrency, hawala, terror funding, organised crime and narco-terrorism. He lauded the compilation of data regarding terrorism in the last few years and emphasised that the fight against terrorism would require collaboration from global to local levels including various states. He called upon the NIA and the IB to standardise training programmes for all Central and state counter-terrorism agencies to ensure uniformity in their methodologies. The Centre's initiative in building data finds reflection in the success of the National Automated Fingerprint Identification System in bringing over 90 lakh fingerprints on record. On the occasion of Police Commemoration Day on October 21, the Home Minister said that while main-

taining a zero-tolerance policy against terrorism, the government had framed strong laws to curb its spread. In the context of the modernisation of Police forces, he announced that a Police Technology Mission had been established with the aim of creating the "world's best anti-terror force".

The focused attention given to the task of countering terrorist activities in the country, under the direction of Shah, has already resulted in a nearly 65 per cent decline in incidents of terrorism, insurgency and Maoist violence. In what should be considered a move of great strategic importance in the area of national security, the Home Minister told the 49th All India Police Science Congress at Dehradun in October last year that internal security, border security and good law & order management were the integral components of the system that made the country secure. The Ministry of Home Affairs has taken several measures to improve law & order throughout the country. The Home Minister has made a significant observation that "as we move towards becoming a robust economic power our police and security agencies must assume a more substantial role in safeguarding our economic institutions". This is an astute understanding of the reality.

### Modi representing Bharat' Advani writes on 'cherished' Ram Mandir

I am elated beyond words that we are on the verge of realising my most cherished dream of having a grand Shri Ram temple at Ramjanmabhoomi, the birthplace of Shri Ram. On 22nd January 2024, Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi will install the idol of Shri Ram at the beautiful temple in Ayodhya, and I feel blessed that I will witness this historic occasion in my lifetime. I have always believed that 'faith' is the foundation on which rests both a meaningful life of a person and the whole society at large. Faith not only infuses energy and confidence into a person's life, but also helps give it direction. For me and for cores of Indians, this faith has been our deep reverence for Shri Ram. Shri Ram embodies the spirit of India. The true spirit of India and

Indianness is discipline, truth, honesty, ethics, moral values, acceptance and celebration of diversity, respect for elders, strong family bonds and all such fine human values and Shri Ram is the epitome of all these impeccable human qualities. Hence the title 'Maryada Purushottam' (an exemplar among good human beings) by which he is known. He is an ideal for Indians' aspiration to live a life of higher values. Shri Ram was also an ideal king—the living embodiment of 'Dharma'. Hence the concept of 'Ram Rajya', the epitome of good governance, was extolled as the ideal for India. Although Shri Ram is the holy religious figure worthy of worship for the Hindus, he is a pre-eminent symbol of India's cultural heritage and national identity -which belong to all citizens

alike. The story of Shri Ram's life, the Ramayana, is both a source and a carrier of the continuity of India's cultural traditions and has greatly influenced the Indian mindset generation after generation, century after century. Therefore, for the last almost 500 years, the reconstruction of the Ram Temple in Ayodhya has been a deep desire for countless Indians. The Ramjanmabhoomi movement for the reconstruction of the temple at the Janmasthan of Shri Ram in Ayodhya proved to be a major watershed in the history of post-1947 India. Its impact on our society and polity, and on our sense of national identity has been tremendous. In my own political journey, I have always said that the Ayodhya Movement was the most decisive transformational.

### India's civilisational discourse resonates across the Indian Ocean Region

The consecration of the Ram Temple in Ayodhya on January 22 is a landmark event for India. This event is not just religious but has several undertones that cut across different perspectives, such as historical, political, and social. However, the Ram Temple is also fast assuming a geopolitical character, which is reflected in the developments of the Indian Ocean Region. The Indian Ocean Region is already in turmoil due to the Israel-Hamas war and its spillover effects as the Houthis are attacking cargo ships in the Red Sea. The geopolitics of this region are further thrown into flux due to the India-Maldives row. With Mohamed Muizzu, a pro-China leader, in power, India-Maldives ties have deteriorated dramatically in the last month. Muizzu's unequivocal anti-India stance is rapidly increasing threat perception for India in the Indian Ocean Region, as the risk of the Maldives ceding ground to China in India's neighbourhood is very high. 2023 saw a massive 122% increase in civilian deaths by explosives, highest in decade. The friction between India and the Maldives could generally be considered as falling mostly within the realm of strategic competition in a geopolitical space. However, this row also has a civilizational



undertone. Not only is Muizzu anti-India, he also tilts towards conservative ideology and radical Islam. The Maldives, a Muslim-majority country, has seen a surge of radical elements in its society since about a decade and a half ago. The radicalisation in the Maldives is in stark contrast to the celebration of inclusive civilisational ethos and taking pride in one's own culture without demeaning others' beliefs that is happening with the construction of the Ram Temple in India. This civilisational undertone is further pronounced when Mauritius, with an almost 50 per cent Hindu population, declared a two-hour break to all Hindu officials on January 22, when the consecration of Ram Temple is scheduled to take place in India.

Mauritius government has even termed the consecration a global event. Mauritius' overtures not only celebrate the shared cultural values with India, but they also underscore the island nation's support for India in the Indian Ocean Region. Mauritius, an African

island country located in the southern Indian Ocean, is geopolitically important for India in its outreach to the Indian Ocean Region as well as Africa. While India has accelerated its engagements with African countries in the Indian Ocean Region in the past decade, Mauritius was one of the first countries that India reached out to for strategic cooperation. It was in Mauritius in 2015 that Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi outlined India's vision for the Indian Ocean Region, which is termed as SAGAR (Security And Growth for All in the Region). Mauritius' cultural overtures also have a subtle hint of attracting Indian tourists, as they are likely to think of options other than the Maldives for holidays. While Lakshadweep may be gaining traction after Prime Minister Narendra Modi endorsed it as a tourist destination, it could take time for Lakshadweep to develop into a full-fledged tourist destination like the Maldives. Identifying this scope, Mauritius has subtly pitched itself as an alternative to the Maldives.

### Iran has set a new agenda for the region and the rest of the world

Iran has set a new agenda for the region and the rest of the world, even if it is unclear how it is going to make it relevant and work on the ground for long, if not indefinitely. AP Iran's tri-nation attacks on Pakistan, Iraq and Syria, not necessarily in that order, is possibly the first time that any nation in West Asia has trained its guns on three adversaries simultaneously after Israel in 1967. Of course, Iran's is a limited attack at present, but Tehran's strategy would have provided for possible, if not plausible counter-attacks from

one, if not two or all three nations that it had targeted. In the Six-Day War that June 1967, Israel shocked the enemy and surprised the world by destroying Egypt's air force almost completely on the ground, and also took on a half-hearted Jordan, and later Syria, simultaneously, forcing them all to sign a truce pact on Tel Aviv's terms, all within 10 days. This time round, no one is talking about the complete annihilation of Iran's adversary or adversaries, and certainly not their annihilation, as with Egypt's enmity decades ago.

Yet, Iran has set a new agenda for the region and the rest of the world, even if it is unclear how it is going to make it relevant and work on the ground for long, if not indefinitely. For the sheer audacity of the attacks bordering on insanity, Tehran needs to be watched for its subsequent moves, political, diplomatic and military. It's because Tehran is already a pariah to much of the 'international community'. How Iran's 'surgical strike' on Pakistan-based terror groups shows Tehran's confidence. If not on their own, many if not

most Western nations look up to the U S for guidance and direction that used to be the UK's until the latter voluntarily abdicated it all in the decades following the Second World War. Iran is now a no-no again after the US had sought to mend fences under President Obama, but has remained intransigent during the incumbency of Joe Biden, who followed in the footsteps of maverick Trump. In a re-election year when Trump is vastly emerging as his Republican challenger, Biden's hands are tied, and his choices limited.



## First meeting of US-China working group on fentanyl precursor chemicals to be held Tuesday

**WASHINGTON:** The first joint meeting of the US-China working group on fentanyl precursor chemicals will be held on Jan. 30 in Beijing, a senior US official. "This is a key part of the implementation of our bilateral cooperation on this effort," the US official told reporters.

The official added the United States has information that China started action against Chinese precursor chemical companies around the time of the summit of US President Joe Biden and Chinese President Xi Jinping last November. The United States will pursue law enforcement actions and impose controls on the precursors. The meeting is a pivotal moment for the issue, the official said.

Top Chinese and US officials held candid



**A top MOE official said the group proposed revolutionary changes to improve Indian HEI approval, assessment, and accreditation**

talks in Bangkok aimed at lowering tensions between the United States and China on Taiwan and other subjects, ahead of an expected springtime call between President Joe Biden and Chinese leader Xi Jinping.

Fentanyl is a leading cause of drug over-

doses in the United States, and the two leaders discussed efforts to reduce its flow at a summit in California last year. The US is already seeing fewer seizures of illicit chemicals used to make fentanyl at US airports after China moved to shut down companies that make them.

China has started some conversations with Mexico about the issue, the official said.

"It is really important that this is a multilateral issue," the official said.

## Pakistani police use tear gas to disperse pre-election rally by supporters of former leader Imran Khan

**KARACHI:** Pakistani police fired tear gas to disperse supporters of former Prime Minister Imran Khan in the southern city of Karachi on Sunday, less than two weeks before a national parliamentary election that Khan was blocked from running in because of a criminal conviction. An Associated Press reporter at the scene saw between 20 and 30 people getting arrested at the rally. A dozen workers from Khan's political party were arrested for attacking officers and blocking the road, police said. Although Khan will not



be on the ballot for the Feb. 8 election, he remains a potent political force because of his grassroots following and anti-establishment rhetoric. He says the legal cases against him were a plot to sideline him ahead of the vote. Senior police superintendent Sajid Siddozai said workers from Khan's Pakistan

Tehreek-e-Insaf, or PTI party organized the rally without obtaining permission from authorities and blocked the road. Siddozai confirmed the use of tear gas. "When police officials attempted to negotiate and persuade them not to block the road, they attacked the police."

## 33 people have been killed in separate traffic crashes in eastern Afghanistan

**ISLAMABAD:** Separate traffic crashes in eastern Afghanistan have left at least 33 people dead and 16 others injured, authorities said on Sunday. Ten collisions occurred in the Sorabi district of Kabul province, on the main

highway linking the Afghan capital, Kabul and the eastern Nangarhar province, killing 17 people, including two children and four women, said Khalid Zadran, spokesman for the Kabul police chief. Ten others were injured in

the crashes and they were hospitalized for treatment, Zadran said. Meanwhile, four additional collisions happened in the eastern Laghman province near the end of the same highway between Kabul and Nangarhar, killing 15 people.



## Murtaza Wahab and the Sindh governor and asked the poll conducting authority to "temporarily remove"

**ISLAMABAD:** Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) filed a complaint against Karachi province Mayor Murtaza Wahab and the Sindh governor and asked the poll conducting authority to "temporarily remove" them from their offices to ensure free, fair, and impartial elections, Dawn News reported. This comes a day after the Election Commission of Pakistan issued a notice to Karachi Mayor Murtaza Wahab for violating its code of conduct. As per the Pakistan-based news daily, PTI Karachi president Khurram Sher Zaman, who is also contesting the February 8 elections from NA-241, accused the mayor and Sindh Governor Kamran Tessori of indulging in activities tantamount to a violation of the ECP's code of conduct. In a formal complaint sent to the provincial election commissioner, the PTI leader contended that both the governor and mayor were engaging in activities that violate the code of conduct of the ECP, undermining the principles of a fair and impartial electoral process.

In light of these serious allegations, Sher Zaman called upon the ECP to conduct a thorough and impartial investigation into the matter, Dawn News reported. He also urged the commission to take immediate action, including the "temporary removal" of the mayor of Karachi and the governor of Sindh from their offices until the investigation was concluded. "Furthermore, it is requested that the offices of Mayor Karachi and Governor Sindh be sealed to prevent any further misuse of their positions for political gains until the conclusion of the electoral process."

## More Palestinians displaced as Israel battles Hamas in south Gaza

**DOHA/GAZA:** Medical facilities are at risk of collapse in Khan Younis, the southern Gaza city now at the focus of Israel's offensive, the Gaza health ministry warned on Sunday, as fighting raged across the Palestinian enclave. Residents said Israeli planes and tanks also pounded areas in Gaza City to the north, where Israel has slowly been pulling out troops. The fighting could be heard in the nearby towns of Beit Lahiya and Jabalia, near to Gaza City. Israel's military said it was engaged in "intensive battles" in Khan Younis, where it said



troops "eliminated terrorists and located large quantities of weapons". The armed wing of Hamas and the Islamic Jihad said fighters clashed with Israeli troops in several areas across the enclave overnight. Hamas' armed wing said its fighters destroyed two

Israeli tanks in Khan Younis. The latest fighting came as UN officials and aid groups urged countries to reconsider their decision to pause funding for the UN refugee agency for Palestinians, a vital source of aid in Gaza.

At least nine countries have paused

funding following allegations by Israel that some of UNRWA's staff were involved in the deadly Oct. 7 Hamas attacks on Israel. Gaza Health Ministry spokesperson Ashraf Al-Qidra said 165 Palestinians were killed and 290 wounded in the past 24 hours, bringing the total killed in Israeli strikes since the war began to 26,422. Officials in the Hamas-ruled territory do not distinguish between militants and civilians in their count. One strike on a house in a suburb of Gaza City killed eight people, health officials said.

## Four individuals lost their lives in a tragic incident

**NEW DELHI:** Four individuals lost their lives in a tragic incident described by Los Angeles police as a murder-suicide in the Granada Hills area on Saturday. Responding to a shooting report around 7 p.m. officers discovered four deceased at the 11600 block of Lerdo Avenue. The Los Angeles Police Department confirmed that the investigation revealed the nature of the incident to be a murder-suicide. After receiving the call, there was no answer when



the officers arrived and attempted to make contact by knocking on the door, said the police. After gaining entry forcibly into the house, the police personnel discovered three victims guided by a survivor of the shoot-

ing. The deceased included a male in his late 40s and two females, one in her late 40s and another approximately 80 years old, all succumbing to gunshot wounds, as stated by the police. In a separate part of the

house, officers found an elderly man in his late 80s who had died from a self-inflicted gunshot wound. Authorities believe he was responsible for shooting the others, police said. LAPD Capt. Kelly Muniz said during a press briefing, "The witness was inside and fortunately was not harmed during the incident and was able to barricade themselves and call the police." The identities of the victims and any potential motive were not disclosed yet.

## Greta joins hundreds marching in England to protest airport's expansion for private planes

**LONDON:** Climate activist Greta Thunberg joined a march in southern England on Saturday to protest the use of private jets and the expansion of an airport.



Extinction Rebellion, say private jets are much more polluting than commercial passenger airliners. Flights to and from Farnborough Airport carried an average of 2% passengers per flight in 2022, the group said. "It is clear that private jets are incompatible with ensuring present and future living conditions on this planet," Thunberg said in a video that Extinction Rebellion posted on social media.

"We're not going to let this continue. We're not going to let the rich few who are responsible for the

majority of aviation emissions get away with sacrificing people and the planet," she added. Farnborough Airport that an important hub for business and corporate travel, and that it recognized the importance of reducing its environmental impact. "The airport's environmental footprint is a fraction that of a traditional commercial airport, yet it serves as one of the largest employment sites in the region," it said in a statement. Thunberg, 21, a Swedish environmental campaigner who inspired a global youth.

## Is Europe ready for another Donald Trump presidency?

The more likely it seems that Donald Trump will be the Republican Party's nominee for the US presidency, the louder the voices become that warn Europe to prepare itself for a second Trump term in the White House. In an interview with French public broadcaster France 2, Christine Lagarde, president of the European Central Bank, described the possible election of Donald Trump as a "clear threat" to Europe.

Belgian prime minister Alexander De Croo told the European Parliament in mid-January that "if 2024 brings us 'America First' again, it is really more than ever 'Europe on its own.'" In a paper published by the European Council on Foreign Relations (ECFR) think tank, for-



mer Swedish Prime Minister Carl Bildt predicted far-reaching global consequences if Trump were reelected. "The US would abandon climate policy and expand investments in fossil fuels. Nato would be — at best — dormant. There would be cozy get-togethers with buddies Putin and Orbán. Trade wars would harden," he wrote. How to prepare for a Trump 2.0 sce-

nario Sudha David-Wilp, the director of the Berlin office of the German Marshall Fund, a think tank funded by the US government, the German government and the EU Commission, told DW that her main concern was over Europe's military capabilities. "It's very important that Europe becomes a strong actor, militarily, in a conventional sense, that it's able to take

care of security issues in its immediate neighborhood," David-Wilp said. In addition, she said, Europe must also "be a strong partner for Asia, for Europe, when it comes to warding off external threats from authoritarian forces, and also get strong economically to prepare for potential protectionist measures from a second President Trump term." Jürgen Hardt, a conservative lawmaker with Germany's federal parliament, the Bundestag, said he fears that Germany is ill-prepared for a second term with Trump. Hardt, who is the foreign policy spokesman for the opposition Christian Democratic Union (CDU) and Christian Social Union (CSU) parliamentary group, told DW he is critical of Germany's foreign policy.

## Is Europe ready for another Donald Trump presidency?

The more likely it seems that Donald Trump will be the Republican Party's nominee for the US presidency, the louder the voices become that warn Europe to prepare itself for a second Trump term in the White House. In an interview with French public broadcaster France 2, Christine Lagarde, president of the European Central Bank, described the possible election of Donald Trump as a "clear threat" to Europe. Belgian prime minister Alexander De Croo told the European Parliament in mid-January that "if 2024 brings us 'America First' again, it is really more than ever 'Europe on its own.'" In a paper published by the European Council on Foreign Relations (ECFR) think tank, former Swedish Prime Minister Carl Bildt predicted far-reaching global consequences. "If Trump were reelected, 'The US would abandon climate policy and expand investments in fossil fuels."



## Delhi Police on alert ahead of AAP vs BJP protests today, ITO security tightened



The Delhi Police said that it has not permitted any demonstration by the political parties in the capital. The Delhi Police on Friday said it remains on alert and has beefed up the security around the central parts of the city, including ITO, in view of the demonstrations planned by the Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) and the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) in the national capital. The AAP has called for a protest outside the BJP headquarters over alleged cheating in the Chandigarh mayoral election,

while the BJP said it will mount a demonstration near the AAP office against the alleged corruption of the Arvind Kejriwal-led government. Arvind Kejriwal and Punjab chief minister Bhagwant Mann will also take part in the protest, reported. Incidentally, the protest will take place on the same day that the Enforcement Directorate (ED) has asked Kejriwal, who is also the national convener of the AAP, to appear before it in connection with its investigation into a money laundering case linked to alleged

irregularities in the Delhi excise police 2021-22. The Delhi Police said it has not permitted any demonstration by the political parties in the capital. "Police did not give permission for the demonstration. Police have received information about the arrival of Aam Aadmi Party workers from many areas of Delhi and also from Punjab," news agency ANI quoted the police as saying. According to the Delhi Police, traffic will be diverted from Deen Dayal Upadhyay Marg to other routes on the day.

## Electoral bonds worth over 571.8 cr sold between Jan 2 and 11: SBI in RTI reply

Electoral bonds are sold four times a year – January, April, July and October, and for another 30 days in the year general elections are held. A total of 897 electoral bonds worth ₹571.8 crore were sold between January 2 and 11, with Kolkata having the highest share of 32.17% (415 bonds) worth ₹183.95 crore, the State Bank of India (SBI) said in a response to a right to information (RTI) request. SBI is the sole bank authorised by the government to issue and encash these bonds. Hyderabad branch ranked second with a

sale of 153 bonds worth ₹133.2 crore, or 23.29% of total value of bonds. Electoral bonds are sold four times a year – January, April, July and October, and for another 30 days in the year general elections are held. They allow political parties to accept money from donors whose identities are kept anonymous. The sale during the 30th tranche of electoral bonds issued last month was a 43% drop from the previous one. A total of 1,109 electoral bonds worth ₹1,006.03 crore were sold between in the 29th tranche between

November 6 and 20, ahead of and during the assembly elections in five states. In January, 581 (64.77%) electoral bonds were sold through digital payment instruments while 316 were sold through physical payment instruments like cheques and demand drafts. 872 bonds worth 570.05 crore, accounting for 99.69% of the total value, were encashed. A total of 336 bonds worth 237.9 crore were encashed in the Delhi branch, 158 bonds worth ₹138.2 crore (24.24%) were encashed in Hyderabad.

## Law students participate in LU's contest

**U.P Lucknow:** Lucknow University's Moot Court Association witnessed an impressive response to its second Dr Avtar Singh Memorial National Online Article Writing Competition with the participation of 65 teams and participants from all corners of the nation. The competition prompted students to articulate their perspectives on a

broad spectrum of topics, including the Digital Data Protection Act versus Right to Privacy and the role of mediation in consumer disputes. Law student Anjana from Mar Gregorious College of Law, Thiruvananthapuram, clinched the top position in the competition. The first runner-up position was jointly shared by

Sanskriti Jaiswal from LU and Sanskar Jaiswal from GNLU, Gujarat. Anubhuti Awasthi from Amity University, Lucknow, secured the second runner-up position. Professor Dr Banshi Dhar Singh, the head and dean of the Faculty of Law, motivated students to actively engage in such competition.

## CAPSULES

### CBI raids activist Harsh Mander's office, residence in FCRA violation probe

The Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) on Friday conducted searches at the office and residence of retired IAS officer and activist Harsh Mander in connection with a probe related to the violation of the Foreign Contribution Regulation Act (FCRA). The Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA) had recommended a CBI inquiry last year into the foreign funding of Aman Biradori, a non-government organisation (NGO) founded by Harsh Mander. This follows a money laundering probe initiated by the Enforcement Directorate (ED) in September 2021, where Mander's residence was previously raided. The investigation is centred around two NGOs associated with him.

#### Who is Harsh Mander?

- Harsh Mander is a rights activist associated with right to food, right to information, bonded labour and the right of adivasis.
- He is the Director of Delhi-based think tank Centre for Equity Studies.
- He is author of several books including Between Memory and Forgetting: Massacre and the Modi Years in Gujarat, Partitions of the Heart: Unmaking the Idea of India, The Right to Food Debates: Social Protection for Food Security in India.
- Harsh Mander was also a member of the Sonia Gandhi-led National Advisory Council during the erstwhile UPA government.

## Chinese military bodies, purchased Nvidia semiconductors banned by the US

**BEIJING:** Chinese military bodies, state-run artificial intelligence research institutes and universities have over the past year purchased small batches of Nvidia semiconductors banned by the US from export to China, a Reuters review of tender documents show. The sales by largely unknown Chinese suppliers highlight the difficulties Washington faces, despite its bans, in completely cutting off China's access to advanced US chips that could fuel breakthroughs in AI and sophisticated computers for its military. Buying or selling high-end US chips is not illegal in China and the publicly available tender documents show dozens of Chinese entities have bought and taken receipt of Nvidia semiconductors since restrictions were imposed. These include its

● "The graphic processing units - a type of chip - that are built by Nvidia are widely seen as far superior to rival products for AI work"

A100 and the more powerful H100 chip - whose exports to China and Hong Kong were banned in September 2022 - as well as the slower A800 and H800 chips Nvidia then developed for the Chinese market but which were also banned last October. The graphic processing units - a type of chip - that are built by Nvidia are widely seen as far superior to rival products for AI work as they can more efficiently process huge amounts of

data needed for machine-learning tasks. The continued demand for and access to banned Nvidia chips also underlines the lack of good alternatives for Chinese firms despite the nascent development of rival products from Huawei and others. Prior to the bans, Nvidia commanded a 90% share of China's AI chip market. Purchasers included elite universities as well as two entities subject to US export restrictions - the Harbin Institute of Technology and the University of Electronic Science and Technology of China, which have been accused of involvement in military matters or being affiliated to a military body contrary to US national interest. The former purchased six Nvidia A100 chips in May to train a deep-learning model.

## Lord Shri Ram is the great hero of our Sanatan culture: Amarjeet Chhabra

**Delhi:** The GH-13 Residents Welfare Association in Paschim Vihar, Delhi, planned a cultural program to commemorate Republic Day. This program was organized by R.W.A. President R.K. Mittal and General Secretary J.P. Sharma. Councilor Monica Goyal and former Councilor Vinay Rawat were also present on this occasion. This society has full boom barring and parking amenities. The Delhi Government artists contributed to the



program with a patriotic presentation. On this occasion, they performed dance and

music portraying the culture of all of the country's states, which the attendees

thoroughly liked. Many luminaries attended the event and were honored.

## In poll year, the interim budget's four poles



**New Delhi:** The political thrust of the interim budget by Union finance minister Nirmala Sitharaman on Thursday was explicitly targeted at these four key demographics, or castes, first identified by Prime Minister Narendra Modi in November as a response to the Opposition's demand for a nationwide caste census. The finance minister listed a raft of measures that form the

core of the Centre's outreach towards these social groups, and promised some additional schemes that aimed at meeting their social and economic aspirations. Exuding confidence about a third term in this year's general elections, the finance minister doubled down on welfare and repeatedly highlighted how the government's economic philosophy had delivered on prosperity and empowerment – the

likely contours of the Bharatiya Janata Party's (BJP) poll pitch in a few months. The government office also underlined its commitment to ideological concerns and its core vote bank by announcing the formation of a high-powered committee to make recommendations to address challenges posed by "fast population growth and demographic changes".

## Telangana postpones gram panchayat polls indefinitely

**District** collectors were directed to appoint special officers or persons-in-charge or a committee of persons-in-charge to perform the functions of the gram panchayat. The Telangana government on Thursday indefinitely postponed the elections to 12,777 gram panchayats in the state and placed their administration in the hands of special officers with immediate effect until further orders. The tenure of sarpanches and members of the gram panchayats came to an end on Thursday and they have been requesting the state government to extend their term by another six months on the ground that they were not able to do anything for nearly two years due to the Covid-19 pandemic between 2020 and 2022. In a government order (GO No.



5), which was seen by HT, principal secretary (panchayat raj) Sandeep Kumar Sultania directed district collectors to appoint special officers or persons-in-charge or a committee of persons-in-charge from Friday to perform the functions of the gram panchayat. According to the order, the special officers or persons-in-charge could be of the rank of a tehsildar, mandal parishad development officer, agriculture officer, mandal educational officer, mandal pan-

chayat officer or similar rank officers. These officers or committees will perform the functions of the gram panchayat till the assumption of new members and sarpanches, who are elected by the people. The special officers have also been directed to take charge immediately. Meanwhile, some of the sarpanches also moved the Telangana high court on Wednesday, seeking to stop appointment of special officers to administer gram panchayats, but did not

get any relief, people familiar with the matter said. Justice Kaja Sarath refused to extend their term till the elections were conducted to the gram panchayats. The sarpanches also contended that they had spent their personal money running into lakhs to take up developmental works in their gram panchayats, but the state had not reimbursed them.

The judge, however, issued notices to the state government and the State Election Commission, asking them to submit their views on conducting elections to gram panchayats and appointing special officers, said sources. The president of Telangana's ruling Bharat Rashtra Samithi, K T Rama Rao, said sarpanches were retiring from the post and not from public service.

## Jio Financial Services Q3 net profit falls 56 pc to Rs 294 crore

**NEW DELHI:** Jio Financial Services Ltd on Monday reported a 56 per cent decline in consolidated net profit at Rs 294 crore for the third quarter ended December 2023, compared to the previous quarter. The company had earned a consolidated net profit of Rs 668 crore in the second quarter of the current fiscal, Jio Financial Services said in a regulatory filing. Its revenue too moderated to Rs 414 crore, from Rs 608 crore in the September quarter. For the nine months ended December, the company's net profit stood at Rs 1,294 crore, the filing said. The total expenses increased sequentially to Rs 98.95 crore, against Rs 71.43 crore in the previous quarter. Jio Financial Services, carved out from Reliance Industries Ltd



## 2nd Test: Can Kuldeep Yadav 'reverse' the trend?



**CHENNAI:** Let's take you back to a chilly November afternoon in 1987 in Kolkata. England were playing the World Cup final at the Eden Gardens against Australia and were closing in on victory. With 120 more to get, captain Mike Gatting tried a reverse-sweep off Allan Border and looped a catch to the wicketkeeper. England went on to lose the final and had to wait for another 32 years to win it and Gatting had to bear the cross of trying an "irresponsible shot" for the rest of his playing career. Cut to January 2024. The first Test against India appears all but gone for England against the

sharp turn of R Ashwin, Ravindra Jadeja and Axar Patel on the black-soil Hyderabad turner. A capitulation of the visitors within three days would be par for the course when Ollie Pope, the No. 3 England batter, decided to counter-attack. And what's his biggest weapon? The reverse sweep. A stroke that Gatting himself rued as "wrong shot selection" in the 1987 World Cup final has now become the cornerstone of the nation's "greatest Test win in the subcontinent". How has this transformation happened? Is it due to 'Bazball'? To understand the freedom with which Pope, the second-most orthodox

batter in this lineup after Joe Root, played the shot, we need to understand the philosophy behind the approach. For starters, 'Bazball' is not "Test match cricket played T20 style", as the Indian broadcasters are selling it during every commercial break. It goes way deeper than that and what coach Brendon 'Baz' McCullum has done to this English side is to allow players to unshackle their minds from the fear of failure. Before coming to India, the England team figured that only the conventional sweep against the turning ball of Jadeja and Axar won't take them too far.

## Sinner's victory speech was heartfelt, thanking his 'perfect parents'

**Australia**

Australian Open champion Jannik Sinner spoke about leaving home at 14, his parents' support, and his growth on and off the court. Sinner's victory speech was heartfelt, thanking his 'perfect parents'. He trained at the Piatti Tennis Centre and now holds the prestigious Norman Brookes Challenge Cup. The 22-year-old said, "Growing up away from home was the fastest way to grow up." It was tough leaving home at 14, says Australian Open champion The intricately designed Norman Brookes Challenge Cup sat before Jannik Sinner,



but the Australian Open champion said it was all yet to sink in. Sinner delivered one of the most moving victory speeches, reaching out to his parents Johann and Siglinde Sinner, who he called 'perfect parents'. The 22-year-old said, "Growing up away from home was the fastest way to grow up." Sinner's father Johann

works as a chef in a restaurant and his wife Siglinde also worked at the same restaurant as a waitress. Most of Sinner's childhood was spent with his grandparents, who looked after him when his parents were away at work. Simone Vagnozzi, Sinner's coach for the last three years, said the 22-year-old's parents should be held up as an example. "Sometimes they come to the tournament, and they do not speak one word about tennis. They are just there. They enjoy the life of the tournament, but never come to us (his coaches) and say, serve, volley, breakpoint."

## Ranji Trophy: Jharkhand suffer huge loss vs Vidarbha

**Ranchi**

Jharkhand's Ranji Trophy campaign went from bad to worse as they succumbed to a huge 308-run loss against Vidarbha at JSCA International Stadium Complex in Ranchi. Conceding first-innings lead in all three matches earlier in the

season, Jharkhand had to be content with only a point from each game but on Monday they suffered a morale-crushing defeat at their home ground. Vidarbha registered a commanding victory on the final day thanks to India pacer Umesh Yadav and Aditya

Thakare's superb bowling exploits. Having declared their second essay on 374/9 on the penultimate day, thanks to fine knocks by Dhruv Shorey (113) and Atharva Taide (138), the visitors set the home side an improbable target of 429.

## 'Don't fall into your own trap by...': Harbhajan Singh expresses concerns

**NEW DELHI:** Team India suffered two major blows with all-rounder Ravindra Jadeja and star batsman KL Rahul ruled out of the second Test match against England due to injuries, the cricket board. Rohit Sharma's India, who are already without their star player Virat Kohli, lost the nail-biting opening Test by 28 runs in Hyderabad on Sunday. India are currently trailing the five-match series 0-1 and will head into the sec-



ond Test with almost an inexperienced side. The second Test will be played in Visakhapatnam starting Friday. BCCI on added Sarfaraz Khan, Saurabh Kumar, and Washington Sundar to India's squad. Veteran spinner Harbhajan Singh said the team is

going to miss Jadeja and KL Rahul and the new squad lacks experience. "BCCI announced the team and shockingly both Jadeja and KL Rahul are not part of it. Both in-form cricketers are injured. We don't know about their return as well. Virat

Kohli isn't there as well. His presence would have bolstered the Indian batting lineup. Shubman is out of form. Shreyas hasn't been among the runs. Both are class cricketers but haven't scored runs so far," Harbhajan said on his YouTube channel. "The team looks decent but lacks experience. Yes, there is Rohit Sharma, but the next best run-scorer is Ashwin. In terms of batting, the line-up looks weak.

## Deepti Sharma rises to joint second among bowlers in T20I rankings

**NEW DELHI:** India's Deepti Sharma climbed one spot to jointly hold the second position, while her teammate Renuka Singh also ascended one place to secure the 10th spot in the latest ICC women's T20I bowling rankings released. Deepti's advancement was primarily propelled by South Africa spinner Nonkululeko Mlaba dropping three positions from second to fifth after securing one wicket from two matches against Australia. Meanwhile, Pakistan's Sadia Iqbal joined



Deepti in the second spot after moving up one position, with England's Sarah Glenn following closely at fourth after rising a rank. England spinner Sophie Ecclestone

maintained her lead at the pinnacle of the T20I rankings for bowlers. In the all-rounders' category, there were no alterations within the top 10, with Deepti holding onto the fourth

position. Regarding batters, India's vice-captain Smriti Mandhana retained her fourth position, being the highest-ranked Indian batter, while Jemimah Rodrigues, Shafali Verma, and Harmanpreet Kaur maintained their positions at 13th, 16th, and 17th, respectively. Australia's Beth Mooney surpassed her compatriot Tahlia McGrath to claim the top spot in the T20I rankings for batters following an outstanding innings against South Africa.

## Messi and Luis Suarez on scoresheet but Inter Miami fall 4-3 to Saudi club Al Hilal

**NEW DELHI:** Inter Miami showcased their prowess as Luis Suarez netted his first goal for the Major League Soccer side at Riyadh's Kingdom Arena on Monday, and Lionel Messi converted a penalty. However, the efforts fell short, with Saudi Pro League side Al Hilal securing a 4-3 victory. The match's climax came with an 88th-minute header from Brazilian forward Malcom, ultimately settling the score after Miami fought back to level at 3-3 from a 3-1 deficit early in the second half. Former Fulham striker and Serbian international Aleksandar Mitrovic initiated the scoring for Al Hilal in the 10th minute, skillfully side-footing a finish past Miami goalkeeper Drake Callender following a well-executed offensive sequence. Saudi international forward Abdullah Al-Hamdan extended Al



Hilal's lead to 2-0 after 13 minutes, capitalizing on a misplayed clearance from Miami defender Noah Allen. Miami had an opportunity to pull one back in the 26th minute when Sergio Busquets volleyed over from a close range after a defensive lapse from Al Hilal. Julian Gressel's persistence paid off for Miami in the 34th minute, setting up Luis Suarez for a goal initially disallowed for offside but later validated by VAR, bringing the score to 2-1. However, Al Hilal swiftly restored their two-goal advantage just before half-time. Al-Hamdan delivered a cross into the area, finding Brazilian

forward Michael, who nodded home after a rushed clearance attempt by Miami's goalkeeper. Miami showcased resilience after the break, leveling the score with two quick goals. Lionel Messi converted a penalty in the 54th minute, and shortly after, a ferocious strike from David Ruiz made it 3-3. With the game poised for a draw, Malcom's decisive header in the 88th minute secured a 4-3 win for Al Hilal. The friendly served as part of Inter Miami's pre-season tour, preparing for the upcoming Major League Soccer season starting on February 21.

## Bopanna, Ebden hit it off as a pair



**MELBOURNE:** Rohan Bopanna played his 61st Grand Slam doubles event with his 19th partner. The Indian has been around the block. Clearly, the 43-year-old's charge to the game's elite started with Pakistan's Aisam-ul-Haq Qureshi, he has also played with friends Mahesh Bhupathi and American Rajeev Ram. Bopanna was seated on the interview terrace at Melbourne Park, it was well past midnight. He was exhausted and giddy with relief, but he didn't miss a beat when asked who his best partner was. "Matt Ebden obviously no?" he said. "Not because we won a Grand Slam title today," the towering Kodava explained. "This partnership has been so consistent and that makes all the difference - week after week, Masters events and Slams, we are in contention. It's a very good feeling." "I am glad I found him at the age of 41," he said.

## Brilliant Uchijima wins NECC-Deccan ITF for second time

**PUNE:** It was expected to be a keenly-fought contest but the brilliance of Moyuka Uchijima made it completely one-sided, the third seeded Japanese beating Australia's Tina Nadine Smith 6-4, 6-0 to claim the NECC \$40K ITF women's singles title at Deccan Gymkhana. It was Uchijima's second title at the venue, following her triumph in 2021 December, and her third in India, going with her success in Navi Mumbai last month. "In Pune, my winning streak is still going on. I am just improving match by match," said the 22-year-old after the win. "I served really well. She is a great mover (on court), runs really well. So I tried to be patient and aggressive. I played the right way today." Uchijima had lost a tough three-setter to Rutuja Bhosale in the quarterfinals last week in Bengaluru, but she was at home on the hard courts of Deccan Gymkhana. "It played a little faster here this week. And the courts are better here. She liked the even bounce. She has won here before, so she thinks it's her home.

## Cleiton delivers as East Bengal end title drought in Super way

**Cleiton Silva's goal leads East Bengal to victory in the Kalinga Super Cup final, ending their 12-year trophy drought. The game was filled with drama, including five goals, two penalties, and two red cards. East Bengal's win guarantees them a place in the AFC Champions League-2 preliminary stage. Cleiton Silva took off his shirt and fell to the ground, face up. He was soon submerged in a flood of emotions, as his teammates rushed in and fell over him one by one. He just did what the doctor ordered, handing back the lead to East Bengal in the Kalinga Super Cup final. There were still 12 more minutes to play in the extra times but they could sense that the dream was truly and remarkably taking shape in red and gold hue again. Carles Cuadrat's bravehearts ended East Bengal's 12 years of hurt in stunning fashion at the Kalinga Stadium in Bhubaneswar, overcoming an early setback to get the better of hosts and defending champions Odisha FC 3-2 in 120 minutes of ping-pong football before laying their hands on the Super Cup. It was their first national trophy since winning the Federation Cup in 2012. It's also their return to Asian club football as Super Cup champions are guaranteed a place in the AFC Champions League-2 preliminary stage.**





## This budget is roadmap to achieve PM Modi's vision of a Developed Bharat: Shah



Lucknow The Union Interim Budget 2024 presented in the Parliament on Thursday, under the leadership of Prime Minister Narendra Modi introduced new schemes for farmers, women, and the middle class. Union Home Minister and Minister of Cooperation Amit Shah emphasised that 'The Union Budget draws the roadmap to achieve PM Modi's vision of a Developed Bharat.' He believes that this interim budget for the second term of the Modi government in the Amrit Kaal will prove to be the budget of 'Sankalp se Siddhi'.

The budget brings new hope for farmers, women, and the middle class by highlighting the achievements of the Modi government in the last 10 years on the journey to make India a leading nation in every sector. Under the guidance of Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Union Home Minister and Minister of Cooperation Amit Shah, the budget sets the goal of making India completely Aatma-Nirbhar and developed by the year 2047. It introduces new opportunities for prosperity for farmers, focusing on promoting self-reliance in oilseeds on one hand

and emphasising on nano DAP usage and dairy development on the other. The plan to start the construction of two crore additional houses in the next 5 years will benefit the middle class. The people of the country have witnessed the efforts of the Ayushman Bharat scheme, which aims to provide free treatment of up to five lakh rupees to millions of people. An important decision to connect Anganwadi workers and helpers with the Ayushman Yojana allowing them to avail free treatment, has been made in the interim budget of 2024.

## Muslims behind AMU gave up its minority status in 1920

Union government told Supreme Court that Muslims who lobbied with the British government for establishment of Aligarh Muslim University (AMU) had voluntarily surrendered its denominational character, and acceded to overarching government control over its administration in 1920, as the aim and intent behind AMU was to establish an institution of national importance. Arguing against reconsideration of the 56-year-old five-judge SC judgment in Azeez Basha case, which had ruled in 1967 that AMU was not a minority institution, solicitor general Tushar Mehta said the events preceding establishment of the uni-

versity by the AMU Act of 1920 showed that the governing society of Muhammadan Anglo-Oriental (MAO) College, affiliated to Allahabad University, was dissolved by the 1920 Act and an institution of national importance, on the lines of Banaras Hindu University, was set up. SG Tushar Mehta said patrons of MAO College, historically referred to as British loyalists, faced stiff opposition from within the community for giving up AMU's denominational character and Muslim control over its administration and formed Jamia Millia Islamia which, unlike AMU, retained its minority status, like St Stephens

College, during pre and post-Constitution times. The aim of AMU patrons was to establish a university recognised by the British government to enable students obtaining degrees from the institution to be eligible for employment under the Crown, SG said. "It was wholly open for MAO College to continue as a college, avoid control by the British, and remain a minority institution. However, the said course was not adopted," he added. HC "Right of administration at the stage of incorporation and establishment of AMU was surrendered by 'loyalists' who sought an imperial legislative enactment at the time.

## Gaurav Samman to Dr Ritu

Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath conferred Uttar Pradesh Gaurav Samman on Lucknow-based scientist Dr Ritu Karidhal Srivastava and Kanpur's Naveen Tiwari. Dr Ritu Karidhal played an important role in the development of India's Mars Orbiter Mission and Chandrayaan as deputy director operations for the mission. Dr Ritu has been working for ISRO

since 1997. Naveen Tiwari, is credited with establishing the largest independent mobile Ad tech platform in the world, connecting local businesses in Uttar Pradesh and India with national and international audiences. The lock screen software developed by his enterprise is actively featured on over 400 million smartphones worldwide. The CM fur-

ther pointed out that in the past, markets used to get flooded with standard Chinese products during festivals. Today, those products have been replaced by OPOP products. He added, "People now prefer to gift OPOP products, crafted by entrepreneurs and artisans, to their loved ones." He asserted that the spiritual and cultural heritage of India.

## CAPSULES

### Netplus, a broadband service provider subsidiary of Jujhar Group is known for its connection speeds and customer retention rate

As the digital landscape evolves, the telecom industry stands at the forefront of this transformation, reshaping how people connect and communicate. In Punjab, a region embracing technological advancements, Netplus, under the visionary leadership of Gurdeep Singh, is playing a pivotal role in revolutionising connectivity. Netplus, a broadband service provider subsidiary of Jujhar Group is known for its connection speeds and customer retention rate. Netplus Broadband is one of the fastest-growing ISP in the region, providing next-gen services such as high-speed broadband, smart telephony & OTT. With an exponential rise in data consumption, the introduction of 5G technology, and a growing emphasis on seamless connection, the telecom sector is undergoing a seismic transformation. It is no longer enough just to be connected; it is also necessary to be connected quickly, reliably, and securely. Netplus has been at the forefront of this transformation in Punjab. Speaking on this, Gurdeep Singh, Chairman, and Founder, shares Netplus's story and its role in influencing the future of connectivity. "Netplus has been proactive in embracing technological advancements. We recognized the burgeoning demand for high-speed internet and expanded our infrastructure to provide reliable fiber-to-the-home (FTTH) services. Moreover, we're closely monitoring the 5G landscape, preparing to integrate this cutting-edge technology.

## India and France agree to work together to build and launch military satellites

Delhi: According to persons familiar with the situation, India and France have inked a bold and unprecedented Defense Space Agreement that may lead to the launch of military satellites with both offensive and defensive capabilities. Not disclosed or discussed, the agreement was quietly signed by India's National Security Advisor, Ajit Doval, and French Defense Minister Sebastien Locornu while French President Emmanuel Macron and Prime Minister Narendra Modi were attending the "At Home" Republic Day reception at Rashtrapati Bhawan. The two nations have signed a Letter of Intent (LoI) on a Defence Space Partnership, which allows the two allies to work together to develop defense capacities and operational capabilities for improved

● " "France and India have decided to invest in a long-term relationship with both countries on the same page politically on Houthis"

global situational awareness, the protection of communication and surveillance satellites, and increased transparency of the air, land, and sea battlegrounds. Although the Modi administration has not made public its defense space relationship with France—the country's longest-standing civilian space partner—the LoI opens the door for the two nations' space agencies to work together to design and deploy

military satellites in order to safeguard national security objectives. In the worst situation, India's military satellites would not only watch enemy movements but also safeguard the country's space assets. President Macron told his Indian counterparts that France will provide India with "no limits" when it comes to defense cooperation, including the creation, development, and certification of new platforms that will be manufactured expressly to meet the needs of both nations. Speaking on condition of anonymity, a key intermediary stated, "France and India have decided to invest in a long-term relationship with both countries on the same page politically on Houthis and the Gaza war, with nuanced differences over the Ukraine war given that France is part of the EU."

## Government acknowledged the demand, ending the Maratha quota

Delhi: To commemorate the dedication of the Ram Temple in Ayodhya, senior Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) officials and MLAs have planned "Shobha Yatras," community dinners, and readings of the SundarKand chapter of the Ramayana throughout Delhi. Participating in the three-day Ramlila that the Delhi government is organizing near ITO, Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal stated that the AAP government is drawing inspiration from the "Ram Rajya" while imple-



menting its social measures. According to Kejriwal, the idea of "Ram Rajya"

is regarded as the perfect law. We are in charge of the government in Delhi because

of that. Our goal is to guarantee that no one in Delhi goes to bed hungry.

## India has to rethink its system of import tariffs

Delhi: It is anticipated that Indian policymakers may reverse import duties on industries such as leather, textiles, and technical items, in order to prevent input costs from surpassing those of finished goods. It has been claimed that in order to correct these distortions for over a dozen items in the Union

budget, the commerce ministry has contacted the finance ministry. Since high input duties raise the cost of production locally, manufacturers have long called for changes, but government response has been sluggish. Nevertheless, it's encouraging that there might be a future attempt. Increased domestic prices can actually make imports more cost-effective in many situations, even when completed products are subject to tariffs. This is because they not only make it more difficult to compete internationally. Therefore, 'Make in India' tends to be hampered by an inverted duty regime. In any case, we need to streamline our tariff structure to ensure that Indian factories are not an exception among globally dis-

persed participants with reduced charges and to reassure investors of future rate stability if they are to participate more in global value chains. Undoubtedly, the government has already taken action against a number of duty inversions in previous years. However, in a few of these instances, the obvious solution was increased import tariffs on finished goods. Furthermore, attempting to sort through the disorganized mess we have created item by item has proven to be insufficient.

In addition to standard customs duty, there are several levies, and various sectors are covered by duty drawback and remission programs. It is claimed that some input items serve several purposes that are subject to separate taxes.

## Rahul Gandhi declares that Bengal must take the lead in combating politics of enmity

Delhi: Bengal was at the vanguard of the independence movement and should now lead the charge to end "the politics of hatred," said Congress leader Rahul Gandhi as he resumed his Bharat Jodo Nyay Yatra after a two-day break on the territory of the disgruntled INDIA ally TMC. "If you fail to rise to the occasion, people will never forgive you," he said from an open-top vehicle in Siliguri, north Bengal, to a crowd.

The Wayanad representative had intended to march through the streets of Siliguri and Jalpaiguri, but was prevented from exiting his vehicle by the magnitude of the crowds in both locations. Rahul Gandhi, who was supposed to arrive in



Jalpaiguri at 2:00 pm, was delayed by nearly an hour. He regarded a statue of Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose at Jalpaiguri PWD More prior to boarding a boat at Beguntary in order to

travel to Siliguri. "Across the nation, hatred and violence are spreading," Rahul declared to the gathering. It will be rendered useless. We must strive

towards spreading love and justice for our youth as opposed to hatred. "The Union government doesn't work for the youth or the poor; it only serves large corporations."

## Jio Financial Services Q3 net profit falls 56 pc to Rs 294 crore

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