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

Turnout touches 64% in Phase 1 of Lok Sabha polls, against 66% in 2019

" West Bengal, which has a history of poll violence and clashes between rival party workers, saw peaceful polling on Friday"



NEW DELHI: The first phase of polling for the 2024 general election - covering the largest chunk of 102 Lok Sabha seats across 21 states and UTs - witnessed an encouraging turnout of 63.5% (as of 11pm), while remaining largely smooth and peaceful even in vulnerable areas like the Naxal-hit Bastar region and West Bengal. Violence was reported in Manipur which still managed a turnout of 70.8%. The overall turnout for these seats in 2019 was 66%, barring delimited seats in Assam and Outer Manipur, a few assembly segments of which went to the polls in the first phase this time. Defying summer heat

almost all over the country and rain in J&K's Udhampur, people came out in large numbers despite talk of a low-key campaign. Sources said the turnout is expected to go up further, with long queues seen at many polling stations well after polling hours. As per rule, all voters who are queued up at the polling station when polling time ends are allowed to cast their vote. Election Commission has worked hard over the past couple of years to make a smooth and peaceful Lok Sabha

election a reality. The first phase turnout is encouraging and should enthrone voters to come out in even higher numbers in the remaining phases, a senior EC functionary told. West Bengal, which has a history of poll violence and clashes between rival party workers, saw peaceful polling on Friday barring stray altercations in Cooch Behar. EC said none of these incidents had any effect on polling, as evident from the 79.4% turnout recorded across the three parlia-

mentary constituencies of Alipurduars, Cooch Behar and Jalpaiguri. Tripura too saw incident-free polling with the voter turnout touching 81.5% and Sikkim logged 80%, while other states where turnouts soared beyond 70% included Manipur, Puducherry (78.3%), Meghalaya (74.5%) and Assam (73.4%). Udhampur saw polling of 67.9% despite rain and terror threats. In Bastar constituency of Chhattisgarh, voters defied threats from Left-wing extremists.

Naxal-hit Bastar gives ballots the thumbs-up, records 64% turnout

RAIPUR: Over 64% of Bastar's 14 lakh electorate defied the Maoist threat and turned up to vote by 5pm in the first phase of the Lok Sabha polls on Friday. This figure is expected to rise. This is being held in the backdrop of the most aggressive anti-Maoist operations in nearly two decades of insurgency. As many as 62 Maoists have been eliminated since the polling dates were declared on March 12, including 29 in a single encounter in Kanker on Tuesday. Never before have Maoists been hit so hard ahead of any election. Over 60,000 security personnel, nearly half of whom were central forces deployed from other states, stood guard as the Maoist-hit region gave a thumbs up to democracy. Barring two incidents in



Bijapur - an accidental grenade explosion that killed a CRPF jawan and a Maoist IED blast that injured an officer - polling was conducted peacefully. Voting started at 7am. It was after 9.30am that polling picked up and by 11am, the turnout touched 29%. Around 2pm, it had shot up to 43%, a polling official told. Polling ended at 3pm in K o n d a g a o n , Dantewada, Bijapur, Konta and Narayanpur segments of Bastar constituency. In

Jagdalpur, it went on till 5pm. Bastar range IG P Sundarraj and divisional commissioner Shyam Dhawade voted at Haathkachora polling booth in Jagdalpur. Congress candidate Kawasi Lakhma and BJP's Mahesh Kashyap cast their votes in Nagaras in Sukma and Kalcha in Bastar. Elderly people came in wheelchairs and on crutches. Since it's marriage season, several brides and grooms were seen in queue to cast their vote, decked in wedding.

Tata Sons seeks IPO waiver from RBI after cutting debt

MUMBAI: A month after raising over Rs 9,000 crore from TCS stake sale, Tata Sons has approached RBI seeking an exemption from a mandatory IPO. The holding company of the \$150-billion salt-to-software Tata Group has informed RBI, in the fresh proposal, that it has reduced its debt significantly. Tata Sons needs to cut its debt entirely to cease to be listed as an 'upper layer' NBFC.

Your grandma jailed us for 1.5 years: Pinarayi dig at Rahul over ED jibe

KOZHIKODE: In a sharp retort to Congress's Rahul Gandhi, Kerala CM Pinarayi Vijayan said he and other Left leaders cannot be intimidated by jail threat or probe by Central agencies. Rahul said in Kannur on Thursday that CMs of two states are now in jail, but Vijayan has not even been questioned by ED despite corruption charges. Speaking at an LDF election rally here on Friday, Vijayan said Rahul's "grandmother had jailed us for one-and-a-half years (during the Emergency) when she reigned over the country". "Rahul Gandhi is worried why Kerala chief minister is not being interrogated or taken into custody and why no case is being registered. Rahul Gandhi... you had a name in the past. You should not create a situation that shows that you have not changed," Vijayan said. Left leaders are not like former Congress leader Ashok Chavan, who joined BJP after reportedly saying that they cannot go there (to jail), he added. "We are not ones who have not faced interrogation. It was your follower who had referred a fabricated case to CBI as part of political vendetta. It was later dismissed by the vigilance dept. The CBI had questioned and they too came to the same conclusion. You (Congress) were in power then. You check with those who were in govt then and you will know that we were not shaken on hearing about the probe. Don't try to intimidate us by talking about jail, probe or Central agencies," Vijayan said. Vijayan said that his criticisms against Rahul had been over the failure to take a strong stand against CAA. "Where was Congress when there was a nationwide stir against CAA?"

India in wait-and-watch mode after limited Israeli hit on Iran

NEW DELHI: Following Israel's retaliatory strike on Iran, Indian govt is closely monitoring the situation but whether it asks Indian nationals in the two countries to leave will depend on whether there is any further escalation. While Israel did launch an air strike on Iran, its actions so far have been limited in scope, intended perhaps to not escalate further. Iran has

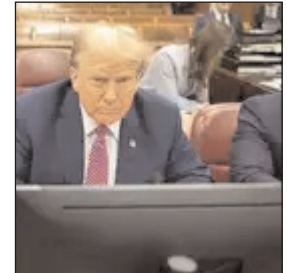


denied any of its military or nuclear facilities took a hit in the Israeli action. For India, if indeed the situation worsens, the

top priority would be to safely evacuate Indian nationals in both the countries. India had earlier issued an advisory, but it was restricted to asking Indian nationals to not travel to both the countries till further notice. MEA had also urged Indians residing in Iran and Israel to exercise caution and restrict their movement. While US asked its embassy staff to restrict movement, Australia Friday told its citizens to leave Iran and Israel citing "threat of military reprisals and terrorist attacks".

Court refuses last-minute bid to halt Trump's hush money trial

NEW DELHI: A New York appeals court judge on Friday dismissed Donald Trump's attempt to halt his hush money criminal trial over defense complaints that jury selection was unfairly rushed, reported AP. Justice Marsha Michael quickly made the decision following a short hearing. This decision came hours after the jury selection process concluded in Trump's criminal trial, which is



currently taking place roughly two miles south. The ruling is set to proceed with opening arguments starting on Monday before prosecutors begin laying out their case alleging a scheme to cover up negative sto-

ries Trump feared would hurt his 2016 presidential campaign. A jury comprising 12 individuals and six alternates was seated for the trial setting the stage for opening statements next week. The completion of the jury selection process marks the first criminal trial of a former US president, with allegations of Trump falsifying business records to suppress stories about his personal life during the 2016 election.

Manipur defies blazing guns & boycott call, clocks 70% voting

GUWAHATI: Conflict-scarred Manipur braved gunshots, goons and calls for a poll boycott in some pockets to end the first phase of elections to two Lok Sabha seats with a turnout in excess of 70.79%, led by booths set up for thousands of riot-displaced people still living in relief camps. An elderly voter awaiting his turn at a polling station in Bishnupur district's Thamanpokpi was wounded in firing during a suspected booth-capture attempt after hitch-free polling during the first few hours. Police arrested three suspects and seized a firearm and five bullets from them. Kangpokpi, one of the hill districts,



reported a turnout way lower than the state average as the poll boycott announced by multiple community organisations kicked in. Saikul, one among three assembly segments of Outer Manipur constituency, had a little over 19% of voters show up at the booths. Kangpokpi (38.14%) and Saitu (29.81%) were the other two laggards. The rest of the hills, including Churachandpur, seemed to make up for Kangpokpi's lack

Andhra Pradesh couple's toxic marriage turns into poll battle

SRIKALULAM: A couple's acrimonious marriage has turned into an electoral battle in Andhra Pradesh, with the wife threatening to contest against her husband, who has been fielded by YSRCP from Tekkali assembly constituency in Srikakulam district. In a video that has gone viral, Duvvada Vani, a zila parishad member, is heard saying she would contest against her husband, Duvvada Srinivas. Vani was earlier made in-charge for the constituency by YSRCP, indicating she would be given a poll ticket from Tekkali. However, the party fielded her husband instead.

From Congress to BJP to Congress in 19 days

BHOPAL: If Chhindwara is the hottest seat in MP this Lok Sabha polls, the talking point of voting day was the U-turn of local mayor Vikram Ahake, a l o n g - t i m e Congressman who joined BJP on April 1. Ahake issued a video message, appealing to people of Chhindwara to vote for Congress candidate Nakul Nath. As polling began on Friday, Ahake's video started going around on social media. "A few days ago, I joined a party but since then, I have been feeling suffocated. I felt I was not doing what is right to the person who developed Chhindwara. Kamal Nath has helped the people of Chhindwara."

Ajit books Baramati ground, forces uncle-Sule to hunt for new venue for 1st time

PUNE: For over 40 years, the concluding election rally for Baramati Lok Sabha and assembly seats has been held at a ground near a canal in Christian Colony in Baramati town. The extended Pawar family has followed a tradition, where they gather for lunch first and then head to the ground where patriarch Sharad Pawar addresses the crowd of supporters. This time, the tradition stands broken. The veteran politician's nephew and Maharashtra's deputy chief minister Ajit , whose wife Sunetra Pawar is locked in a high-profile electoral battle against Pawar senior's daughter. and sitting MP Supriya Sule, has already booked the ground, owned by a private trust, to hold a con-

cluding rally for his wife. Pawar and his daughter are now forced to find an alternative venue for their final rally on May 5 on their home turf. Sule said like the party name and symbol, Ajit Pawar had taken away the ground, too, from the veteran. "It is disappointing and we will redefine it in a new way. This tradition of holding a final rally at this ground was started by Sharad Pawar even before Ajit Pawar came into politics," she said. A senior NCP functionary from Baramati, on the condition of anonymity, said, "There's no question about who will get it (the rally ground), because we are the real NCP, and it has been recognised by the Election Commission as well."

Video of water being mixed in liquor pouches in country liquor shop went viral

Kundhiara: Last night, a video of water being mixed in liquor pouches inside the shop in a country liquor shop in Sehra in Kundhiara area went viral on social media. Villagers told that due to selling adulterated liquor in the country liquor shop located in Sehra Ba-

government instructions, liquor shops should not be located near schools, but country and English liquor shops have been opened near the degree college located in Sehra. Villagers informed that a few months ago, there was a fierce fight between a shopkeeper and



zaar, there is a fight every day between the shopkeeper and the public. After the liquor shop was closed at night, a villager made a video of the shopkeeper adding water to the liquor pouch and CC with a syringe and made it viral on social media. The villagers complained about this to the Excise Department and the administration but no action has been taken yet. As per

a customer over adulteration in liquor, in which the Kundhiara police saved the shopkeeper and registered a case against the customer. Since then the morale of the shopkeeper has increased. The angry villagers said that if adulteration is not stopped at the liquor shops, then someday a major incident may happen for which the administration will be held responsible.

A massive fire broke out in the fields in Dando and Bagholwan villages of Bara and Kaundhiara police station area. The fire could be controlled after a lot of effort.



Poetry is a simple medium to express emotions: Ankita Kheda

On Poetry Day, poetry recitation ceremony was organized at St. Peter's Educational English Medium School, Janwar

Meja: Poetry is the only medium to express emotions. The above words were shared by St. Peter's Educational English Medium School Principal, Mrs. Ankita Kheda, while encouraging the students who participated in the poetry recitation ceremony organized on the occasion of Poetry Day on Thursday. Happened somewhere.

He congratulated the children participating in the competition, including Avyakt Khera Aashi Tiwari Akanksha Patel Abhay Singh Ayan Ahmed Ariba Ayana and Siddharth Singh, and many other students, on their talent and wished them a bright future and elaborated on many famous poets. Told in advance. He said that poetry is a medium through which we express our feelings. In this sequence, school manager Abhishek Khera, while distributing awards to all the participating children, said that poems not only give children an opportunity to express their feelings but also increase their self-confidence. On this occasion, all the school teachers, parents and school staff and many other people were prominently present.



60% wheat purchased through doorstep collection: Official

Prayagraj: As part of efforts to ensure smooth procurement of wheat from farmers across the state this season, the state government has set up 293 wheat purchasing centres in Prayagraj district alone and deputed nine agencies for the task. For the benefit of the farmers, wheat is even being procured right at the doorsteps of the farmers through mobile procurement vans. As much as 60% of the procurement in Prayagraj has been through these vans, said Prayagraj's regional food marketing officer BC Gautam.

Ahead of the Lok Sabha elections, the UP government had increased the number of wheat procurement centres by 10% which added up to more than 6,400 across the state. The move is part of its efforts to achieve the procurement target of 60 lakh metric tonnes (MT) in the Rabi marketing season of 2024-25. Since the minimum support price (MSP) of wheat is Rs. 2,275 per quintal (100 kg), the payout to the state's farmers against the targeted purchase would be to the tune of around Rs. 13,650 crore.

"Registration of farmers is being done not just at the centre but even in different villages. This time, the state government has set a target of purchasing 3.54 lakh metric tonnes of wheat in the district whereas last time the target was to purchase 3.02 lakh metric tonnes. Since March till now, 6,526 metric tonnes of wheat have been purchased which is five times the purchase made in the same month last year," BC Gautam said.

To meet the set target, instructions have been issued to all purchasing centre in-charges and it is being continuously monitored, he added. This time the Yogi government has set the support price of wheat at Rs. 2,275 per quintal which is Rs. 150 more than last year. Last time the support price was Rs. 2,125. Instructions have also been issued that payments will be made to the Aadhaar linked bank accounts of farmers within 48 hours of the purchase. This year, exemption from verification has been given for the sale of up to 100 quintals of wheat. Now Rs. 20 per quintal weighing fee at the purchasing centres will also be returned to the farmers. As a result, along with Rs. 2,275 per quintal of wheat, the weighing amount is also being sent to the farmers' accounts, officials said. To solve any problem, the food and civil supplies department has issued toll free number 18001800150 through which farmers can contact the District Food Marketing Officer.

Walls in UP Govt schools to display stories of women achievers INITIATIVE AIMS TO INSPIRE STUDENTS

Prayagraj: The walls of the state's government-run primary and upper primary schools will now tell the stories of prominent Indian women. According to senior state education department officials with knowledge of the development, the state government has ordered that one wall each of all 1.54 lakh schools across 75 districts be dedicated for this mission under Mission Shakti Phase-4 special campaign. The aim is to motivate students to emulate these personalities.

These women role models include Rani Lakshmi Bai, Chand Bibi and Savitribai Jyotirao Phule, Sarojini Naidu, Mother Teresa, Lata Mangeshkar, PT Usha and Saina Nehwal among others.

Confirming the development, Praveen Kumar Tiwari, the Prayagraj district's basic shikshaadhipati (BSA), said he issued an order dated June 10, 2022 to all Prayagraj district block education officers (BEOs) requesting that this initia-

tive be implemented on priority in all government primary and upper primary schools operating in their respective areas. "The information about the women's personalities will be provided by either painting a classroom wall or placing flex. The authorities have been instructed to post large and clear images of the female personalities as well as concise write-ups about them," he continued.

The missive, a copy of which is in possession,

names 19 prominent women, including Rani Lakshmi Bai, the queen of Jhansi and a leader of India's first war of independence and Chand Bibi, the ruler and warrior who acted as the Regent of Bijapur Sultanate and defended Ahmednagar against the Mughal forces of Emperor Akbar in 1595. Savitribai Jyotirao Phule (Indian social reformer, educationalist, and poet from Maharashtra) to Sarojini Naidu (proponent of civil rights, women's emancipa-

tion who fought the British during India's struggle for independence), Mother Teresa Nobel Peace Prize winner who dedicated her life to caring for the destitute and the sick, Lata Mangeshkar legendary playback singer and PT Usha noted former track and field athlete. Sucheta Kriplani, an Indian independence warrior and India's first female chief minister, and Saina Nehwal, a professional badminton player and former world number one. Other notable

Indian women include poets and authors Subhadra Kumari Chauhan, Amrita Pritam, Mahadevi Verma, astronaut Kalpana Chawla, noted singer Begum Akhtar, and Mary Kom.

The government has given instructions that the names of local or region-specific women of the district, development block, and divisional level women personalities can also be exhibited as part of this unique initiative, authorities said.

Ujjwala beneficiaries not able to get passbook and gas connection

Koraon Prayagraj: In the Ujjwala Gas scheme run by the Government of India, allegations of huge corruption by the gas agencies have been made through the beneficiaries. As some beneficiaries accused the Indian Gas Agency operating in Ayodhya village of Tehsil Koraon, they said that Ujjwala gas cylinder was given by their employees but its passbook was not given even after months

had passed. Beneficiaries also allege that when they are asked about the passbook, these days they avoid it by saying that they also use the vehicles of the said gas agency to charge less gas and more money for the cylinders being transported to the area. Now in such a situation, neither any action nor any investigation is taken by those responsible against such gas agencies.

Canals desilted by irrigation department on paper only?

PRAYAGRAJ: Although the central and the state governments declared loan waiver to small farmers, their condition is not likely to improve until focus is shifted on all other agricultural facilities including irrigation. Farmers are still dependent on rains for irrigating their crops as water is often not released in canals and minors by the concerned officials. This often results in destruction of crops and heavy loss to farmers. The condition of irrigational facilities is not too good in Allahabad district especially in trans-Yamuna areas where farm-

ers have to suffer losses due to lack of water for their crops. They mostly depend on monsoon for irrigation despite the presence of canals. It may be mentioned that canals need to be cleaned every year for smooth flow of water to the distant areas for irrigation. Due to silt, garbage and growth of vegetation water is blocked at several places which needs to be cleared. Irrigation department officials and engineers are responsible to get the canals cleaned. However, all the works are done only on papers. There are many vil-

lages in trans Yamuna and Ganga areas where water never reaches in canals. Some of the villagers claim that they even do not remember when the last time they irrigated their fields through canals.

In such villages, farmers have to rely on rains or tube wells for irrigating their crops. While the rains are often scarce, tube wells cannot be afforded by small farmers. The situation is more deplorable in rocky areas of trans-Yamuna where agriculture has become a risky affair due to lack of water and corruption in irrigation department. Farmers claim that irrigation

department employees often demand money for releasing water from the tails. All works are done on papers and canals remain dry throughout the year. Moreover, musclemen often block the canals for irrigating their own fields. Husband of village head of Madari Gramsabha in Mauaima, Jamaluddin alleged water never reached his village in the last 20 years. The engineers never cleaned the canals but payment for the same is made every year to the contractors. Complaint was made in this connection to the senior officials but no action was taken, he adds.

PW Gurukulam school opens in Varanasi following success in Gurgaon

Varanasi: PW Gurukulam School, located in Varanasi Daafi Mughalsarai Bypass NH2 (Chakiya), Uttar Pradesh (232101) opens after the success of its first branch in Gurgaon. Affiliated with the CBSE Board, the school provides elementary education from Pre-Nursery to XIIth; and the curriculum framework will be in alignment with the National Education Policy, 2020. The maiden batch commenced on 1st April, 2024; in which over 600 students will be enrolled. The key areas of focus include academic excellence, new-age skill development, and test preparation, ensuring comprehensive growth of students. Apart from the day school



facility, PW Gurukulam School also offers a residential facility. The school aims to make young individuals responsible, self-

their expertise in educating over 40 million students through online and hybrid learning models Residential schools

play a vital role in shaping well-rounded individuals who are academically proficient, socially adept, and morally grounded. Living on campus fosters a sense of

community and facilitates collaborative learning outside the classroom. PW Gurukulam School will ensure students are involved in community engagement activities related to sustainability and societal upliftment; whilst nurturing the core values of mutual respect and kindness. PW Gurukulam School will be an innovative learning space where students can gain knowledge on various aspects of Montessori pedagogy, Robotics, and other skills. Career initiative programs are included, which are positioned to prepare young aspiring minds to become champions of their own future.

Varanasi, also known as the City of Learning, boasts

of some of the most renowned academic institutions, pulsating with cultural activities and the rich intellectual and spiritual heritage. Gurukulam is pioneering its way here by adapting transformative learning; blending culture and innovation which honors the Indian ethos of fostering inclusivity and responsibility. Priyanka Mukherjee, Principal of PW Gurukulam School, Varanasi, said, "We aim to shift from rote learning to applied learning, which will make every student ready to face the world. The school will be a canvas for students to paint their futures with immersive and transformative learning." Admissions are open for PW Gurukulam School.

Hi-tech landing system at Prayagraj airport soon

Prayagraj: Poor visibility due to dense fog or rain that often hampers the safe landing of aircraft, will soon be a thing of the past as efforts are being made to install hi-tech landing system at the Prayagraj airport. A survey has been conducted to install CAT-III landing system at the Prayagraj airport akin to the ones already functional at New Delhi, Kolkata and Lucknow airports, said Prayagraj airport officials. The technical team of Directorate General of Civil Aviation (DGCA) explored the possibilities of installing this state-of-the-art technology at the airport three days back. DGCA wants to install CAT-III system at the airport before Mahakumbh-2025, so that during the mega religious fair taking place during winters, there is no problem of landing of aircraft due to dense fog, officials added.

CAT-III refers to an Instrument Landing System (ILS) allowing flights to land in adverse weather conditions like fog, snow, or rain despite poor visibility. The

Instrument Landing System (ILS) is a precise guidance system for aircraft during runway approaches. It employs two radio beams, offering both horizontal and vertical guidance to pilots while landing.

Having completed the survey, now the DGCA team will give its report on CAT-III technology implementation at Prayagraj airport and based on the team's report, permission will be sought from the Indian Air Force to install CAT-III system on the runway of the airport here.

Prayagraj Airport's officiating director Rajesh Kumar said that Mahakumbh-2025 will be organised in winters. There will be dense fog here at that time and in view of the mega religious fair, the movement of aircraft here will increase manifold. To ensure smooth landing of aircraft in dense fog, it is necessary to install CAT-III system. With the installation of this system, passenger aircraft will be able to land at the airport even in low visibility of mere 50 metres, he added.

UP Board to release high school, intermediate results today

Prayagraj: The Uttar Pradesh Board of Secondary Education has announced that the results of the high school and intermediate board examinations for the year 2024 will be declared on April 20 at 2:00 pm.

Secondary Education Council Secretary of UP board Dibyakant Shukla said through a press release that the results of the high school and intermediate examinations of the year 2024 will be declared on April 20

at 2:00 pm from the Secondary Education Council Headquarters in Prayagraj.

The release further stated that the results can be seen on the websites of the Secondary Education Council at upmsp.edu.in and the NIC website at upresults.nic.in. The information has also been given to the Chief Election Commissioner, Uttar Pradesh, by the Board. The class 10 and 12 exams for the Uttar Pradesh State Board of High School

and Intermediate examinations began on February 22.

As per the UP board, more than 55 lakh candidates will participate in the state board examination this year. Earlier, the state board implemented a comprehensive strategy to maintain the integrity of the examination process.

Admit cards, complete with QR codes, have been distributed to all candidates, ensuring secure identification. More than three

lakh exam invigilators have been deployed, and a three-tier team, consisting of the center administrator, external center administrator, and static magistrate, has been established to open question paper packets at examination centers, aiming to prevent any malpractices. Any deviation from this protocol will result in disciplinary actions against all three individuals.

To combat cheating, the Special Task Force (STF),

local intelligence department, and police have been mobilized. The monitoring extends to social media, with the creation of the Quick Response Team (QRT) to swiftly address any irregularities online.

A robust monitoring system comprising 1297 Sector Magistrates, 430 Zonal Magistrates, 75 State-level observers, and 416 mobile squads has been established to oversee the examination process.

HC quashes court order refusing to issue NOC for passport renewal of dancer Sapna Choudhary

Prayagraj: The Allahabad High Court has cancelled the trial court order staying the no objection certificate (NOC) for the passport renewal of dancer Sapna Choudhary. The High Court directed the passport authorities to decide on the application made by Sapna Choudhary for renewal or re-issue of her passport and pass orders within a month.

The court said that the right to travel

abroad is part of a person's freedom. Saying this, the bench of Justice Shamim Ahmed quashed the order of the Additional Chief Judicial Magistrate Court refusing to issue a no-objection certificate for the issuance of a passport.

Dancer Sapna Choudhary had approached the High Court challenging the order of the ACJM court in which her application to renew his passport was rejected because the court had no jurisdiction to allow passport renewal.

Sapna filed a petition in the High Court against the order of the ACJM court. Her lawyer argued in court that if she is acquitted in future, she may suffer a huge loss by not going abroad for his professional work.

It was also argued that such refusal violates the applicant's constitutional rights under Articles 19 and 21 of the Constitution of India. After considering the arguments made by counsel for the parties and perusing the record, the court held that citizens are entitled to a passport under Article 19(1)(d) and Article 21 of the Constitution of India.

The court found that the ACJM Court ignored the notification and the Office Memorandum of the Ministry of External Affairs and quashed the order. Consequently, Choudhary was directed to make a fresh application along with a certified copy of the High Court order for renewal/re-issue of his passport before the concerned Regional Passport Officer within 20 days from the date of this order. In turn, the concerned Regional Passport Officer/Authority was directed to pass the order for renewal/re-issue of the passport of the applicant within one month after deciding on the application and completing appropriate formalities as per law. The court also directed Choudhary to inform and obtain permission from the concerned trial court before going abroad and to appear before the trial court on a date fixed as directed by the trial court.



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Volunteers take up 'green voting' to increase voter turnout

Prayagraj: In a unique concept of 'green voting', a group of volunteers associated with Paryavaran Sena - an organization working for environment protection and planting trees across several states of country - have come forward to encourage youngsters, especially first-time voters to vote first and then, plant a tree for environment conservation. Ahead of polling, the volunteers are conducting door to door campaign in villages, blocks and cities in eastern UP districts to encourage first time voters to cast their franchise and plant saplings for generation next. Ajay Krantikari, head of Paryavaran sena said, "Volunteers are connecting with first-time voters online and offline with an objective to increase voters turnout. Apart from this, district authorities are holding a series of campaigns where volunteers are briefing youngsters about the significance of each vote."

Apart from briefing them the power of voting, volunteers are also apprising first-time voters about the impor-

tance of trees in human lives and requesting them to plant a sapling in and around their houses after casting their vote. Interestingly, groups of youngsters from colleges have joined hands with the volunteers to spread the message of green voting in Prayagraj, Pratapgarh, Kaushambi, Fatehpur and other districts of the region. Krantikari meanwhile said "We have roped in active volunteers to connect with students of colleges in different districts of the state to promote the concept of green voting." Officials are making sincere efforts to make targeted interventions to instil a sense of self-motivation among voters to participate in the upcoming general election.

The officials have identified challenges to increase turnout in urban areas and encouraging the officers to prepare a booth-wise action plan for enhanced voter participation. They are also planning to rope in stakeholders like resident welfare associations (RWAs), local icons and youth influencers to persuade eligible voters to vote.

Victim's false depiction as a minor is abuse of court process: HC Mandates prompt age determination report filing in POCSO cases

Prayagraj: Hearing a bail application, the Allahabad High Court has directed that in the cases of POCSO Act (Protection of Children from Sexual Offences Act) the police authorities/investigation officers must ensure that a medical report determining the victim's age is drawn up at the outset and the same is submitted to the court without any delay.

Directing for mandatory medical report, Justice Ajay Bhanot observed, "This court has been finding that in large number of cases the age of the victim set out in the prosecution case is often at variance with the age determined by the expert medical boards in accordance with the latest medical protocols. At times there are multiple contradictions in age related documents available with the prosecution. Numerous cases of false implication and abuse of POCSO Act have also been noticed. Run-away couples of young age are criminalized in the process."

In the instant case as in a large number of bail applications under the POCSO Act, issues relating to the age of the victims having serious consequences on the life and liberty of accused persons arise for consideration.

It was the case of the accused that the victim was wrongly shown as a minor of 16 years in the FIR only to falsely implicate the applicant under the stringent pro-

visions of the POCSO Act.

The Court noted that in the instant case, the medical examination to determine the victim's age was not conducted at the time of the applicant's arrest. Instead, the report was prepared later, revealing the victim's age to be 17 years old.

Against this backdrop, while granting bail to the accused, the court took note of several instances of multiple contradictions within age-related documents provided by the prosecution. The court further said that the discrepancies in the victim's age in POCSO cases can substantially affect the rights and liberties of the accused.

"False depiction of a victim as a minor in POCSO Act cases is an abuse of the process of court," court added. In numerous cases, the age determined by the Medical Board contradicted the minority of the victim set up in the prosecution case. Justice Bhanot further observed, "This court is finding that in many instances the accused-applicants have argued that medical determination of the victim's age was not carried out deliberately as it would establish the majority of the victim and repudiate the prosecution case. By falsely depicting the victim as a minor accused persons are wrongly implicated under the stringent regime of the POCSO Act only to cause their indefinite imprisonment.

UPSRTC to act tough against drivers, conductors not promptly reporting accidents

Prayagraj: For not reporting bus accidents, action will be taken against the driver, conductor and other responsible people. In case of an accident, action will be taken if the accident reporting system is not updated. The negligence of drivers, conductors and officers in giving information about roadways bus accidents on the accident reporting system has been exposed. While the drivers and conductors are slow in giving information, the officers do not go to the spot. This is the reason why interceptor vehicles are not

able to reach for help in case of an accident.

A review meeting regarding roadway bus accidents was held on Thursday at the Transport Corporation headquarters through video conferencing. It was said that action would be taken if the accident reporting system is not updated in case of an accident. At the same time, the Principal Manager will have to reach the spot immediately after the bus accident and upload the photo of the accident on the system group.

Immediate information

is not being given in case of a bus accident. Principal Manager Personnel Ashok Kumar has expressed his displeasure over the accident to the regional managers through video conferencing. He said that in case of an accident, the first responsibility will be on the driver and conductor.

They will inform the assistant regional manager, centre in-charge and timekeeper of their depot. If they do not, RM and ARM will take disciplinary action against them and officers who do not reach the accident site will also be punished.

Northern & Phaphamau held in goalless draw, VBPS earn full points "Goal" U14 Football Competition

Prayagraj: Under the auspices of Northern Football Academy, in the second match of Under-14 boys category in the "Goal" football competition today at the football field of Vishnu Bhagwan Public School, Jhalwa, Northern Football Academy and Phaphamau Boys match ended in a goalless draw. According to the Head Coach of the academy, Indranil Ghosh, both the teams got one point each, while in the second match of the day, Vishnu Bhagwan defeated Naini Boys 1-0 and got full points in the league match. Swastik scored this goal on a pass from Ayush Prajapati. Player of the match award went to Aman and Swastik.



Police officers, govt doctors to appear virtually in courts

Prayagraj: The Uttar Pradesh Prosecution Department is planning to introduce a new system wherein government officials, mostly policemen and doctors, will be able to record their statements virtually in pending court cases. This is being done to reduce the pendency of cases in the courts of Uttar Pradesh.

The state government is gearing up to build infrastructure in the districts to have a central, computerised system under which police officers and government doctors

can go to the office of the Joint Director of the Prosecution Department and record their statements for speedy proceedings in the courts.

ADG (Prosecution), Dipesh Juneja, said, "There is a huge pendency of cases in the district courts. What happens is that police officers who work in the capacity of investigating officers and doctors in medico-legal cases have to routinely go to the district courts to record their statements. Such officials are regularly transferred

from one district to another across the state.

"Because of the geographic size of Uttar Pradesh, it becomes difficult for these officials to physically go to the district courts. For example, one officer who was posted in Western UP and investigated a case there gets transferred to Eastern UP. Now that officer has to take leave, and travel to the district where he was posted earlier.

"This results in the loss of manpower and also requires large amounts of funds for travel, lodging

etc. So we plan to have a centralised system where a police officer or a government doctor can go and virtually record their statements. This will help us ensure speedy trials in cases, and also, save money." The Prosecution Department plans to launch the initiative in five districts soon -- Lucknow, Prayagraj, Varanasi, Noida, Barabanki, and Varanasi.

"Once the system is operational in these five districts, we will extend it to the other districts as well. In the future, we hope the common people can also

give statements to courts remotely from these computerised offices," said Juneja.

Joint Director (Prosecution), Atul Kumar Ojha, said: "Once an officer retires, he or she is not willing to go to a different district to record evidence. To get allowances for the same is a lengthy process. This system will allow them to do it from wherever they are based after their retirement. We hope to reduce the pendency of cases with this new system."

Prayagraj in grip of scorching heat as mercury soars to 42°C; doctors advise caution

Prayagraj: Amid soaring political temperatures on the campaign trail ahead of the second phase of polling for the Lok Sabha, the Prayagraj district is in the grip of a sweltering spell, with the maximum daytime temperature reaching 42°C on Friday.

Already grappling with severe heat with the onset of summer, the locals have largely been confining themselves indoors, unless necessary.

Even with the arrival of the election bandwagon in the state, with prominent leaders of all

contesting rallies holding meetings and rallies, the streets in Prayagraj have been wearing a deserted look under the scorching sun. Locals were largely seen in the relatively cooler comforts of their homes or resting in the shade of trees, while some braved the heat to fetch water in pitchers from public taps and wells.

Dr Ajay Saxena from SRN Hospital in Prayagraj warned about the dangers of dehydration during the unsparing summer months.

Urging people to keep themselves hydrated, Dr Saxena said, "When the

body lacks sufficient fluid and salt, its temperature can rise higher than the external temperature, potentially leading to a



heat stroke if not properly managed."

"During summers, a body faces the risk of

dehydration. If there's less fluid intake, the body heat could rise to levels beyond the temperature outside. And if the body is unable to sustain the heat within itself, a person could potentially come down with a heat stroke. One needs to make sure to keep sweating," he said.

He advised people to avoid exercising, especially under the sun.

According to the India Meteorological Department (IMD), heatwave conditions are likely to prevail over parts of Odisha, Gangetic West Bengal, Konkan, Saurashtra and Kutch, coastal Andhra Pradesh and Yanam, and Telangana this week.

The weather agency added that hot and humid weather is very likely to prevail over Gangetic West Bengal, Tamil Nadu, Puducherry and Karaikal, Rayalaseema from Tuesday-Saturday;

coastal Karnataka, Kerala and Maharashtra from Tuesday to Wednesday; coastal areas of Gujarat from Tuesday to Thursday; and Konkan and Goa from Thursday to Saturday. A heatwave, sometimes described as extreme heat, is a period of abnormally hot weather. It is a prolonged period of excessively hot weather, typically with high temperatures and often accompanied by high humidity. A heatwave is usually measured relative to the usual climate in the area and normal temperatures for the season.

Accused arrested in murder case

Prayagraj: Within 48 hours, police team of police station Handiya successfully exposed the murder that took place within the police station area of Handiya and arrested 01 wanted accused. Commissioner of Police, in continuation of the campaign being run by the Commissionerate Prayagraj for prevention of crime and arrest of wanted accused, Deputy Commissioner of Police Under the direction of Ganganagar and under the efficient supervision of As-

sistant Police Commissioner Handia, Inspector-in-charge Handia Commissionerate Prayagraj, the police team registered MO No. 173/2024 at Police Station Handia, related to Section 302 IPC, 01 wanted accused Suraj alias Lalli, son of Ram Garib, resident of village Mandar. Within 48 hours, today on 19.04.2024, Police Station Handia Commissionerate Prayagraj was arrested from near his residence village Mandar under Police Station Handia area and advance legal action was taken as per rules.

Editorial

Why China is blocking Dalai Lama's Sri Lanka visit

The Sri Lankans have been trying to have the Dalai Lama visit since January 2023

The—70 per cent plus Buddhist—Sinhala population of Sri Lanka fervently wants to welcome the 87-year-old Dalai Lama into their country at the earliest. A group of Sri Lankan Buddhist monks who met the Dalai Lama in Bodh Gaya in 2022 invited him to come. Dalai Lama is revered by his direct followers and other Buddhist sects as the 14th reincarnation of the Buddha, Avalokiteshvara. The current monk was anointed at the age of 15 in 1950, the very year the Chinese took over Tibet.

The Sri Lankans have been trying to have the Dalai Lama visit since January 2023. They are trying once more now as fresh efforts intensify on the open invitation from the various Buddhist monasteries. Many Sri Lankan Buddhists feel the Dalai Lama can help sort out the island nation's economic woes with his wisdom and blessings. Leading Sri Lankan Buddhist leader Waskaduwe Mahindawansa went on television to state that the Chinese had pressured the Sri Lankan government to prevent the visit. The Chinese, ever political and strategic, want the Sri Lankan Buddhists to team up with Gandharan Buddhists in Pakistan rather than the Indian orders that are opposed to the Chinese. And certainly, they do not want the Dalai Lama to visit and be honoured. The impediment to a Sri Lankan visit comes every time by way of China. Beijing's debt restructuring will play a crucial role in obtaining further soft loans from the IMF. This has tied the hands of the Sri Lankan government. The Chinese still regard the elderly Dalai Lama as a dangerous separatist with massive influence, a living and highly popular symbol of resistance to the Chinese takeover of Tibet. One of the thorny problems stretching beyond the present incumbent is that the Buddhist monasteries in Tawang, Leh, and elsewhere in India do not agree that the Dalai Lama's successor can be chosen by the Chinese. The Buddhists everywhere are furious at the constant insults hurled by the Communist Chinese against the Dalai Lama, who do not recognise him as a spiritual leader at all, calling him a 'wolf' in monks robes. The internal facts in Tibet are quite damning. Since 1949, over 1.2 million Tibetans have been killed, over 6,000 monasteries destroyed, and thousands of Tibetans imprisoned. The Tibetans are being relocated to dense city enclaves in Lhasa; their smart phones are monitored; and the Mandarin language is being pushed in place of the Tibetan. With all this and 74 years of effort, including much infrastructure development and the relocation of ethnic Han Chinese to Lhasa, the Chinese are still not the masters of Tibetan hearts and minds. Similar problems of non-acceptance of unbridled repression plague the Communist CCP in Xinjiang, Hong Kong, against dissidence of any kind in the country, and of course, Taiwan. The Chinese authorities bristle at everything the Dalai Lama says and does, and are disturbed every time the Dalai Lama travels within India or internationally. Still, the Dalai Lama has been very successful at promoting the Tibetan cause. The Chinese don't like the fact that the Dalai Lama is completely free in India. They objected strongly to the Dalai Lama's visit to the Tawang Buddhist monastery and other parts of Arunachal Pradesh as a state guest in 2016. China, typically and audaciously, claims 90,000 sq km of the state, even today as 'South Tibet'. China is firmly opposed to the Nobel Laureate and international apostle of spiritual optimism. The fact that the young Lama escaped to India, which gave him sanctuary, is a constant thorn in the flesh.

2024 polls, election manifestos and Sanatana Dharma

One of the primary issues of the 2024 national election campaign has become Sanatana Dharma. The BJP accuses the Opposition of insulting Sanatana Dharma. The Opposition rebuts this by saying that the BJP is deliberately politicising the issue and misguiding ordinary voters. Elections will come and go. Political parties will win and lose. But in a country where the overwhelming majority is Hindu, the debate is one of pivotal importance, transcending transient political dividends. It has a bearing on the very nature of Sanatana Dharma, its evolution, its philosophical wisdom, its inherently eclectic and inclusive character, and all the factors which make it different from Abrahamic faiths. Let me clarify at the outset that I am a proud Hindu. The number of books I have written on the Hindu faith, and the sheer profundity of its thought as well as the remarkable achievements of Hindu civilisation which forms the foundational period of our history, bears testimony to this. My real worry, however, is that this acrimonious political wrangling on Sanatana Dharma could reduce this great religion to a new level of fundamentalist illiteracy. And such a consequence goes far beyond the immediate political for-



tunes of expedient politicians.

by Taboola Sponsored Links The crux of the matter is: what is Sanatana Dharma? Is it an unchanging monolith? Is it compiled in a single text, like the Bible or Koran, which cannot be transgressed by believers? Is it written in stone, to be interpreted by one Pope or Ayatollah? Or, has it evolved to be what it is precisely because it is none of the above? It is exceptionally significant that in its entire history, not a single Hindu has been burnt on the stake or killed for blasphemy, as is not uncommon in some other faiths. What this means is that Sanatana Dharma has allowed for differences of opinion within its fold, including trenchant criticism of some aspects of it, by its own followers. The

Hindu faith had not one but six systems of philosophy attempting to understand the truth behind the vast and bewildering plurality of the cosmos. Each of them had a different interpretation. In addition, there is the Lokayita Charvaka school, which cogently argued the materialist school of thought, denied the existence of God, and considered the Vedas, regarded as Shruti or revealed texts by many Hindus, as devoid of all sanctity. But the Charvakas were not ostracised, or worse, beheaded for blasphemy. Instead, they enriched the dialogic debate within Hinduism and were countered in a civilised manner by those opposed to them. In the 8th century CE, Adi Shankaracharya, who is considered the 'reviver' of

Hinduism, could say without fear: na manro na teertham na veda na yajnah: neither mantras, nor pilgrimages, nor the Vedas or yajna (rituals), matter. What matters is: Chidananda roopam, Shivo hum, Shivo hum: bliss and awareness, I am Shiva, I am Shiva. In many religions, the declaration of equating oneself with God would be considered blasphemy. For instance, in Persia, a Sufi mystic, Al Hallaj (858-922 CE), almost contemporaneous with Shankaracharya, was put to death for having the temerity to say: 'Ana' I Haq: I am the Truth'. But not so in Sanatana Dharma. The basic point is Sanatana Dharma is eternal for the grandeur of its philosophical vision, and not only for its religious practice; it is eternal for the diversity it allows for in thought, and not necessarily its rituals. Therefore, narrowing the interpretation of Sanatana Dharma to exclude all differences of opinion is distorting its greatness and, indeed, the very reason for survival. Unfortunately, this is precisely what we see happening today. Anybody and everybody is 'hurt' by anyone who does not blindly endorse everything that is deemed by the 'hurt' to be a part of Sanatana Dharma, including those ills that urgently need reform, such

as the pernicious caste system and gender disparity. If this is the criteria, then Veer Savarkar, the icon of Hindutva, would be hounded today, because he wrote extensively and consistently about what is wrong in the Hindu faith and practice. He called these the 'seven fetters, including the misformed religious sanction given to the caste system, inter-dining between castes, inter-caste marriage, gender disparity (beti-bandi) and untouchability'. So would Dr Ambedkar, Mahatma Gandhi, Vivekananda and Jotibhai Phule. The language used by Udhayanidhi Stalin against Sanatana Dharma—as I have written strongly about before—is abominable and unpardonable. But the original inspiration for the revolt against the social evils that were sanc\against 'inferior castes', as part of Hindu religious practice, in Tamil Nadu came from EV Periyar, who is the ideological inspiration for both the DMK and the AIADMK. The language of Udhayanidhi was emphatically wrong, but the idea behind it of attacking the discrimination, oppression and exploitation of Dalits and the backward classes, is still valid, especially in Tamil Nadu where 70 per cent of Hindus are of the backward classes.

Unravelling West Asia's Geopolitical Chessboard: Iran, Israel, and Saudi

In its effort to position Iran as a true Muslim power, it made anti-Israel posturing an intrinsic part of its foreign policy rhetoric. Image: Reuters File Photo On Sunday, April 14, Israel experienced a barrage of missiles launched from Iran, marking a notable escalation in tensions between the two nations. Although Iran and Israel do not engage in direct conflict, their rivalry is entangled within the broader power struggle between Iran and Saudi Arabia. Both Tehran and Riyadh vie for regional dominance, not just through geopolitical manoeuvring but also through religious leadership. Lebanese analyst Patricia Karam posits that Iran perceives the

Israel-Palestine conflict as an opportunity to bolster its influence over Shiite groups in the Middle East. Iran aligns itself with the so-called "axis of resistance," loosely comprising regional military proxies closely linked to Tehran. The year 1979 witnessed a dramatic shift in the Middle East's power dynamics. Mass protests in February 1979 in Iran culminated in overthrowing the Pahlavi dynasty's decades-long rule. The new regime, led by Ayatollah Khomeini, established a Shi'ite Islamic Republic, directly challenging Saudi Arabia's self-proclaimed leadership of Sunni Islam. The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia took it as an anti-royalist coup that happened earlier in Cairo and Baghdad. This sectarian divide intensi-

fied later that year when an extremist religious group led by extremist Juhayman Al-Otaybi, a follower of the Wahhabi Salafi creed of Islam, carried out a 14-day occupation of Mecca's Grand Mosque. Driven by a messianic mission, the group exhorted the Saudi population to rise up and overthrow the monarchy and establish an anti-Western, Islamist regime. According to the attackers, the Al-Saud family had lost its legitimacy because it was corrupt, ostentatious, and under the spell of the morally degraded values of the West. The siege of Mecca struck a direct blow to the religious and political legitimacy of the House of Saud. Saudi Arabia, as custodian of Islam's holiest sites in Mecca.

West Asia crisis: Israel's inevitable retaliation against Iran

In fact, even as this column predicting Israel's strike against Iran as inevitable was sent for publication, media reports have emerged that Israel has carried out retaliatory strikes inside Iran while Iranian state media, according to CNN, have reported explosions in the centre of the country. This completely changes the equation. The region and the world are now caught in a dangerous escalatory spiral, should Iran choose to respond to the latest strikes as it has vowed to, and India will inevitably get caught in the crossfire. The world, however, wanted Israel to show "restraint". It is being said that the April 13 attack by Tehran — in which a multifaceted strike package including over 300 cruise missiles, ballistic missiles and kamikaze drones were fired at Jerusalem — was "symbolic" in nature, a bit like scripted WWE 'fights'. The reasons behind such a suggestion are two-fold: one, that Israel did not suffer any meaningful damage and two, Tehran had announced its intent well before the attack, giving the other side enough time to prepare. World leaders led by the US are leaning on Israeli prime minister Benjamin Netanyahu and his war cabinet to "defuse and deesca-



late" tensions. There is even a cautious optimism in the air that the situation can be contained. UN secretary-general Antonio Guterres has urged "maximum restraint" and said at an emergency meeting of the UN Security Council on Sunday that "it's time to step back from the brink". The Joe Biden administration, which has already declared "do everything necessary to defend itself." Israel's defence minister Yoav Gallant has told his American counterpart, Lloyd Austin, that Israel has "no option but to respond" while the Jewish state's military chief has said that the inevitable response will come at a place and time of Israel's choosing. Israel's 'war cabinet' is meeting again to decide on the modalities of response, and according to Jerusalem Post, an Israeli media outlet, the country has already decided on the type but not the timing of the counter-strike on Iran. From the outside, all this may seem a little mystifying.

their foreign ministers Annalena Baerbock and David Cameron, respectively, to Israel to plead with Netanyahu not to retaliate. The result of this coordinated western pressure on Israel, so far, has been poor. Israel is reserving its right to strike back at Iran. Netanyahu flatly told the visiting German and British ministers that Israel will make its "own decisions" and "do everything necessary to defend itself." Israel's defence minister Yoav Gallant has told his American counterpart, Lloyd Austin, that Israel has "no option but to respond" while the Jewish state's military chief has said that the inevitable response will come at a place and time of Israel's choosing. Israel's 'war cabinet' is meeting again to decide on the modalities of response, and according to Jerusalem Post, an Israeli media outlet, the country has already decided on the type but not the timing of the counter-strike on Iran. From the outside, all this may seem a little mystifying.

Why Maldives may rework India relations after Majlis

Strategic thinkers in the two nations are keeping their fingers crossed, but are still hopeful, over the future of Maldives-India bilateral relations after parliamentary polls in the two countries, especially the former. That is to say, the negativity of the past months, particularly emanating from the Maldivian side, may slowly be replaced by positivity and even more objectivity in the coming weeks, months and years. The mostly unnoticed, yet quietly efficient posturing in the whole melee was the official position, as 'stated' by India. Rather, there was no official response to any of the nega-

tive observations and governmental initiatives that have had the potential to 'kill' bilateral relations for good. If anything, India has responded only with abundant positivity through deeds, still abiding by the nation's value-based 'Neighbourhood First' ethos through Prime Minister Narendra Modi breathes in fresh air through words and deeds — especially in the case of a 'smaller neighbour' Maldives. It was thus that the Modi government took President-elect Mohamed Muizzu's reiteration of his poll-campaign 'commitment' on India withdrawing military pilots and technicians man-

ning the three flying platforms that were gifts from India through the past decade. Muizzu has since announced that the second of three batches of Indian personnel have since left Maldives as agreed upon. The third one is due to depart in May, all of them being replaced by civilian 'technical personnel'. The Indian acceptance of the Muizzu diktat with grace and dignity did ensure that the new President had nothing to fear from India or be suspicious about the larger Ocean neighbour in the north. Muizzu's estranged political mentor and jailed former President Abdulla Yameen

had injected those unnecessary and unjustified fears and suspicions into the bilateral discourse with his 'India Military Out' request in the closing months of his presidency in 2018. Barring India's regional adversary China's unilateral declaration that they would defend Maldives' 'sovereignty and territorial integrity in case of external threats', there was nothing to suggest that either India or any other nation or force was threatening the archipelago-nation at the time — or, even in the past six years since Yameen lost the presidential polls of 2018. Yet, after losing power and leaving without a cause.

Tata AIA Life launches Tata AIA Rising India Fund



AMBALA: Tata AIA Life Insurance (Tata AIA), one of India's leading life insurers, has launched the Tata AIA Rising India Fund, a Fund that opens a unique avenue for consumers to participate in India's growth story. The New Fund Offering (NFO) will remain open until March 31, 2024, with units being offered at an NAV of Rs. 10 per unit during the NFO period. The Rising India Fund will invest in key sectors and companies, that are driving the Atmanirbhar Bharat story. These include infrastructure, manufacturing, banking, digital, defense, etc. The fund will invest in companies across market caps and would be sector agnostic, enabling the fund manager to harness diverse opportunities driving India's growth engine. On the NFO launch, Harshad Patil, Executive Vice President, and Chief Investment Officer (CIO) of Tata AIA,

said, "In the recent years, India has displayed its global influence by becoming the fastest growing major economy. Through this new fund, we would like to offer our consumers an avenue to participate in and benefit from this incredible journey. Our consumers have always benefited from the long-term growth potential of the Indian equity market by investing in the ULIP funds that Tata AIA offers. We will continue to strive towards generating the alpha in our fund performance. With a robust research process and a bottom-up stock selection approach, we are committed to providing lasting value and returns to our policyholders. Mr. Samit Upadhyay, President - CFO & Head of Products and Propositions of Tata

AIA, said, "At Tata AIA, we are committed to craft innovative insurance solutions that cater to diverse requirements of consumers including financial security, wealth creation as well as health & wellness. The New Fund Offer, Tata AIA Rising India fund, can be availed along with our unique Param Rakshak (PR) series, featuring Pro-Fit, Param Rakshak solution, Param Rakshak Plus solution, etc. These solutions are embellished with attractive features that not only deliver superior, consistent, and risk-adjusted long-term returns but also prioritize the safeguarding of your loved ones' future. We are confident that consumers will find the PR series proposition with the new fund offer quite attractive.

27 Years of Track Record for HDFC Top 100 Fund

CHANDIGARH / LUDHIANA:

HDFC Top 100 Fund, an open-ended equity scheme predominantly investing in large-cap stocks ("the Fund"), has successfully completed 27 years in 2023. Over the past 27 years, the Fund has delivered Compound Annual Growth Rate (CAGR) of ~19%. Further, a SIP of Rs 10,000 invested systematically on the first business day of every month (total investment Rs 32.90 Lacs) in HDFC Top 100 Fund would have grown to Rs. 7.98 crores by February 29, 2024 (See complete performance details given at the end). This performance



is a testament to the fund's ability to navigate market fluctuations and deliver growth to investors. The portfolio construction follows a bottom up approach to stock picking blended with top down sector and macro trends. The Fund follows a diversified style with a blend of GARP (growth at reasonable price) and value. In stock selec-

tion, the focus is on quality of business models, management and financial metrics. Portfolio construction is based on risk-reward of opportunities available at any given point in time. As per the mandate, more than 80% of the portfolio always remains invested in the well-established large cap companies.

Wheat stock with FCI lowest since 2018, but higher than buffer norm

New Delhi: Wheat stock with Food Corporation of India (FCI) has dropped below 100 lakh tonne for the first time since 2018, falling to 97 lakh tonne this month, due to low procurement during past two years and record sale of the cereal in open market to

keep prices under check. However, in case of rice stocks, FCI is currently holding more than four times the buffer norm. Despite wheat stock plummeting, even at current level, it is higher than statutory buffer stock requirement at this point of time. As per

norm, in April, FCI must have 74.6 lakh tonne of the foodgrain. "The stock is enough to meet National Food Security requirement and it's more than the buffer norm. Procurement season has also started from March 1.



Crompton strengthens its sustainability footprint in the agricultural sector

KARNAL: Crompton Greaves Consumer Electricals Ltd., renowned for its innovative solutions in the pumps industry, is proud to announce its fourth consecutive win of another landmark solar water pumping system order under the prestigious PM-KUSUM scheme for the state of Haryana. The latest order, sanctioned by the New & Renewable Energy Department Haryana and HAREDA includes the supply, installation, and commissioning of 7.5 HP DC; 10 HP AC and 10 HP DC solar photovoltaic water pumping systems which are worth over Rs. 9 crores. This achievement is part of a larger initiative led by the Solar Energy Corporation of India (SECI) and the Ministry of New & Renewable Energy (MNRE), aiming to replace and establish new connections for 6.5 Lac pumps across India. Total orders accrued till now from HAREDA stands at Rs 65.6 crores. Moreover, Crompton has secured a Letter of Empanelment for 2500 solar pumping systems in Maharashtra from MSEDCL (Maharashtra State Electricity Distribution Co. Ltd) for 500 systems and MEDA (Maharashtra Energy Development Agency) for 2000 systems. Another Letter of Empanelment has been received for 1000 solar pumping systems in Rajasthan from Commissionerate of Horticulture, Rajasthan. Total value of Letters of Empanelment received amounts to appx Rs 85 crores, marking another step forward in its commitment to agricultural sustainability. This significant development, coupled with the recent fourth order from Haryana and LOE from Maharashtra and Rajasthan.

The world's largest instant drink manufacturer, Rasna, ropes in actress Tamannaah Bhatia as their new brand ambassador.

Ludhiana : Summer is here, we know it Coz Rasna's New Campaign is out! This year like every year Rasna has come out with a fresh new campaign that not only highlights their 21 Vitamins and Minerals that energise us but also highlights the emotions it stirs up that of Vitamins of Love, Happiness, Josh and Success. On the basis of deep market research and blind product taste results, Rasna is reformulated

as a vitamin, mineral, and glucose drink with real fruit extracts. The new ad is a result of extensive market research done Pan India to help us understand our customers and their evolving needs. It focuses on the natural, healthier, and great taste aspects targeted towards SEC A and B households and repositions it as a tastier, thicker, and healthier drink that satisfy rational aspects as well as working as a catalyst

in providing energy, Josh, happiness, and the most important vitamin, Vitamin Love. Today Rasna is not only the world-famous innovation Rasna soft drink concentrate, but also Rasna Instant powders, which come in many formats viz. 750gm pouch makes 33 glasses, 500gm makes 22 glasses, 400 gm makes 17 glasses, sachet making single glass. , sachet making 500 ml and so on. Rasna has also taken the

lead to develop new generation liquid concentrates like squashes and syrups. Rasna also has a full-fledged wellness range under its sub-brand Rasna Healthy Daycomprising of Pure Honey, Protein p o w d e r s , Honey/malt-based powders, Chocolate Spreads, Instant soups and so on. This year's highlight of the campaign of course is the onboarding of the s e n s a t i o n a l Tamannaah Bhatia, the face of youth .

HDFC Bank and TD Bank Group sign an agreement to simplify banking experience for Indian students in Canada

Ambala/HISAR: HDFC Bank and TD Bank Group (TD) today announced an expanded relationship supporting Indian students planning to study in Canada. With this agreement, TD and HDFC Bank are announcing a new referral program. HDFC Bank will refer students planning to study in Canada to TD's International Student GIC Program, which enables students to conveniently comply with the Government of Canada's Student Direct Stream (SDS)



study permit pathway. This referral partnership builds on the two banks' existing relationship where TD has acted as HDFC Bank's main correspondent banking partner for Canadian Dollar clearing since 2015. As part of the Canadian government's requirements to

apply for an expedited study permit, students are required to provide proof of financial support, which is accomplished via a Guaranteed Investment Certificate (GIC) from a participating Canadian financial institution. The TD International Student GIC Program is

designed to enable students to open accounts digitally and help them meet their study visa and living expense requirements. HDFC Bank is India's leading private sector bank. As of December 31, 2023, the Bank's distribution network was at 8,091 branches and 20,688 ATMs across 3,872 cities / towns. TD is the second largest Bank in Canada and sixth largest in North America by assets, and serves over 27.5 million customers around the globe.

ICICI Bank's iMobile Pay is used by over one crore customers from other banks

GURUGRAM / FARID-ABAD : ICICI Bank announces that its retail mobile banking app, iMobile Pay, has on-boarded over one crore customers of other banks. This significant achievement comes just over three years after ICICI Bank made the app open for customers of other banks. ICICI Bank was the pioneer in launching mobile banking app in 2008, expediting the way for digital banking in India. In December 2020, it became the first bank to make the app interoperable by extending the benefit of its services to customers of other banks. Since then, customers of any bank can use iMobile Pay by following a few simple steps: link their savings bank account with the app, generate a UPI ID and enjoy a wide range of convenient services. These include making payments to any UPI ID



or merchants, paying bills, recharging online and transferring money to any bank account, payment app and digital wallet. Further, users can also open a savings account, apply for a home loan or credit card among other banking services provided by ICICI Bank. With over one crore customers of other banks using iMobile Pay, there has been 26% growth in the overall transactions value in this financial year till the end of February 2024 (April-February), compared to the same period last year. During this period, the average ticket size increased by 16%. Commenting on this remarkable achieve-

ment, Mr. Sidhartha Mishra, Head- Digital Channels and Partnerships, ICICI Bank stated, "We have consistently aimed to innovate and simplify banking for our customers. The fact that our retail banking app has on-boarded over one crore customers from other banks in just three years is a testament to iMobile Pay's significant role in providing seamless digital banking experiences. With iMobile Pay, we are revolutionising the way customers manage their finances and conduct transactions. We have built a simple, seamless, secure, and accessible banking platform that offers over 400 services.

Tasva, the Indian Menswear Brand by Aditya Birla Fashion and Retail and Designer Tarun Tahiliani Continues Expansion; Unveils 6th Store in Delhi

NEW DELHI: Tasva, the Indian menswear brand by Aditya Birla Fashion and Retail Ltd. and celebrated designer Tarun Tahiliani, is pleased to announce the launch of its sixth store in Delhi, situated in DLF Avenue, Saket. Strategically located within DLF Avenue, Saket, the new store is poised to serve the discerning clientele of the city and its environs, presenting a diverse array of meticulously curated wedding and occasion wear that seamlessly amalgamates comfort with style. The opening of Tasva's sixth store in Delhi marks a significant milestone in the brand's journey, underscoring its growth trajectory and unwavering dedication to delivering



unparalleled fashion and lifestyle products. Encompassing an expansive area of 2,041 sq. ft., the new store showcases an impressive assortment of kurtas, bundhis, sherwanis, bandhgalas, achkans, churidars, aligarhis, and an array of accessories such as safas, brooches, pocket squares, shawls, stoles, mojaris, and more. The store's elegant ambience harmonizes seamlessly with its exceptional collection, ensuring an unparalleled shopping experience. Tasva's team of profi-

cient stylists is committed to comprehending the unique preferences of customers and providing tailored assistance. Each garment epitomizes Tarun Tahiliani's distinctive style, meticulously crafted with impeccable attention to detail to achieve the quintessential Tasva fit. Leveraging fabrics such as silk, banarasi brocade, velvet, and cotton that pay homage to the rich legacy of Indian textiles, the collection features traditional embroideries such as zardozi, aari, chikankari, and

gota work, seamlessly blending the elegance of Indian craftsmanship with contemporary silhouettes for the global Indian. haring his thoughts on the unveiling of the new store, Tarun Tahiliani, the Chief Design Officer, Tasva, said, "Tasva has been a long-held dream of mine, made possible by Aditya Birla Fashion and Retail. The name itself represents the finest version of oneself, which we have worked hard to accomplish through the brand. For the longest time, I've heard that ethnic wear is uncomfortable, and Tasva is an attempt to rectify that. We have designed garments that provide our consumer, the Indian Man.

Man gets 3-week parole to arrange for fine amount

New Delhi: Delhi High Court has granted three weeks' parole to a man convicted under the NDPS Act on the ground of arranging funds for payment of fine in terms of the sentence awarded to him. "This court is of the considered opinion that since the parole apart from re-establishing social ties, is sought on the ground of arranging funds for payment of fine, there appear to be sufficient reasons for releasing the petitioner on parole," said Justice Anoop Kumar Mendiratta. The single judge bench observed that there were sufficient reasons for releasing the convict on parole, subject to him furnishing a personal bond of Rs 25,000 to the satisfaction of the jail superintendent. One Harish Yadav was convicted and sentenced to 10 years. Later, he was further sentenced to simple imprisonment of six months in default of payment of fine.

More checks on Big Tech for anti-competitive acts



NEW DELHI: A government-appointed panel has recommended enactment of a new law - Digital Competition Act - to allow the Competition Commission to monitor large digital enterprises and intervene before instances of anti-competitive conduct transpire. The move is meant to deal with entities such as Google, Facebook and Amazon that use data ("the defining feature of digital markets") and supplement the Competition Act. It will apply to a list of pre-defined "core digital services"

that are susceptible to concentration, the 10-member panel headed by corporate affairs secretary Manoj Govil said. When it comes to anti-competitive practices, mergers and acquisitions is to be kept out of the proposed law, while in case of nine others the draft legislation has worked out a principle-based framework, laying down the broad contours of each of them. A parliamentary standing committee report, which had dealt with the issue and has been used

extensively by the panel had listed anti-competitive practices such as anti-steering that is seen in app stores and prevents users from tapping into third party apps, or self-preferencing by marketplaces to promote their own products, along with other concerns such as bundling, deep discounting, exclusive tie-ups, search and raking preferences, advertising policies and data usage that allows personal data to be stored by large digital enterprises for profiling customers and sale to others.

ICICI Pru MF curbs flows into mid, small-cap funds

MUMBAI: ICICI Prudential Mutual Fund on Tuesday said it will not accept any fresh investment in mid-cap and small-cap funds, effective March 14 until further notice. I-Pru MF joined a long list of fund houses that have over the last few months stopped inflows into small-cap funds. Some fund houses have suspended inflows into mid-cap funds, too. These decisions have been taken to insulate investors in these funds from excessive market volatility and loss in value of investments in case of sudden slide in stocks

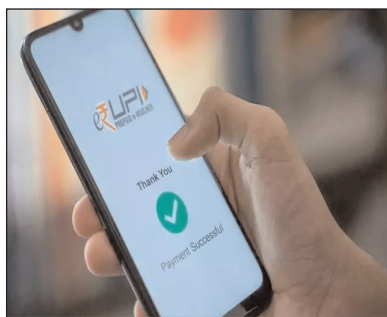


from these market segments of the market. On, Sebi chief Madhabi Puri Buch had also flagged about froth building up in mid and small-cap funds, referring to high valuations. The regulator had also, through MF industry trade body Amfi, alerted fund houses to strengthen their risk

management mechanisms relating to schemes belonging to these categories to safeguard investors. Sebi chairperson has also announced that the regulator is currently carrying out stress testing for mid-cap and small-cap funds, and the results would be out this Friday.

Now in Nepal, Scan & Pay With UPI

Delhi: The introduction of UPI for cross-border transactions has been announced by Phonepe Payment Service of Nepal and NIPL, the international division of NPCI. With UPI-enabled apps, Indian customers may now make quick UPI payments at a variety of business outlets in Nepal. Indian consumers



can easily accept UPI payments from merchants connected to the

Fonepay network. The Global Fintech Fest in September 2023 in India marked the launch of the Indo-Nepal UPI payments program. The collaboration is live and enables person-to-merchant UPI transactions between India and Nepal using QR codes.

CAPSULES

Nibiru Chain launches public mainnet

Nibiru Chain, the developer-centric Layer 1 blockchain platform, has launched its public mainnet and secured listings on four major exchanges: Kucoin, Gate.io, Bybit, and MEXC. It targets developers in gaming, real-world assets, NFTs, and DeFi.

The platform offers users the ability to stake with NIBI validators, participate in governance, and secure unique domains with NibID.

Nibiru introduces web3 gaming through Chess3, allowing players to earn rewards while enjoying chess. The platform facilitates the minting and trading of NFTs on Dropspace and explores real estate opportunities through Coded Estates' testnet. Developers on Nibiru Chain are incentivized through rewards, receiving a portion of transaction fees for smart contract usage, with plans for additional rewards based on Total Value Locked (TVL) metrics. Looking ahead, Nibiru Chain aims to launch its genesis NFT collection, expand into the Asia-Pacific (APAC) market, and introduce parallel optimistic execution to address blockchain scalability.

Industrial growth slows to 3.8% in Jan

NEW DELHI: Retail inflation remained unchanged in Feb but food and beverages prices inched up, while non-food items eased during the month. Separate data showed industrial output growth moderated in Jan from Dec's upwardly revised number. Data released by the National Statistical Office (NSO) on Tuesday showed retail inflation remained unchanged at 5.1% in Feb but below the 6.4% recorded in Feb last year.

Mutual fund SIP reached Rs 19,000 crore for the first time in February

"The greatest number of SIP accounts was 820.17 lakh in February, up from 791.71 lakh in January"



Delhi: February SIP contributions set a record. February's contribution was Rs 19,186.58 crore, up from Rs 18,838.33 crore in January. The SIP AUM rose 2.49% to Rs 10.52 lakh crore in February from Rs 10.26 lakh crore in December. The greatest number of SIP accounts was 820.17 lakh in February, up from 791.71 lakh in January.

New SIPs registered in January reached a milestone. New SIPs fell in February. February saw 49.79 lakh SIPs versus 51.84 lakh in January. Mutual fund AAUM was Rs 54.52 lakh crore in February, up from Rs 52.89 lakh crore in

January. Mutual Fund folios reached a record 17,41,95,535 in February, up from 16,95,59,182 in January. In February, retail MF folios with equity, hybrid, and solution-oriented schemes achieved an all-time high of

13,94,91,744. February retail AUM, including equity, hybrid, and solution-oriented schemes, was Rs 30.70 lakh crore with an average of 30.72 lakh crore. According to February 2024 data, SIP accounts increased to 8.20 crores with 49.79 lakhs new registrations. This shows investors' dedication to wealth accumulation. These developments suggest that investors are becoming financially educated and that collaboration is creating a smart investing landscape. Retail investor engagement nationwide shows that the mutual fund business is growing and important "said.

ITC's top shareholder BAT to sell 3.5% stake for \$2bn

KOLKATA: British American Tobacco, one of the world's largest tobacco products companies that is also the biggest shareholder in tobacco-to-FMCG major ITC, is selling about 3.5% stake in the Indian conglomerate, aiming to garner about Rs 16,800 crore (about \$2 billion). London-headquartered BAT will sell nearly 44 crore shares of ITC at a price band of Rs 384-400 through block deals on Wednesday, the deal's term sheet showed. At the lower end of the price band, the shares are priced at a 5% discount to the stock's Tuesday close on the BSE at Rs 404. ITC's block deal will be one of the largest in India. The biggest block deal in India was executed in May 2020 when global pharma major

GSK had sold 5.7% in FMCG major HUL for about Rs 25,600 crore. BAT holds a little over 29% stake in ITC but it is not the promoter of the company. BAT's top management has been talking about monetising part of its stake in ITC for three to four months, provided it could successfully navigate India's strict foreign holding rules in tobacco companies. BAT had indicated that its holding in ITC would not fall below the strategically important 25% mark. "They (BAT) will continue to remain a major shareholder in ITC," a source told. On Tuesday evening, BAT through a statement said that after the completion of this block trade, "BAT will remain a significant shareholder of ITC."

Apple, Google agreed to 'defend' search deal from regulators

Apple's agreement with Google to use it as the default search engine on iPhones includes a provision for the two companies to "support and defend" the deal against government scrutiny. Apple's Senior Vice President of Services, Eddy Cue, revealed this during an antitrust trial. Their longtime contract was renegotiated in 2016 to include the provision, Apple's Senior Vice President of Services Eddy Cue disclosed Tuesday in a Washington federal court, where the US government is pressing its claim that Google operates a monopoly in the search business. Cue, the architect of the most recent version of the agreement, said the provision for a joint defense was added at Google's request.



ment scrutiny, a top Apple executive said at an antitrust trial. Their longtime contract was renegotiated in 2016 to include the provision, Apple's Senior Vice President of Services Eddy Cue disclosed Tuesday in a Washington federal court, where the US government is pressing its claim that Google operates a monopoly in the search business. Cue, the architect of the most recent version of the agreement, said the provision for a joint defense was added at Google's request.

Panasonic's arm looks to boost production in India

TOKYO: Panasonic Electric Works Company, a subsidiary of one of the world's largest electronics companies, wants to enhance its production capacity in India. It is also planning to expand its footprint in the Indian market over next five years, with a focus on wiring device business segment

He said it was handled by company lawyers so he couldn't speak directly.

Pakistan inflation slows to 23.1% yr/yr in Feb

KARACHI: Pakistan's consumer price index for February was up 23.1% from the same month last year, marking the slowest rate of annual inflation since June 2022, data from the Pakistan Bureau of Statistics showed on Friday. The country has been struggling with soaring inflation, which last May hit an all-time high of 38% on an annual basis, partly driven by new taxation measures the government imposed to comply with International Monetary Fund demands. Islamabad's funding agreement with the IMF expires on April 11. On a month-on-month basis the February CPI was unchanged, having risen every month since the fiscal year began last July. Pakistan's finance ministry projected in a monthly report on Thursday that inflation would hover around 24.5%-25.5% in February, with expectations of further easing to 23.5%-24.5% in March as the crop situation and the supply of commodities improves. The annual CPI for January had clocked in at 28.3%. February's improvement on that was partly due to base effects. In January, Pakistan's central bank held its benchmark interest rate at 22% for the fifth policy-setting meeting in a row and raised its full-year inflation projections.

Once a global ideal, Germany's economy struggles with an energy shock that's exposing longtime

ESSEN: For most of this century, Germany racked up one economic success after another, dominating global markets for high-end products like luxury cars and industrial machinery, selling so much to the rest of the world that half the economy ran on exports. Jobs were plentiful, the government's financial coffers grew as other European countries drowned in debt, and books were written about what other countries could learn from Germany. No longer. Now, Germany is the world's worst-performing major developed economy, with both the International Monetary Fund and European Union expecting it to shrink this year. It follows Russia's invasion of Ukraine and the loss of Moscow's cheap natural gas - an unprecedented shock to Germany's energy-intensive industries.

The governor of the State Bank of Pakistan said the rise in its average inflation forecast for the fiscal year ending in June to 23%-25%.

World Bank maps out plans to further boost lending by \$100 bln-plus over a decade



WASHINGTON: The World Bank on Thursday proposed steps that would boost its lending to developing countries by an additional \$100 billion over a decade as part of an ongoing reform process aimed at helping the bank expand its mission to include climate change. In a 24-page report to the joint ministerial committee that oversees the bank and the International Monetary Fund, the bank's management said it would ask shareholders to approve a hybrid capital measure and a new portfolio guarantee platform. That together could boost lending by over \$100 billion. That amount would come on top of measures already being implemented that will boost the bank's lending to developing countries by up to \$50 billion.

Public Diplomacy Forum Commemorates 17th edition of International Women's Day, Recognizes Women Achievers

New Delhi: Central Delhi became the focal point as the Public Diplomacy Forum orchestrated a vibrant celebration in honour of the 17th edition of International Women's Day. Embracing the theme of "Count Her In: Invest in Women, Accelerate Progress" for this year, women from diverse sectors were lauded for their outstanding contributions. The distinguished Guests of Honour were K.J. Alphons, Former MOS Electronics & IT and Tourism & Culture, Smt. Lakshmi Puri, Assistant Secretary-General and Deputy Executive Director of UN Women, Dr. Sachchidanand MS IGC A., Paridhi Sharma, played a significant role in hosting the afternoon festivities, while Dr. Aruna Abhey Oswal was the co-host for the event. Ratan Kaul, Founder President of the Public Diplomacy Forum, Festival



Director of the Inkpot India Conclave, and Senior Advisor to the Indo-American Friendship Association, expressed, "The event aimed to inspire, motivate, and empower women by acknowledging their accomplishments. Over the years, distinguished international icons in visual arts, performing arts, international diplomacy, media, and political leadership have graced this event as special guests." Among the esteemed personalities honored were Yuvrani Ritu Singh of Jammu and Kashmir, Arunima Kukreja, Anuradha Prasad,

Manjari Mishra, Varuna Anand, Radhika Bharatram, Tulsī Kumar, Aditi Maheshwari, and Richa Anirudh, among others. It's noteworthy that the Public Diplomacy Forum, as a civil society organization, has a tradition of hosting meaningful and socially and politically relevant projects, programs, and seminars. In our increasingly globalized world, civil society organizations like the Public Diplomacy Forum are indispensable partners for international efforts at the country level. The Public Diplomacy forum has positioned

Strengthens its commitment to providing equal work opportunities in 9 states through this initiative

KARNAL: Amazon India today announced the launch of Women in Night Shifts (WINS) at one of its large Sort Centre in Haryana. In addition to Amazon's existing initiatives, WINS is designed to provide a safe and supportive work environment for women, ensuring equal opportunities for both men and women to work in various shifts, and championing inclusivity for all. In some states in India, regulations prohibit the employment of women in night shifts in warehousing operations facilities primarily stemming from concerns about women's safety and wellbeing. Therefore, safety, security, and wellbeing take centre stage to enable the WINS initiative. Amazon India has actively engaged with state governments to advocate for equal work opportunity for all. Through dedicated efforts and collaboration with authorities, the company has successfully enabled night shift operations for women across select sites in



Tamil Nadu, Rajasthan, Gujarat, Maharashtra, Karnataka, Uttar Pradesh, Telangana, Punjab, and now, in Haryana. "We believe in creating equal opportunities and addressing barriers that women face in the workplace and are thankful to the government for their support in enabling women to work in night shifts," said Liju Thomas, Director of HR, India Operations, Amazon India. "The launch of WINS reiterates our commitment to promoting gender equality and nurturing a safe work environment for our employees and associates. We prioritize the safety and wellbeing of our associates offering comprehensive measures, such as transportation

facilities, and enhanced security arrangements for those working in night shifts. We intend to extend this initiative to other sites in Haryana, reinforcing our commitment to a diverse and secure work environment." Amazon has implemented various measures aimed at enhancing the safety and wellbeing of its associates. These measures include improved facility lighting, provision of escorted pick-up and drop services, running gender sensitization trainings, deployment of female staff in supervisory and support roles, and conducting sessions with safety experts to address the unique challenges associated with working in night shifts.

CAPSULES

ICICI Prudential Life Insurance maintains industry-leading claim settlement ratio for the third quarter of fiscal 2024

HISAR/KARNAL: Life insurance is an essential component of financial planning, providing financial security to the family and/or dependents. It is a promise made by the company to ensure the financial well-being of the family in case of untimely demise of the policyholder. It is a tool to alleviate the financial distress caused by the loss of a loved one. Claims are the moment of truth for the industry and therefore one must purchase a policy from a brand they trust. Evaluating the claims settlement ratio and the average time taken to settle a claim can be a good indicator of a customer-friendly life insurer. The turnaround time too is critical as it ensures that the beneficiaries receive the claim proceeds quickly. However, the onus does not squarely lie with the insurance company. Customers also shoulder the responsibility of truthfully disclosing all material information at the time of purchase, this ensures a quick and hassle-free claims experience for the nominees. As mandated by regulations, life insurers declare their claim settlement ratios on a quarterly basis. After all individuals buy life insurance to ensure their dependents are financially secure in case of any eventuality. The chart below depicts the claims settlement ratio of a few life insurance companies. Notably, ICICI Prudential Life Insurance has a consistent claim settlement ratio track record, featuring a noteworthy.

Hyundai Verna and Royal Enfield Himalayan Win Top Honours at car & bike Awards 2024

NEW DELHI : The 2024 car&bike Awards were held at Sofitel BKC, Mumbai on February 27th, 2024. In its 19th edition, celebrating the best cars and bikes to be launched in calendar year 2023, Hyundai's all-new sedan Verna and Royal Enfield's adventure bike, the new Himalayan emerged with maximum scores. A 7-member jury, each for cars and bikes, consisting of senior automotive journalists from carandbike.com editorial team, and external automotive experts, voted in this process. The winners



were chosen based on a thorough and elaborate assessment programme that included experiencing these vehicles on the Madras International Circuit over two days followed by a proprietary scoring and voting process validated and

audited by Divergent Insights, one of India's well-known, independent market research and analytics firms. The car&bike Awards are one of India's oldest and most reputed automotive awards. This year, more than 50 vehicles

were nominated for the awards. "The car&bike Awards recognizes and honours the best amongst all new cars and bikes launched in a calendar year. The year 2023 was a rather interesting one for the automotive industry with some path-breaking launches in the four-wheeler domain and more so in the two-wheeler space. Also, record sales numbers in a very tough year. To acknowledge the efforts of the automotive industry, this year's jurors had their work cut out to determine the best of the lot.

Ex-Intel India head Avtar Saini hit by cab while cycling in Navi Mumbai, dies

NAVI MUMBAI: Avtar Saini, a reputed chip designer, who was out on a ride with fellow cyclists, was knocked down and killed by a cab on Palm Beach Road in Nerul on Wednesday. The 68-year-old Saini was former Intel India country head, credited with working on Intel 386 and Intel 486 microprocessors. He went on to lead the design of the Pentium processor. The incident, coming less than a year since the death of runner Rajalakshmi Vijay on Worli seaface, is another reminder of how unfriendly roads are in



Mumbai for cyclists, pedestrians and runners. Saini, a resident of Chembur, was knocked down between Nerul junction and NRI-Seawoods signal at 5.50 am. He was taken to DY Patil Hospital, where he was declared brought dead. Members of an amateur cyclists group accompanying him said

when the cab rammed into Saini's bicycle from behind, he skidded on road and sustained grievous injuries. Due to the force of impact, the bicycle frame was wedged under the front wheels of the cab. Its driver attempted to escape, dragging the bicycle under his wheels for a

km. Passing motorists chased the cab and intercepted it near the Navi Mumbai Municipal Corporation headquarters at Belapur. Satish Kadam, inspector of NRI coastal police, said, "The accused cab driver, Hrishikesh Khade, has been booked for rash and negligent driving causing death. He has not been arrested but served with a notice under provision of CrPC directing him to cooperate in the probe and to remain present in court when a chargesheet is filed. Saini's body has been sent for postmortem."

BJP is getting stronger under the able leadership of BJP State President Nayab Singh Saurabh Chaudhary

Kaithal: BJP Business Cell Haryana Co-Convenor Saurabh Chaudhary Goyal said that with the hard work of the country's famous Prime Minister Narendra Modi, Chief Minister Manohar Lal, BJP State President Nayab Singh Saini and BJP workers and the blessings of the public, Will win ten seats with historic votes. Speaking in an interview here, Saurabh Chaudhary Goyal said that in order to hoist the flag of victory in the Lok Sabha elections, the Bharatiya Janata Party has started seeking suggestions from the people of the state for its resolution letter. In the meeting of officials held under the chairmanship of BJP State President Naib Singh Saini in Rohtak itself, the beginning of putting suggestions in the suggestion box has been started, a mobile number has also been released for the

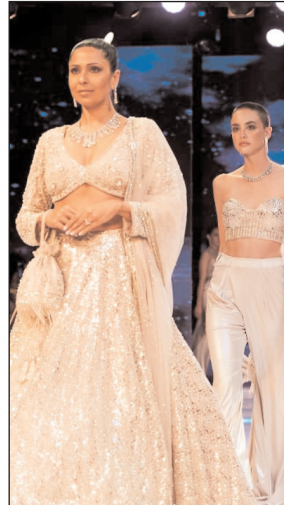


section without discrimination. Women empowerment has happened rapidly under Modi government. Now women are becoming financially strong. Under Ujjwala scheme, poor women have got freedom from smoke. Water is coming from tap in every house. Modi government has given permanent houses to the poor. BJP state co-coordinator Saurabh Chaudhary Goyal said that the blessings of the public are with the BJP and the public will give Modi a chance to serve the country by making him the Prime Minister once again by blooming lotus on 10 out of 10 Lok Sabha seats. After 2014, Modi government came at the Center and Manohar government in Haryana and the double engine government established transparency and good governance.

The Narendra Modi and Manohar governments at the Center worked to bring change in the lives of the poor through poor welfare schemes. In these 10 years, Modi and Manohar government have worked for every

Basanti Unveiled "Renaissance: A Rebirth" Collection in a Stunning Display at Jaipur Marriott's Fashion Extravaganza

Jaipur: Presenting their much-anticipated "Renaissance: A Rebirth" Collection, renowned fashion house Basanti marked its debut at the Jaipur Times Fashion Week on March 10, 2024, hosted in the opulent setting of Jaipur Marriott. The event promised a dazzling display, spotlighting the brand's unwavering commitment to innovation and growth through their groundbreaking collection. The collection, divided into two distinctive chapters, skillfully captured the essence of Basanti's evolution and its profound understanding of the diverse lifestyles of modern Indian women. In the first chapter, titled "Prints and Resort Wear," the collection seamlessly transitioned into a captivating showcase of prints and resort wear.



Basanti, a longstanding pioneer in India's fast fashion landscape, crafted this segment to embody freedom and exploration. It offered a fusion of style and comfort tailored for the contemporary woman, who seeks both elegance and ease. The grand finale unfolded with the second chapter, focusing on "Glamour and Sophistication for the



Modern Bride." This segment was a tribute to the desires and aspirations of Basanti's clientele, particularly tailored for special occasions. Exuding glamour and sophistication, it was dedicated to the modern bride, presenting a celebration of accessible luxury that resonates with the spirit of the modern Indian woman. Utkarsh Ahuja,

the driving force behind Basanti's remarkable resurgence, expressed, "Basanti's creative process is deeply rooted in the preferences and evolving needs of our clients. The collection seamlessly blends style, quality, and accessibility, ensuring that each piece becomes a timeless wardrobe essential for the modern woman."

Civilian team reaches Maldives to replace Indian military personnel

NEW DELHI: A civilian team from India has reached Maldives on Wednesday to take charge of one of three aviation platforms in Maldives ahead of the March 10 deadline for the withdrawal of Indian military personnel from the island nation. Quoting a statement by Maldives defence ministry, the local media reported that the civilian team to operate and maintain the aircraft arrived in Addu early last night to complete the takeover process. On Wednesday, the news portal also said, test flights will be held today (Wednesday), before the helicopter is taken to India for repairs. An Indian ship will dock in Addu on the 28th of this month carrying the replacement helicopter. Further quoting the defence ministry statement.

Rural women have lost their way, says HD Kumaraswamy, triggers row in Karnataka



MANDVA/BENGALURU:

Congress launched a scathing attack on Karnataka JD(S) president HD Kumaraswamy who said during a roadshow at Tumakuru on Saturday that rural women are "losing their way" because of gov't's guarantee schemes. The former CM had to make a hasty retreat after protests against the remark. Kumaraswamy said, "This govt (state) in the last election announced five guar-

antees (because of which) our mothers in villages have lost their way. One should think about what will happen to their livelihoods and that of their families." Vehemently condemning the remark, women Congress workers in Mandya raised slogans and held placards urging Kumaraswamy, who is also NDA candidate for Mandya Lok Sabha seat, to "go back".

Karnataka CM Siddaramaiah, who

was campaigning in Madikeri, Kodagu district, said the remarks "showed Kumaraswamy's mindset" and his feelings for women. He said, "Being a two-time CM, if he speaks about women in such a way, will people tolerate it?" In his clarification, Kumaraswamy said he was only "cautioning" women about their "innocence being misused" by Congress in the name of guarantee schemes.

"We are extremely delighted to announce our arrangement with MANN+HUMMEL

Chandigarh: OK Play India Ltd., a leading player engaged in the production of plastic moulded furniture, outdoor play equipment, point-of-purchase products, automotive components, and electric vehicles, has announced robust earnings for quarter and year ended 31 March 2024. For the quarter ended 31 March 2024 (Standalone), the company reported its revenue at Rs. 4838.46 Lakhs, a growth of 45% QoQ. EBITDA jumped 126% QoQ, from Rs. 252.05 Lakhs (Q3FY24), to Rs. 571.83 Lakhs (Q4FY24). PAT recorded a robust growth and stood at Rs. 426.33 Lakhs (Q4FY24). Recently, the company executed a split of the Equity Shares of the Company in the ratio of 1:10, i.e. division of every 1 equity share of the nominal/face value of Rs. 10 each into 10 equity shares of the nominal/face value of Rs. 1 each. Earlier, the company had announced that, it, through its recently acquired wholly owned

subsidiary, MRH Technologies Private Limited, entered into an agreement with MANN+HUMMEL Filter Private Limited (MHIN), a subsidiary of the MANN+HUMMEL Group, Germany to act as its sole and exclusive distributor to promote, distribute, supply, install and service its revolutionary new product - "PureAir Mobile Fine. Dust Particle Filter Roof Box- designed to combat the life threatening, hazardous menace of air pollution. being MANN+HUMMEL is a 4.8 Billion Euro German MNC having operations in over 80 countries and present in India since the last 18 years. Leveraging their advanced filtration techniques and the state-of-the-art technology, MANN+HUMMEL has developed a dependable and potent product in combating fine dust pollution by efficiently capturing hazardous fine dust particles, including PM2.5 and PM10, from ambient air. The same has been successfully productionised and test-

ed. The product has been designed to be mounted on vehicles as well as on stationary locations. Commenting on the agreement, Mr. Rajan Handa, Managing Director, said: "We are extremely delighted to announce our arrangement with MANN+HUMMEL, a prominent global leader and recognized authority in the field of air filtration solutions. This agreement holds significant importance, not only for the Company but also for the Nation as it has the potential to be a transformative remedy for addressing air pollution in India. Air pollution poses significant detrimental consequences on public health and the environment. The well documented adverse effects of particulate matter include detrimental impacts on respiratory systems, cardiovascular health, and overall quality of life. Moreover, the elevated levels of Air Quality Index (AQI) pose a serious threat to the youth and future generations, necessitating.

CAPSULES

India go down to Oz in shoot-out

Kolkata: For the first time in this edition of the Pro League, Australia failed to register a win as India held them 2-2 in regulation time in Rourkela on Wednesday. But Australia did prevail 3-0 in the shoot-out to grab the bonus point as Johan Durst denied all the Indian attackers from sounding the board. On the other hand, PR Sreejesh failed to make a single save. As for India, who were leading 2-1 at half-time, they did get a couple of chances to increase their lead in the third quarter but on both the occasions Durst did well to deny them. And one of the was just too good. Abhishek took a reverse hit, not too far away from the right, and Durst dived on his right and kept the ball out with his stick. On the other occasion, he kept out the ball after a brilliant run by Hardik Singh down the right flank. In the other match of the day, Ireland went down to Spain 0-7. India took the lead in the 20th minute after Harmanpreet Singh converted India's second PC of the match. However, the hosts failed to hold on to the lead for too long as Australia won a penalty stroke three minutes later after Rohidas fouled Tom Wickham from behind. Govers took it and slammed it towards the left of Sreejesh, who went on the right, to make it 1-1. But India were back in the lead six minutes later as they grabbed their 4th PC of the match in the second quarter. This time Rohidas found the target after he slotted the ball towards the same zone as Harmanpreet did.

Man-portable anti-tank missile acs another test

India has successfully conducted another test of indigenous man-portable anti-tank guided missile (MP-ATGM), which has a strike range of 2.5km strike, with DRDO saying the weapon system is now ready for final user trials by the Army. The fire-and-forget MP-ATGM, which is equipped with day/night and top attack capabilities to penetrate modern armour-protected tanks, has been field evaluated in different flight configurations several times with the objective of proving the technology, DRDO said



"Adequate trials were conducted for achieving compliance of the com-

plete operational envelope as stipulated in the Army's general staff

qualitative requirements," it said.

BBMP lists out 58 'stressed' areas, lines up water tankers

BENGALURU: Alarm bells are going off at 58 locations across the city, which according to BBMP have begun reporting drinking water scarcity in the run-up to summer. These locations are largely concentrated in the tech corridors of Mahadevapura and Bommanahalli along with RR Nagar, Yelahanka, and Dasarahalli zones. The challenges faced by residents of these localities (mostly on the city's periphery) took centre stage at a coordination committee meeting



convened by Rakesh Singh, additional chief secretary of urban development department, with BBMP and BWSSB officials. While the situation is grim in these 58 locations, including those dotted with upscale apartment complexes, another 257

points across Bengaluru have been identified as water-stressed by BWSSB. Ram Prasath Manohar, chairman of BWSSB, said the board has initiated steps to supply potable water through the existing 68 tankers. "We're also in the process of procuring 18 new tankers and hiring an additional 200 private tankers to meet the demand during this summer. The situation across the city is likely to improve by the end of April as we complete works under Cauvery V Stage," he said. Not to be left behind, BBMP

has also geared up to face summer challenges. "Wherever there is severe shortage, additional borewells have to be dug at the earliest. Wherever the RO water plants have become defunct or dried up, they shall be repaired and commissioned again by linking them to the nearby borewells. Officials must ensure potable water is dispensed on a 24x7 basis," said Rakesh Singh, who is also administrator of BBMP, after the joint coordination meeting.

HC seeks status of criminal cases filed in 2020 Delhi riots

New Delhi: Delhi High Court on Thursday sought status of criminal cases registered following riots that broke out in the national capital in Feb 2020. A bench of Justice Suresh Kumar Kait and Justice Manoj Jain asked police to furnish details after noting that over 750 FIRs were registered in the aftermath of violence and the

investigation in 273 was still pending. Communal clashes had broken out in northeast Delhi on Feb 24, 2020, after violence between citizenship law supporters and protesters spiralled out of control leaving at least 53 people dead and around 700 injured.

The bench was hearing a public interest litigation by Jamiat Ulama-Hind seeking setting up of special investigation team (SIT) to hold an independent probe into the riots. The petitioner's lawyer said that SIT should be set up at least in those cases where the stage of filing of chargesheet has not even come till now. "How much time will you take? That was 2020 and we have entered 2024... Total cases registered is 757; transferred to Crime Branch 62; number of cases chargesheeted 367; number of cases

pending trial 250 and pending investigation is 273. Therefore, pending cases are 273 as on April 2. So many cases," said the bench, relying on the figures furnished. During the hearing, the court observed that the cases were registered in 2020 but several of them were still pending and asked the police the reason behind it. The petitioner had approached the high court in March 2020 seeking several reliefs, including preservation of the CCTV footage of the riots in northeast Delhi. The PIL claimed that FIRs have not been lodged against persons responsible for the riots and alleged that the police is not accepting the complaint in which the accused are named and they are insisting to give a complaint against unknown persons.

22 kids hurt as bus 'on way to Dharmi rally' hits truck in Uttarakhand

RUDRAPUR: At least two dozen people, including 22 school children and their teacher, sustained injuries when a truck rammed into a school bus near Bigrabagh in Khatima town of Udham Singh Nagar district on Sunday. The bus was allegedly carrying the kids to CM Pushkar Singh Dharmi's rally at Khatima's Chatiya Farm. Congress pounced on the issue, alleging that Election Commission's model code of conduct prohibits the use of school children in political campaigns and rallies. The injured were taken to a nearby hospital. Dr B P Singh, the hospital medical superintendent, said "All the injured are stable, and we are monitoring their health." While opposition par-



ties said the bus, belonging to Nosegaye Public School, was ferrying students to the rally in support of BJP's Nainital-Udham Singh Nagar candidate Ajay Bhatt, EC officials dismissed the allegation. Bhuvan Kapri, Congress MLA from Khatima and deputy leader of opposition in the assembly, said the bus was among the 103 listed for transporting attendees to the rally. "Our children's safety must be

our priority. I cross-checked the bus's registration number with the list of those designated for CM's event, and this bus was part of the convoy. I will address this issue in the assembly to ensure preventive measures are taken," Kapri said. Dharmi visited the hospital to check on the injured. "I am deeply saddened by this unfortunate accident," he said.

'Zero-tolerance policy for terror to continue'

NEW DELHI:

Continuing India's zero-tolerance policy towards terrorism, which has meant effectively no engagement with Pakistan in the past eight years, while intensifying India's neighbourhood first policy, were among the highlights of BJP's manifesto released on Sunday. Looking to capitalise on the perception of India's rising geopolitical heft, the document said BJP will further consolidate Bharat's position as a voice of the Global South by using PM Narendra Modi's "visionary" 5S approach of Samman, Samvad.

Probe Shortage Of Medicines: Bharadwaj To LG

New Delhi: Health minister Saurabh Bharadwaj has written to lieutenant governor VK Saxena demanding strict action against officials responsible for the non-availability of medicines and consumables at Delhi govt health facilities. He also demanded a "time-bound inquiry" against them for misrepresenting facts and misleading govt on the issue. The letter was sent on Thursday in response to a story, 'Boy with broken arm turned away by hosps'. On April 1, an 8-year-old boy with a broken arm was turned away by two state-run hospitals, Dr Hedgewar Aarogya Sansthan and Chacha Nehru Bal Chikitsalaya, a dedicated paediatric facility. While one hospital claimed it did not have cotton, the other said it had no orthopaedic doctor at the time to treat the boy. The boy's father, a guard with a monthly salary of Rs 15,000, had to ultimately take him to a private hospital.