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

## Himachal : Rebel MLAs disqualified; breather Sukhu govt

● The committee will include the CM and state Congress chief. Jolted by the prospect of BJP eroding its hold on one of only three states



**SHIMLA:** The Sukhvinder Singh Sukhu-led Congress govt in Himachal Pradesh lived to fight another day, getting its six dissident MLAs disqualified under anti-defection law for cross-voting BJP to victory in Tuesday's Rajya Sabha poll, and deciding to set up a six-member coordination committee to bridge the divide between govt and party. The committee will include the CM and state Congress chief. Jolted by the prospect of BJP eroding its hold on one of only three states it governs, Congress' central leadership declared after the crisis appeared to dissipate that the party was united in HP and

the Sukhu govt would last its term. Speaker Kuldeep Singh Pathania said disqualification petitions were received by the assembly secretariat against six Congress MLAs for defying the party whip in the election to Himachal's lone Rajya Sabha seat. The speaker's 30-page ruling, among the fastest on disqualification of MLAs, cites various HC and SC orders on invoking the anti-defection law. Those disqualified are Sudhir Sharma (Dharamshala),

Rajinder Rana (Sujaipur), Indradutt Lakhanpal (Barsar), Ravi Thakur (Lahaul-Spiti), Chaitanya Sharma (Gagret) and Devendra Bhutto (Kutlehar). Congress retains HP majority but remains vulnerable Congress's designated troubleshooters in Himachal Pradesh, including former Haryana CM Bhupinder Singh Hooda and Karnataka deputy CM D K Shivakumar, on Thursday claimed to have since set its house in order. Sukhvinder

Singh Sukhu remains CM for now, with a diktat from observers that no MLA or PCC office-bearer shall reveal any "inside information" to the media. Although Congress still has 34 MLAs after disqualification of six who cross-voted in RS poll, it remains vulnerable with just two legislators in excess of the magic figure of 32. Disqualifying the MLAs, Speaker Kuldeep Singh Pathania said, "These members were present in assembly. (earlier this week) .

## Shah, Nadda brainstorm with state ahead of meet to decide poll candidates

**NEW DELHI:** Anxiety among sitting BJP MPs as well as those aspiring for tickets surged on Wednesday, the eve of the party's first central election committee meeting. Home minister Amit Shah and BJP president J P Nadda held marathon deliberations with leaders from over 14 states and UTs amid speculation that a substantial number of incumbents could be benched. Two-termers are considered to be particularly vulnerable, with the party keen to ward off the risk of 'local incumbency' hindering its plans to leverage PM Modi's popularity to score its biggest LS win. The number of state units called for deliberations has reinforced the indication that the leadership, taking up from where it left off in the latest state polls, may announce its first list soon. Party circles were abuzz that the list, likely to be announced a day after the CEC meeting in which Modi, other par-



liamentary board members and senior state leaders will be present, may have as many as 200 candidates. BJP recently held 'informal' meetings with leaders from UP and other states. Besides, central office-bearers have completed the review of states the party expects decent pickings from. BJP likely to field Shivraj Scindia for LS elections. The review, an exercise comprising on-the-spot assessment, feedback from local units and findings of surveys commissioned by the party, involved weighing the prospects of winners from last round against strengths of potential replacements. Core group members from Madhya Pradesh,

Rajasthan, Gujarat, Delhi, Goa, Tripura, Arunachal Pradesh, Jharkhand, Haryana, Andaman & Nicobar Islands, Jammu & Kashmir, Assam, Uttarakhand, Dadra and Nagar Haveli, and Daman and Diu had brainstorming sessions with Shah, Nadda and general secretary (organisation) B L Santhosh. Sources said former MP CM Shivraj Singh Chouhan, who was present in the meeting to review probables for his state, is among the likely candidates from a prominent seat. Besides, Union minister Jyotiraditya Scindia and senior party member Kailash Vijayvargiya could also be fielded. Sources said

election committee of Delhi BJP has submitted a list of 25-30 probables to the national leadership for the seven seats in the capital. The names of foreign minister S Jaishankar, housing and urban affairs minister Hardeep Singh Puri and late leader Sushma Swaraj's daughter Bansuri were among the probables for the New Delhi seat apart from sitting MP Meenakshi Lekhi, a senior Delhi BJP official said. "The list of probables was discussed in a meeting of national leaders, including Nadda, Shah and state president Virendra Sachdeva, at the party headquarters," he said. Except for East Delhi MP Gautam Gambhir and North West Delhi MP Han Raj Hans, the remaining five - Ramesh Bidhuri (South Delhi), Lekhi (New Delhi), Harsh Vardhan (Chandni Chowk), Manoj Tiwari (North East Delhi) and Parvesh Verma (West Delhi) - are representing their constituencies.

## No hike in fertiliser prices, says government, offers Rs 24,420 crore subsidy



**NEW DELHI:** Govt on Thursday said there will be no increase in fertiliser prices and they will continue to get key farm input at old rates during kharif (summer) sowing season, while announcing the Cabinet's approval of Rs 24,420 crore subsidy for phosphatic and potassic fertilisers. Cabinet also added three new grades of fertilisers to aid farmers and enhance productivity of oilseeds and pulses. "Despite rising prices of fertilisers in global market, we have decided to keep prices same as last season," said I&B minister Anurag Thakur.

The kharif sowing season runs from April to September. The decision for nutrient-based subsidy rates for 2024-25 kharif season came early this year considering the model code of conduct is likely to be in force till May-end. As per govt, subsidy on Nitrogen has been fixed at Rs 47 per kg, phosphatic at Rs 28.7 per kg, potassium at Rs 2.4 per kg & Sulphur at Rs 1.9 per kilo for kharif season. Subsidy on phosphatic fertilisers has been increased to Rs 28.7 per kg for kharif season from Rs 20.8 per kg in 2023 rabi season. Thakur said subsidy on di-ammonium phosphate will continue at Rs 4,500 per tonne. He added that DAP-based fertilisers will be available for Rs 1,350 per bag, while muriate of phosphate fertilisers will be available for Rs 1,670 a bag & for NPK for Rs 1,470 per bag. The minister said price per bag remains unchanged and there will be no additional financial burden on farmers.

## Cabinet okays outlay of Rs 75,000 crore for rooftop solar units to benefit 1 crore

**Government** on Thursday approved an outlay of Rs 75,021 crore to assist one crore households install rooftop solar systems under the PM-Surya Ghar scheme launched by PM Modi on Feb 13, envisaging 300 units of free power each month. Cabinet approved financial assistance of 60% of the cost of a 2 kilowatt (kW or 2,000 watt) solar system



and 40% of additional system cost for units with 2-3 kW capacity. As per a govt statement, at current benchmark rates this will translate into a subsidy of Rs 30,000 for a 1 kW system, Rs 60,000 for a 2 kW system and Rs

78,000 for a 3 kW system. Households will be able to access collateral-free loans at low interest rate (7%) for setting up rooftop solar systems up to 3 kW. No assistance will be given to systems above the capacity of 3 kW. Cabinet also decided a 'solar village' will be set up in each district to act as role model for adoption of rooftop solar in rural areas.

## Don't take up Dera chief parole plea without our nod: HC to Haryana

**CHANDIGARH:** Punjab and Haryana high court has directed Haryana govt "not to consider" any application for parole by Dera Sacha Sauda chief Gurmeet Ram Rahim "without permission of this court". He is serving prison sentences for rape and murder. ML Khattar's govt has been facing criticism for being lenient towards the controversial Sirsa preacher by frequently releasing him on parole



and furlough. "We would like Haryana to furnish an affidavit as to how many persons having such criminal antecedents and sentenced in three cases have been granted this benefit.

In the meantime, the respondent (Dera chief) may surrender on March 10..." HC said. how the Dera chief had remained out of jail for 232 days in the past two years. He is on parole at present.

## Numbers of children with acute malnutrition down 12%

**NEW DELHI:** Women and child development minister Smriti Irani on Thursday highlighted the pivotal role of the 'Poshan Tracker' in informing govt and stakeholders in a better way about the nutritional status of children. She said since the Poshan Tracker became operationalised the ministry found out that when anganwadi workers measure 75 million children every month as per WHO standards, the numbers of children with Severe Acute Malnutrition and Moderate Acute Malnutrition came down by around 12% as compared to the data reported under the National Family Health Survey - 5.



"Handheld devices are now available to 1.2 million anganwadis across the country. Every month anganwadi didis measure 75 million children under the age of 6 as per WHO standards across the country," she added. "The National Family Health Survey has a sample size of 600,000 families on the basis of which we in the country are informed about the status of children with regards to children with Severe Acute Malnutrition and those with Moderate Acute Malnutrition. However, once Poshan Tracker became operationalised we

found out that when we measured 75 million children as per WHO standards the numbers for SAM and MAM came down by 12% which is a huge gain for the nutrition ecosystem in India," Irani added. Irani was speaking at the launch of the Cartoon Coalition that uses storytelling through popular cartoons to disseminate the message of good health and nutrition to children and the 'Poshan Utsav Book' that will serve as an atlas on food, offering insights from cultural, social, economic and scientific perspectives. The book has been curated by the Deendayal Research Institute (DRI) and supported by Bill and Melinda Gates.

## BJP to fight 11 out of 14 Assam seats

**GUWAHATI:** BJP announced Thursday that it will contest 11 of 14 LS seats in Assam. The remaining three will be shared with allies AGP and United People's Party Liberal. In a departure from 2019, when BJP contested 10 seats - AGP three and Bodoland People's Front one - the party decided to realign its seat-sharing arrangement. BJP terminated its partnership with BPF in 2020 and entered into an alliance with UPPL. BJP won nine seats in 2019, but lost one to Congress. However, its allies failed to secure any, with AGP losing in Dhubri to AIUDF and Barpeta and Koliabor to Congress, while BPF lost to an independent in Kokrajhar.

## House of Silkyara hero Wakeel Hasan razed, DDA offers flat

**NEW DELHI:** A day after it had demolished the two-room house of Silkyara tunnel rescue hero Wakeel Hasan as part of an anti-encroachment drive, the DDA on Thursday offered him an EWS category flat in north-west Delhi's Narela, temporary shelter to his family and a job for him. However, Hasan's wife Shabana demanded a house in the vicinity of Khajoori Khas, northeast Delhi, where the family lived in an allegedly unauthorised structure, as their kids studied in the area. Hasan, who led a team of rat-hole miners that dug through the blockage to rescue workers trapped in Uttarakhand's Silkyara tunnel, on Thursday sat amid the family's household items on a

street in front of their demolished home. After razing Silkyara hero's house, Delhi authorities offer flat (1). Hasan's daughter Aliza, who missed her board exam Thursday, at the family's demolished home. (Photo: Piya Bhattacharjee) Treated like a criminal, says Uttarakhand hero I was treated like a criminal. Officials misbehaved with my children, they barged into our house and razed it to the ground," said Hasan, who was feted as a hero after the tunnel rescue in Uttarakhand district last November. "We did not think twice before rushing to Uttarakhand for the rescue operation without caring for our lives and did what we could to save lives.

## China flag in Isro ad: PM Modi blasts DMK, party hits back



**NEW DELHI:** After PM Modi's criticism on Tamil Nadu government's newspaper advertisement allegedly showcasing 'China rocket picture,' DMK MP Kanimozhi came to party's rescue. Claiming it to be a human error Kanimozhi said, "I don't know from where the person who did the artwork found this picture." "I don't think India has declared China an enemy country. I have seen that the Prime Minister has invited the Chinese PM and they have gone to Mahabalipuram. Just because you do not want to accept the truth, you are finding

reasons to divert the issue," DMK MP further added. Earlier in the day, PM Modi in a veiled reference to the ruling DMK, alleged that though newspapers and TV channels wanted to highlight Centre's such efforts "the regime here won't allow them to do so," "DMK is a party that does not work but stands ahead to take false credit. These people paste their stickers on our schemes. Now they have crossed the limits, they have pasted China's sticker to take credit for the ISRO launch pad in Tamil Nadu," PM Modi said while addressing a gathering in Tirunelveli

in Tamil Nadu. It is notable that DMK MP Kanimozhi and Tamil Nadu PWD minister EV Velu were on the dais while Prime Minister Modi was slamming Tamil Nadu government. The Prime Minister alleged that the DMK is 'not ready' to accept India's progress in the space sector. "They are not ready to accept India's progress in the space sector and with the taxes that you pay, they give advertisements and do not even include a picture of India's space in them. They did not want to present India's space success in front of the world, they insulted our scientists.

## Flow of Ravi water to Pakistan fully stopped: Report

**NEW DELHI:** The flow of water from Ravi river to Pakistan has been completely halted with the completion of the Shahpur Kandi barrage, as per media reports. Shahpur Kandi barrage is situated on the border of Punjab and Jammu and Kashmir. This means that the Jammu and Kashmir region will now benefit from the 1,150 cusecs of water that was previously allocated to Pakistan. The water will be used for irrigation purposes, benefiting over 32,000 hectares of land in the Kathua and Samba districts. The Shahpur Kandi barrage project, which is crucial for irrigation and hydropower generation, has faced numerous challenges over the past three decades. Prime Minister Narendra Modi accorded the highest priority to the Shahpur-Kandi dam project as it has the potential to irrigate thousands of acres of agricultural land in Jammu and Kashmir, Union minister Jitendra Singh said on Sunday. On September 8, 2018, Jammu and Kashmir and Punjab signed an agreement to resume work on the Shahpur-Kandi dam project, which had been hanging fire for the last 40 years.



According to reports, the Indus Water Treaty signed between India and Pakistan in 1960, India has exclusive rights over the waters of the Ravi, Sutlej, and Beas rivers, while Pakistan has control over the Indus, Jhelum, and Chenab rivers. The completion of the Shahpur Kandi barrage allows India to make maximum use of the Ravi river, ensuring that the water previously flowing towards Pakistan from the old Lakhapur dam will now be utilized in Jammu and Kashmir and Punjab.

The foundation stone for the Shahpur Kandi Barrage Project was laid by former Prime Minister PV Narasimha Rao in 1995. However, the project faced several disputes between the governments of Jammu and Kashmir and Punjab, leading to its suspension for over four and a half years. India has already constructed several storage works, including the Bhakra Dam on the Sutlej, Pong and Pandoh Dam on the Beas, and Thein (Ranjitsagar) on the Ravi. These projects, along with

others like the Beas-Sutlej link and the Indira Gandhi Nahar Project, have allowed India to utilize nearly its entire share (95%) of the waters from the eastern rivers. However, approximately 2 million acre-feet of water from the Ravi river is still flowing unutilized to Pakistan below Madhopur. With the completion of the Shahpur Kandi barrage, India can now harness the water resources from the Ravi river for its own benefit, contributing to agricultural and economic growth in Jammu and Kashmir and Punjab.

## TADA court acquits 1993 serial bomb blasts' main accused Abdul Karim Tunda

**NEW DELHI:** The Terrorist and Anti-disruptive Activities Act (TADA) court on Thursday acquitted the main accused in the 1993 serial bomb blasts case, Abdul Karim Tunda due to lack of evidence. Tunda's lawyer, Shafiqat Sultan said that the CBI failed to produce any strong evidence against Abdul Karim Tunda. "Abdul Karim Tunda is innocent, today the Court gave this judge-



ment. Abdul Karim Tunda has been acquitted in all sections and all acts. CBI prosecution could not produce any concrete piece of evidence before the court in TADA, IPC, Railway Acts, Arms Act, or

Explosive Substances Act," Tunda's lawyer said. "We had been saying from the beginning that Abdul Karim Tunda is innocent Irfan and Hamiduddin have been convicted and the quantum of the sentence will be

pronounced shortly," he added. The central agency had accused Tunda of being the mastermind in the blasts of four trains on the first anniversary of the 1992 Babri Masjid demolition. The CBI also charged two other accused, identified as Irfan alias Pappu and Hamiruddin, for a series of blasts in Lucknow, Kanpur, Hyderabad, Surat and Mumbai on the night of 5-6, 1993.

## Bill Gates in Bhubaneswar; talks to slum dwellers, buys Koraput coffee

### BHUBANESWAR:

Microsoft co-founder and philanthropist Bill Gates visited the city and met chief minister Naveen Patnaik on Wednesday. He interacted with slum dwellers and reviewed works undertaken by the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation here. The philanthropist spent more than 30 minutes at the Maa Mangala Basti. There, he engaged in discussions about the residents' concerns. Additionally, he interacted with the women of the slum communi-



ty. "We requested him to open a school for our kids," said a woman from the slum. Development commissioner Anu Garg said Gates also interacted with members of self-help groups. Furthermore, he visited Krushi Bhawan and

interacted with top officials of the agriculture department. Gates was honoured with the KISS Humanitarian Award 2023 for his unparalleled contributions to enhancing global health, education and addressing climate

change through innovative technology solutions. Later, Gates visited the Mission Shakti bazaar inaugurated by Naveen on Tuesday. He tasted Koraput Coffee there and purchased green gram dal, Kandhamal haldi and other products.

## Indian tycoon Yohan Poonawalla buys late Queen Elizabeth II's Range Rover

**Yohan Poonawalla,** the managing director of Poonawalla Group, has acquired the late Queen Elizabeth II's Range Rover, which still retains its original registration number. Poonawalla expressed his delight in acquiring this remarkable piece of automotive history. The car, a 2016 Range Rover SDV8 Autobiography LWB edition, was privately purchased by Poonawalla. Rich piece of British royal history! Indian tycoon Yohan Poonawalla buys late Queen Elizabeth II's Range Rover; check unique features

royal history. This acquisition comes in the form of the late Queen Elizabeth II's Range Rover, which was put up for resale online. What sets this car apart is that it still retains the same registration number, OU16 XVH, as used by the late Queen. Poonawalla expressed his delight in acquiring this remarkable piece of automotive history and mentioned that the retention of the original registration number was an added bonus. "I am delighted to have acquired this remarkable piece of automotive history," ET quoted Poonawalla as saying. "Once a car leaves the royal household, the number plate changes. What is unique about this car is the fact that it still retains the same registration number, OU16 XVH, as used by the late Queen. (That has turned out to be an

added bonus," he said. The 2016 Range Rover SDV8 Autobiography LWB edition, painted in Loire blue with ivory upholstery, has covered approximately 18,000 miles. The reserve price set for this car on the Bramley's Auctioneers website was 224,850 pounds (over Rs 2.25 crore). Poonawalla chose to purchase the car privately, avoiding the auction process. This Range Rover was specifically designed for royal use and features unique modifications, including covert lighting, specially adapted fixed steps, and police emergency lighting. One notable modification made for the Queen is the addition of grab handles in the rear for ease of entry and exit. Poonawalla stated that he intends to retain all the modifications made to the car.

## Two arrested in UP and Bihar linked to 2,700 complaints

**GURGAON:** These frauds get reported every day. Work from home jobs that offer payments in return for simple tasks such as liking social media posts and videos before dropping the big bait – make an investment and get a higher return. And then, the money and the 'employers' vanish. Two such 'employers', operating from Prayagraj in UP and Gopalganj in Bihar, were arrested earlier this month by a Gurgaon police team. The two have now been linked to 2,700 cyber fraud complaints filed in different states – the most in UP (683), followed by Rajasthan (262) and Telangana (213). They allegedly cheated 112 others in Haryana. Of these complaints, 142 were made into FIRs and the two cheated online users of Rs 10.3 crore. Police are able to



do this through linkage analysis, which involves using a central database to connect the dots between cybercrimes being reported across the country. The arrested duo was working with at least four associates based in Bijon (UP) and Kaithal (Haryana). Investigation so far has revealed that Rs 15cr had been routed to the account of a Chinese citizen, police sources said on Wednesday. The trail began with a complaint at Cyber East police station on

November 30 last year. The complainant told Gurgaon cops he was cheated of Rs 8.5 lakh after investing in a task-based fraud. The investigation into bank accounts used to transfer money led cops to Utkarsh Soni, a goldsmith in Prayagraj, and the first accused to be arrested by Gurgaon police on Feb 14. Utkarsh confessed and steered police to Ashutosh, a student in Gopalganj and the second accused who spilled out details of other associates. "Through linkage

analysis on the Union home ministry's I4C (Indian Cybercrime Coordination Centre) database, the two men's details were connected to 2,702 cybercrime complaints, including 142 FIRs registered across police stations in the country, and Rs 10.3 crore was defrauded from victims who lodged these complaints," said Siddhant Jain., DCP (cyber-crime). Investigation into the gang is now pivoting to Chander Prakash Tiwari of Kaithal in Haryana. Chander, a high-school dropout, and three others – Nitin Kumar, Abhinav and Ankit, all of Bijon in UP – were arrested from Panchkula on Feb 22 after cops interrogated Ashutosh. Cyber East police station inspector Jasvir Singh said Chander was one of the key gang members.

## Is your child having cough & respiratory issues? Blame dusty

**NAGPUR:** As viral infections sweep across the region leading to long queues outside paediatricians' clinics, city's dusty roads and vehicle pollution are aggravating the problem. Senior paediatrician Dr Satish Deopujari said that having cough and respiratory issues is the new reality. "We all have to learn to live with the fact that till the day you die, you will have cough. The dusty roads, construction work, smoke, pollution etc all contribute to major respiratory problems," said Dr Deopujari. Dr Rajiv Mohta, a paediatrician said, "It's not the root cause, but yes it is making problems worse for those with respiratory issues. Already the viral infections are causing cough among kids which last for quite some time, and such environmental issues make matters worse." Dr Sanjay Deshmukh, paediatrician said "The respiratory tract takes a beating when such harmful thing.

## Two-child norm for govt jobs in Rajasthan gets Supreme Court nod



**NEW DELHI:** More than 21 years after upholding validity of the mandatory 'two-child norm' eligibility criteria for candidates contesting panchayat polls, the Supreme Court has now put its stamp of approval on an identical norm for public employment, debaring candidates who have more than two children from seeking govt jobs.

A bench of Justices Surya Kant, Diapankar Datta and K V Vishwanathan dismissed the appeal filed by ex-serviceman Ram Lal Jat, who had retired from service in 2017 and had applied for a constable's post

in Rajasthan Police on May 25, 2018. His candidature was rejected as Rule 24(4) of Rajasthan Police Subordinate Service Rules, 1989 that followed the norm set under the Rajasthan Various Service (Amendment) Rules, 2001, which provides that "no candidate shall be eligible for appointment to the job who has more than two children on or after June 1, 2002." He had unsuccessfully challenged the rejection of his candidature for constable post in Rajasthan high court, which in Oct 2022 had ruled that the fixation of norms squarely fell

in the realm of policy, which could not be interfered with by the court. The Justice Kant-led bench said, "A somewhat similar provision, which was introduced as an eligibility condition to contest panchayat elections, has been upheld by the SC in the case of Javed and others vs. State of Haryana in 2003. This court held that the classification, which disqualifies candidates for having more than two living children, was non-discriminatory and intravires the Constitution, since the objective behind the provision was to promote family planning."

## 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.



## 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 Saini: 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 common people on which the common people will also be able to give suggestions. BJP leader Goyal said that under the able leadership of BJP State President Naib Singh Saini, the BJP organization is continuously strengthening at a fast pace in the entire state. People from every section are joining BJP day by day. 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

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.

## Prime Fresh Limited (PFL) Wins Bid for APEDA approved Packhouse for a 5 year Lease

**Chandigarh:** Prime Fresh Limited (BSE: 540404) is pleased to update & inform that it has been selected as a winner during the process of TENDER BIDDING & SELECTION (On a lease/rental for 5 years) for the APEDA Approved Fully Integrated Agro Packhouse in Gujarat-Ahmedabad. This is a Multipurpose, Multi Products & Omni sales channel facility having peak potential to generate a sale of 25 TPD of Fruits, vegetables & other Agro Products. The said facility is situated very strategically closure to Ahmedabad Airport & Wholesale fruits market at Naroda (Ahmedabad). This facility also connects to major Agri belts, Port and Domestic City Business opportunities.

The facility is spread across close to 60000 sq. fts of land area along with massive construction & modern packhouse infrastructure approved by APEDA. The Development is a major landmark achievement for PRIME FRESH LIMITED as it helps strengthens the Exports Capabilities of PFL and also it can help improve revenues from other verticals such as Domestic F&V Supply chain, Ripening, Storages and other packing & repacking services. The Facility is equipped with all the modern facilities, cold storages, ripening chambers and other infrastructure such as sorting, Grading & packing facilities. The cumulative capacity has a potential for 40 TPD

of inwards and outwards of Agro produce once it starts stabilizing & operating at full capacity over the coming few years. This achievement supports company's assets light growth model saving almost 15 crores (Rs.15,00,00,000) of future capex and providing a huge impetus to PFL's ambitious growth plans over the coming 3 years. Prime Fresh Limited, listed on BSE SME platform is a fully integrated Agri value chain company, established in 2007. Prime Fresh operates Pan India across 17 states and 85 districts for its Fruits and Vegetables Supply chain Business. PFL has multiple collections and Distribution Centres spread across

Maharashtra, Gujarat, Rajasthan, Telangana & Delhi. PFL is one of its kind an only national player in its space and business model. Prime Fresh follows Omni Channel Sales Strategy for its post-harvest & market linkages business model for Fruits & vegetables supply chain business segments. PFL through its 3PL business segment also provides services such as Sorting, Grading, packing, Loading, Unloading, ripening, storage, warehouse management and facility management for many large corporates in different verticals such as F&V, Spices, Tea, FMCG & pharmaceuticals. PFL is successfully associated with India's largest Modern Trade Retail company.

## 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.

## Editorial

### India will become the third largest economy...

"In my third term, I promise that India will become the third largest economy in the world," the Prime Minister said in his recent speech to the Lok Sabha. This is "Modi ki guarantee," he added. In the last 10 years, India has jumped six places, from 11th largest in 2014 to fifth in 2024. The Prime Minister has now set a target of 2029 to make India the world's third largest economy. Latest calculations by the IMF suggest it could happen even earlier, likely by 2027. That would leave the Indian economy behind only China and the United States. Compare this to the target of 2043 set by the previous UPA government while presenting its final budget in 2014. But senior Congress leader P Chidambaram, who had presented that budget in 2014, was not impressed. "China's GDP is five and a half times more than our GDP," he reminded us. Now, Chidambaram's numbers are a bit off the mark. China's GDP is a little under five times our GDP, not five and a half times. But that is not the point. There is a huge gap between India and China. We must deal with this difficult fact. But how did it get this way? To begin with, here are two surprising facts. In 2004, India's economy was about 37 percent the size of China. By 2014, it was only 19 percent. In other words, during the UPA years, India's economic size relative to China was cut in half. Second, when you are shopping, whether online or otherwise, does it ever bother you that so much of our stuff seems to be made in China? But it was not always this way. Would you believe that in 2004, India actually used to run a trade surplus with China? It was a surplus of \$1.75 billion in 2004. By 2014, it had turned into a deficit of \$38 billion! So how did we become so dependent on China? Here is that story. In a surprise result, the Congress party came to power after the 2004 elections. At the time, the world was just entering a period of high growth. For decades, India had been an economic underperformer. But now, everyone was talking about the BRIC (Brazil, Russia, India and China). These four emerging powers were supposed to lead the world. Everything was going upwards: markets, business confidence, economic growth numbers. India on the way to becoming an economic superpower? The UPA government could hardly believe its luck. But the Chinese were only too happy to take advantage of the UPA's giddy feeling. In April 2005, Chinese premier Wen Jiabao visited India. By the 2004-05 financial year, India was already running a small trade deficit with China, about \$1.48 billion. The Chinese premier must have felt extra welcome in India, because the UPA needed the support of the Communist parties to stay in power. That is when the UPA agreed on its first "trade target" with China. At the time, India's trade with China was worth about a billion dollars a month, or roughly \$12 billion a year. The two countries agreed to raise this to at least \$20 billion over the next three years. But this "target" was achieved quickly. Too quickly, in fact. Chinese President Hu Jintao traveled to New Delhi in November of 2006. India promptly agreed to double the "trade target" to \$40 billion a year. There wasn't much of anything 'bilateral' about this trade. Indian markets were being flooded with Chinese goods.

Almost unbelievably, the UPA government did not seem to notice at all. Prime Minister Dr. Manmohan Singh even boasted about it during his visit to China. "Our trade target of \$20 billion by 2008 was reached two years ahead of schedule. The revised target of \$40 billion by 2010 is also likely to be reached two years ahead of schedule," Dr. Singh told a summit of business leaders in Beijing in January 2008.



# West's glaring double standards on terrorism

The latest example of nations adopting double standards emerged post a drone strike launched by the Islamic Resistance, a pro-Iran group based in Iraq, on a US base in Jordan, killing three US service personnel and wounding 40 more. In retaliation, US air force struck multiple targets in Iraq killing at least 16 civilians and wounding dozens more. The Iraqi government spokesperson responded by accusing the US of 'violating international law and lying about the circumstances surrounding its retaliatory strikes'. Subsequently another US drone strike killed the commander of the Iraqi militia group Kataib Hezbollah, who was an Iranian, on Iraqi soil. Similar strikes also took place in Syria. Both Iraq and Syria objected to the US unilaterally conducting air strikes on their soil. In the UN Security Council, Russia and China accused the US of violating the territorial integrity of these nations. They also accused the US of escalating the ongoing conflicts. But the US was least concerned. This is not the first time that the US has conducted strikes in Iraq.

Iraq is not an enemy of the US but an ally whose armed forces are being trained by them. Since when is unilaterally launching air strikes and killing scores of civilians as a counter to three soldier deaths by a militant group



legally justified, especially when the nation involved is an ally. The US ignored the criticism of Iraq and did not even bother to respond or address its concerns, treating it as a non-entity, solely because Baghdad lacks military power. At the same time, it continues to demand that India investigate who is behind the attempted assassination of a known anti-India terrorist, Gurpatwant Singh Pannun. Why double standards?

In the West, even joking about hijacking an aircraft or being a member of the Taliban is considered a crime. People are arrested and face jail terms. However, Pannun, who threatened to hijack Indian airlines flights is permitted to do so without even a whimper from the US and Canadian governments. If this is not adopting double standards, wonder what would be. Canada accused India of interfering in their elections. A declassified Canadian government docu-

ment stated, 'India engages in foreign interference activities.' On the accusation the Indian spokesperson mentioned, 'We strongly reject such baseless allegations of Indian interference in Canadian elections, it is not govt of India's policy to interfere in the democratic process of other countries, in fact, quite on the reverse it is Canada, which has been interfering in our internal affairs.' Earlier Justin Trudeau had claimed that India was behind the killing of Hardeep Singh Nijjar, a declared terrorist by India. India refuted the accusation and sought evidence, which New Delhi claims is yet to be received. On the subject of interference, during the height of the farmers' agitation in 2020-21, Trudeau had mentioned, "The situation (farmers protest) is concerning and we're all very worried. Let me remind you, Canada will always be there to defend the rights of peaceful protest." When Amritpal

Singh, the radical Sikh preacher, was arrested in March last year, Canada's foreign minister, Melanie Joly stated, "We are aware of the evolving situation in Punjab, and we are following it very closely. We look forward to a return to a more stable situation." Justin Trudeau stated, "We are looking forward to a swift return to a more stable situation." On Canada's truckers' agitation over which Ottawa applied illegal laws, India's only comments were, 'We have noted that the government of Canada has actually invoked the Emergency Act. Let us leave it at that on that issue.' When comments from leaders of both states are compared, it is evidently Ottawa which is commenting on India's internal affairs, rather than New Delhi, though it accuses India of interference in its internal affairs. Globally, India was criticised over its handling of the farmers' strike, which remained largely peaceful, while Ottawa was backed and supported when it applied emergency laws to forcibly quell the truckers' agitation. Why double standards? Post Tucker Carlson's recent interview of Vladimir Putin, the European Union began considering imposing sanctions on him.

A member of the European Parliament mentioned, "As Putin is a war criminal and the EU sanctions all who

assist him in that effort, it seems logical that the External Action Service examine his case as well." The sanction would prevent Carlson from entering the European Union. Simultaneously, European nations have adversely commented on freedom of press in India. Post the detention of Mohammed Zubair in August 2022, the German foreign ministry mentioned, "Free reporting is beneficial to any society and restrictions are a cause for concern."

After raids on the BBC offices for tax evasion, India came in for western criticism on grounds of curbing press freedom. Not a word was mentioned when the BBC acknowledged in June last year that it has been paying lower taxes in India. Another example of double standards. Globally, India is ranked 161 in the press freedom index while European nations, seeking to impose sanctions on Tucker Carlson just for an interview are considered far more liberal. Simultaneously, those who interview Zelenskyy are praised. What a paradox. When a Surat court sentenced Rahul Gandhi to two years in a defamation case in July last year, leading to his suspension from the Lok Sabha, there were negative comments from the west. The US state department spokesperson mentioned.

## Why impeachment of Biden's cabinet secretary is a big deal

It is the first in 150 years. The matter will now move to the Senate, where the Democrats have a majority. So, in all likelihood, Mayorkas will keep his job. But for the Biden administration, it is a historic rebuke; under Joe Biden, border crossings have touched a record high. This impeachment comes in an election year when the Republicans are fighting on the issues of border security and immigration. So for them, it is a symbolic victory. Three Republicans sided with the Democrats; there was dissent in the ranks, but in the end, Mayorkas was impeached. "On this vote, the yeas are 214 and the nays are 213. The resolution is adopted pursuant to

Section 2A of House Resolution 996. House resolution 995 is hereby adopted," said Speaker of the US House of Representatives Mike Johnson. This wasn't their first attempt; the Republican-led House tried to impeach Mayorkas last week. That vote failed. It was almost embarrassing for them. So this was their second attempt at it, and it worked out narrowly for them. However, for the Biden administration, it is a historic rebuke. Until now, only one cabinet secretary has been impeached in American history: Secretary of War William Belknap in 1876. So why did the Republicans impeach Mayorkas? He faced two articles of impeachment. One for

refusing to enforce existing immigration laws, and two for lying to Congress that the border was secure. But many say the charges amount to just a policy dispute. Simply put, the Republicans did not like Biden's border policies, but that doesn't make it a crime. Especially one viable for impeachment. Mayor Kaskas has called the charges baseless, and President Biden has called it a "political stunt." Next, the matter will go to the Senate. If it wants, the Senate can hold a trial; if not, it can send the issue to a committee. Either way, a conviction is unlikely. It needs a two-thirds majority in the Senate. But the Senate is led by the Democrats. So, Mayorkas is likely to keep his job.

## UAE's commitment to multiculturalism and religious tolerance

The Prime Minister just concluded a very successful visit to the UAE. This was his seventh trip to the country since 2015. A key highlight of prime minister's visit was the inauguration of the grand BAPS Temple in Abu Dhabi, the UAE's first traditional Hindu stone temple. This was evidence of solid cultural ties between the two countries. At the same time, it also highlights the UAE's commitment to multiculturalism and religious tolerance. There were two other highlights of this visit. First was the prime minister's address at the World Government Summit. At the Summit, the prime minister emphasised the significance of governance that prioritises inclusivity, technological advancement, transparency, and environmental sustainability. He expressed appreciation for the UAE's leadership in creating a platform that brings together global thought leaders to discuss the pressing challenges of the 21st century. These include issues related to food, health, water, energy security, and the imperative of fostering an inclusive society. The prime minister highlighted technology's role as both a disruptor and an enabler, and the need for concerted efforts to tackle terrorism and climate change. He advocated for gov-



ernments to adopt approaches that ensure minimal interference in people's lives while maximizing governance efficiency. The prime minister shared insights from his extensive experience in governance, advocating for policies that promote digital identity, financial inclusion, women's empowerment, and the development of a vibrant start-up ecosystem. He called for global cooperation to address challenges in the digital age, such as artificial intelligence, cryptocurrency, and cybercrime, stressing the need for a balance between national sovereignty and international law. The prime minister's vision for the future of governance is one of learning and collaboration, where solutions emerging from summits like these shape a better global future, embodying the principles of "One Earth, One Family, One Future". Second was the signing of the Bilateral Investment Treaty

between the two countries. This BIT is designed as a mechanism to further bolster the investment flows between the two nations, ensuring a robust framework for investor protection and dispute resolution. This treaty will be instrumental in elevating the Comprehensive Strategic Partnership. By establishing clear legal parameters for investments, the BIT aims to significantly enhance investor confidence, facilitating a surge in Foreign Direct Investments (FDIs) and Overseas Direct Investments (ODIs). The technical provisions within the treaty are expected to streamline investment processes, reduce risks associated with cross-border investments, and foster an environment conducive to increased capital flows, thereby contributing to economic growth and job creation in both countries. Apart from this, the PM and President of the UAE oversaw the exchange of several significant.

## Security forces across the country will have to bear

As Delhi turns into a fortress with the farmer protests, one is reminded of the anarchy that disguised itself as dissent in 2021. Khalistani infiltration and banned organisations like 'Sikhs For Justice' were found to be involved in the 2021 farmer agitation. Khalistani slogans were raised and the protestors held up posters of Khalistani terrorist Jarnail Singh Bhindranwale. At the time, farmer organisations also included in their charter of demands the release of certain prisoners, which included Sharjeel Imam and Umar Khalid. They were at the forefront of organising protests against CAA and NRC and had



been booked under the Unlawful Activities Prevention Act (UAPA). Imam had gone to the extent of exhorting people to cut off Assam permanently from the rest of the country. Their charter had also called for the release of terrorist sympathisers such as Varvara Rao and Sudha Bhardwaj amongst

many others. The farmer protests that ended with the government repealing the farm laws, gave the impression that the protests were engineered by vested secessionist groups with an agenda of taking the Modi-led government on while reviving Khalistani sentiments. Today, as we step into 2024, the farmers are once again trying to make their way to Delhi via Haryana armed with a new set of demands. These demands, some seemingly innocuous and some inconceivable, include pensions for farmers and India's withdrawal from the WTO amongst others. Ironically, some of these protesting farm-

ers have been seen arriving at the protest sites in ultra-luxury vehicles. So far, it has been a wait-and-watch game for most to see if these protests have been hijacked, like in 2021, by the intersectionality of separatist and political grievances. But the signs of a resurrection are becoming difficult to ignore. Farmer organisations started their journey on 12 February, arriving in modified tractors and SUVs with trucks full of food grains and other necessary goods sufficient for the next six months, at the least. This is a glaring indicator for even the layman to realise that they are here for the long run.

## Bombay HC reserves for order plea for stay on Centre's FCU rule

**MUMBAI:** Justice A S Chandurkar of the Bombay high court on Thursday concluded hearing interim applications for a stay on the Centre's fact check unit (FCU) and reserved it for orders. The Centre through its Solicitor General Tushar Mehta sharing video clips of 'deep fakes' and instances of online posts and news he said were found to be fake and related to government departments, said no stay was required as the rule only flags as 'fake, false or misleading' content on social media related to the Centre's working. It requires initially at best a disclaimer to be added, and protects the interest of the public at large from incorrect facts in relation to the Central government, said the SG adding not just India, the world is now dealing with a medium which has no geographical limits, and posts instantly can be accessed by millions. Mehta said while he did last April make a



statement before the HC that the Centre would not notify the FCU till next date and continued it till the split verdict last month, now has had no instructions from the Indian government to extend it. On Jan 31, the division bench of Justices Gautham Patel and Neela Gokhale after hearing at length a challenge raised originally by standup comic Kunal Kamra, and others including Editors Guild of India, News Broadcasters & Digital Association, Association of India Magazines to a 2023 amendment to intermediary guidelines

under the Information technology Act, delivered two differing opinions. The issue of constitutional validity of the rule that enables Centre to set up the FCU thus was sent to a third Judge. Pending the final hearing Kamra's senior counsel citing the 'marketplace of ideas' jurisprudence of Celebrated US Justice Oliver Holmes sought stay on notifying the FCU, arguing that the rule, though meant for intermediaries has a 'chilling effect' on users and would flout their right to free speech. SG Mehta, disagreeing with Seervai, said a few individuals.

## CBI summons Akhilesh Yadav as witness in mining scam case today

**LUCKNOW:** The CBI on Wednesday summoned former UP CM Akhilesh Yadav for recording of statements as a witness in the mining scam. The Samajwadi Party chief has been asked to appear in person before the CBI at the agency's New Delhi headquarters on Thursday morning. The summons has been issued under Section 160 of the CrPC which entitles the agency to record statements of witnesses or individuals familiar with details of a case for the purpose of investigations, said a CBI officer familiar with the proceedings. **Govt officials had cleared 13 projects in violation of rules' Case Of Illegal Mining Alleged In Hamirpur**



It happens when elections are around the corner. I got a CBI notice in 2019 before the Lok Sabha polls. Now it is time for the 2024 Lok Sabha and again I have got a notice," Akhilesh said in Lucknow. The scam relates to a case that CBI had registered in 2019 on the directions of the Allahabad high court regarding alleged illegal mining in Hamirpur from 2012 to

2016, when SP was in power. Allegations are that the then minister for mining Gayatri Prajapati had illegally granted fresh leases and renewed existing in a manner that the process caused heavy losses to the state exchequer and undue gain to him and his associates. The case was registered under the Anti-Corruption Branch of CBI's Delhi unit.

## ED attaches flats-plots worth Rs 64 crore of Kamla Landmarc

**MUMBAI:** The Enforcement Directorate (ED) has attached assets worth Rs 64 crore belonging to Kamla Landmarc group companies, owned by builder Jitendra Jain and partner Parvath Shetty, in connection with a money laundering case.

In a press release issued on Thursday, the ED stated that Jitendra Jain, in a criminal conspiracy with Parvath Shetty, transferred ownership of Kamla Landmarc Builders (one of the Kamla Landmarc group companies) to Parvath Shetty through

Subsequently, Parvath Shetty transferred ownership of the assets created in Kamla Landmarc to his relatives in order to conceal the original ownership. The attached assets include various flats worth Rs 33 crore in the city, agriculture lands worth Rs 16 crore.

## Touch of Gond: Solo exhibition by Ram Singh Urveti celebrates artistic legacy of Pradhan Gond

'Another Master' exhibition, featuring more than fifty works by Ram Singh Urveti, in various mediums, including paper and canvas are on display till March 10 at Delhi's Ojas Art Gallery. One of the senior-most artists from the Pradhan Gond tribe, Urveti started his career in 1991, incorporating his folk traditions in a contemporary and evocative style, and the paintings on display cover more than three decades of his prolific working life. One of the highlights of the exhibition is Sur aur Taal ki Kahani (The Story of Divine Music),



a unique and rare 12 folio-set from 2008-2009, narrating the age-old Gond legend of the divine music and how it was brought to earth. In all his works, Urveti's captivating visuals and intuitive storytelling

fuse his perceptions of the modern world with his tribe's unique symbolism. Rife with the tree-of-life motifs and curved silhouettes, his primitive imagery transcends the canvas, inviting you to closely

observe the natural world in all its plenitude. In his book, Indian Contemporary Art, Herve Perdriolle observes, "With Jangarh Singh Shyam, Ram Singh Urveti is one of the most important figures in contemporary Indian tribal art. Encouraged by Jagdish Swaminathan, he was one of the first to make the transition from ephemeral art to painting on canvas in the early 1990s." His pieces exude an otherworldly quality: buffalos, soul-searching, serpents and Mahua trees commingle in a striking outburst of animism.

## Gaganauts' ground suit designed by NIFT Bengaluru team has asymmetry as theme

**BENGALURU:** A NIFT team from Bengaluru, led by two faculty members and three students, had the prestigious task of designing the ground uniform for the Gaganyaan astronauts. They presented 70 designs to Isro, with the asymmetrical theme turning out to be the head-turner. The team said they studied the uniform of various space agencies including Nasa and SpaceX. Gaganyaan's ground suit designed by NIFT Bengaluru team has asymmetry as theme. When the four astro-



nauts selected for mission Gaganyaan proudly stood on the dias, displaying the wings the prime minister had just pinned on their ground suits on Tuesday, it was a team at the National Institute of Fashion

Technology (NIFT), Bengaluru, that was beaming in pride. For the dark and light blue ground uniform of the astronauts was designed by a team of two faculty and three students in the tech

capital. Prof Jonalee D Bajpai and Prof Mohan Kumar V, under the guidance of the then NIFT director Susan Thomas, and assisted by three students of knitwear design batch 2022 - Lamia Anees, Samarpan Pradhan and Tuliya D - were assigned with the prestigious task of designing the suit. Of the 70 designs they had presented to the Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO), the one that the gaganauts wore was selected. Asymmetry is the theme that the NIFT team has played with.

## No rift in Hockey India, say Tirkey, Bhola Nath

**BENGALURU:** The skeletons have begun to tumble out of the Hockey India closet with two top officials - a coach and CEO - both foreigners, handing in their resignations in quick succession and both pointing towards administrative bungling as the primary cause. Senior women's team chief coach Janneke Schopman accused the federation of gender discrimination, lack of respect and a non-conducive working environment while Elena Norman, the CEO of 13 years, was more forthright when she said she was the victim of power struggle and factions in Hockey India. Since the start of the new regime in 2022, it hasn't been a smooth ride for former India skipper Dilip Tirkey, who assumed office as president with Bhola Nath Singh as HI secretary. It is



learnt that Bhola Nath, who is a close aide of FIH president Tayyab Ikram, has been undermining the powers of the president. A few exchanges of emails, in possession of TOI, suggest the same. But on Thursday, the men in power issued a joint statement to defuse the situation. "Hockey India is an autonomous and professional body dedicated to the development of Indian Hockey. Our primary objective as an organisation has been and continues to remain the welfare and progress of the sport of Hockey and our athletes. In this

spirit, our entire focus remains on growing our talent, ensuring all hosted events are conducted with utmost professionalism and our national teams are receiving the best support to support their performance on the global stage," they stated. Reacting to Norman's comments, they said, "Recently there have been statements by outgoing officials, claiming that there are divisions within the organization. This is not correct. We remain united in working together, and as always in the best interest of the sport."

## Ahead of polls Persons with disabilities release 'manifesto'

**NEW DELHI:** With the Lok Sabha polls round the corner, persons with disabilities came together on Thursday to release a manifesto demanding that political parties must prioritise mainstreaming of people with disabilities in their 5-year action plans for the upcoming elections. From health insurance cover to making way for 5% reservations in governance to policies around pension, health and employment - the manifesto also calls for making way for representation of persons with disabilities in the upper House of Parliament as nominated members. The 'Manifesto For and By Citizens with Disabilities' - was launched by disability rights groups,



led by National Centre for Promotion of Employment for Disabled People (NCPEDP) in collaboration with the National Disability Network (NDN). "As the Lok Sabha Elections 2024 draw near, citizens with disabilities, who form 7% of the population of India and there are more than 1 crore registered voters as

per the Election Commission, it is essential that the voices of persons with disabilities are heard in the discussions around the 2024 General Elections," Arman Ali, executive director of NCPEDP emphasised. He shared that the disability manifesto represents the culmination of extensive national and regional

consultations. NCPEDP, in collaboration with the National Disability Network (NDN) and the National Committee on Rights of Persons with Disabilities (NCRPD), invited inputs from more than 10,000 people with and without disabilities across the country. The disability manifesto addresses a wide spectrum of issues ranging from budgetary allocation to health insurance, accessibility, social security, socio-political inclusion, economic participation, climate change, gender equality, sports, and education. Some of the key demands include greater focus on persons with disabilities in the budget with a minimum of 5% of the total budget.

## Digantara gets additional \$2 million

**Bengaluru:** Space Situational Awareness (SSA) startup Digantara Wednesday announced the closure of an extended \$2 million financing to its previously raised \$10 million Series A round. The new funding saw participation from investors like Aditya Birla Ventures, the venture capital arm of the Aditya Birla Group, and the Small Industries Development Bank of India (SIDBI). "This marks the first time both these investors have ventured into the space technology sector, showing their commitment to Digantara's vision of enabling safe and sustainable space operations," the Bengaluru-headquartered company said. Digantara CEO Anirudh Sharma said the support from leading institutions indicates accelerating momentum in India's space ecosystem poised for global leadership in innovation.

## 'Na merko farak padta hai': Hardik not bothered by social media chatter



**NEW DELHI:** Out of action since the 2023 ODI World Cup, all-rounder Hardik Pandya is gearing up for the upcoming season of the Indian Premier League, where he will be leading Mumbai Indians. Replacing five-time title winning captain Rohit Sharma, Hardik has a tough job at hand and all eyes will be on him as he takes up the mantle from one of the most successful captains in the league. Prepping for the cricketing extravaganza at the DY Patil T20 Cup, Hardik

recently opened up on personal life, pointing out he prefers remaining at home when not playing and hardly has a tough job at hand. "One thing my fans don't know about me is that I don't go out. I am a homeboy. I have hardly been out in the last three to four years; the only occasions I have stepped out is when it has been unavoidable, something happened with my friends. I like to stay at home. There was this time when I did not step out of home for 50 days. I didn't even see the

home lift. I have my home gym, home theatre. The things that I like are in my home," Hardik said on a chat show with the UK 07 rider. The 30-year-old, who prefers remaining away from the media spotlight, was asked about one of his photos in a super car that went viral on social media, to which he revealed that someone sent the car to him for a test-drive. "Main kabhi media mein comment karta nahi hu, toh maine kabhi kiya nahi, na merko farak padta hai.

## 'Indian players are gold in IPL': Ganguly on Rishabh Pant rejoining

**NEW DELHI:** Former India captain Sourav Ganguly, Director of Cricket for Delhi Capitals, shared his sentiments on Thursday in anticipation of the Indian Premier League (IPL) 2024, with star wicketkeeper Rishabh Pant rejoining the squad. Pant was absent from IPL 2023 due to sustaining multiple injuries in a tragic car accident on December 30, 2022. The 51-year-old emphasised that Pant's return is a significant morale boost for the Delhi Capitals as they approach IPL 2024. Ganguly expressed his immense joy at having Pant back in the squad. "It's a huge boost for Delhi Capitals because Indian players are gold in the IPL. Obviously, he has not played much cricket and I hope he gets back to rhythm very quickly. It's been a while since he is away from competitive cricket, almost 17-18 months. He has worked very hard to make a comeback. He is confident and wants to play for Delhi Capitals and India. I am extremely happy he is back and hope he gets through the season," Ganguly told Revsportz. The former BCCI chief additionally mentioned that Pant appears highly confident about participating in the IPL 2024 edition, bringing positive news for both DC and the Indian



national team. "I met him (Rishabh) in Bangalore recently for the inaugural game of WPL. He was there. He is getting ready and hopefully will play in IPL 2024. He looked very confident about playing in the IPL 2024 which begins from March 22. And that's seriously good news for us in Delhi and India," the former left-hand batter added. Pant has represented DC since 2016 and scored 2,838 runs in 98 matches at an average of 34.61 and a strike rate of over 147, with a century and 15 fifties to his name. The 17th season of the Indian Premier League (IPL) is scheduled to commence on March 22, featuring a South Indian derby between defending champions Chennai Super

Kings (CSK) and Royal Challengers Bangalore (RCB) at MA Chidambaram Stadium. The schedule has been announced until April 7, with the remaining fixtures yet to be declared due to the upcoming Lok Sabha polls, the dates for which are pending. Delhi Capitals will host their home matches in Vizag on March 31 and April 3 against CSK and Kolkata Knight Riders, respectively. The Arun Jaitley Stadium in Delhi will be unavailable shortly after hosting the Women's Premier League final on March 17. DC's other fixtures include a match against the Rajasthan Royals in Jaipur on March 28 and an encounter with the Mumbai Indians in Mumbai on April 7.

## Shafali Verma fifty headlines DC's march to 194/5 against RCB in WPL

**NEW DELHI:** Opener Shafali Verma played a fluent innings, scoring a fifty to guide Delhi Capitals to a formidable total of 194 for five against Royal Challengers Bangalore (RCB) in their Women's Premier League (WPL) match in Bengaluru on Thursday. Verma (50, 31b, 3x4, 4x6) and Alice Capsey (46, 33b, 4x4, 2x6) built a solid partnership of 82 runs for the second wicket after the early loss of their skipper Meg Lanning. Marizanne Kapp (32, 16b, 2x4, 3x6) and Jess Jonassen (36 not out, 16b, 4x4, 2x6) played remarkable innings towards the end, adding 58 runs for the fifth wicket in a little over four overs. RCB had to rest all-rounder Ellyse Perry due to illness, bringing in Nadine de Klerk. Verma and Capsey, after a steady start, shifted through the gears seamlessly. Verma, dropped on two by Shreyanka Patil, powered DC's innings with a four and a six off consecutive balls against left-arm spinner Sophie Molineux.

## Cristiano Ronaldo suspended for one match for obscene gesture in Saudi league game

**Cristiano Ronaldo** faces a one-match suspension for an alleged obscene gesture following Al Nassr's 3-2 victory over Al Shabab, as announced by the Disciplinary and Ethics Committee of the Saudi Football Federation (SAFF). Post the final whistle on Sunday, social media videos captured Ronaldo cupping his ear and repeatedly making a pumping



motion in front of his pelvic area, seemingly directed at rival Al Shabab supporters. In the background, chants of "Messi" could be heard, alluding to Ronaldo's enduring football rivalry with the

Argentine player. Following the conclusion of the match on Sunday, videos circulating on social media captured Ronaldo cupping his ear and repeatedly making a hand gesture near his pelvic area, seemingly directed towards rival Al Shabab supporters. In the background, chants of "Messi" could be heard, alluding to Ronaldo's long-time football adversary from Argentina.

## More than age, criteria should be fitness and performance: Mushfiqur

**NEW DELHI:** Senior wicketkeeper-batter Mushfiqur Rahim stressed on the importance of blending experienced players with young talent in the T20 format, amidst criticism directed towards Bangladesh's senior cricketers. Currently representing the Bangladesh Premier League (BPL) franchise Fortune Barishal, Mushfiqur's team secured a spot in the final after a convincing six-wicket victory over Rangpur Riders in the second Qualifier. At 36, Mushfiqur stands



as one of the oldest players in the squad, alongside compatriot Mahmudullah (38) and Pakistan cricketer Shoib Malik (42). Despite facing criticism, all three veterans have made significant contributions throughout their campaign.

Mushfiqur responded to the criticism underlining the importance of melding experience with youthful talent in team building. "Didn't you say before the tournament that Barishal is the 'team of the old'?"

Didn't you say

that T20s can't be won with experience? I think this is the wrong concept. You need experience in every format. New players will come, and the older ones will go, but they will combine well to build the team. We want to leave a legacy, and we want the likes of [Towhid] Hridoy and Tamim [Tanzid Hasan] to leave a legacy when they become senior players [for Bangladesh]. It is supposed to be smooth sailing," Mushfiqur said, as quoted from ESPNcricinfo.

## Sumit Nagal goes down fighting to Lorenzo Sonego



**DUBAI:** Sumit Nagal went down 4-6, 7-5, 1-6 to the 48th ranked Lorenzo Sonego in the first round of the Dubai Duty Free tennis championships late on Tuesday. The 26-year-old Indian worked his way back into the match by breaking in the 12th game of the second set to level set scores. Both players left the court at the end of the

second set and Nagal took his time returning to the court. The India No.1, ranked 97 this week, appeared to have been hampered by an abdominal strain or cramps. He clutched his side a couple of times and the physio was on court later in the set. Nagal was up 40-0 in his opening service game of the deciding set in which he was

broken. Nagal, who will play the two Masters 1000 events in Indian Wells and Miami next, will see how March goes before he decides which events he'll play in the clay court season. The Indian, at 101 in the ATP live rankings, said, "For now it will be the two Masters Series events and then a 250 event on clay.

## Five-goal Haaland's heroics propel Manchester City to FA Cup

**NEW DELHI:** Manchester City's Erling Haaland stole the spotlight with a remarkable five-goal display as the FA Cup holders thrashed Luton 6-2 in the fifth round clash on Tuesday at Kenilworth Road. Assisted by Kevin De Bruyne's trio of assists, Haaland completed his hat-trick within the first 40 minutes of the match, showcasing his clinical finishing prowess. Despite a brief resurgence from Luton, Haaland's relentless onslaught ensured City's dominance and secured their spot in the quarter-finals. Speaking on his partnership with De Bruyne, Haaland expressed gratitude, stating, "Kevin is massive. It's a pleasure playing with him. We know what we both want from each



other." Reflecting on his own form post-injury, Haaland added, "I'm getting back to my best. Finally, I'm feeling good." Manchester City manager Pep Guardiola lauded Haaland's exceptional performance, emphasizing the synergy between Haaland and De Bruyne. "Erling is on fire, and Kevin. The connection was perfect. Kevin needs players like Erling and Erling needs players

like Kevin," Guardiola remarked. Haaland's stellar performance marks his second five-goal haul for City, following his Champions League heroics against RB Leipzig in 2023. With 27 goals in all competitions this season, Haaland continues to silence his critics and inspire City's quest for silverware. The victory extends City's impressive run, with 14 wins in their

last 15 games across all competitions. As they pursue domestic and European glory, the lethal combination of Haaland and De Bruyne poses a formidable threat to their rivals. City's attention now shifts to the pivotal Premier League clash against Manchester United on Sunday, where Haaland and De Bruyne will aim to maintain their scintillating form.

## Turkish Women's Cup: India go down to Kosovo to finish runners-up

**KOLKATA:** All that the Kosovo women's team needed to do was to aim for a draw to break the Indian hearts. But they did more than that as a 92nd minute strike from Ereleta Memeti did not just leave the six Indian players in the box hapless but also shattered the Blue Tigresses dream of clinching a first title outside the South Asian region. The 1-0 win in both teams' last round-robin match earned the Karin Anneli Andersen-coached 9 Europeans consecutive Turkish Women's Cup titles at the Gold City Sports Complex in Antalya, Turkey, on Tuesday. The runners-up finish was, however, also the Indian women's best performance at the four-team tournament. India ended their campaign with six points from three games, three points behind the champions.

## GDP growth at 8.4% in 3rd quarter, fastest in 1.5 years



**NEW DELHI:** The economy grew at its fastest pace in six quarters in the three months to Dec, led by robust manufacturing and construction sector growth. The strong growth has boosted govt's track record of handling the economy against the backdrop of global challenges ahead of general elections. Data released by National Statistical Office (NSO) showed the economy grew by a faster-than-expected 8.4% in Oct-Dec, higher than upwardly revised 8.1% in the previous quarter and above 4.3% in the third quarter of 2022-23. Now, NSO estimates 2023-24 GDP

growth at 7.6%, above earlier estimate of 7.3%, making India world's fastest-growing major economy. NSO has revised upwards the second and first quarters while revision to 2022-23 quarters also led to a favourable effect. GDP growth for FY23 was revised to 7% from 7.2%. The Q3 growth was also higher than RBI's projection of 6.5%. The central bank had revised its projection to 7% for 2023-24 from 6.5%. **Capture 2 Growth broad-based, driven by investment demand: Finmin** Robust 8.4% GDP growth in Q3 2023-24 shows the strength of

Indian economy and its potential. Our efforts will continue to bring fast economic growth which shall help 140 crore Indians lead a better life and create a Viksit Bharat," PM Modi posted on microblogging site X after the data release. The finance ministry said India continues to be an outlier and remains the fastest-growing major economy in the Oct-Dec 2023 quarter and it builds on the momentum of the previous quarter. It said growth was broad-based, driven by robust investment demand. The manufacturing sector recorded a double-digit growth of 11.6%.

## Core sector growth slows to 15-month low of 3.6% in January

**NEW DELHI:** Growth in the country's key infrastructure sector slowed to a 15-month low in January, dragged down by contractions in refinery products and fertilisers, while steel and cement sectors remained strong. Data released by the commerce and industry ministry on Thursday showed eight core sectors, spanning coal, crude oil, natural gas, refinery products, fertilisers, steel, cement and electricity, grew 3.6% in January, slower than 4.9% in the previous months and below 9.7% recorded in January last year. "Core

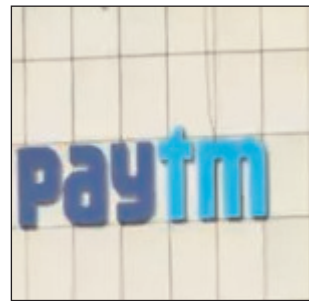


sector growth slid to a 15 month low of 3.6% in January 2024, with contractions emerging in refinery products and fertilisers, and a sub-1% rise in natural gas. Encouragingly, the other five components displayed a moderate-to-healthy expansion, rang-

ing from 5.2% to 10.2% in January 2024," said Aditi Nayar, chief economist at ICRA. Separate data showed fiscal deficit at January-end was at Rs 11 lakh crore or 63.6% of the revised annual estimates, narrower than 67.8% in the corresponding period.

## SoftBank cuts stake in Paytm

**MUMBAI:** SoftBank has cut another 2.1% stake in Paytm, reducing its shareholding in the fintech firm to 2.8%, the company said in a recent stock exchange filing. The Japanese investment behemoth which bets heavily on tech firms had invested over \$1 billion into Paytm and held about



18% stake in the Noida-based company at the time of its initial public

offering in 2021. Even as SoftBank has been offloading its stake in the firm, the developments come at a time when Paytm Payments Bank has come under regulatory scrutiny due to persistent non-compliance. Paytm founder and CEO Vijay Shekhar Sharma is the largest shareholder.

## CAPSULES

### Government releases 2 tranches of tax devolution

**NEW DELHI:** Government has authorised release of two installments of tax devolution amounting to Rs. 1.4 lakh crore on Thursday to strengthen hands of state governments for financing various social welfare measures and infrastructure development schemes. This release is in addition to tax devolution of an installment of Rs 71,061 crore made on February 12.

With this release, states have received total of three installments of tax devolution in February, according to the finance ministry. Uttar Pradesh will receive Rs 25,495 crore, followed by Bihar which will get Rs 14,295 crore. Madhya Pradesh will receive Rs 11,157 crore and West Bengal Rs 10,692 crore. The release of the tax devolution comes ahead of the national elections likely to be held in April-May.

### Reliance Industries, Disney deal gets thumbs up from D-St

**MUMBAI:** Most brokerage houses are positive on the deal that Reliance Industries and Walt Disney struck on Wednesday to merge their media operations in India. The Disney India-Viacom18 joint venture, with near-monopoly in cricket broadcasting rights in India, is expected to push up advertisement rates and turn the broadcasting industry highly competitive, especially for smaller players. Analysts from various broking houses estimated that the merger would be value accretive to RIL's stock price - it is expected to add between Rs 35 and Rs 45 per share. On Thursday, RIL shares on the BSE were marginally up.

## Zepto launches subscription programme for users as competition in quick commerce space

**MUMBAI:** At a time when consumers are taking to the idea of instant grocery deliveries and competition in the space is rising with deep-pocketed players Swiggy and Zomato betting big on their grocery businesses, Zepto is launching a price war with its subscription programme Zepto Pass. The pass, which will be available to most of the customers at a monthly fee of Rs 19-39 will give users access to unlimited free deliveries besides an additional discount of up to 20% on all grocery products. For now, the benefits can be unlocked only when



customers make orders worth Rs 99 and above. Co-founder and CEO Aadit Palicha claimed that the company has been able to leverage its low operating cost structure to roll out the benefits for customers. The idea is to get a larger share of the consumer's wallet and speed up adoption of quick commerce. "We are about

two quarters away from being close to PAT (profit after tax) positive even with Zepto Pass because our cost structures on the back end have reduced dramatically," Palicha told TOI. The service which had been piloted with 5% of the startup's user base prior to a broader roll out showed that consumers with Zepto Pass subscrip-

tions spent 30% more on groceries and their monthly retention improved by 10%, the company said. "The pass is like an avenue to offer more value to customers and as a result, they are spending more with Zepto," said Palicha. The company also expects average order value (AOV) to get a boost with the service. The level of discounts will depend on the size of shopping baskets and the company will analyse every customer's order data to offer them a customised AOV which will enable broader discounts if they are willing to match.

## Non-life insurance companies to offer price data

**MUMBAI:** Non-life insurance companies have said they can help government by providing standardised rates for medical procedures. On Tuesday, the SC asked central govt to consult with states and implement a law that would mandate notification of standard rates for medical procedures. "The insurance industry settled Rs 80,000 crore of health insurance claims regarding bills from nearly 40,000 hospitals. This data is available if the ministry wants to bring in data trans-



parency to curb high charges," said Tapan Singhel, chairman of the General Insurance Council and MD & CEO of Bajaj Allianz General

Insurance. According to Singhel, even if hospitals were required to disclose their schedule of charges for various pro-

cedures, it would significantly enhance transparency. "We have initiated the effort to provide cashless treatment in all hospitals..."

## Strong momentum to continue in Q4, says CEA Anantha

**NEW DELHI:** The strong momentum of the economy is expected to continue in fourth quarter of current financial year, chief economic advisor V Anantha Nageswaran said on Thursday and hoped the farm sector will stage a rebound in next quarter. "So the actual performance of the economy has continued to defy expectations and do better than what many had projected, underscoring the fact that a structural transformation of the economy is indeed underway, both in terms of physical infrastructure and digital infrastructure as well as inclusion agenda, boosting the purchasing power of Indian households," Nageswaran told reporters after release of GDP data. The farm sector contracted 0.8% during Q3 of 2023-24 largely due



to impact of patchy monsoon rains. CEA said prospects of robust rabi harvesting and expectations of fading away of El Nino and forecast of a normal monsoon augured well for a better-than-normal kharif sowing. He said strong growth was linked to vibrant underlying demand and conditions, adding economy has shown strong resilience to global vulnerabilities

and there has been a decline in India's uncertainty index. Nageswaran said moderation in overall inflation and core inflation (minus food and fuel) is expected to boost consumption. He said prospects of healthy rabi harvesting, sustained manufacturing profitability and underlying service economic activity in 2024-25.

## Government clears 3 semiconductor manufacturing projects worth Rs 1.3 lakh crore

**NEW DELHI:** Government on Thursday cleared proposals for three semiconductor manufacturing units worth Rs 1.3 lakh crore, including the country's first fab manufacturing plant by Tata Group and Taiwanese Powerchip Semiconductor Manufacturing Corp (PSMC) in Gujarat. This will be a big push to India's electronics manufacturing set-up as the chips will be made within the country for the first time. The Cabinet nod, which also includes a project involving Japanese Renesas Electronics, follows Rs 22,000 crore testing and packaging unit project of US company Micron, that was approved in June last year (production is



expected to happen by close of this year). Untitled design (94) "India has taken a giant leap today in gaining a foothold in the coveted chip manufacturing eco-system. With these units, semiconductor manufacturing and its ecosystem will get established in India," communications minister Ashwini Vaishnav said. Tata Electronics will set up a Rs 91,000 crore semiconductor fab project with PSMC at Dholera in Gujarat. The plant will have a capacity to produce 50,000

wafers per month. PSMC is renowned for its expertise in logic and memory foundry segments. Tata Electronics said it is proud to lead India's entry into global semiconductor fabrication, and said construction for the project will begin this year. "This will also accelerate our progress towards providing high-technology employment opportunities for the youth," Randhir Thakur, CEO and MD of Tata Electronics, said. Minister of state for IT & electronics Rajeev

Chandrasekhar said a slew of new proposals are in the pipeline and added that govt expects a total investment outlook of nearly Rs 2.2 lakh crore. Cabinet has also approved semiconductor unit of Tata Semiconductor Assembly and Test (TSAT) in Assam at an investment of Rs 27,000 crore. Renesas Electronics and Thailand's Stars Microelectronics's project in Sanand in Gujarat at an investment of Rs 7,600 crore has also got green signal. Govt is close to approving a Rs 90,000 crore proposal of Israel's chipmaker Tower Semiconductors. Vaishnav said all the units will create nearly 26,000 direct jobs and another one lakh indirect ones.

## Drop in share of imported coal in consumption saves Rs 82 k crore forex outgo

**NEW DELHI:** The share of imported coal in overall consumption in the country has come down to 19.3% in the April-December period of the financial year ending March 31 from 21% in the previous corresponding period, translating into Rs 82,264 crore worth of forex savings, the coal ministry said on Thursday. The decline in the consumption of imported coal is a result of rising domestic production on the back of a concerted government push garnished with a slew of reforms to clean up the system and incentives announced since 2014. The steady rise in coal production and improved availability has seen the CAGR (compounded annual growth rate) of imported coal consumption plummeting to about -2.7% between 2014 and 2024 from 13.7%.

## UP will soon be the first state to have fire stations at tehsil level in the country: CM

Lucknow, Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath, on Thursday, said that Uttar Pradesh has seen setting up of 73 fire stations in the last seven years and is well on the way to become the first state in the country to have a fire station at the tehsil level

soon. Inaugurating/laying foundation stone of 38 fire stations virtually from his residence, CM Yogi said: "The UP Fire and Emergency Services was established in the state in the year 1944. However, until 2017, only 288 fire stations were established in the state, while in the last 7 years, 71 new fire stations have been set up. Today, we are moving ahead to become the first state in the country to have fire station at the tehsil level." The Chief Minister also flagged off 35 fire fighting vehicles on the occasion. He remarked: "We have advanced the program of exten-



sive reforms in law enforcement. As a result, rapid modernisation is taking place in fire services in view of its importance in dealing with emergencies. So far, we have allocated approximately Rs 1400 crore for the strengthening of departmental services." Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath highlighted the significant strides taken towards modernization of the department over the past seven years, including the prompt deployment of officials. These efforts have yielded visible

results, he stated, pointing out that previously, complaints about the complexity of the NOC process were frequent. "We implemented various changes to streamline it, leading to a substantial enhancement in Uttar Pradesh's ease of doing business ranking in recent years", he added. CM Yogi emphasized the need to prioritize response times for fire tenders to mitigate loss of life and property. "Significant enhancements have been made in this area.

## World awaits India's skills, innovation & technology in textiles: CM Yogi

New Delhi Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath, on Thursday, said that the global market awaits India's skills, innovation, and technology in the textile sector. He added that India exports carpets worth Rs 17,000 crores, with 60 percent originating from Bhadohi, Mirzapur, and Varanasi in Uttar Pradesh. During a media interaction on the fourth day of 'India Tex 2024,' held at Pragati Maidan, the Chief Minister extended a warm welcome to all buyers and visitors at the 'India Tex 2024' Uttar Pradesh Pavilion and expressed gratitude to PM Modi for giving the opportunity to participate as a partner state in such a significant event. The exhibition showcases the past, present, and future needs of the textile industry, with special emphasis on the international aspect through the Bharat Mandapam and Yashobhumi. Praising Prime Minister Narendra Modi's initiative, he



mentioned that the exhibition, spanning the last four days, saw enthusiastic engagement from individuals nationwide and globally. He further noted that the textile industry stands as the second-largest employment provider after agriculture, offering boundless opportunities for technological advancements. CM Yogi highlighted that in 'India Tex 2024,' Uttar Pradesh has demonstrated its expertise in the textile sector, with 20 exhibitors in Yashobhumi and 46 exhibitors in the Bharat

Mandapam. Artisans have displayed hand-crafts, carpets, and other handloom products from the state to buyers from across the country and the world and are receiving their appreciation. "Uttar Pradesh holds limitless opportunities in the textile sector. Under PM Modi's PM Mitra Park Scheme, a mega textile park is set to be established in an area of one thousand acres between Lucknow and HarDOI, as part of the plan implemented at seven locations across the country.

## CAPSULES

### When Apple wanted to buy Elon Musk's Tesla

For now, Apple has given up on making cars. But, once the iPhone maker thought about buying Tesla some years ago, which could have changed the course of its Project Titan.

The New York Times report shares new details about Project Titan. Citing two people who worked on the project for the past decade, the Times reported that Apple had discussions with Elon Musk about purchasing Tesla but ultimately decided to build its car rather than integrating another business. It's not the first time rumours have surfaced about Apple buying Tesla. In December 2020, Elon Musk himself confirmed that he had talked to Tim Cook about the possibility of Apple acquiring Tesla during the "darkest days" of the Model 3 development. According to Musk, Cook declined the meeting. Six months later, the Wall Street Journal reported that Cook had proposed the idea of Apple acquiring Tesla around the same time. Musk was interested, but on one condition: he would serve as CEO of Apple, not Tesla. The Project Titan, started a decade ago, aimed to create a self-driving car or an electric car similar to Tesla. To have its car on the roads, Apple hired several individuals from car companies and invested billions of dollars, but the company failed to meet the deadlines it set for itself and eventually abandoned the plan to create its car. So, at the end of the day, Apple and Tesla didn't make a deal. Tesla is the top electric car company today, and Apple could have combined it to gain electric car know-how. However, buying Tesla would have been too risky and expensive for Apple, even though it would have been a shortcut into the car business.

## Leopard numbers rise 8% in four years

NEW DELHI: India's leopard population has increased by 1,022 (nearly 8%) in four years - from 12,852 in 2018 to 13,874 in 2022. The latest assessment report released on Thursday however shows that the number has declined in certain states, like Chhattisgarh, Uttarakhand, Kerala, Odisha and Telangana, reports Vishwa Mohan. The actual number may be a bit higher as the estimates represent just around 70% of the leopard habitat as the Himalayas and semi-arid parts of the country were not sampled. This fifth such assessment cycle conducted a foot survey spanning 6,41,449 km to estimate carnivore signs and prey abundance. Camera traps were strategically



placed at 32,803 locations, resulting in a total of 4,70,81,881 photographs that captured 85,488 photos of leopards. Calling rise in leopard pop-

ulation "great news", PM on X said, "This significant increase in leopard numbers is a testament to India's unwavering dedication to biodiversity."

## Fire kills 43 in Bangladesh capital Dhaka

NEW DELHI: A devastating fire broke out in a seven-storey building in an upscale area of Dhaka, the capital of Bangladesh, on Thursday night, resulting in the death of at least 43 people. The fire originated in a popular biriyani restaurant on Bailey Road at around 9:50 pm local time and quickly spread to the upper floors, trapping numerous people. Fire department official Mohammad Shihab stated that firefighters managed to bring the blaze under control within two hours. They successfully rescued 75 individuals, as



reported by the fire service. The building on Bailey Road primarily houses restaurants, as well as clothing and mobile phone shops. Some used a water pipe to descend from the sixth floor, sustaining injuries in the process.

Others found themselves stranded on the rooftop, desperately calling for help. According to the country's health minister, Samanta Lal Sen, who visited the Dhaka Medical College Hospital and a nearby burn hospital, the

number of casualties is expected to rise. Approximately 40 injured individuals are currently receiving treatment at the city's main burn hospital. Fires in apartment buildings and factories are not uncommon in Bangladesh due to lax enforcement of safety regulations.

In July 2021, a fire in a food processing factory claimed the lives of 52 individuals, including many children. In February 2019, a devastating inferno ripped through multiple apartment blocks in Dhaka, resulting in the death of 70 people.

## BJP embraces BJD MLA who rammed SUV into BJP crowd

BHUBANESHWAR: Expelled BJD MLA Prasanta Kumar Jagadev, who was arrested in March 2022 for ramming an SUV into a largely BJP crowd, injuring more than 20 people, joined the saffron party on Thursday. The two-time MLA spent more than four months in jail before

he got bail from the Supreme Court in July 2022. He was suspended from the Naveen Patnaik-led BJD, for thrashing another BJP leader in September 2021. BJP and Congress had agitated against him. He was expelled from the regional party after the SUV incident. After joining the BJP in the presence of Bhubaneswar MP Aparajita Sarangi and former state BJP president Samir Mohanty here, Jagadev said he can foresee a "double-engine" government, with BJP returning to power at the Centre and forming the next government in Odisha. "It's time for action. I will work as a solidier to ensure a Viksit Bharat (developed India)," he said. Aparajita said BJP will be strengthened with Jagadev's joining.

Despite its tumultuous history with the legislator, the BJP has chosen to bring Jagadev on board, signalling a willingness to move forward. On March 12, 2022, Jagadev drove his SUV into a crowd gathered in front of the Banapur block office in Khurda district during the block chairperson's election. Several BJP workers and the then inspector in-charge of Banapur police station Rashmi Ranjan Sahoo were injured. Following the incident, a mob assaulted the MLA and set his vehicle ablaze. Almost all political parties, including the BJD, BJP, and Congress, had condemned his actions then. The MLA was arrested by the police 10 days later and charged with attempted murder (IPC Section 307).

## Sharad Pawar mounts lunch diplomacy to secure turf

PUNE: In a surprise development, Sharad Pawar has invited Maharashtra CM Eknath Shinde and his two deputies Devendra Fadnavis and Ajit Pawar over lunch at his Baramati residence on Saturday. The invite is being seen as a move to blunt the impact that Pawar senior's estranged nephew, Ajit Pawar, plans to generate by announcing projects for Baramati LS constituency that he wants to wrest from his cousin, Supriya Sule. "This is your (Eknath Shinde) first visit to Baramati after becoming CM and I invite you and other members of your cabinet to my residence for a meal," Pawar said in the invite, marking copies to Fadnavis and Ajit



Pawar. The three leaders are yet to react, but bets are out, especially, on whether Ajit Pawar will accept the invite or avoid the luncheon with his uncle in the wake of tension between the two following the split

in NCP. The invitation has puzzled the state's political corridors all the more, since Shinde govt ignored Pawar senior while sending out invites for the 'NaMo mega employment fair' it is holding

on the campus of Vidy Pratishthan in Baramati on Saturday and Sunday, even though he heads the institution. The CM and both his deputies will be in Baramati for the event's inauguration.

## Women celebrate early Holi in Sandeshkhali



KOLKATA: News of Shahjahan Sheikh's arrest was greeted with joy in many parts of Sandeshkhali with villagers distributing sweets and women playing with gulal even as administration imposed fresh restrictions under Section 144 of CrPC in 49 places on Thursday in anticipation of trouble. Cops were deployed in various areas, including at Shahjahan's Akunjipara residence under Sarberia-Agarhati gram panchayat. Police said restrictions were imposed in Sarberia, Boiramari, Nazat, Metiakhali, Taltala, Kalinagar, Trimohini, Dhamakhali, Khulna hat, Monipur, Patrapara, Hatgachi and Atapur, all falling under blocks I and II of Sandeshkhali, till March 3.