

# AKHAND BHARAT SANDESH

Title Code - UPENG04488

NATIONAL ENGLISH DAILY

MORNING EDITION PRAYAGRAJ

Tuesday 09 January, 2024

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

## SC: Gujarat acted in tandem with Bilkis convicts for their relief

**The state has usurped the power of the state of Maharashtra and has passed the impugned**



**NEW DELHI:** Delving into the history of the case in which Bilkis Bano had to approach the Supreme Court four times at different stages to get justice, the apex court said the Gujarat government acted in tandem and was complicit with the convicts while passing orders of remission in their favour when it had no jurisdiction, and it vindicated the SC's earlier orders to transfer the probe to CBI and shift the trial to Mumbai. A bench of Justices B V Nagarathna and Ujjal Bhuyan questioned the state government for not seeking a review of the SC's

2022 order allowing the Gujarat government to decide the remission plea of the accused when it knew and had even argued in court that it had no jurisdiction. It said the Gujarat government had usurped the power of the Maharashtra government by deciding the remission pleas. "We fail to understand why the state of Gujarat did not file a review petition seeking correction of the order dated May 13, 2022 passed by this court..."

Had the state filed an application seeking review of the said order and impressed upon this court that it was not the 'appropriate government'... ensuing litigation would not have arisen at all. On the other hand, in the absence of filing any review petition seeking a correction of the order passed by this court, the state has usurped the power of the state of Maharashtra and has passed the impugned orders of remission on the basis of an

order of this court which, in our view, is a nullity in law," the bench said. "Instead, the state of Gujarat has acted in tandem and was complicit with what the petitioner-respondent No. 3 (Radheshyam Bhagwandas Shah, one of the convicts) had sought before this court. This is exactly what this court had apprehended at the previous stages of this case and had intervened on three earlier occasions in the interest of truth and justice by transferring the investigation to the CBI and the trial to the special court in Mumbai," the bench added. "But, in our view, when no intervention was called for in the writ petition filed by one of the convicts, this court was misled to issue directions contrary to law and on the basis of suppression and mis-statements made by him."

## AAP offers Congress 3/7 Lok Sabha seats in Delhi, 6/13 in Punjab

**NEW DELHI:** Congress's maiden meeting with the Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) over seat-sharing in Delhi ended without a formal announcement of numbers, but with an assurance that leaders on both sides are committed to working together and that they will meet again to finalise the formula. Sources said AAP is understood to have expressed its willingness to offer three of the seven Lok Sabha seats in Delhi to Congress with the



assumption that AAP will be accommodated on one Lok Sabha seat in Gujarat, three in Haryana, and one in Goa. AAP is also understood to have offered six of the 13 seats to Congress in Punjab—the number of seats it won in 2019—a state where Congress leaders have

vehemently opposed the idea of allying with AAP in Lok Sabha polls. AAP's initial offer, which is likely to be vetted internally by Congress both at the headquarters and in states, may go through a few iterations before it is accepted. In Delhi, however,

Congress is learnt to have expressed its keenness to contest the East Delhi, North East and Chandni Chowk seats. Apart from Congress's national alliance committee convenor Mukul Wasnik, former Rajasthan CM Ashok Gehlot, senior Congress leaders Salman Khurshid, Mohan Prakash and Delhi PCC chief Arvinder Singh Lovely, AAP leaders Sandeep Pathak and Delhi ministers Atishi and Saurabh discussed the possibilities of seat sharing.

## India raps Maldives envoy as boycott chorus rises

**NEW DELHI:** A row triggered by some Maldivian ministers ridiculing PM Narendra Modi escalated on Monday, with government discussing the matter with Male's envoy even as some travel companies stopped sales of packages to the archipelago and issued boycott calls.

Amid growing outrage over the provocation from the ministers of Maldives, which has, after the recent polls, taken an anti-India position, travel portals reported a massive surge in search for idyllic Indian destinations like Lakshadweep and Andaman & Nicobar Islands by potential holi-

dayers. The campaign against Maldives appears to be driven by sheer fury, considering that Lakshadweep does not have the infrastructure of tourists. Online travel agency MakeMyTrip said it had "observed a 3,400% increase in on-platform searches for Lakshadweep ever since

PM Modi's visit". Indian Chamber of Commerce (ICC) issued an "appeal to boycott Maldives" while travel portal EaseMyTrip said it had suspended all flight bookings to the island nation "in solidarity" with India, making the retaliation against the comments.

## State of emergency in Ecuador after 'dangerous' narco boss escapes prison

**NEW DELHI:** Ecuador's President Daniel Noboa has declared a state of emergency across the country, including the prison system. This decision comes after a "extremely dangerous" drug lord managed to escape from a highly secure cell, triggering unrest in multiple penitentiaries. "I have just signed a decree for a state of emergency so that the armed forces have all the political and legal support in their actions" against these "narcoterrorists," Noboa said on his Instagram account.

## Bengal cops shielding attackers with a weak FIR: ED

**KOLKATA:** The conflict surrounding the attacks on ED teams in Bengal intensified Monday, with the central agency contending that the state police FIR only registered bailable and non-scheduled offences in the January 5 Sandeshkhali assault. ED alleged that its complaint to police had cited multiple non-bailable penal sections, including attempt to murder and rioting, but these charges were omitted. On January 5, a mob of around 200 villagers from Sandeshkhali in North 24 Parganas district attacked and wounded three ED officials when the central agency, along with a posse of CRPF men, went to search the house of local Trinamool leader Sheikh Shahjahan as part of an investigation into the alleged Rs 550-crore ration scam. Sandeshkhali was one of 18 places visited by ED teams on that day as part of their probe. ED faced a similar hostile situation when its team visited the premises of TMC leader Shankar Adhya in the Simultala area of Bongaon. The agency claimed they had not been given copies of FIRs in both cases. Bengal police, however, refuted ED's claims, asserting that ED's allegations were baseless. Basirhat SP Joby Thomas said a suo motu case had been lodged even before the ED's complaint, and police were conducting a preliminary inquiry.

## Bullet train project gets 100% land five-and-a-half years after first notification

**NEW DELHI:** The government has achieved 100% acquisition of land for the country's first high-speed rail (bullet train) project between Ahmedabad and Mumbai, over five-and-a-half years after the first notification for acquiring land for this project was issued, indicating how difficult and time-taking the process is for any infrastructure works. Railway minis-



ter Ashwini Vaishnaw and Dadra and Nagar Haveli. He added that the National High Speed Rail Corporation Ltd (NHSRCL) has completed pier casting for 268.5 km out of the

total 508.2 km corridor, and it has completed girder launching for 120 km. Vaishnaw has said the first trial run of the bullet train in Gurjarat will start in August 2026. The government has maintained that the execution of the bullet train project has been impacted due to delay in land acquisition in Maharashtra and consequent delays in finalisation.

## More trouble in MVA, Sanjay Raut stakes claim to 23 Lok Sabha seats

**NAGPUR:** Seat-sharing for Lok Sabha polls between Maha Vikas Aghadi constituents seems to be headed for trouble. After Congress invited applications from aspirants in all 48 seats last week, Shiv Sena (UBT) MP Sanjay Raut staked claim to 23 seats which it had fought in alliance with BJP in 2019.



Reiterating his statement, Raut said Sena had always contested 23 seats with BJP in alliance in the past

and, therefore, his demand was justified. "We won 18 of those seats and there will be no discussion on those, although a few of those MPs have left us. Similarly, there would be no discussions on NCP's four and Congress' Chandrapur seat. We lost Sambhaji Nagar and Shirur seats narrowly, but we are not

staking claim to those. We do not have any clash with NCP on any seat. We will finalise our discussions with Congress on , as MP Raut and I would be meeting with their delegation. The final decision will be taken by Sonia Gandhi and Rahul Gandhi, NCP patriarch Sharad Pawar, and Shiv Sena (UBT).

## Ghaziabad to become Gajnagar or Harnandi Nagar?

**GHAZIABAD:** Circulating for some time as a demand by Hindu outfits, the civic body has put renaming of Ghaziabad on the board meeting agenda for the first time on Tuesday. On the table are two options - 'Gajnagar' and 'Harnandi Nagar'.

The proposal to rename the NCR district was tabled by a BJP councillor on Monday and inducted into the agenda, with the mood believed to be turning in its favour. Name change proposal: Links drawn between Ghaziabad and Hastinapur

On the proposal for a new name for the district, Ghaziabad mayor Sunita Dayal said they had been receiving requests for renaming the place for some time now. "But this is the first time the matter will be being discussed at the executive level," she told TOI. Calls to rename Ghaziabad have grown over the years, especially after Allahabad was dropped and Prayagraj came into being in 2018. ward number 100, officially tabled the proposal.

## CEO fleeing after killing son in Goa held in Karnataka

**PANAJI:** A 39-year-old startup founder and CEO from Bengaluru was on Monday charged with murdering her four-year-old son in a service apartment in North Goa's Candolim and hiring a taxi to travel back to Karnataka with the child's body in a bag. The shocking crime, for which investigators are yet to find a motive, unravelled after a member of the housekeeping staff found a bloodstain while cleaning the apartment from which Suchana Seth had checked out on Monday morning. Based on an alert from the Goa Police, she was detained at Aimangala police station in Karnataka's Chitradurga district. A police team from Calangute was on its way to Karnataka late on Monday to take custody of Suchana and bring her to Goa on transit remand.

## Over 10 warships sent to deter pirates of the Arabian Sea

**NEW DELHI:** India has now deployed over 10 frontline warships with marine commands in the region stretching from north and central Arabian Sea to the Gulf of Aden, further stepping-up its naval presence to show the flag and deter piracy and drone strikes. This unprecedented "enhanced maritime security operations" are being conducted independently by India, which has refrained from joining the US-led multinational 'Operation Prosperity Guardian' launched in the Red Sea in December after attacks on civilian as well as military ships by Houthi rebels of Yemen. MARCOS rescues crew on hijacked vessel, Indian Navy launches anti-piracy operations in Arabian Sea With escalating piracy and drone attacks on commercial vessels threatening critical sea lanes of communications, which has



already led to a major jump in freight rates, Indian Navy is maintaining a "persistent presence" in the Arabian Sea, senior officers. "Indian warships are deployed all over the region to enhance surveillance and deterrence against the twin threats from pirates and drone strikes. The aim is to help stabilise the situation in the Arabian Sea and promote net maritime security," an officer said. Regular ISR (intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance) missions are being flown by P-8I long-range maritime patrol aircraft and unarmed MQ-9B Sea Guardian drones, both of which are capable of providing 'live feeds'.



## Noida gives builders a 21% decrease in dues



nesses will pay a considerable 21% less than they would have otherwise, thanks to the 24-month Covid zero period (March 2020-22) during which all interest and penalties are eliminated. In contrast to the pandemic waiver, however, this relief will be granted on a case-by-case basis following an examination of petitions.

**"All that realtors owe is the Noida Authority. In contrast to the pandemic waiver, however, this relief will be granted on a case-by-case basis following an examination of petitions"**

**Delhi:** Based on government recommendations released last month to revive stalled projects and resume registries—two issues that impact almost 2.3 lakh housing units in the city and in Greater Noida—the Noida Authority presented recalculated dues to realtors on Friday. As a result, real estate busi-

nesses will pay a considerable 21% less than they would have otherwise, thanks to the 24-month Covid zero period (March 2020-22) during which all interest and penalties are eliminated. In contrast to the pandemic waiver, however, this relief will be granted on a case-by-case basis following an examination of petitions. The developers will have a detailed discussion of the offer with Manoj Kumar Singh, the commissioner of industrial

development. The discussion with the builders began at the Noida Authority office, approximately eleven a.m. 52 of the 57 housing project developers that were invited to the meeting showed up. The majority sent their financial executives.

According to officials, there was little to no difference between the dues determined by the realtors and those prepared by the

certified accountant that Noida Authority employed, about Rs. 28,000 crore that are owed. If a realtor owes, say, Rs 350 crore after the Covid waiver, it will now be required to pay Rs 275 crore under the amended package. Realtors will be eligible for the second tranche of zero period waiver, which covers 20 months between 2013 and 2015—the year the National Green Tribunal forbade construction within a 10-kilometer radius of the Okhla Bird Sanctuary—if they accept the recalculated dues and accept the state government's rehabilitation proposal, which entails accepting a time-bound payment plan.

## A group headed by Ram Nath Kovind is seeking public feedback on "One Nation, One Election"



work to enable simultaneous elections in the country" by the group on "One Nation, One Election," which is led by former President Ram Nath Kovind. The committee announced to the public that it will review the proposals submitted by January 15th. Individuals can contact sc-hlc@gov.in or publish their recommendations on the committee's website, [onoe.gov.in](http://onoe.gov.in). The group has met twice since forming in September of last year. It also recently sent letters to political parties asking for their opinions and to communicate with them on a "mutually agreed date" over the suggestion to hold simultaneous elections for the Lok Sabha and assembly, as well as other polls. The parties, which comprised seven registered unrecognized parties, 33 state parties, and national parties, received a reminder from the committee later on.

**"The parties, which comprised seven registered unrecognized parties, 33 state parties, and national parties, received a reminder from the committee later on"**

**Delhi:** The public is being asked for proposals "for making appropriate changes in existing legal administrative frame-

site, [onoe.gov.in](http://onoe.gov.in). The group has met twice since forming in September of last year. It also recently sent letters to political parties asking for their opinions and to communicate with them on a "mutually agreed date" over the suggestion to hold simultaneous elections for the Lok Sabha and assembly, as well as other polls. The parties, which comprised seven registered unrecognized parties, 33 state parties, and national parties, received a reminder from the committee later on.

## BJP is opposed to JMM's effort for a bypoll to be held in the Gandey assembly seat



**Delhi:** While the BJP opposed having the bypoll, a delegation of JMM met with the CEO of Jharkhand and requested the EC, through him, to hold the byelection to the Gandey assembly seat in Giridih district as required by the Representation of People's Act of 1951. Following the resignation of its current MLA, Sarfaraz Ahmad, on December 31, the Vidhan Sabha Speaker declared the Gandey seat vacant, citing personal reasons. The JMM delegation, which included two office-bearers and MLAs Dinesh William Marandi, Bhushan Tirkey, and Nalin Soren, stated in their memorandum that the fifth Jharkhand Vidhan Sabha's first session was called to order "According to the Constitution's Section 172, the fifth Vidhan

Sabha's tenure ends on January 5, 2025," the delegation said. The delegation also mentioned that Section 151A of the Representation of People's Act of 1951, which mandates that an election be held in the event that a member voluntarily resigns with more than a year left in office, made holding a byelection for the Gandey assembly seat necessary. On the other hand, in a letter to Governor CP Radhakrishnan, BJP MP Nishikant Dubey requested him to prevent the inauguration of a non-MLA as chief minister. Dubey supported his allegation in his letter by citing two court rulings: the Bombay High Court's W/2019 verdict reversing the EC's decision to hold a byelection to the Katol assembly constituency in Nagpur, Maharashtra.

## India-UAE launch 'Desert Cyclone 2024' joint military exercise in Rajasthan

**"The collaborative military engagement is expected to not only strengthen the defense ties between India and the UAE but also contribute to the broader goal of fostering regional peace and security"**



**Delhi.** India and the United Arab Emirates (UAE) commenced the joint military exercise 'Desert Cyclone 2024' today in Rajasthan. The fortnight-long drill is strategically designed to enhance interoperability by fostering the exchange of best practices, particularly focusing on urban operations.

The Ministry of External Affairs emphasized that the exercise aims to pave the way for greater collaboration in various areas of defense. These

include the production and development of defense equipment, joint exercises involving armed forces, with a special emphasis on naval operations. Additionally, the collaboration extends to sharing strategic information and doctrines, as well as technical cooperation concerning Intermediate Jet Trainer programs. Highlighting the historical context, the ministry underscored that the inaugural India-UAE Joint Air Forces exercise took place in September 2008 at the

Al-Dhafra base in Abu Dhabi. This shows the commitment to reinforcing defense capabilities through mutual cooperation. The 'Desert Cyclone 2024' exercise highlights the shared commitment of India and the UAE to regional security and stability. The collaborative military engagement is expected to not only strengthen the defense ties between India and the UAE but also contribute to the broader goal of fostering regional peace and security.

## Nepal sends five hundred kinds of souvenirs to Ayodhya

**Delhi:** Over 500 exquisitely gift baskets were sent to Ayodhya from Nepal's Janakpur city believed to be the birthplace of Sita ahead of the inauguration of the Ram Mandir on January 22. The Mahantha of Janaki Temple of Janakpur, Ram Roshan Das handed over the exquisitely decorated souvenirs to the Shri Ram Janmabhoomi Tirtha Trust General Secretary Champat Ray.

Lord Ram, according to Ramayana, traveled to Ayodhya and married Sita whose second name is Janaki. The souvenirs included gold-silver articles, various kinds of sweet dishes, clothes, fruits, cosmetics, furniture among others.



## BJP received Rs 256.25 crore from Prudent Electoral Trust in FY 2022-23

**DELHI.** The BJP received a total of Rs 256.25 crore from Prudent Electoral Trust, while the BRS received Rs 90 crore and the YSRCP Rs 16 crore from the fund during the financial year that ended in March 2023. The trust gave total donations of Rs 363.15 crore to political parties during the year, according to its filing before the Election Commission (EC). The data shared by the trust reveals that while the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) received 70.56 per cent of the donations made by it during the past year, the Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) received a total of Rs 90 lakh from the fund in two tranches of Rs 45 lakh each. The contributions made by the trust to the BJP were in 17 tranches. The trust made three contributions to the Bharat Rashtra Samithi (BRS), totalling Rs 90 crore. The maximum contribution of Rs 75 crore was made in one trench to the K Chandrasekhar Rao-led party while another of Rs 10 crore and yet another of Rs 5 crore were given to the ruling party in Telangana. The YSRCP, which is in power in Andhra Pradesh, received contributions to the tune of Rs 16 crore in four tranches, with the maximum being of Rs 12 crore in one go. Another trust -- Paribartan Electoral Trust -- has made a contribution of Rs 75 lakh to the BJP. Electoral trusts, which give donations to political parties, have to make disclosures before the EC during the year in accordance with rules.

## 500 prefabricated toilets to be installed in Ayodhya

**Delhi:** The Uttar Pradesh government has unveiled a plan to boost religious tourism and improve sanitation along the Saryu Ghats in Ayodhya by installing 500 prefabricated toilets along the river bank. The Ayodhya Development Authority (ADA) will oversee the implementation of the prefabricated toilets scheme, covering major ghats, just in time for

the upcoming Makar Sankranti snan (holy dip) event on January 15. The move follows Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath's directive to develop Ayodhya as a religious tourism destination.

The selection and operation of the 500 prefabricated toilets will involve an agency selection process, utilizing the quality cost-based selection method.

Control rooms, supported by a 24/7 toll-free helpline, will be established for user support. Access to these toilets will be free for the public for at least 12 months, with the selected agency responsible for maintaining cleanliness, proper functionality, septic waste management, uninterrupted water supply, and the use of eco-friendly cleaning chemicals.

## 68 RS MPs to retire in 2024, Vaishnaw and Yadav among BJP's 60



**Delhi:** Sixty Rajya Sabha MPs from BJP, including nine Union ministers, are among the 68 completing their tenure this year and many of them are likely to contest Lok Sabha polls, giving a chance to others who have been aspirants for the Upper House. As many as 57 leaders, including railway minister Ashwini Vaishnaw, education minister Dharmendra Pradhan, environment minister Bhupender Yadav, health minister Mansukh Madaviya and former PM Manmohan Singh, will complete their tenures in April. Uttar Pradesh will have the highest

number of vacancies at 10, followed by Maharashtra and Bihar (six each), Madhya Pradesh and West Bengal (five each), Karnataka and Gujarat (four each), Odisha, Telangana, Kerala and Andhra Pradesh (three each), Jharkhand and Rajasthan (two each), and Uttarakhand, Himachal Pradesh, Haryana and Chhattisgarh (one each).

## JD(U) & RJD may contest 16 Lok Sabha seats each in Bihar, leave 8 for Congress, Left

**Delhi:** The two major Grand Alliance (GA) partners in Bihar JD(U) and RJD are very close to finalising the number of Lok Sabha seats they will contest along with Congress and the Left parties in the coming elections. The assertion holds credence after Bihar deputy CM Tejashwi Yadav, visited the official residence of CM Nitish Kumar in the afternoon and had one-on-one discussions on the seat-sharing issue. It is believed that Tejashwi carried his father's message to Nitish on the issue. "While seat-sharing has almost been finalised and leaders keep talking over the phone, there are some glitches over a few seats which both RJD and JD(U) want to contest. This issue will also be sorted soon," said a senior RJD leader. He said as per a rough formula, RJD and



JD(U) will contest 16 seats each while Congress will be given five seats and the Left three. One plus or minus is negotiable, he added. There are 40 Lok Sabha seats in Bihar. "Nitish is adamant on 17 seats as his JD(U) had contested the same

number of seats in the 2019 LS elections and won 16 in partnership with BJP. If RJD and JD(U) fight 17 seats each, the Left may have to compromise and will be given one seat only," said a Grand Alliance.

## Haryana state federation calls for two separate trials for National Championships

**Delhi:** Wrestlers in Haryana are in a difficult position with the state federation announcing two separate trials to pick the team for the Senior National Championships. The development comes in the wake of the IOA ad-hoc panel announcing the National Championships in Jaipur from Feb 2-5, and the suspended Wrestling Federation of India (WFI) calling the move 'illegal' while planning to hold a separate National Championships. The tussle for the administrative control of wrestling in the state federations has intensified and the wrestlers are feeling the heat. Harayana Amatuer Wrestling Association (HAWA) president Rohtash Singh has announced state trials from Jan 17-18 in Sonapat, while HAWA general secretary issued a separate circular calling the state trials to be conducted in Hisar on January 13 and 14. Rohtash, who earlier backed the former WFI president Brij Bhushan Singh's faction, changed sides before the WFI election in support of the group backed by the protesting wrestlers and contested for the post of joint secretary and lost. Rakesh Singh, on the other hand, has the backing of the newly-elected WFI.



## Meja Urja Nigam commences a week long Girl Empowerment Mission- Winter Workshop

Prayagraj

On January 8, 2024, MUNPL's CEO Sh. Sunil Kumar inaugurated the Girl Empowerment Mission (GEM) Winter Workshop 2024 at the St. Joseph's school auditorium. The week-long workshop aims to further enhance the skills of the girls selected & trained under GEM 2023 summer program through diverse training activities including art & craft, dance, yoga, music, and theatre. Addressing the young minds, Sh. Sunil Kumar emphasized their pivotal role in shaping the nation's future, stating, "You are the future of this nation as girls have the power to change socie-



ty. Your dedication, commitment, and willpower shall help you in fulfilling your dreams." He urged them to prepare for the future, underlining the importance of the follow-up workshop in reinforcing and improving the skills acquired during the summer workshop. The event also witnessed a feedback session, allowing the girls to share their thoughts and previous

experiences. The event also witnessed an inspiring address of Aparajita Mahila Samaj President Smt. Usha Kumar, who praised the central govt's unique initiative of girl child education — "Beti Bachao, Beti Padhao" and highlighted the collective responsibility to offer quality education to young girls. She stressed the changing landscape where girls stand equally in every

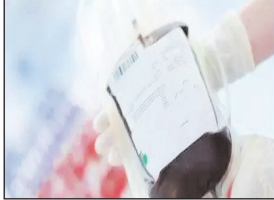


sector and deserve equal opportunities to contribute to the nation's growth. Smt. Usha Kumar expressed gratitude for the opportunity to contribute under this unique initiative. Sh. Sunil Kumar concluded the inauguration ceremony with inspiring words, "If you teach a boy, you teach an individual, but if you teach a girl, you teach a community." He urged

the girls to seize the opportunity, rise, and shine making their parents, community and MUNPL proud and said, "you will be our brand ambassadors, so work hard, maintain good health, succeed and make all of us proud wherever you go." During the event, Heads of various other departments, NEAM president, AMS members and other staff were also present.

## Blood not for sale, charge processing cost only, DCGI tells blood banks

Delhi: The Drugs Controller General of India banned all charges on blood units, except supply and processing costs. DCGI has sent out a letter stating this to drug controller cum licensing authorities in all states and Union territories. Referring to the meeting of Drugs Consultative Committee held in September last year, DCGI wrote, "It was recommended with respect of agenda No. 18 of ATR point 3, for overcharging of blood, it was opined that blood is not for sale, it is only for supply and only pro-



cessing cost may be charged by a blood centre." DCGI has also asked the drug controller cum licensing authorities to direct all blood centres to adhere to the revised guidelines for recovery of processing charges. When a person donates blood, it is not transfused into a patient directly. The donated blood, referred to as whole blood, is processed in centrifuges

to separate it into transfusable components. This includes red cells, platelets and plasma. The exercise is referred to as blood processing and a cost is incurred on this. Centre released a guideline in 2022 stating that private blood banks cannot charge more than Rs 1,550 for processing whole blood. Processing charges for packed red cells, fresh frozen plasma, and platelet concentrate all of which are required for transfusion in patients have been capped at Rs 1,550, Rs 400, Rs 400 respectively for private labs.

## AAP renominates Sanjay and selects Maliwal for the Rajya Sabha



Delhi: The party's political affairs committee, led by Chief Minister of Delhi Arvind Kejriwal, announced the nominees. The Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) renominated sitting lawmakers Sanjay Singh and ND Gupta for second terms in the Upper House and nominated Swati Maliwal, the head of the Delhi Commission for Women (DCW), to the Rajya Sabha. Because of his alleged involvement in corruption related to the Delhi excise policy 2021-2022, Singh is incarcerated. The party claims the matter, which is being looked into by the Enforcement Directorate and the Central Bureau of Investigation, is the

result of a "political vendetta," and he has refuted all of the allegations.

The party's political affairs committee, led by national convener of the AAP Arvind Kejriwal, the chief minister of Delhi, announced the nominees for the Upper House. For the first time, DCW Chairperson Swati Maliwal has received a nomination.

In a statement, the party said, "The PAC has decided to support Sanjay Singh and ND Gupta for their respective second terms as Rajya Sabha members." But Sushil Kumar Gupta, the AAP's Haryana state president and current Rajya Sabha MP, has been removed.

## 32% of DPCC posts vacant, 50% staff on contract

Delhi: About 32% of posts at Delhi Pollution Control Committee (DPCC) are vacant. Those occupied have nearly 50% contractual staff. These details were shared by the agency in response to an RTI query filed by an environmental activist. DPCC, which implements pollution-related norms, has 344 approved posts, of which 234 are filled. Of these, 111 are regular employees and 122 contractual. The agency has no data on total staff recruited since 2014, revealed the RTI query.

Over whether any letter was sent to Delhi government to increase the staff of DPCC or to fill up the vacancies, DPCC replied that the "matter is under process" for Group A employees. For the Group B employees, the letter has been sent to Delhi



Subordinate Services Selection Board. A residents' forum named URJA had shared a report stating that the agency was virtually absent in one of the hotspots of Delhi for implementation of the summer action plan despite several anomalies on the ground. According to the report, in Wazirpur, a large number of people did not see anti-smog guns in their area, many large construction sites did not display the registration certificate in public

domain and no teams were seen monitoring open burning. "Delhi has been suffering from pollution for the last so many years, but surprisingly, no concrete efforts are being taken to control the same. DPCC has been facing a staff crunch for a long time now and it is impacting pollution control measures across the city," claimed Amit Gupta, who filed the RTI query. Officials of DPCC did not respond despite several attempts.

## MCD finalising road network plans for three illegal colonies

Divya Delhi. The MCD town planning department has published the map plans proposing road widening in these colonies for seeking public feedback. The Municipal Corporation of Delhi (MCD) is in the process of finalising the road network plans for three unauthorised colonies in the Capital. These road network plans, will be the first step in regularising the approximately 1,800 unauthorised colonies in Delhi. A senior municipal official said that draft plans for the regularisation of the three colonies — Khirki Extension in south Delhi, East Azad Nagar in east Delhi, and Saroop Nagar Extension in north Delhi — have been prepared with the help of School of Planning and Architecture. The plan broadly proposes a road widening exercise in these colonies under three categories of road — 6m, 9m, and 12m.



## To make trip planning easier, One Delhi brings Delhi Metro and DTC closer together



Delhi: Passengers may now buy tickets for DTC and Delhi Metro buses using the same app. The Delhi Metro Rail Corporation (DMRC) has connected the One Delhi mobile app of the Delhi government with its ticketing systems. Anuj Dayal, principal executive director, corporate communications, DMRC, stated that "the integration of issuing QR tickets for Metro and DTC buses through One Delhi app will add one more channel for issuing Delhi Metro tickets and will facilitate commuters to use one single app for booking both metro and bus tickets." He continued by saying that this strategic alliance will provide travelers with a one-stop shop for all of their transit needs, making riding the Delhi Metro even more convenient. The software provides integrated bus and metro route planning in addition to ticketing. "The One Delhi smartphone app will create a detailed itinerary that smoothly integrates both forms of transportation based on your chosen starting point and destination. According to a DMRC spokesman, "This feature eliminates the need to switch between multiple apps or consult different sources for bus and metro schedules." The official went on to say that the integration of DMRC's ticketing services into the app is a big step forward in the city's development of a more integrated and effective urban transportation system.

## RWA scheme for tax rebate to kick off

Delhi: Aimed at benefiting all registered RWAs and group housing societies, MCD is set to launch a redesigned Sahbhagita Scheme. The registration process for the scheme will continue until March 31. The benefits of the scheme include the allocation of 10% of the total property tax collected from an area towards incentive to RWAs or group housing societies, provided at least 90% of the residents are property tax compliant. Further, an additional 5% of the total property tax collected will be allocated towards wet waste disposal incentive if the residents contribute to 100% waste segregation at source, 100% composting, recycling of dry waste, and handling over the remaining dry waste to authorised agencies, said an official.

## LG directs DMs to spend a night at Delhi's villages

Delhi. The LG's orders came after he held consultations with over 500 villagers from 180 Delhi villages at Raj Niwas to discuss the problems that they face. Lieutenant governor (LG) VK Saxena directed all district magistrates in Delhi to spend the night at villages in the Capital to get a first-hand account of the problems faced



by the residents there. Saxena said his directions are in line with

Prime Minister Narendra Modi's call to take the government to the doorsteps of people. "Taking forward PM Narendra Modi's call to take "Govt at doorstep", instructed DMs of Delhi to spend nights in all the villages to understand their issues better and expressed my willingness to do the same.

## Women government employees can now nominate children over spouse for pension

Delhi. The Union government has now amended the Central Civil Services (Pension) Rules of 2021, in order to allow women government servants and pensioners to nominate their children for receiving family pension over their spouse, if at the time of their death, any proceedings for divorce, domestic violence, or dowry demands happen to be pending against the said spouse. Till now, the rules provided for the family pension to first go to the surviving spouse and the children became



eligible to receive it only after the death of the spouse. As a result, several women officials and pensioners were asking if it was possible to nominate children before the spouse in cases where divorce proceedings are underway or domestic violence cases are pending against the spouse.

## A unique exhibition of sarees from all around the nation is taking place alongside the R-Day parade

Delhi: Witnessed by 80,000 people, this year's Republic Day procession will feature a unique exhibition of sarees from all over the nation. More than two thousand sarees and women's clothing will be on show behind the tourist centers along the Kartavya Path, bringing vibrancy to the lavish event. According to sources, the culture ministry — which is integral to the cultural initiatives along the Kartavya Path — is spearheading this. They also mentioned that clothes,



including sarees, were being brought from every state and U.T. "Anant Sutra," or sacred strands, is the name given to this saree exhibit. They said that this would align with the government's goal of showcasing the nation's "Nari Shakti," or

women's empowerment, during the Republic Day celebration. During the parade this year, there will be all-women contingents, tableaux, and performances.

A significant portion of the crowd will also be made up of women, especially those who are the beneficiaries of various government programs. The beneficiaries who are women would be treated as "special guests," and their numbers may reach up to 10,000.



## Editorial

### 2024: Global Election Fest

2024 will be a historic election year, when democracy will undergo a major test with elections in approximately 70 countries including the United States, India, Mexico and South Africa. More than 3.7 billion voters will head to the polls, and their results may have global impact and ramifications. The current year will be the greatest year for democracy and democratic institutions worldwide. The greatest power in the world (the United States), the most-populous country (India), the biggest trading bloc (the European Union), the largest Muslim country (Indonesia), the largest Spanish-speaking country (Mexico) and the territory that is the most contentious one between the two superpowers of this century (Taiwan), all will hold elections in 2024. A total of more than 3.7 billion inhabitants around 70 countries – or almost half of the global population – will head to cast their votes in either presidential or legislative elections in the coming year. The verdict of these polls may have profound consequences on the lives of people and on a world that is going through a turbulent time, with on-going brutal wars in Ukraine and Gaza, as the West seems falling into decline, with no clear alternative. On a geopolitical level, this electoral jamboree might have a major impact. Major disruptive results include the return of Donald Trump to the White House, a third consecutive victory in Taiwan by candidates that Beijing considers hostile, or a consolidation of the extreme right in the European Union, all of which could lead to far-reaching consequences. In addition to these, other elections to watch out for include the potential presidential elections in Venezuela to those in Ukraine, from Indonesia to South Africa and Mexico, besides the United Kingdom – where a substantial change of course would not be expected regardless of the outcome. However, what might be the worrisome aspect of these elections is the litmus test which democracy will undergo. Surveys by different international think tanks and institutes indicate dissatisfaction with the present-day working of democratic institutions – a sentiment common throughout the nations of the west – meaning, the US and Europe – even though they see themselves as democracy's home ground. A recent Ipsos opinion poll in western countries found a widespread belief that current democratic systems favour the rich and powerful and ignore everyone else. Freedom House, the independent, US-based watchdog concluded in its 2023 report that the Global Freedom Index declined for the 17th consecutive year. The principle of free speech, essential to a fully functioning democracy, is also under attack. Paradoxically, this unprecedented vote-fest comes at a moment when classic forms of liberal democracy are under existential attack from authoritarians and dictators such as China's Xi Jinping and Russia's Vladimir Putin, far-right nationalist-populist parties such as in Austria, Hungary and Scandinavia, and military coup plotters and Islamists from Venezuela to Chad. Yet the report said while 35 countries experienced declines in political rights and civil liberties, 34 saw overall gains. Autocrats were neither infallible nor unbeatable. The geopolitical and economic impacts of so many ballot box battles, occurring more or less at once, may combine to further destabilise an unstable world – for good or bad. The European continent will see elections in Austria, Belgium, Croatia and Finland, as well as for the European Parliament in June.

### Modi's return to office in 2019 was one of the biggest pro-incumbency

The countdown for elections to the 18th Lok Sabha has started, and all estimates suggest Narendra Modi will return to 7, Lok Kalyan Marg with an absolute majority. While the Opposition parties are trying to put up a united front to stop Modi, the attempts to unite are limited to parties meeting at various locations in the country and dispersing without arriving at any concrete agenda. Opposition disunity apart, there are several factors that make Narendra Modi's re-election as Prime Minister imminent.

#### Charisma intact

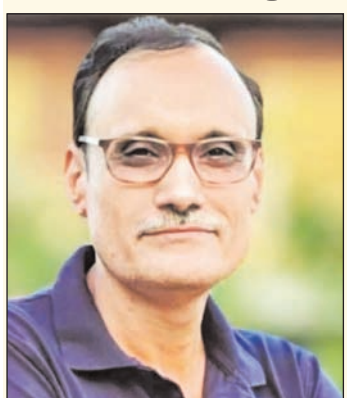
In the post-Independence electoral history of India, there has been no mass leader whose popularity has soared consistently like that of Narendra Modi. Today, no other leader can match up to Modi's 'image' and 'leadership'. 'Brand Modi' evokes a trust among people that the country has not seen in the past, or the present. The absence of any other credible face is a major reason why BJP's return to power is assured. What constitutes the BJP's biggest strength is the opposition's biggest

weakness. There is no face in the parties trying to take on the BJP that garners the kind of confidence Modi instils in the people. The fact alone sets the BJP ahead in the race against the rest. Because of Modi's leadership and his charisma, a large section of the country joined the BJP after 2014. This was the reason that in the 2019 general elections, the BJP achieved its best vote percentage.

The result was a big stamp of approval of the people on Prime Minister Modi because the party had con-

tested the election in his name, taking to voters the development work initiated under him. While other governments have suffered anti-incumbency, Modi's return to office in 2019 was one of the biggest pro-incumbency mandates in the country's history. While the Congress has returned to power in the past, it has either been in the initial years of Independence when no opposition to Congress existed, or due to a sympathy wave as in the case of the 1984 victory in the aftermath of Indira Gandhi's assassination.

## Farmers will receive a fair price when cooperative sugar mills are revived



KP Malik

It appears that long-standing problems with sugar mill income taxes are beginning to be resolved. In fact, payments made to sugarcane farmers by cooperative sugar mills prior to the assessment year 2016-17 will be allowed to be claimed as expenditures, thanks to the Union Budget 2023-2024 and the efforts of Cooperation Minister Amit Shah and Prime Minister Narendra Modi, who are working to resolve income tax-related issues that have been hanging over for decades. In section 155 of the Income-tax Act, a new sub-section 19 (1) has been added in response to this. In July 2023, CBDT released Standard Operating Procedures related to this as well. The National Federation of Cooperative Sugar Factories Limited study states that cooperative sugar mills

have benefited by Rs 46,524 crore as a result, resolving long-standing income tax difficulties. The state's farmers will benefit from this. Additionally, the government has decided that cooperative sugar mills will not be required to pay extra income taxes when they give farmers greater payments for their sugarcane, up to the State Advised Price or a fair and remunerative price. With the help of this provision, cooperative sugar mills will be able to offer their members a greater price for sugarcane and will be exempt from income tax on the cost of paying this higher price. According to the explanation released in October 2021, this clause has been in effect since April 2016 and has been providing member farmers with benefits through cooperative sugar mills.

The government's decision will also compel the commercial sugar mills to pay the farmers a reasonable price. As a result, the government is taking sugarcane growers' interests into consideration when making this decision. 10, 000 crore through NCDC to improve Cooperative Sugar Mills A new initiative called 'Grant-in-Aid to NCDC for Strengthening of Cooperative Sugar Mills'

has been introduced by the Ministry of Cooperation. The Government of India is contributing a grant of Rs. 3010.57 crore for 24 cooperative sugar mills thus far. Additionally, when it comes to purchasing ethanol and establishing CROGEN power plants, the Central Government is favoring cooperative sugar mills. It appears that the Petroleum Ministry will put cooperative Choni mills on par with commercial companies for ethanol purchase under the ethanol blading program. Additionally, work is being done to create Kojan power stations powered by bagasse from sugarcane. These actions will boost cooperative sugar mills' revenue and company operations. The GST rate on molasses has been lowered from 28% to 5% in order to support cooperative sugar mills. By October 2023, the government plans to lower the 28 percent GST currently applied to sugarcane to just 5%. Distilleries will

have more liquidity as a result. Since their primary source of raw materials is molasses. The decreased GST will mean that they need less working capital. Higher margin distilleries are being developed by cooperative sugar mills without ethanol or distillery operations. You can sell it to make extra money. As a result, the RBI made a number of significant decisions to alleviate the challenges that cooperative banks were facing in conducting business. The Prime Minister and Cooperation Minister Amit Shah led the central government's attempt to address these issues.

Now, in order to grow their company, urban cooperative banks are allowed to create new branches. Like commercial banks, cooperative banks will likewise be allowed to pay off debts in full. Urban cooperative banks have been given additional deadlines to meet the targets for priority sector lending (PSL). To facilitate regular communication between RBI and Urban Co-operative Banks, a nodal officer has been designated. The cooperative banks now have the authority to relocate their offices or build additional branches and ATMs while they are at home.

Customers of urban cooperative banks are now able to access financial services. For both rural and urban cooperative banks, the maximum amount for personal house loans has been raised by more than twice. With the new criteria, rural cooperative banks can now diversify their business by lending to the residential housing and commercial real estate industries. As of now, cooperative banks are CGTMSE Member Lending Institutions (MLIs). As a result, the member cooperative banks can now receive risk coverage for loans of up to 85%. Additionally, cooperative banks will now offer loans to businesses in the cooperative sector without the need for collateral.

In actuality, the RBI approved on April 5, 2023. By tying the license fee to the volume of transactions, the circular has lowered the cost of onboarding on cooperative banks' contemporary Aadhaar Enabled Payment System (AePS). In addition, the facility will be provided without charge to cooperative financial institutions for the first three months of the pre-production phase. Farmers will soon be able to bank on their figure print from the comfort of their own homes thanks to this.

### Bangladesh elections have pitted the West against Sheikh Hasina, But she has Modi's support

The Bangladesh elections seem to be virtually a done deal, with Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina likely to be re-elected for a fourth straight term when the polls are held on 7 January – although this will be her fifth term as PM, having been elected once before in 1996. The question, then, is not whether Hasina will be PM but what kind of PM she will be. What should Bangladesh, its neighbourhood and, indeed, the world, expect from her rule over the next five years? At least the Western world is already positioning itself – mostly against her. On the other end of the spectrum lies Russia – as if to underline the fact that international diplomacy has

been split wide open, at least since the Ukraine war – which has openly criticised the West for instigating an "Arab Spring" in Bangladesh. Meaning, according to Moscow, on the pretext of suing for democracy, Western nations are trying to unseat an elected government. Some of the charges are startling. It seems that a diplomat in the US mission in Dhaka, Matthew Bay, met Jamaat-e-Islami leader Syed Abdullah Muhammad Taher on the US embassy premises, to discuss the political situation in Bangladesh just a couple of months before the polls.

You could argue that the Americans – or at least, the Democrat

Party – seem particularly oblivious to the lessons of history. Back in 1971, the US sided with Pakistan against the creation of Bangladesh because Pakistan was giving the Americans access to the Chinese leadership, in the hope that Beijing would neutralise the powerful Soviets – and wilfully ignored the fact that the Jamaat had sided with the Pakistan Army and against its own people. It collaborated in the assassination of Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman in 1975, allied with General Ziaur Rahman's Bangladesh Nationalist Party and has since openly colluded with organisations that openly target Hasina.

### Attack on democracy !

Indira Gandhi and her government allowed the demonstration and did not suspend or isolate any MP. But Indira Gandhi still showed her Hitlerism. Not like an opposition-free campaign. Indira Gandhi imprisoned several opposition leaders during the Emergency. The Centre's Congress government suspended numerous state governments. By suspending his own state government once, he proved that no one will be forgiven if the state government does not rule or makes an unconstitutional mistake. Is it? It seems to me that opposition MPs will govern if there are any. One wonders why opposition party leaders are sitting on their hands despite a record-breaking opposition streak given how the Modi government is functioning in Parliament or in opposition. Are they anti-government? Atal Bihari Vajpayee, the then-leader of the opposition Bharatiya Janata Party, attacked the Indira Gandhi government for raising petrol and diesel prices in 1973, approaching Parliament in a bullock cart. India's Prime Minister was Indira Gandhi. At that time, no one considered anyone other than Indira Gandhi for Prime Minister, just as no one does today with Narendra Modi. Additionally, dividing Pakistan into two halves made him famous worldwide. As India's strongest Prime Minister, she was called Iron Lady. With the oil

problem and the government's need for revenue, taxing it may or may not be the democratic value of a parliament without opposition. That in the coming days, either there will be no or to suspend the one who has the support to question the current NDA government, it seems that the BJP's agenda is to rule the country? The way the Modi government suspended MPs from Parliament during the winter session in the last few days was shocking. On December 14, 14 MPs were suspended on the opening day of the session. Thirteen Lok Sabha and one Rajya Sabha MPs are suspended. On December 18, 45 Lok Sabha and 33 Rajya Sabha MPs were suspended.

On December 19, 49 Lok Sabha MPs were suspended. Next day, December 20, two Lok Sabha MPs were suspended. Over the past two-and-a-half years, 143 MPs have been suspended till December 20. The Modi government has suspended Rahul Gandhi, Azam Khan, Sharad Pawar, Raghav Chadha, and Sanjay Singh from both Houses. They include Rahul Gandhi. Raghav Chadha was reinstated by the Supreme Court. The 143 suspended MPs include 109 Lok Sabha and 34 Rajya Sabha members. Most of these MPs were suspended for disrupting Parliament security, while TMC MP Kalyan Banerjee was punished for imitating Rajya Sabha Chairman and

Vice President Jagdeep Dhankhar. I don't think the administration should fear opposition questioning. The government fears what? In 3.5 decades, Parliament has laughed a lot at impersonation without hurting anyone. After the heated argument, commotion, and attack in Parliament, all MPs, ministers, the Prime Minister, Chairman, and other significant persons laughed, ate, and spoke over tea in the Central Hall in all prior governments. Journalists often told us that the hubbub in Parliament between parties and the opposition was political. In truth, both are one, which is how those images were printed, showing both presidents happy and smiling.

Regarding denigrating Jats and farmers, I think Jats don't bend down, even if they break. Broken cot and twisted Jat are not respected in the Jat community; he is thought dead. Whether under Mughal or British authority, the Jat has been cut off, but it is not disposed of. However, the Jat community has never condoned the Modi government's attempts to disrespect them and encourage casteism. Only Jat society avoids hypocrisy and discrimination. Where was the soul of the Jats who are now beating their chest when the insulted the international level sports women society to save one of its MPs trapped in a criminal case?



## Development story of Ayodhya Guptar Ghat emerges as a major tourist attraction

### Ayodhya

Guptar Ghat of Ayodhya, the place which was chosen by Lord Shri Ram to proceed to heaven as per the popular belief and which has a rich spiritual heritage, has emerged as a major tourist attraction of Ayodhya with the Yogi government's initiatives to rejuvenate it, including launching water sports and boating activities, after years of neglect by previous governments during which it was reduced to become a shelter for stray animals. The Yogi government has taken steps to both restore the ghat's ancient spiritual and historical glory as well as to establish it as an attractive tourist destination in Ayodhya by equipping it with modern civic amenities. It is noteworthy that prior to 2017, Guptar Ghat was considered a dilapidated stretch of the riverbank, primarily known for some ancient temples and meditation sites of saints, where stray animals were often found amid litters strewn all around. However, when Prime Minister Narendra Modi's vision found active implementation under CM Yogi, Guptar Ghat transformed, becoming a tourist attraction with riverbank restoration, construction of solid embankments, beau-



tification, widening and expansion of roads, and the introduction of tourist amenities. Presently, the Lakshman Path, connecting Rajghat to Guptar Ghat, has been transformed into a four-lane road through encroachment control and expansion. In addition, various attractions, including water sports, have been developed here, turning the serene banks of the spiritually rich Sarayu into a place that not only provides spiritual solace but also fills visitors with excitement and joy. Two phases of the beautification drive of Guptar Ghat have been completed while the third phase is in the final stage of completion.

So far in the third phase of the drive, work on various amenities and attractions have been completed, including an open-air theatre, an aesthetically designed park with mod-

ern facilities, attractive sculptures, entrance gates, meditation cum yoga centre, kiosks, toilet blocks, interpretation centre, cafeteria, play park for children, CCTV surveillance for security, and more. These projects have been accomplished at the cost of Rs. 16.65 crores. Furthermore, the overall expenditure on beautification processes in Guptar Ghat, encompassing both phases, has amounted to Rs. 76.73 crores. This includes the construction of a 1.150 km embankment from Guptar Ghat to Jamthara Ghat at Rs. 39.63 crore as well as development of various projects at the cost of Rs. 37.10 crore. The configuration of the Sarayu River's bed at Guptar Ghat posed challenges to maintaining the necessary water levels for conducting regular water activities. Therefore, the government is working on construction of

embankments and the restoration of barrages to address this issue. Now, in addition to traditional boating, jetties are also operating in the river. Furthermore, motorboats are operated here, providing riders with exhilarating experiences. Soon, the facility will also witness the operation of solar-powered boats and regular cruises. Guptar Ghat is becoming a world-class tourist destination through development of following facilities... Open Air Theatre: Serving as an excellent medium for organizing cultural programs. Attractive park equipped with state-of-the-art facilities: It has been equipped with facilities like an open-air gym, proper pavement, a jogging track and Victorian-style arc lighting. Attractive Sculpture: Many attractive sculptures and mural sculptures are also being installed here. Meditation cum Yoga Centre:

Tourists coming here will be able to complete meditation and yoga activities uninterrupted in the peaceful environment of sacred Sarayu. Kiosks, toilet blocks: Keeping in mind the toilet facilities of citizens, kiosks and toilet blocks are being operated here

## Transgender community upbeat ahead of Ram temple opening Blesses Modi-Yogi for reviving Ayodhya's spiritual and cultural glory

### Ayodhya,

The transgenders' community is upbeat ahead of opening of Ram temple in Ayodhya. They are celebrating the resurgence of Lord Shri Ram's divine splendor, reminiscent of the Treta Yuga. Filled with joy and enthusiasm, members of the community are offering their heartfelt blessings to Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Gorakshpeethadhiswar Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath for their pivotal roles in reviving this spiritual and cultural glory. They express their gratitude by saying, "May Lord Shri Ram always support these two heroes who have brought back this glory, and may their praises resound in all directions." "Gaddipati" and the President of the Kinnar Samajin



Ayodhya district, Pinky Mishra, explained it was this community that cradled Shri Ram in their arms, played the dhokak-majira to celebrate, offered blessings, and accepted the 'neg.' This 'neg', declined by many despite King Dasharatha's countless requests, was embraced by the community. Pinky added: "When Lord Shri Ram returned from exile, the community expressed their heartfelt devotion, sharing

with him, "Lord, we remained away from Ayodhya, patiently awaiting your return, engaging in meditation, worship, and praise." Touched by their incredible dedication, Lord Shri Ram bowed his head in acknowledgment and blessed them. He declared that in any household, whenever an auspicious occasion occurs, the community should extend congratulations and blessings, accepting the 'neg' in return. This tradition has per-

sisted since that sacred moment. With the joyous return of Ram ji, there is an overwhelming sense of happiness. "Lovely emphasized the significant role played by Gorakshpeeth in the struggle for the birthplace. Whether it was Mahant Digvijaynath or Mahant Avedyanath, Gorakshanath consistently played a crucial role whenever there was progress in the Janmabhoomi Mukti Movement. Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath frequently asserts, "I have only one king - that is Raja Ram." His commitment to the development of Raja Ram's city serves as a testament to this belief. Nargis expressed that Ayodhya Dham is destined to become a model city in terms of both development and heritage preservation.

## "Cold day" to "severe cold day" conditions are likely to continue

**NEW DELHI:** Indian Meteorological Department (IMD) on said that, "cold day" to "severe cold day" conditions are likely to continue over some parts of Punjab, Haryana, Chandigarh, Delhi and Rajasthan for next two more days and significantly decrease thereafter. According to the latest forecast from the India Meteorological Department (IMD), dense to very dense fog is expected to persist over Northwest India for the next two days, gradually diminishing afterward. In their daily bulletin, the IMD reported minimum temperatures ranging from 6 to 10 degrees Celsius across significant regions. These areas include most parts of Punjab, Haryana, Chandigarh, Delhi, West Rajasthan, and select portions of East Rajasthan and West Uttar Pradesh. This information provides valuable insights into the prevailing weather conditions, aiding residents and authorities in making informed decisions based on the forecasted temperatures. "These are above normal by 3-5°C over many parts of Madhya Pradesh, Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, Jharkhand, Maharashtra and some parts of Haryana, Delhi, Chhattisgarh, Odisha. These are below normal by 2-4 degree Celsius in some parts of West Rajasthan. Today, the lowest minimum temperature of 2.8 degree Celsius reported at Bikaner (West Rajasthan)," said the IMD.

The IMD also forecasts the persistence of dense to very dense fog conditions during the night and morning in certain areas and isolated pockets across Punjab, Haryana, Chandigarh, and East Rajasthan until January 7. Additionally, dense fog is expected in isolated pockets for the following 24 hours after that period. "Dense to very dense fog conditions are very likely to prevail for a few hours in morning in isolated pockets over West Uttar Pradesh and West Rajasthan on Saturday and dense fog in isolated pockets till January 8," said IMD. According to IMD, dense fog conditions are very likely to prevail for a few hours in morning in isolated pockets over East Uttar Pradesh till January 9.

, over West Madhya Pradesh,

## Clear, goals well defined, and with right policy & precise implementation, we will reach the \$1 trillion target: Chief Minister

**Chief Minister CM Yogi reviews ongoing efforts and its recent outcomes for achieving one trillion dollar economy goal.** It is necessary to collect data with accuracy for expected results, get staff trained: Chief Minister seeks proposal for the establishment of a

Pharmaceutical Research and Innovation Institute near Lucknow. Uttar Pradesh's growth rate on current prices in 2021-22 was 20.1% against the country's growth rate of 18.4%. We have potential & favourable opportunities and we must take full advantage

of this: Chief Minister Prepare targets for economic betterment; all depts should conduct monthly reviews with Planning department: Chief Minister There is a need to improve crop diversification and supply chain management: Chief Minister?

During a significant meeting on Monday, Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath discussed the ongoing efforts, current outcomes, and future policies aimed at achieving the ambitious goal of establishing Uttar Pradesh as a one-trillion-dollar economy.

## Govt committed not to allow injustice to anyone: CM Yogi

### Gorakhpur

Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath on Sunday said that the government is committed not to allow injustice to anyone and determined to bring happiness in everyone's life.

Listening to the problems of around 200 people at Janata Darshan held in the auditorium of

Mahant Digvijaynath Smriti Bhawan on Gorakhnath Temple premises, CM Yogi instructed officials to take strict legal action against those who forcibly encroach on someone's land.

"Solving people's problems is the priority of the government and any kind of negligence or laxity

in this will not be tolerated", CM Yogi told officials. The Chief Minister went to the people, listened to their problems one by one patiently and assured them of prompt and satisfactory resolution to each of their problems.

Many people, including some women, had come to

the Janata Darshan with complaints regarding land disputes as well as illegal encroachments. After listening to them patiently, CM Yogi directed concerned officials present there to take effective legal action against professional land grabbers by identifying them as land mafia.

## Dawood childhood house and three other properties owned by his family in Ratnagiri went under the hammer

**NEW DELHI:** Dawood Ibrahim's childhood house and three other properties owned by his family in Maharashtra's Ratnagiri went under the hammer. The properties were registered under the name of Dawood Ibrahim's mother, Amina Bi. The auction was organised under the Safema act, officials said. The auction took place at the Aayakar Bhavan in south Mumbai. Only two of the four listed properties, which received four and three bidders, respectively, attracted suc-

cessful bids, with a single person emerging as the successful bidder for both. There were no bids for the other two properties. An agricultural land with the reserve price of Rs 15,440 was auctioned for Rs 2.01 crore, the highest bid at the auction. A total of four bidders came for this property. Another agricultural land fetched the highest bid of Rs 3.28 lakh against the reserve price of Rs 1,56,270, officials said. The name of the successful bidder was not disclosed. According to a participant

the winning bidder was a Delhi-based lawyer. Earlier in 2017 and in 2020, over 17 properties belonging to the underworld don were auctioned off by Safema. Dawood, a key accused in 1993 Mumbai serial blasts, lived in the Mumbai village before moving to Mumbai in 1983. Dawood is also designated as a 'global terrorist' by the United Nations under United Nations Security Resolution 1267, and listed under the Fourth Schedule of the UAPA Act, 1967. (With agency inputs)

## Transport secretary 'misses' speed signs, fined thrice

**NEW DELHI:** The road transport secretary got three challans for speed violation on a particular stretch in the capital. Guess why? He missed the speed limit sign which was placed "almost" behind a tree. Poor placement of signs - often behind trees and poles - on Delhi roads result in vehicle owners getting "challan surprises". It was no different for Union road transport secretary Anurag Jain. "The system does not

recognise who the owner is and I've paid challan thrice for speeding. But my problem was different. I took up with police the point that the speed signs should be visible to me. I thought the speed limit was 60 kmph on that stretch and my vehicle was at 61 kmph.

Usually, this should not have been the reason for getting a challan," he said. Sharing his experience on Friday, Jain said "technology treats all com-

muters equally", and also flagged how it is essential to place road signs "at the right spot" so that no driver misses them.

Massive protest erupts across India against Central government new hit-and-run law. Jain said he sent a person to check the speed limit so that he could take a call whether to challenge the challans. "The person told me that 50 kmph was the speed limit sign mentioned on the board.

## Delhi-Jaipur & Bengaluru-Mysuru to soon get GPS toll

**NEW DELHI:** Delhi-Jaipur highway (NH-48) and Bengaluru-Mysuru expressway will be the first two stretches where GPS-based tolling system will be introduced ensuring commuters pay user fee for just the number of kilometres travelled.

TOI has learnt that preparatory work has started and better geofencing of the Delhi-Jaipur stretch has begun for exact calculation of the stretch travelled and toll payable for the journey. Sources said currently more than 18 lakh commercial vehicles are fitted with GPS-based vehicle location tracking system and to begin with, these vehicles can start paying the user fee.

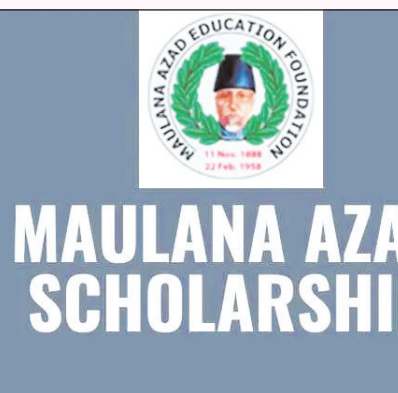
Sources said this new GPS-based tolling system will be tried on different stretches and will be expanded gradually.

## Ayodhya's four main paths are inspired by the four Vedas and four eras

**Yogi gov** is upgrading Janmabhoomi Path, Ram Path, Bhakti Path, and Dharma Path Banks with world-class facilities. Ayodhya establishes benchmarks for proper use of solar energy, mural painting, wall painting, modern lighting and Wi-Fi connectivity. Ayodhya, January 7. The Yogi government is leaving no stone unturned to revive the ancient glory of Ayodhya while equipping the city with world-class facilities. The four main paths in Ayodhya, namely Bhakti Path, Janmabhoomi Path, Ram Path, and Dharma Path, have been developed based on the concepts of four Vedas and four eras. These paths, adorned with mural painting, wall painting, pebble stone sculpture, modern lighting, and Wi-Fi connectivity, represent a global standard achieved through the appropriate utilization of solar energy. It is noteworthy that the double-engine government has accelerated the development of Ayodhya, transforming its dilapidated, narrow, and pothole-ridden roads into roads of global standards since 2017. After decades of neglect, Ayodhya is now rapidly establishing new benchmarks in development, and is moving forward continuously to solidify its identity as the spiritual capital by the year 2047. Undoubtedly, the leadership of Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath is instrumental in making this possible. Prior to 2017, Ayodhya was plagued by restricted power supply, irregularities in drainage systems, and a lack of cleanliness. Stray animals roaming around the single-lane, pothole-ridden paths were a great traffic hazard. This had become the identity of Ayodhya. However, since 2017, Ayodhya has rapidly caught up with the pace of development, made possible by the double-engine government and particularly due to the commitment of the Chief Minister. Presently, the four main paths—Bhakti Path, Janmabhoomi Path, Ram Path, and Dharam Path—are being transformed with world-class modern facilities and artistically crafted.



## Nearly 2,000 beneficiaries of now-cancelled Maulana Azad fellowship await stipend, hike



**Delhi:** It's been three months since Nazia Israr, a PhD scholar at the University of Kashmir, Srinagar, last got her stipend under the Maulana Azad National Fellowship (MANF) scheme. A Junior Research Fellow who got her fellowship in February 2022, Israr is also awaiting a hike in the stipend for the last six months. But neither the stipend nor the hike is forthcoming, and the financial strain is impacting her research work on development studies. "We have got the funds till September. Since then, we have neither received the fellowship amount nor

**According to research fellows, close to 1,900 beneficiaries in 27 universities across India are awaiting stipends for the last three months and a revision of fellowship amount for the last six months**

heard from the Ministry (of Minority Affairs) about the hike. It's extremely difficult to carry out our research due to a shortage of money. We have to pay rent and also travel for research," the Baramulla resident. She isn't the only one. According to research fellows, close to 1,900

beneficiaries in 27 universities across India are awaiting stipends for the last three months and a revision of fellowship amount for the last six months. The MANF fellows claim that while researchers and doctoral students covered under fellowship from other ministries such as education, tribal affairs, and social justice and empowerment are getting the increased stipend following a Department of Science and Technology (DST) order in June 2023, they are yet to hear about the proposed increase. Under the MANF,

## CBSE mandates schools to file SQAA focusing on curriculum

**Delhi:** The CBSE schools have been directed to file the annual self-assessment under the School Quality Assessment and Assurance Framework (SQAAF) which was introduced in March 2023. This will be the first year for the schools to apply for the SQAA 2023-24 to evaluate the quality enhancement processes on parameters set under SQAAF. The schools were expected to submit the SQAA report between April 1 and December 31, 2023, the deadline was extended to March 31, 2024, as only 40% of schools submitted the assessment report. Speaking to Education

Times, Pragya Singh, director, school assessment, CBSE, says, "To maintain the standard of education, the schools are being assessed on curriculum, pedagogy and assessment, which carries 40% weightage. Standards have been prepared in different areas of school functioning like curriculum, pedagogy, assessment, infrastructure, inclusive practices, human resources, management and governance, leadership, and beneficiary satisfaction against which the schools can assess for quality interventions."

Schools have participated in the self-assessment in seven

domains through specific performance indicators (as given under the standards). The CBSE has made it mandatory for all its affiliated schools that are applying for fresh affiliation/switch over/upgrade/extension of schools from the session 2023-24 onwards to submit self-assessment under SQAAF vide circular no 14 available on SARAS Portal. "Schools whose extension is not due may also undertake self-assessment as mentioned in SQAAF portal. The department will also review the infrastructure of a few randomly selected schools," says Singh.

## Delhi Nursery Admissions 2024: First List to Be Released On January 12

**Delhi:** Private schools in Delhi are set to release the first list of candidates selected for admission to nursery, kindergarten (KG), and Class 1 on January 12 for the academic year 2024-25. Schools began disclosing the final grades given to each candidate last

Friday as part of the admissions process, which began on November 23. For 25 per cent of the seats at private schools allotted to the economically disadvantaged segment (EWS), the Department of Education (DoE) will supervise the cen-

tralised online admissions process. According to officials, schools will conduct a draw of lots before determining the final list in situations where two or more students have similar scores. The deadline for the admissions process is set for March 8.

## CAPSULES

### CUET PG 2024 Registration, Application Form, Eligibility & Fee, Last Date

**Delhi:** CUET PG 2024 is to be held to determine students' efficiency in getting admission into Central universities for PG courses. The NTA released CUET PG 2024 exam dates from March 11 to 28, 2024. The due date for registration is January 24, 2024; it commenced on December 26, 2023. The Central University Entrance Test (Postgraduate) is an all-Indian entrance exam for postgraduate programs in Central and participating universities. The National Testing Agency, NTA, announced on December 26, 2023, the opening of registration for CUET PG 2024. The official CUET PG website, pgcuet.samarth.ac.in, is where candidates can submit their applications. Applications must be submitted by January 24, 2024. January 27, 2023, will mark the start of the rectification window, which ends on January 29, 2023.

## Aishwarya Rai, Amitabh, Aaradhya Turn Cheerleaders for Abhishek's Kabaddi Team

**Delhi:** During a recent match, Aishwarya Rai, Amitabh Bachchan, and Aaradhya Bachchan turned cheerleader for Abhishek Bachchan and his kabaddi team, Jaipur Pink Panthers. Aishwarya, Amitabh, and Aaradhya attended the kabaddi match in Mumbai's Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel Indoor Stadium. They were seated in the stands with Abhishek and sported Jaipur Pink Panthers jerseys. Jaipur Pink Panthers was competing against U Mumba.

## How UK's new visa rules will impact Indian students, workers & their dependents

**● "In 2022, around 55,000 Indian students were studying in the UK, according to Indian foreign ministry statistics"**



**Delhi:** The UK has introduced new student visa rules that prevent international students from bringing their parents, partners or children with them starting 1 January, unless they are pursuing a PhD or postgraduate research courses. Under the dependent visa, international students, barring undergraduates, could bring their family members, including spouses and children, to

the UK. The new restrictions will impact international students at the postgraduate level and in non-research courses. The UK has been a favoured destination for Indian students seeking higher education abroad, shows Bureau of Immigration data.

In 2022, around

55,000 Indian students were studying in the UK, according to Indian foreign ministry statistics. UK Home Office data showed that 1,42,848 sponsored study visas were issued to Indians in the year ending June 2023 — a 54 percent rise from the year ending June 2022. Of the 5,00,000 sponsored UK study-related visas issued in June 2023, almost 1,54,000 were granted to students' dependents. Indians accounted for almost a third of sponsored UK study visas during this time, according to the UK Home Office. The new rules also require that those pursuing PhDs must have studied for at least 24 months before switching to a work visa, such as a skilled worker visa.

## Science centres to come up at 2 govt ..

**Delhi:** Delhi government has decided to set up science centres at two state-run schools with exhibits and interactive models on virtual reality, immersive experience, augmented reality, holographic projections and astronomy apart from physics, chemistry, biology and mathematics. The science centres will be located in schools at Vasant Vihar and Karol Bagh. The aim of Directorate of Education (DoE) is to equip such educational facilities that provide



an effective method to students to learn science by way of leveraging interactive display of models and exhibits that demystify the modern world of technology and innovations," said an official. Officials said DoE

will soon identify experienced agencies to design the rooms and open areas and the exhibits and interactive models at the science centres. While technical specifications of all models and exhibits will be

framed by the agency concerned, the final approval will have to come from the education department. The total cost of the project is likely to be about Rs 3 crore. The aim of Directorate of Education (DoE) is to equip such educational facilities that provide an effective method to students to learn science by way of leveraging interactive display of models and exhibits that demystify the modern world of technology and innovations," said an official.

## 85 IIT-Bombay students get Rs 1cr-plus

**Delhi:** Many as 85 IIT Bombay students have bagged cool crore-plus annual pay packages in the first phase of placements. Most of the higher salaries on the IIT-B campus during this year's placement season seem to have come from the research and development space, the average annual salary for which stood at Rs 36.9 lakh, up from the previous year's Rs 32.25 lakh. In contrast, the finance sector that is hogged by algo trading firms saw a drop of 22% in average yearly compensation to Rs 32.4 lakh from Rs 41.7 lakh last year. Other sectors, including IT, software and consulting, saw a marginal rise in the overall average pay in the first phase of campus placements. "Our students have put in a lot of effort to match up to the requirements of the



companies. Many firms conducted interviews online which is not very easy to crack. Offers have been staggering and are coming in small waves. International recruitment is slow as the geopolitical scenario is not favourable and this is an election year in India, so many companies are just adopting a wait-and-watch policy," said a placement officer.

In the first phase that ended on December 20, a total of 63 students accepted international offers. Most of the international offers have

come from Japan, Taiwan, South Korea, Netherlands, Singapore and Hong Kong. Despite global and economic uncertainties, IIT-B saw a total of 1,340 offers being made till December 20, which resulted in 1,188 students getting placed. This included seven students placed in PSUs as well as 297 PPOs via internships, of which 258 were accepted.

The number of offers received overall, though, were lower than last year's phase one of placements.

## The medical college canteen offers only nutritious meal options

**Delhi:** All AIIMS, PGIMER, JIPMER, and other Institutes of National Importance (INIs) have received advice from the Center to make sure that their college canteens offer healthier options in place of high-fat, high-sugar beverages and other items associated with non-communicable diseases. The government has recommended whole grains, millets, and fresh produce as better substitutes. "Even small steps can have a huge impact on the nation's and society's health," Dr. Atul Goel, director general of health services (DGHS), wrote to medical colleges. According to Dr. Goel's letter, non-communicable diseases (NCDs) are thought to be responsible for approximately 63% of all deaths in the nation. Cardiovascular illnesses accounted for the highest percentage of NCD deaths (27%), followed by malignancies (9%), diabetes (3%) and other disor-



ders (13%). "Unhealthy diets, fast food (such as burgers, pizzas etc) and sugary beverages contribute enormously to the ever-increasing NCD burden," according to the DGHS. A similar letter advocating for a prohibition on alcohol use at medical conferences was sent by

the DGHS to all medical groups the previous year. The letter explained the connections between alcohol consumption and a number of illnesses and injuries, such as cancer, hemorrhagic strokes, and liver cirrhosis.

## PG med students to get weekly off, 20 CLs to ensure work-life balance

**Delhi:** In a major overhaul aimed at ensuring work-life balance of post-graduate (PG) medical students, National Medical Commission (NMC) has decided that all PG students will be eligible for a weekly off and at least 20 days of casual leave per year. The gazette notification issued on January 1, however, did not define "work hours" for resident doctors, which has been a demand of associations across the country. It mentions that doctors have to work for "reasonable working hours" and that they will be provided "reasonable time for rest" in a day. "We have been raising the issue of defining minimum and maximum working hours for a long time. It is sad that this crucial issue hasn't been addressed properly in the new notification," said Aviral Mathur, president of the Federation of Resident Doctors Association (Forda).



## Janhvi says she was disappointed when "Bawaal" was released on OTT

**Delhi:** Janhvi Kapoor recently discussed the negative reception her latest movie, "Bawaal," received. In 2023, it was made available on the OTT platform. During a recent interview, the actress disclosed that she had placed all her hopes in one basket and anticipated that 'Bawaal' would elevate her career. Janhvi stated that she pinned 'Bawaal' a lot in an interview with Film Companion. To be able to shoot that movie, she battled for her dates. She had hurt her shoulder, which was the reason "Mahi," the movie she was filming, was already behind schedule. The actress believed that this was her. The most well-known works by Nitesh Tiwari are "Dangal" and "Chhichhore." Both of them were huge hits at the box office. Janhvi also acknowledged that she hasn't yet produced a big commercial smash, but she hopes that her debut Telugu film, "Devara," starring Jr.



**When Manoj who inspired '12th Fail' met Vidhu Vinod Chopra, wept**

**Delhi.** Manoj Kumar and Shraddha Joshi, on whom '12th Fail' is based, were a part of a script-reading session for the film. Vidhu Vinod Chopra shared a glimpse of the emotional moment through an Instagram video. '12th Fail' has been winning the hearts of the

NTR, would alter that. She was getting to perform, and it wasn't just Varun and Nitesh Tiwari or Sajid Nadiadwala or her. She filled her basket with all of her eggs. The first 'jhatka' was that the movie ended up being

audience, both in theatres and on OTT. Based on Anurag Pathak's novel, the film is about a man who failed his 12th standard exam but managed to clear the UPSC (Union Public Service Commission) through sheer hard-work.

the kind that the producers thought belonged on an over-the-top platform. She was hoping for numbers from that movie in addition to validation, so this was a huge blow to her. The most well-known

## Kareena to Join KGF Star Yash in Toxic, To Make Her Kannada Debut

**Delhi:** Kareena Kapoor is set to star with Yash in his upcoming film Toxic. Yash announced his new film last year and revealed the title in December. While details about the film are still under the wraps, a new report has claimed that Kareena will be seen in the leading role in the film. If the rumour is true, this will mark Kareena's Kannada film debut. According to Filmfare, director Geetu Mohandas and Yash are likely to make the announcement of Kareena joining the star-cast in the coming days. It is also said that the filming of the movie will start in a few



weeks. Kareena is not the first Bollywood actress who will be working with Yash. In 2022, Yash was seen working with Raveena Tandon and Sanjay Dutt in KGF 2. Speaking of Toxic, the film marks Yash's 19th film. Not only did he release the title last month but he

also released a short video that seemingly gives a first look at his character. The video features a number of anti-heroes, including DC Comics famous villain Joker. With every picture of these anti-heroes catching flames, the closer we get to Yash's look in the movie.

## Ankita says she didn't think carefully before marrying Vicky Jain

Ankita Lokhande and her husband, fellow Bigg Boss 17 contestant Vicky Jain had a bitter argument inside the house. Taking to X (formerly known as Twitter), The Khabri shared a video in which Ankita hinted that her marriage with Vicky Jain wasn't a good decision. The clip ended with

Ankita weeping bitterly. The fight began over Vicky's closeness with Bigg Boss contestant Mannara Chopra. An annoyed Ankita told Vicky inside the house, "Suddenly Mannara is in your life... You like her a lot... You enjoy talking to her. Please carry on." Vicky then asked her,

"What's wrong in that? Please give logic, reason." Later, Vicky told Ankita that she has "unreasonable attitude." She angrily replied, "What is your problem? You are feeling bad because I spoke of Mannara?" Vicky then accused Ankita, "You drive away all the friends with your opinions."

## Manoj 'fed off' Konkana's energy to elevate his performance in 'Killer Soup'

**Delhi:** Acclaimed actor Manoj Bajpayee's mantra to elevate his performance in the upcoming series 'Killer Soup' was to "feed off" his co-star and actress Konkana Sen Sharma's energy. Manoj Bajpayee expressed how he always admired his co-star Konkana Sen Sharma for her acting finesse. "There are a few contemporaries that I have high regard for, and Konkana is one of them. There were moments while shooting when I fed off her energy to elevate my performance. Konkana's dedication and passion for her craft takes centre stage as I always see her strive until she has achieved what she has aimed for." "Her



commitment instantly shines through, inspiring not only her co-star but the entire crew," Manoj said. Konkana heaped praise on Manoj and said that it's very easy to interact and be comfortable with the actor. She added: "I have so much respect for him and the work he has

done. Our collaboration goes beyond the script, reaching a level of understanding where we can sense each other's moods, even when the cameras aren't rolling. In moments of vulnerability, he effortlessly lifts my mood with his humour." 'Killer Soup' will stream on

## Vijay Was Disheartened When Super Deluxe Got Rejected As India's Official Entry For Oscars

**Delhi.** Directed by national award-winning filmmaker Thiagarajan Kumararaja, Super Deluxe is considered as one of the best films of Vijay Sethupathi's career. A film about characters deeply rooted in reality had Vijay essaying the role of a transgender, Shilpa, which he pulled off with finesse and aplomb. His endearing portrayal of Shilpa's anger, longing, affection garnered him widespread acclaim. In his recent interview, Vijay Sethupathi recalled his reaction when Super Deluxe



couldn't make the cut as India's official entry for Oscars in 2019. Speaking with the entertainment portal Bollywood Hungama, Vijay Sethupathi expressed, "It was heartbreaking for us also. Politics, something

happened. It was not because I starred in the film. Even if I was not in that film, I wanted that film to go there. Something happened in between and I don't want to talk about it. It's unnecessary." Vijay Sethupathi is one of the

iconic actors in Indian cinema with many hits to his credit like Jawan and 96. In an illustrious career of more than a decade, Vijay Sethupathi has nailed all the roles, whether that of the protagonist or the antagonist. Now, there are reports that he might again essay the role of a villain in the film Thalaivar 171, starring Rajinikanth. Lokesh Kanagaraj will write and direct this movie. Vijay Sethupathi and Lokesh's collaboration has worked brilliantly in films like Master and Vikram.

## Santanu on future plans with Shruti: I don't believe in the idea of marriage

**Delhi:** Doodle artist and illustrator Santanu Hazarika, who has been dating actor Shruti Hassan for quite a few years now, but looks like a wedding is not in the cards for the couple. "I don't believe in the idea of marriage, basically having a name. As artists, there shouldn't be any sort of institution or binding that sort of puts you in a box. Marriage is a very conventional construct. And for me, I don't believe in such a construct because it will always keep evolving. Marriage is something that I've never thought about. We are happy where we are, and that's all that matters," Hazarika asserts. The artist emphasises the freedom he finds in avoiding societal norms and how they choose to let their relationship unfold organically, instead of focusing on the social media attention.



even regarding our relationship, for people to see. I believe that artists and art are not something that are independent. Whatever happens in my personal life inspires my art and my work, and vice versa," the 32-year-old says. "I am not affected by how people perceive my personal or professional life. So, it has never bothered me. About navigating the social media trolling and comments, I haven't found that difficult to do. What my loved ones and people

in my surroundings are saying matters the most. And besides that, everything else will just fall into its place," he further adds. Meanwhile, talking about his art form, he tells us, "I always had an interest in drawing. My first exposure to art was through comic books and cartoons, and I was fascinated by the whole idea of fantasy at a very young age," adding, "In the coming few weeks, I am going to launch a new range of products of Art X Electronics."

## Dhanush plays a dacoit wanted by the British in this high-octane drama

**Delhi.** Ahead of the release of Arun Matheswaran's Captain Miller, the makers released the film's trailer. Starring Dhanush in the titular role, the film also boasts of a star-studded cast, including Priyanka Mohan, Shiva Rajkumar, Sundeep Kishan, Vinoth Kishan, Nassar, and Edward Sonnenblick. The 2-minutes-54-second long trailer gives a glimpse into the world of Captain Miller. The trailer shows that the film is set in a pre-independent India where the British are in control and Dhanush's character is considered a criminal, a dacoit. Dhanush plays Easa, a local rebel leader fighting against the colonisation of his village. A dialogue that hints at what his character will be like is when he says that his behaviour depends on the other person's. There's a treasure in his village that the locals safeguard, but the British want to loot. Apart from Dhanush's character, the trailer also gives a peek of the supporting roles. Shiva, Priyanka, Sundeep and Vinoth's characters are shown. The trailer gives enough information without giving away



**Sonam on her post-partum journey, "It's taken me 16 months to feel like myself again"**

**Delhi.** A pregnant Sonam Kapoor Ahuja appeared on our September cover last year, as she candidly spoke about the challenges that come with it, preparing for the future with a baby and shifting her priorities. In conversation with journalist Faye D'Souza, the actor and

then impending mother, shared the side of pregnancy you don't often hear, especially from public figures. "Because of pregnancy, my body temperature has risen, I am constantly hot and sweating, not glowing, very unglamorous, non-movie-star-like.

too much. Captain Miller will see music composed by GV Prakash Kumar, cinematography by Siddhartha Nuni and editing by Nagooran Ramachandran. The script for the film was penned in 2018,

but it's only in 2020 that Dhanush said yes to the project. The film is set in the 1930s and the title is inspired by Tom Hanks' Saving Private Ryan (1998).

## When Manoj Sharma who inspired '12th Fail' met Vidhu Vinod Chopra, wept

**Delhi.** Manoj Kumar and Shraddha Joshi, on whom '12th Fail' is based, were a part of a script-reading session for the film. Vidhu Vinod Chopra shared a glimpse of the emotional moment through an Instagram video. '12th Fail' has been winning the hearts of the audience, both in theatres and on OTT. Based on Anurag Pathak's novel, the film is about a man who failed his 12th standard exam but managed to clear the UPSC (Union Public Service Commission) through sheer hard-work. The film is based on the lives of Manoj Sharma and Shraddha Joshi. Now, an old video posted by Vidhu Vinod Chopra is going viral, where he revealed that Manoj and Shraddha joined him for a script-reading session before the filming began.

CAPSULES

## In the 'Dulhania' series, Karan Johar disputes that Janhvi Kapoor will take Alia Bhatt's place



**Within the Bollywood community,** rumors began circulating that Janhvi Kapoor will replace Alia Bhatt in the third episode of the acclaimed "Dulhania" series. Following news of Varun Dhawan and Alia Bhatt's alleged absence from "Dulhania 3," rumors started to circulate. PeepingMoon.com claims that Janhvi Kapoor was supposed to be the new face of the franchise, which stoked rumors about Alia possibly having scheduling difficulties for the movie. But, Karan Johar refuted these allegations, explaining on Instagram that they are untrue and advising the media to avoid making unwarranted assumptions. In order to prevent rash assumptions about the continuation or start of any franchise, Karan Johar stressed in his statement the importance of accuracy and formal confirmation from the production company on their film projects. He emphasized the group's resolve to release information as soon as preparations are solidified and completed.



## Darjeeling tea production falls 9% in 2023 to lowest level in 6 years



**Delhi:** Darjeeling tea production in 2023 is estimated to be the lowest in over 50 years, with an expected decline to 6.1-6.3 million kg. This is a decrease of at least 9% compared to the previous year. The decline in production is attributed to factors such as the closure of 10 gardens in Darjeeling and a shortage of workers affecting tea plucking. Industry players also noted a decline in average price realisation during auctions, although this may not accurately reflect producers' earnings. "Generally, December is a lean month for tea production. In 2022, it

● **The December 2023 figures are yet to come but it will not make much difference,"** CTTA secretary general Kalyan Sundaram said

was only 60,000 kg in December. The December 2023 figures are yet to come but it will not make much difference," CTTA secretary general Kalyan Sundaram said. The output in 2023 is

expected to be the lowest since 3.2 million kg in 2017. "But 2017 was not a normal year. There was a strike that affected production," said Sandip Mukherjee, adviser, Darjeeling Tea Association. What has come as a further blow is a decline in average price realisation during auctions. Compared to 2022, prices fell 7.6% to Rs 315 a kg the lowest since 2015, when it was Rs 290 a kg. Industry players, however, said the average realisation may not be the best indicator of how much producers are earning. "Of the total produc-

## Fintech company MobiKwik intends to raise 700 crore and has refiled its IPO papers with SEBI

**Delhi:** One MobiKwik Systems Ltd., a unicorn fintech company, has once again filed documents for an initial share sale in an attempt to collect up to 700 crore, just over two years after shelving its IPO proposal. But compared to the 1,900 crore it had suggested when it filed the draft documents the amount to be generated through the Initial Public Offering (IPO) is significantly less. Peak XV Partners-backed One MobiKwik Systems Ltd. is now attempting to raise 700 crore through a new share offering, as per the Draft Red Herring Prospectus (DRHP) sub-



mitted A pre-IPO placement of up to 140 crore worth of the company's securities may be contemplated. Should such a placement be made, the next issue's size will be diminished. According to the draft papers, 250 crore of the proceeds from the new offer will go toward financing expansion in the financial services

industry, while 135 crore will support the payment services sector. In addition, 135 crore will be allocated for investments in data, product and technology, machine learning and artificial intelligence, and 70.28 crore would be used for capital expenditures related to the payment devices business and general corporate reasons. Through the book-building process, the offer is being made, with at least 75% of the issue being available for distribution to eligible institutional buyers.

According to the DRHP,

## Ola Electric wins 40% share in Dec

**Delhi:** Ola Electric stormed past the 40% market share milestone in electric two-wheeler sales in December, driven by deep discounts and an extensive offering of aggressively priced e-scooters at multiple price points. The company offered discounts nearing 18% or 20,000 on the S1 X+



electric scooter, its cheapest offering in the market, as it moved to grab a larger share of the e-two-wheeler market ahead of a

potential public listing early this year. While there were negligible discounts on the TVS iQube and Bajaj Chetak after the festive season, Hero's Vida V1 and Ather's 450 range of scooters had cash discounts of just 26,500, according to a report by Motilal Oswal.

## GST departments on an overdrive with notices and summons

**Delhi:** But tax notices have been issued to companies across sectors from consumer durables and smartphones to insurance and banking to online gaming and service providers. What has left India Inc worried is not just the multiplicity of notices, lack of uniform process, poor coordination between Centre and state tax authorities, and even understanding in the case of certain tax officials of the VAT (Value-Added Tax) era. Concerns around interpretation also exist as such notices mostly pertain to the initial implementation phase of GST, when there were several teething troubles and constant tweaks in policy decisions.

● **Sending show cause notices for FY 2017-18, which was the first year of the GST regime**

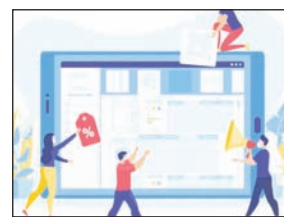
After sector-specific probes, the scope of the notices over the past few months expanded to cover "underpayment" of tax, "incorrect availment of input tax credit" and "reconciliations differences" between returns filed and financials. This picked up pace before the end of three-year limitation period on September 30 for sending show cause notices for FY 2017-18, which was the first

year of the GST regime. The limitation period begins after the filing of annual returns for the year to which the demand is related. Deadlines for filing annual returns had been repeatedly extended during the initial GST phase and later during the COVID-19 pandemic, hence, the limitation period for 2017-18 was also extended till September 30 this year. Notices have also been sent for subsequent years from FY19 to FY22. Dabur India, LIC, Bajaj Allianz, ICICI Prudential, Star Health and Allied Insurance, Maruti Suzuki, Akzo Nobel, Sheela Foam and ICICI Lombard General Insurance are among companies that have received notices or tax demands.

## New e-comm hubs: Parts of Hindi heartland, northeast with ease and are comfort

**Delhi:** Northeast and parts of the Hindi heartland are emerging as the new e-commerce hotspots, fuelling the next wave of growth for the estimated over \$80 billion industry, according to a recent study jointly conducted by consulting firm Kearney and Meesho.

Helped by rising disposable incomes and consumer appetite for varied options and styles, cities like Varanasi, Allahabad, Gorakhpur, Noida,



Jamshedpur and Ranchi are increasingly taking to online shopping. The trend is also in part being driven by the restricted presence of offline retail in some regions in the northeast for instance, geographical build of certain areas makes it difficult for offline retailers to set up shops. Imphal, Agartala,

Silchar and Shillong are among cities in the northeast which are home to digitally savvy consumers who can navigate online apps with ease and are comfortable shopping online. "Consumers in northeastern states have been early adopters of many modern trends, including the Korean cultural wave (K-fashion, K-drama, Korean skincare). Evolving demand there is typically not serviced well by the limited presence of retail, which encour-

ages digitally astute consumers to shop online," an analyst said.

E-commerce players, who largely catered to consumers in metros and tier-1 cities in their initial phase of expansion, have been building capabilities to service tier-2 regions and beyond, where several customers with large wallets are more than willing to spend on a range of online products to avail the convenience of doorstep deliveries that e-tail offers.

## Saudi oil price cut to offer India room for better deals

Saudi Aramco cut OSP (official selling price) of flagship Arab Light crude for Asia to their lowest in 27 months, a move that can work well for India if it prompts oil to slide further to boost prospects of cheaper fuel for consumers and keep the energy import bill from bloating. Aramco slashed the OSP by \$2



per barrel for February shipments, marking the second consecutive reduction after the \$1.5 per barrel discount announced in December for January loading. The world's largest oil exporter also pruned prices for North America, North West Europe and the Mediterranean. The Saudi move is seen as a bid to protect market share amid onslaught from rival producers. Asia is important as it is considered the growth engine for global oil demand because of China and India the world's second and

third-largest oil consumers, respectively. Saudi Arabia sees a serious competition from the US fracking boom as shale oil found its way into Asia around 2017. The tectonic shift in the global energy flow sparked by Moscow's invasion of Ukraine in February 2022 and emergence of new suppliers in South America and Africa poses a bigger challenge. India and China have been lapping up the Russian barrels shunned by western buyers since the Ukraine war as sanctions and banking curbs on Moscow.

## Indian single malts pip foreign brands in sales, overtake global giants for 1st time

● **"India is a fast-growing market and very diverse, with the younger audience experimenting and gravitating towards niche products"**

**Delhi:** Move over Glenlivet, Macallan, Lagavulin and Talisker - it's now time for homegrown single malts, whose sales have for the first time overtaken those produced by the global giants. Early estimates prepared by industry body Confederation of Indian Alcoholic Beverage Companies (CIABC) show that Indian single malts have cornered a share of around 53% of total sales in 2023. Of the total sales of around 6,75,000 cases (of nine litres each) of single malts in India last year, around 3,45,000 cases were retailed by Indian-origin makers, while the remaining 3,30,000 were by



Scottish and others. "In our estimate, the local brands grew by around 23% in 2023, while the imported ones grew at a more conservative 11%. This is a milestone," Vinod Giri, director-general of CIABC, told T8OI. The numbers are seen as a milestone for homegrown players. "It's not everyday that such a feat is achieved. From being mocked around till just a decade-and-a-half back, Indian whisky makers have come a long way as they are now second to none in terms of quality and refinement," says Thrivikram Nikam, joint MD of Amrut Distilleries. The craze for 'Made in India' brands has prompted Diageo and Pernod Ricard which source their single

malts mainly from Scotland, to join the party launching local brands. Diageo had introduced the Godawan in 2022, while Pernod recently launched its first Indian single malt Longitude 77. "India is a fast-growing market and very diverse, with the younger audience experimenting and gravitating towards niche products. Consumers want new stuff, and there is a lot of value in newness," says Kartik Mohindra, chief marketing officer at Pernod India. Paul P John, chairman of John Distilleries that makes its single malts in Goa, says the foreign brands are "panicking now" as Indian companies grow bigger.

## BYD overtakes Tesla as biggest EV marks



**Delhi:** These figures underscore the challenges Tesla will likely face this year, from competitors keen to capitalize on the growing demand for EVs. Tesla's stock slipped after the news was announced, before regaining ground. As well as besting Tesla in pure electric vehicle sales, BYD sold more than 400,000 plug-in hybrid electric vehicles in the fourth quarter. In total, it sold more than three million passenger vehicles last year. However, Tesla was still the top seller of EVs on an annual basis, delivering more than 1.8 million vehicles to customers in the year to December, well above BYD's sales figure of just under 1.6 million.