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

## Both camps corral MLAs, Nitish Kumr set to win trust vote

**PATNA:** Bihar's political landscape is ablaze with high-octane drama as CM Nitish Kumar prepares to prove his govt's majority in assembly on budget session's inaugural day slated for Monday. JD(U) leader Nitish, requiring 122 lawmakers' backing, seems to command a majority on paper after severing ties with RJD-Congress-Left Grand Alliance (GA) on Jan 28 and joining NDA.

With support of 128 MLAs, including BJP (78), JD-U (45), HAMS (4), and one independent, NDA appears poised Sunday to secure victory during the trust vote in 243-member assembly. In contrast, GA stands at 115 MLAs, comprising RJD (79), Congress (19), Left (16), and AIMIM (1). Amid fears of MLA poaching, both sides have fortified their ranks by corraling respective lawmakers. Probability of a significant exodus of legislators from their camps seems remote, considering the inherent risk of forfeiting their



assembly membership. With over 20 months remaining to relish perks of their MLA status, the allure of stability and security within their current affiliations prevails. JD(U) minister Vijay Kumar Choudhary exuded confidence in securing the trust vote, emphasising NDA's support base. BJP MLAs returned from a Bodh Gaya training camp, congregating at deputy CM Vijay Kumar Sinha's residence, as preparations for the crucial vote intensified. Against a backdrop of political maneuvering, RJD and Congress MLAs sought refuge at former deputy CM Tejashwi Prasad Yadav's residence,

bracing for the looming showdown. RJD MP Manoj Jha indicated that GA would not give NDA a walkover and asked Nitish to show 122 MLAs' support required to remove speaker Awadh Bihari Chaudhary, who belongs to RJD. Fate of speaker Chaudhary remains uncertain, with a no-trust proposal submitted against him. Chaudhary asserted his intent to preside over the session, while NDA contested the validity of his claim, citing constitutional stipulations. With Feb 12 marking 16th day since submission of no-confidence proposal against him on Jan 28,

NDA emphasised adherence to Article 179 of the Constitution and Article 110 of Rules of House Conduct and Business. According to BJP MLA Nand Kishore Yadav, procedural clarity is paramount. "A notice against speaker can be given even by one member of House. It is the first on the agenda of the House after the governor's joint address to legislators," he said. "Once no-trust proposal comes, speaker has to vacate chair and his deputy will preside over proceedings. Secondly, notice is given to assembly secretary and not speaker. House rules are very clear," he elaborated. Former additional solicitor general SD Sanjay cited Patna HC's judgment in Karpoori Thakur vs Abdul Gafoor case of 1975, along with Articles 176(1) and 181. "When any new session begins, governor has the right to address a single House or joint session. It must be followed by a no-confidence notice against Speaker if there is any such.

## For the first time in India, Radiocarbon dates of Weapons of Copper Age Civilization found from Nigohi, District Shahjahanpur Uttar Pradesh were obtained

**Lucknow** . The joint study team of Indian Journal of Archaeology, Are pura, Birbal Sahni Institute of Palaeosciences, Lucknow & Shahjad Rai Research Institute, Baghpat UP, conducted this important research. Numerous copper weapons were unintentionally discovered from Nigohi Area of district Shahjahanpur Uttar Pradesh. These weapons embedded in clay lumps were procured by Dr. Amit Rai Jain (Director, Shahjad Rai Research Institute, Baghpat U.P.). Some of these weapons along with clay chunks were studied and forwarded to BSIP (Birbal Sahni Institute of Paleosciences, Lucknow) by Shri. Vijay Kumar (Chief Editor, Indian Journal of Archaeology, Lucknow [www.ijarch.org]). The



study of the same was taken up by Professor Ravi Bhushan (BSIP, Lucknow). The antiquities recovered included a great number of swords, harpoons, axes, chisels, anthropomorphic figures, hand guard, choppers, knives, saws, among other weaponry. Even though numerous such weapons have been found at different locations of North India, no accurate date of these weapons has been documented as of yet, with the exception of some speculations.

In order to determine its correct chronological age, provenance, and other archeological parameters, a thorough research was conducted. Radiocarbon dating using Accelerator Mass Spectrometer was carried out by scientific team from BSIP, Lucknow on the contemporary soil and organic matter associated with the sample weapons. The radiocarbon dates ranges from 3610 cal BP to 4328 cal BP, which corresponds to Late to Mature

Harappan Age. To ascertain the provenance of organic matter, carbon isotopic composition and the C/N (carbon nitrogen) ratio was carried out. The d13C of the sample ranged mostly from -18 to -20 per mil (parts per thousands) and C/N ratio ranged from 8-15, which primarily indicates possible lacustrine environment. Extensive research is currently under progress to address additional climatic and archaeological factors.

## Mastermind' of Haldwani violence arrested in Delhi

**DEHRADUN:** In a joint operation with Delhi police, Nainital police on Sunday detained Abdul Malik, suspected mastermind of Haldwani violence that left five dead and dozens injured, from Delhi. Cops said Malik, owner of Malik Ka Bagicha, a spot around which violence had erupted, built an "illegal" madrasa and mosque in Banphoolpura. His son, who was not named, and SP leader Matin Siddiqui's brother Javed Siddiqui have also been held.

Police on Sunday apprehended Abdul Malik, the suspected mastermind of the violence that erupted in Haldwani on Thursday in which five people were killed and dozens injured.

"He was traced to the national capital and nabbed by us with assistance from Delhi police. He will be brought to Uttarakhand after completing the required documentation," said an officer who did not wish to be named.

Cops said Malik, the owner of Malik Ka Bagicha, the spot around which the violence had erupted, built the "illegal" madrasa and mosque on the Nazul land in Banphoolpura. Malik's unnamed son and SP functionary Matin Siddiqui's brother Javed Siddiqui have also been arrested.

"Police had detained over 60 people, including Malik's son, for questioning due to their suspected involvement in the violence. Based on questioning, he was apprehended," the officer added.

Police Headquarters spokesperson Nilesh Anand Bharne said investigation is on to identify others involved in the violence. "Five persons have been arrested, and over 60 detained. Probe continues to identify more involved and we are expecting further arrests in the coming days," said Bharne. The Nainital district administration has deployed a large number of police forces in Haldwani's Banphoolpura area after the violence that broke out on February 8 following an anti-encroachment drive.

## Madhya Pradesh High Court slams 'fashion' of demolishing houses

**INDORE:** It has become "fashionable" for authorities to tear down any house without adhering to "principles of natural justice", Indore bench of Madhya Pradesh HC has observed, ordering a compensation of Rs 1 lakh each to two petitioners whose homes were bulldozed by Ujjain Municipal Corporation. Justice Vivek Rusia noted the



illegality of the act, carried out in Sandipini Nagar on Dec 13, 2023, without serving prior notice to petitioners Radha Langri and Vimal Gurjar or giving them opportunity for a hearing. They

approached HC following the demolition. Rusia also ordered disciplinary action against erring officers. Justice Vivek Rusia criticised a trend of local authorities resorting to demoli-

tions "by drawing up proceedings without complying with principle of natural justice". Rusia further said: "It appears that in this case also, criminal case was registered against family members of petitioners and demolition was carried out." Upon HC's directives, Ujjain Municipal Corporation commissioner examined the cases.

## Election Commission snatching NCP from its founder is shocking: Sharad

**PUNE:** NCP (Sharadchandra Pawar) chief Sharad Pawar on Sunday said that never had a political party been taken away from its founder. He was talking in Pune for first time after EC's ruling granted NCP name and symbol to faction led by his nephew and Maharashtra deputy chief minsiter Ajit Pawar. "Election



Commission's decision was shocking. It not only took away symbol but handed over entire party to other group. This has never happened before, but EC

made it happen," Pawar told reporters. Pawar camp has challenged EC's verdict in SC. Pawar said people would not support poll panel's order. "I have contested elections on different symbols in past. Party symbol has limited use. For people, ideology and thought are more important," he added. Replying to a question

about getting a symbol, Pawar said, "We have not yet sought any symbol. EC is expected to give us an appointment on either Monday or Tuesday and it is likely to be finalised then." Responding to certain recent remarks from Ajit Pawar in Baramati that 'some' people may make an emotional appeal to voters by projecting upcoming.

## US threatening sanctions to spoil India-Russia ties: Moscow envoy

**NEW DELHI:** Russian envoy to India Denis Alipov said on Saturday while his country remains New Delhi's "reliable and time-tested friend", US is trying to threaten the relationship with sanctions. "In India, Russia enjoys a solid reputation as a reliable, sincere, well-intentioned, time-tested friend. Such an image was initially shaped due to major contribution of USSR to Indian socio-economic development, and it largely persists to this day," he said. The Russian envoy added, "US officials who come here do not hesitate to directly state that they are pursuing the goal of tearing New Delhi away from Moscow. Some Indian partners are forced to exercise caution, sometimes, frankly speaking, excessively, but there are also a significant number

## Appeasement politics: 90 in Karnataka have cabinet rank

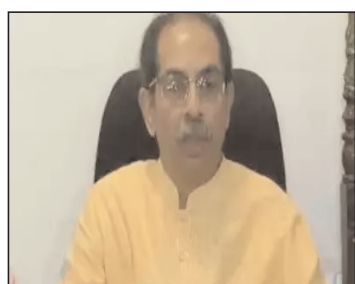


**BENGALURU:** As many as 90 people, including 77 MLAs and nine non-legislators, have been granted cabinet rank by Karnataka's Siddaramaiah govt ever since it took office nine months ago. Sources said such a contingent is, perhaps, the largest ever in Karnataka governance history. With Congress scoring a big win in the May 2023 polls leading to claims galore from different sections of the party, 77 of its 135 MLAs and four MLCs have been given the prestigious rank. These include ministers (including CM), chairpersons of boards and cor-

porations, multiple advisors to CM and even chief whips of the governing party in both assembly and council. Besides, nine members appointed advisors to CM with the rank and status as cabinet ministers are members of neither of the Houses. They include Congress victory mastermind Sunil Kanugolu, CM's medical adviser Dr H Ravikumar, former IAS officer and 'Brand Bengaluru' expert BS Patil and Dr Aarthi Krishna, vice-president of the NRI Cell. What does a cabinet-rank status entail? Apart from the inherent heft.

## Uddhav follows in Siddaramaiah's steps, seeks Maharashtra's 'rightful due'

**MUMBAI:** Days after Karnataka CM Siddaramaiah led a protest to Delhi against the Centre's alleged bias in allocation of funds to states, Shiv Sena (UBT) chief Uddhav Thackeray said Maharashtra must get its rightful share. Uddhav said Maharashtra pays one rupee as tax to the Centre, but only 7 paise is returned to

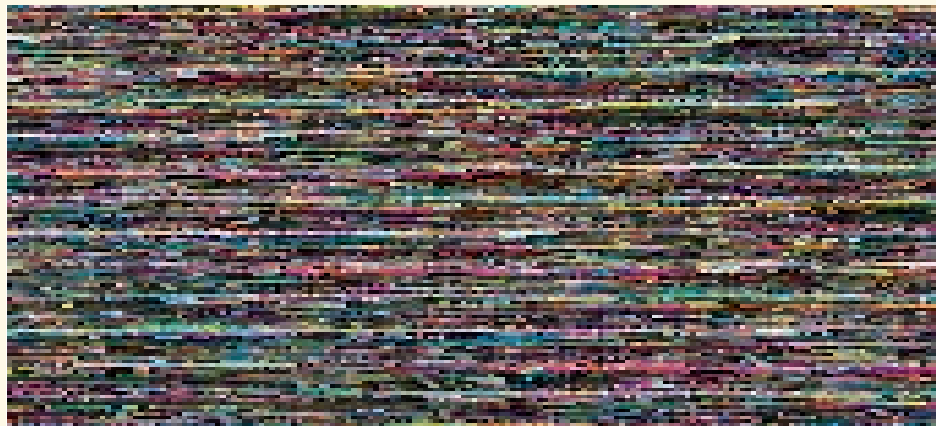


the state. He demanded that

the state be paid back at least 50% of the money it sends to the Centre. Speaking at a meeting of Sena's (UBT) Sthaniya Lokadhikar Samiti, Uddhav said that whenever govt at the Centre changes, he would take the lead to amend the laws related to the distribution of funds to states.



# Choosing the RIGHT Pre-Primary School for Your Child



As a parent, one of the most significant decisions you'll make for your child's future is selecting the right pre-primary school. This foundational stage sets the tone for their educational journey, impacting their social, emotional, and intellectual development. Navigating this decision might seem daunting, but with a strategic approach, you can ensure you find the best fit for your little one. Here's a comprehensive guide to help you make this crucial choice.

**Understand your child's needs:** Learning Style: Observe how your child learns best—whether through play, structured activities, or a mix of both. You can observe this throughout their day to day activities. You can see the inclination of his/ her towards more audio / visual activities or towards more hands-on activities. **Personality:** Consider their temperament and social preferences. Are they outgoing, shy, or somewhere in between? **Interests:** Take note of their interests and inclinations. Some schools

might offer specialized programs that align with these interests. You can see the inclination of his/ her towards more audio / visual activities or towards more hands-on activities. **Research and Visit Schools:** **Academic Curriculum:** Look into the curriculum. Does it encourage holistic development? Does it strike a balance between academics and play? Is it following the guidelines of NEP 2020 or NCF 23. **Teaching Approach:** Inquire about the teaching methods. Are they child-centered, focusing on individual needs and

progress? **Facilities and Resources:** Assess the school's facilities—classrooms, playgrounds, libraries, and technology. Do they support a stimulating learning environment? **Teacher-Student Ratio:** A low ratio allows for more personalized attention, fostering better learning experiences. **Environment:** Evaluate the School's Environment: **Safety Measures:** Ensure the school prioritizes safety with proper security measures and a safe infrastructure. Are they following the guidelines specified by

the government?

**Inclusivity and Diversity:** A diverse environment can enrich your child's learning experience, fostering acceptance and understanding. **Parental Involvement:** Check if the school encourages parental involvement through activities or events.

**Talk to Other Parents and Alumni:** Word of Mouth: Seek feedback from parents whose children currently attend or have attended the school. Their insights can be invaluable.

**Alumni Success:** Research the achievements of former students. This can reflect the school's impact on its students in the long run.

**Consider Logistics:** Location and Commute: Factor in the school's proximity to your home or workplace. Consider the commute and how it fits into your daily routine. **Try not to send your**

child to a faraway school as it will certainly hamper their routine and schedule.

**Cost and Affordability:** Evaluate the tuition fees and additional costs. Ensure it aligns with your budget without compromising quality.

**Trust Your Instincts: Gut Feeling:** After all the research, consider your instincts. Does the school feel like the right environment for your child? Do not follow only the marketing gimmicks. Visit the school at least twice or thrice before taking a final call. In the end, selecting a pre-primary school is a significant milestone for both you and your child. Take your time, research thoroughly, and involve your child in the decision-making process when possible. Remember, the best school isn't necessarily the most prestigious; it's the one that nurtures your child's unique potential and sets the stage for a lifelong love of learning.

## Seniors Hub Dwarka's Contributory Monthly Lunch now in 5-Star Hotel

This month, destination for Contributory Monthly Lunch was "Spring Restaurant" Hotel Radisson Blu on 9th February 2024. Shifting from the Food Court of Pacific Mall to Radisson Blu hotel, was a gamble but was whole heartedly welcomed by the members who were there in large number, to enjoy lavish lunch together in the 5-star ambience. Chorus, after the lunch was, next time and always same venue. Contributory Monthly Lunch at Seniors Hub Dwarka, popularly known as SHD, is a routine affair now where members eat together with their spouse, yes presence of spouse is mandatory. Shri RK Jain, President of SHD says that it is an opportunity for spouse to come out of their routine kitchen to enjoy with fellow ladies of the group. This occasion is used by them to share their experience and form informal groups to spend quality time together. Ravi Jaitley, General Secretary of the SHD reiterates that it is the spouses of the members who keep track of the monthly lunch date, which generally happens on 2nd Thursday of every month, and bring their better half to the lunch. One can see great camaraderie and bonhomie between members. True to its tagline "Facilitating Human Connectivity" SHD is providing a platform to not only interact with each other but also get intimate.

## UP Assembly passes lift and escalator Bill

Speaking on the lift and escalator Bill, Energy Minister Arvind Kumar Sharma said that after an incident in Noida, MLAs Dharendra Singh and Pankaj Singh had demanded that a law be made for lifts and escalators. Sharma said that a provision has been made in the Bill that registration will be mandatory for installing lifts and escalators in public. A provision has also been made for immediate information in case of an accident and for insurance and compensation. Once the Bill becomes a law, lifts and escalators cannot be installed without obtaining the approval



of the Energy Department. It will be mandatory for the agencies that manufacture and install lifts and escalators and the agencies that maintain them to register with the Directorate of Electrical Safety.

It will have to be renewed every five years. It will also have to be tested every year

and a fee of ₹1,500 needs to be deposited for this. A fine will be imposed on the owner or the institution concerned if they fail to get the repairs done and ignore the standards. Describing the Bill as the need of the hour, Sharma also said that states like Maharashtra, Gujarat, West Bengal and Haryana have their

own laws for installing lifts, but there was no such provision for it in Uttar Pradesh. He said that its implementation will not only curb accidents, but will also strengthen the system. BJP member Dharendra Singh expressed his gratitude to Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath and Energy Minister Sharma for bringing the Bill and said it will prove to be a "milestone". However, Samajwadi Party members Dr R K Verma, Amitabh Vajpayee and Kamal Akhtar talked out the "shortcomings" of its draft and demanded that it be handed over to a Select Committee.

## Welcome DCP-Dwarka, Shri Ankit Singh, IPS - Seniors Hub

Seniors Hub Dwarka, welcomed Shri Ankit Singh, IPS, DCP, Dwarka by presenting a flower bouquet on Wednesday, 7th February 2024. "It is always an honour and pleasure to welcome public servants on behalf of fellow members. It doubles when it's official like DCP who takes care of our safety and security." says Ravi Jaitley, General Secretary, DCP, Dwarka was briefed about the activities of SHD and the interactive sessions being held with Dwarka



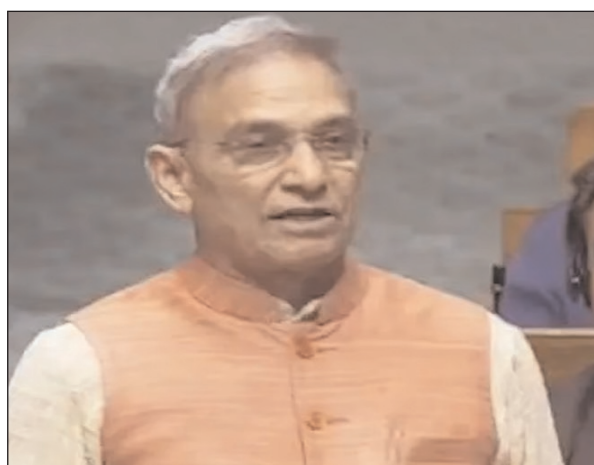
Police. It will not be out of place to mention that SHD members have a special attachment with Dwarka Police which is reciprocated by them by way

of holding special Meetings, Talks as also participating in the Tiranga Rally organised by SHD. "We look forward to best of cooperation and relation-

ship with Dwarka Police under the able leadership of new DCP, Shri Ankit Singh." Added Shri RK Jain, President.

## India's long-suppressed soul awakened with Ram temple opening

**New Delhi** Senior BJP leader Satyapal Singh on Saturday quoted from Jawaharlal Nehru's "tryst with destiny" speech, saying the country's long-suppressed soul found utterance on January 22, when a grand Ram temple was consecrated at Ayodhya. Initiating a discussion in the Lok Sabha on "the construction of historic Shri Ram Temple and Pran Pratishtha of Shri Ramlala", Singh also slammed the Congress for questioning the existence of Lord Ram, which he said has pushed the party to the opposition benches. The short-duration discussion during the last scheduled sitting of the 17th Lok Sabha began with the DMK members trying to raise the issue of Tamil fishermen and urging the chair to admit an adjournment motion. They walked out of the House after Speaker Om Birla disallowed the notice for the adjournment motion.



Singh, a former Indian Police Service (IPS) officer who represents the Baghat constituency in Uttar Pradesh in the Lok Sabha, said it was a historic moment to witness the inauguration of the Ram temple and the "pran pratishtha" (consecration) of the idol of Ram Lalla in the present times. "Shri Ram does not belong to Hindus alone, he belongs to everyone. Bhagwan Ram is our ancestor as well as our inspiration," the former Union minister said, adding that the

temple is not a "communal" issue as some people perceive it. At the same time, he slammed the previous Congress government for giving an affidavit in the court stating that "Ram Setu" was not a man-made structure and that Lord Ram was imaginary. "Where there is Ram, there is religion. Those who murder dharma are killed and those who uphold dharma are protected. The Congress is in this situation today because it rejected Lord Ram at that time," Singh said.

## Raising the height of NH, which could lower the incidents of stray cattle/wildlife

**New Delhi:** The Department-related Parliamentary Standing Committee on transport, tourism and culture has recommended raising the height of national highways, which could lower the incidents of stray cattle/wildlife roaming on the national highways. The committee made these recommendations considering the high number of crashes and fatalities on the national highways. The committee headed by Yuvajana Sramika Rythu Congress Party (YSRCP) MP V Vijayasai Reddy has also recommended the development of helicopter ambulance landing facilities at toll plazas across the country in a bid to enable urgent medical assistance to accident victims. Responding to the recommendations, the ministry of road transport and highways of India (MoRTH) notified that the National Highway Authority of India (NHAI) and the National Highways Logistics Management Limited (NHLML) were developing Wayside Amenities across national highways & expressways

wherein a few WSA sites in Delhi-Mumbai Expressway, Trans Rajasthan & Trans Haryana has the infrastructure provision for Helicopter landing facilities. The ministry underlined in its response that the recommendation of the committee had been noted for implementation "as per feasibility." The committee in its report on 'Issues relating to Road Sector' has further recommended that the ministry examine the feasibility of raising the height of national highways, which the committee feels could lower the incidents of stray cattle/wildlife roaming on the national highways. The committee while noting that it was "dismayed" that fencing/boundary wall to prevent wildlife/cattle is planned after several incidents of fatal accidents, has recommended formulating a mechanism to monitor the frequency of such incidents. Union road transport and highways minister Nitin Gadkari last year said that the government intends to build helipads and drone landing facilities along

national highways to deal with emergency situations. Gadkari had also urged the chief ministers of all states to put up fences along the expressways and national highways to keep stray animals off roads. The Centre too has launched several projects to develop roads in the country and prevent accidents caused by cattle coming onto the highways. "There should be some mechanism to monitor the frequency of incidents of wildlife/ cattle straying on roads even when the same has not caused any fatal accident yet., and proactive steps may be taken to curb the same," the 325th report of the committee read. According to the government, at 461,312, road accidents in 2022 rose by 12% and there has been an 11% increase in fatal accidents. A study also found that 69% of road accident victims are stray dogs, 21% are cattle, five per cent are Ox and five per cent are other animals. The committee has further recommended the movement of special corridors for the movement.

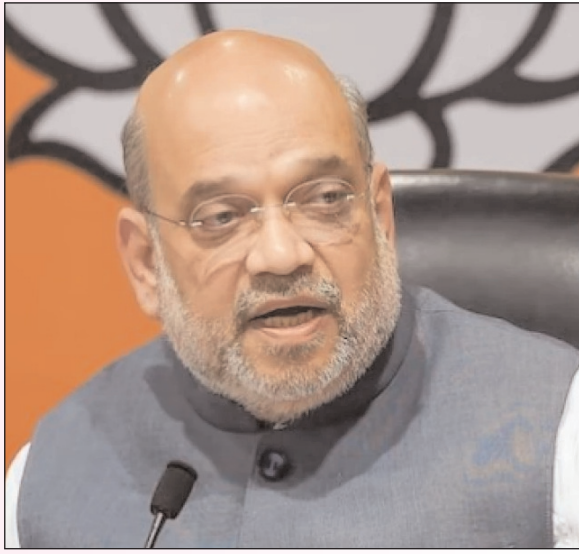
## Chaudhary lauds Modi government in Parliament amid alliance rumours

**New Delhi:** In a comment that signalled his tilt towards the Bharatiya Janata Party, Jayant Chaudhary lauded the central government in the Rajya Sabha on Saturday for conferring Bharat Ratna on his late grandfather and former prime minister, Chaudhary Charan Singh. He said Prime Minister Narendra Modi's working style is similar to that of his grandfather. Jayant Chaudhary, whose RLD is influential in UP's Jat-dominated areas, had announced an alliance with the Samajwadi Party last month. However, recently, media reports suggested that he was mulling an alliance with the BJP for the upcoming Lok Sabha elections.



## Shah accuses Congress of appeasement on UCC

**New Delhi:** Union home minister Amit Shah on Saturday said the Uniform Civil Code was a constitutional agenda signed by first prime minister Jawaharlal Nehru but the Congress party later ignored it due to its appeasement politics. Amit Shah also attacked the opposition over the Ram Temple. Amit Shah also attacked the opposition over the Ram Temple. "But the Congress had ignored it due to appeasement. The enforcement of the UCC in Uttarakhand is a social change. It will be discussed on all forums and face legal scrutiny. A secular country cannot have religion-based civil codes," Shah said at the ET NOW Global Business Summit 2024. The Uttarakhand assembly, earlier this week, passed the UCC bill, which seeks to replace the religious personal laws with laws applicable to all religions equally. Muslim bodies have opposed the law.



He also made a sharp attack at Rahul Gandhi over his Bharat Jodo Nyay Yatra, saying he had no rights to carry out the yatra because his party was responsible for the partition of the country in 1947. Amit Shah also attributed the delay in the construction of the Ram Temple in Ayodhya to appeasement. "However, due to the politics of appeasement and citing law and order, the construction of the Ram temple was not allowed," he said. **Amit Shah on CAA** Meanwhile, Shah

declared that the Citizenship (Amendment) Act (CAA) will be implemented before the Lok Sabha elections. The law, enacted in 2019, makes it easier for non-Muslim refugees from Pakistan, Afghanistan and Bangladesh to get Indian citizenship. The law had triggered a year-long protest by the Muslim community at Delhi's Shaheen Bagh. "Our Muslim brothers are being misled and instigated (against the CAA). The CAA is only meant to give citizenship.

## Land-for-jobs scam case: Court grants interim bail to Rabri Devi, daughters Misa Bharti and Hema Yadav

**NEW DELHI:** Former Bihar chief minister Rabri Devi, along with her daughters Misa Bharti and Hema Yadav, has been granted interim bail on Friday by the Rouse Avenue Court in connection with the land-for-jobs scam case. The bail is valid until the next date of hearing, which is scheduled for February 28. The Enforcement Directorate (ED) had earlier issued notices against Amit Katyal, Rabri Devi, Misa Bharti, Hema Yadav, and Hridayanand

Chaudhary to appear on February 9, 2024, for further trial in the alleged 'land for job scam'. Lalu Prasad's family - wife Rabri and daughters - appeared before the court, while Katyal appeared through video conferencing. The ED had filed a prosecution complaint on January 1, 2024, under the Prevention of Money Laundering Act (PMLA), 2002, against the four and two companies - A K Infosystems Private Ltd. and A B Exports Pvt. Ltd. The complaint

was filed before the Special Court (PMLA) in New Delhi. The investigation by the premier agency was initiated based on an FIR registered by the CBI, alleging corruption by Lalu Yadav, the then Railway Minister, in the appointment of Group D substitutes in Indian Railways between 2004 and 2009. The candidates were allegedly asked to transfer land as a bribe in return for jobs in Indian Railways. On January 9, the ED

## Smile Train India launches "Face to Face" Campaign on National Cleft Day

**New Delhi:** The world's largest cleft-focused NGO, Smile Train, organised a captivating photo exhibition at Select City Walk, New Delhi today, to commemorate National Cleft Day 2024. The event also served as the launch of their "Face to Face" campaign, spotlighting remarkable narratives aimed at increasing awareness about clefts. The exhibition was inaugurated by LIVA Miss Diva Universe 2023, Shweta Sharda.



The exhibition showcased the inspiring journeys of Smile Train supported cleft affected children through compelling photographs captured by an internationally recognised photographer Komal Bedi Sohal. The pictures portrayed the profound impact of cleft surgeries, highlighting the transformative journey of children with clefts as they blossom with their newfound self-assurance and confidence.

In India, more than 35,000 children are born with clefts annually. Many of them get bullied or remain isolated because of their facial difference and speech. Untreated clefts can cause numerous health issues including difficulty with breathing, eating, hearing, and speaking.

However, timely surgery and treatment can completely cure clefts, giving individuals endless opportunities to thrive in life. February 8 is observed as National Cleft Day by the Indian Society of Cleft Lip, Palate and Craniofacial Anomalies and cleft charities in India. Mamta Carroll, Smile Train's Senior Vice President and Regional Director for Asia said, "Face to Face - transcends being merely a photo exhibition; it embodies a tribute to the resilience and unwavering spirit of the young children whose treatments have been supported by Smile Train.

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

**MUMBAI:** Troubled

edtech startup Byju's has launched a rights issue to raise \$200 million from existing investors at a valuation of about \$225 million-\$230 million, a 99%

drop from its peak valuation of \$22 billion as it struggles with a funding crunch. In a statement, the company said that the funds will be used to clear immediate liabilities and meet operational

requirements. "It has been 21 months since our last external capital raise, during which we have cut our burn and worked to become a lean organisation, razor-focused on execution. This capital

## Manipur-based tribal groups oppose decision to scrap India-Myanmar FMR

**NEW DELHI:** Members of Manipur-based tribal groups have opposed the central government's decision to scrap the India-Myanmar Free Movement Regime (FMR).

The FMR allows people residing close to the India-Myanmar border to venture 16 km into each other's territory without any documents. The reaction of the groups came on Thursday after Union Home Minister Amit Shah said that the Centre has decided to scrap the FMR to maintain the country's internal security



and demographic structure of northeastern states. "The tribal communities in Manipur and Mizoram are not happy with the decision

of the FMR and they will make sure to take whatever steps required to oppose the decision at higher level," spokesperson of ZO United Ginza

Vualzong said. "We had a three-hour meeting with home ministry officials on Wednesday.

During the meeting, we spoke about the various issues that we are facing back home. They have listened patiently to our issues and concern. They said that they will take it up to the higher authorities," Vualzong said.

Zo United is a coordinating body which comprises all apex bodies like Kuki Inpi Manipur, Zomi Council, ITLF, COTU, HTC and all tribe councils.

## Jio-bp launches "You-Deserve-More" campaign

**GURUGRAM:** Jio-bp (the operating brand of Reliance BP Mobility Limited, fuel and retailing joint venture of Reliance Industries and bp), a leading mobility solution provider, today launched their You-Deserve-More campaign showcasing their unique customer propositions to elevate India's fuelling experience. Marching through the Amrit Kaal towards the 100th anniversary of Independence, India will continue to remain the bright spot for global energy. Offering "More" to India, the You-



Deserve-More (YDM) campaign highlights the unique customer propositions on offer from Jio-bp, focusing on three pillars of performance, service, and cutting-edge technology. The YDM campaign touches upon diesel delivering up to 4.3% higher mileage and petrol that keeps engines up to 10X cleaner through interna-

tionally developed bespoke "ACTIVE" technology at no extra cost along with a rapidly growing Jio-bp pulse EV charging point network. Also highlighted is the 24x7 shop for snacks, confectionery and travel need items, along with signature coffee under an international on-the-move brand Wild Bean Café, amongst other

propositions at the country-wide network of Jio-bp Mobility Stations. In line with their vision of reimagining mobility for the country with low carbon solutions, Jio-bp also retails a bouquet of energy offerings including compressed biogas, ethanol based E20 petrol, and EV battery charging and swapping. Even beyond Mobility Stations, Jio-bp is the pioneer in taking diesel to customer's doorsteps through automation driven pilfer proof mobile dispensers and patented packed HDPE containers.

## Saurabh Chaudhary Goyal crowned as State Co-Convenor of BJP Haryana Business Cell

**Kaithal:** king on the slogan Sabka Saath-Sabka Vikas, Sabka Prayas-Sabka Vishwas, BJP has reshuffled its organization and given responsibilities to party workers and leaders in many cells and fronts. In this series, senior BJP leader Saurabh Chaudhary Goyal has been appointed state co-coordinator of BJP Haryana Business Cell. Saurabh Chaudhary has expressed his gratitude to the state's popular Chief Minister Manohar Lal, energetic state president Naib Singh Saini, state in-charge Biplav Dev, top leadership as well as Kaithal MLA Leela Ram, BJP District President Ashok Gurjar for giving important responsibility by BJP. In the conversation, the newly



appointed state co-convenor Saurabh Chaudhary said that he assures that he will take all the businessmen and industrialists along and propagate the party's policies to the masses and will once again work to make the lotus bloom in the country and the state. He said that he will discharge the responsibility given to him not only in the country but also in the world's biggest party with full devotion and honesty. BJP state co-ordinator Saurabh

Chaudhary said that history will be created by winning more than 400 seats across the country in the Lok Sabha. Even in Haryana state, BJP is winning 10 out of 10 Lok Sabha seats. He said that the formation of BJP government in the country and the state for the third time will be a historic task in itself because today the people of the country and the state are happy with the Modi-Manohar government and the BJP organization from Panna Pramukh to the national level is getting stronger day by day. If it is, then the opposition will not be able to stand in front of it. time all the workers have geared up to bloom lotus in all the four assemblies of Kaithal district.

## ICICI Prudential Life Insurance launches retirement savings product – ICICI Pru Gold

**PANIPAT/SONIPAT:** ICICI Prudential Life Insurance launched ICICI Pru Gold Pension Savings, a tax efficient pension product that enables customers to make systematic contributions and build the desired retirement corpus to lead financially independent retired lives. This unique product is also India's first product which offers customers safety of the capital invested, complimentary health check-ups and make partial withdrawals. Customers can withdraw up to 25% of the contributions made after a period of three years enabling them to meet liquidity needs. Besides, the annual bonus, as and when declared, has the potential to further bolster the corpus and consequently the annuity. ICICI Pru Gold Pension Savings product empowers customers, upon maturity to withdraw up to 60% of the accumulated savings and receive guaranteed regular life-long pension from the balance amount, enabling financial freedom during the golden years.



Mr. Amit Palta, Chief Distribution Officer, ICICI Prudential Life Insurance, said, "Retirement planning has assumed great importance with the rapidly changing family structures in the country. ICICI Pru Gold Pension Savings, a tax efficient product has been designed to enable customers to make regular contributions to build the required retirement fund to be financially independent.

We are cognizant of retirement planning being a long-term process and that customers' financial circumstances can change. The partial withdrawal feature of up to 25% empowers customers to meet liquidity requirements without disrupting the retirement savings plan. This is India's first retirement plan-

ning product which offers both partial withdrawals and safety of capital invested. To ensure customers achieve their retirement planning goal, the complimentary health check-up feature which we believe will benefit customers in their planning process. Notably, ICICI Pru Gold Pension Savings product provides customers' a component of guaranteed benefit and annual bonus if declared, which has the potential to augment the maturity amount. Besides, customers can make a tax-free withdrawal of up to 60% of the accumulated savings on maturity and convert the balance into an annuity to receive guaranteed life-long income to be financially independent. ICICI Pru Gold Pension Savings is a testament to our commitment to empower customers to achieve their retirement aspirations. The product aligns with the Company's strategy of offering innovative life insurance solutions that cater to the evolving financial landscape.

## Ratan Tata finally completes work on his 'pet' project

**MUMBAI:** At 86, Ratan Tata is ready to roll out his latest and long-pending 'pet' project — an animal hospital for Mumbai. Conceived out of his struggle and the transcontinental quest to find advanced healthcare for his injured dog, the hospital is all set to finally see the light of day in the first week of March. Spread across 2.2 acres and built at a cost of Rs 165 crore, the facility will be one of India's few 24x7 hospitals for dogs, cats, rabbits, and other small animals.

In an exclusive interview with TOI ahead of the inauguration of the Tata Trusts Small Animal Hospital in Mahalaxmi, Ratan Tata said, "A pet is no different from a member of one's family today.



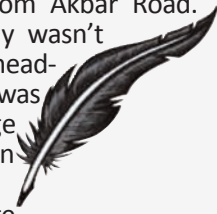
## Editorial

### Rao was a Batman of Indian politics

It's ironic to see the Congress disowning one of its own prime ministers, especially the one "whose impact on the nation's fortune went way beyond the economy", as Baru wrote in 1991. But then it was an obvious outcome for a non-Gandhi leader in the Congress. It had happened in the past with Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel and it took place after Narasimha Rao, as was the case with Pranab Mukherjee. Anyone seen to be eclipsing the halo of the Gandhi-Nehru family was systematically targeted to be pushed to the footnotes of the party's — and by extension, the nation's — history. This explains Sonia Gandhi's hostility for Rao, to the extent that the former Prime Minister was denied a well-deserved memorial in Delhi, even when lesser worthies could find space in the national capital. Author Vinay Sitapati, in *Half Lion: How PV Narasimha Rao Transformed India*, gives a graphic detail on how the late Prime Minister was denied a rightful place and space in Delhi after his death. "The home minister, Shivraj Patil, suggested to Rao's youngest son, Prabhakara, that 'the body should be cremated in Hyderabad'. But the family preferred Delhi. After all, Rao had last been chief minister of Andhra Pradesh more than thirty years ago, and had since worked as Congress general secretary, Union minister, and finally prime minister — all in Delhi. On hearing this, the usually decorous Shivraj Patil snapped, 'No one will come,'" Sitapati writes. Thereafter, Ghulam Nabi Azad and YS Rajasekhara Reddy reached out to Rao's family — Reddy, being the chief minister of Andhra Pradesh, promised a grand memorial for Rao in Hyderabad! Later in the day, prime minister Manmohan Singh entered the room and asked Prabhakara: "What do you want to do with the body?" To this, Rao's son replied, "These people say it should be in Hyderabad... This (Delhi) is his karmabhoomi. You should convince your Cabinet colleagues." Manmohan nodded. Sonia Gandhi was standing near, but mostly kept quiet. When Sanjaya Baru arrived, Ahmed Patel sought his intervention. Baru's bureaucrat father knew Rao from the 1960s — and he was close to the family. "Sonia's political secretary tapped him on the shoulder. 'You know the family,' Patel said. 'The body should be taken to Hyderabad. Can you convince them?'" Sitapati quotes Prabhakara as saying, "We sensed even then that Sonia-ji did not want Father's funeral in Delhi. She did not want a memorial (in Delhi)... She did not want him (to be seen) as an all-India leader."

The next morning, when Rao's body, draped in the national flag, was being taken to the airport, it was planned to stop at 24 Akbar Road, the Congress headquarters. "As the body approached 24 Akbar Road, located adjacent to Sonia Gandhi's residence, the funeral procession slowed. The entrance gate to the compound looked firmly shut. There were several senior Congressmen present, but hardly any cadres had been rustled up. No slogans filled the air, just deathly silence. The carriage stopped on the pavement outside, as Sonia Gandhi and others came out to pay their respects." "It was customary for the bodies of past Congress presidents to be taken inside the party headquarters so that ordinary workers could pay their respects. The family was somewhat dazed when this did not happen. A friend of Rao's asked a senior Congresswoman to let the body in. 'The gate does not open,' she replied. 'This was untrue,' the friend remembers. 'When Madhavrao Scindia died (some years earlier) the gate was opened for him.' Manmohan Singh now lives in a guarded bungalow a few minutes from Akbar Road. When asked why Rao's body wasn't allowed into the Congress headquarters, he replies that he was present, but has no knowledge of this. Another Congressman is more forthcoming.

"We were expecting the gate to be opened... but no order came."



## Maldives' Muizzu has joined camp China. Space for diplomacy with India has shrunk

After completing his first state-visit to China with great pomp and show, Maldives President Mohamed Muizzu returned to Male to take stock of the soured relations with India. The ties between the two countries were already on rocky ground, with Muizzu demanding Indian troops leave the island nation and his government not renewing an agreement allowing India to conduct hydrographic surveys in Maldivian waters. But over the last six days, more dominoes have fallen in quick succession. The question is: will

Muizzu pick up the pieces or leave them where they are? The latest controversy was triggered by disparaging remarks made by three Muizzu ministers against Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Indians at large. References to Indians drinking cow urine were a low blow but it wasn't until Indians on social media began encouraging a tourism boycott of Maldives that Male issued a statement distancing itself from the ministers' remarks and then suspended them. Some Maldivian MPs like Eva Abdullah suggested issuing a

formal apology to India, and former vice president Ahmed Adeeb told me in an interview that all of this could've been avoided if Muizzu had rang Modi. If Muizzu's latest trip is any indication, it's that he's unabashedly in China's camp. He praised China's Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) and, in what was perceived as a slight to India, called for Beijing to reclaim its number one spot as the country sending most tourists to Maldives. (Last year, India held the top spot with over 2 lakh tourists flocking to the island nation). Sure,

Muizzu and Modi had a sit-down on the sidelines of COP28 in Dubai last month, but his interaction with Chinese First Vice-Premier Ding Xuexiang at the same event was far warmer. China-Maldives relations will "thrive" under Muizzu's leadership, a statement from the President's Office shortly after the meeting said. With Bollywood celebrities like Akshay Kumar weighing in on the controversy, hashtag #BoycottMaldives trending on social media, Indian travel agencies cancelling flights.

# India closer to France for a balanced relationship in the western world

Prime Minister Narendra Modi with chief guest French President Emmanuel Macron during the 75th Republic Day parade, at the Kartavya Path, in New Delhi, on 26 January, 2024. PTI

Between them, US President Joe Biden and rival Republican Party's Nikki Haley seem bent on pushing India closer to France for a balanced relationship in the western world that has all the ingredients of strategic stability, both in the bilateral and multilateral contexts. That is if one were to leave out India's Russia relations, which many believed were rocky but became sort of rock steady all over again owing to the Ukraine War, where the long American arm was seen all over the place.

Yes, Nikki Haley, 51, is not even Biden's likely rival in the US presidential polls in November. She did not mean to question, challenge or rebuke India, either. Instead, by claiming that India was moving closer to Russia than the US, implying that the Biden presidency did not inspire confidence not only in New Delhi, but also in Tokyo and Seoul, Canberra and Wellington, Halley was only targeting the incumbent back home. But her choice of India, and not any of America's NATO allies, for example and her choice of words, gave the impression that she was trying to convince a certain sec-

tion of Republican voters that she was all American, and not Indian. It has to be front-runner and former president Donald Trump. Halley is trailing the Republican primaries and polled lower than their kind of NOTA in Nevada, but that does not make sure that Trump's name will be on the ballot. Indications are that at some point, either the Republican Party bosses or American courts could make it embarrassing for Trump's name to be on the ballot. Halley seems hoping for that day and is persisting in the primaries precisely for this reason. Maybe, like a typical Indian-origin woman that she is, Halley is hoping for 'sympathy votes' or 'survivor's votes', first in the primaries and later in the presidential poll. Of course, there is a long way to go this time than any time in the past.

**Disappointment for India**  
Biden kept India waiting and eventually turned down the invitation to be the chief guest at the annual Republic Day celebrations. Information about India's invitation having spread after a time (generally it is kept secret until accepted — which again used to be a formality), Biden's avoidably delayed rejection was a disappointment for India. It is not known how the Indian-American supporters of Biden and the Democratic Party feel about it. Not-so-official news

sources claimed that Biden's decision owed to the election year commitments on campaigns and other essentials. In his place, another Democratic president, Barack Obama, took a short break from his so-called pressing engagements back home to be present in Mumbai first and Delhi next, where he was the chief guest at the 2015 Republic Day. Of course, in true American form and style, it was not a visit confined to honouring contemporary India's tryst with destiny. Obama did hard-selling business in an election year and took back orders for Boeing, which he said would ensure 20,000 Americans did not lose their jobs. Biden was constrained by domestic perceptions, both inside the Democratic Party and outside. Maybe, Team Modi too thought that having Biden would be a high-profile commencement to the ruling BJP-NDA's campaign for the Lok Sabha polls in the summer. To an extent, it compares with the 'Namaste Trump' show that India put out for the US President of the time, in February 2020 amid the farmers' rally in New Delhi. The Ahmedabad rally in particular was only a mirror-image of the Trump show for the Indian prime minister.

, 'Howdy Modi' in Houston months earlier in Houston, Texas.

**Different cuppa**

This is as far as India's American relations go. Of course, there are the larger State-to-State strategic ties on all fronts, from security exchanges to defence procurement to information-sharing in scientific areas wherever needed. Yet, there are still deep-seated American doubts and suspicions about India's leadership, whether it was Indira Gandhi in the Nixon era or Modi now in Biden's time. In comparison, Prime Minister Narendra Modi is much more popular in India — as only Indira Gandhi was before him — than Biden is in the US. That may explain some of Biden's tentativeness but there is a history of Democrats playing the human rights card more against India than even Republicans, except Nixon during the Bangladesh War, when the situation was different. But India-France relations are a different cuppa. There has been political and strategic stability in their government-to-government ties, whoever is the ruler in New Delhi or Paris.

Thus, the non-BJP government procured Mirage from France and the Modi leadership could obtain Rafale fighters decades later. There were no hiccups in the two procurements. The French government of the day did not have to point fingers at Parliament as successive US

presidents have been habituated to cite the Congress as an excuse to propose heavily one-sided proposals, whether on political ties, economic cooperation or defence supplies.

**Typical French grace**

There was more to bilateral business with India in Paris than in Washington — where people would find ways to make India feel small at every turn and also as a follower in the US camp than being an equal partner. With France, it has been different, all through. Suffice it to point out that France did not join the US-led western sanctions on India after the 1998 Pokhran-II nuclear tests, which the US in particular found to be offensive and arrogant. It was France and only France. That has not changed since. In the post-Cold War era, US wants clients for out-sourcing its global concerns that have moved away from Moscow to Beijing, New Delhi, Seoul, Tokyo and Canberra, all fitting the bill. France did not, or does not play its global games that way. It has been looking for partners and partnerships that last longer regardless of changing political leadership that is a part of democratic polity the world over. This should explain why and how it did not hurt the personal dignity and national pride of French President Emmanuel Macron.

## Why India's \$100 bn proposed trade deal with Europe is different

In the pursuit of economic growth, the Maldives seems to have missed a crucial lesson: relying solely on a handful of major players isn't a sustainable strategy. The key to sustainable growth lies in opening up to broader economic participation.

**India is a case in point**  
India stands on the brink of sealing a significant trade deal that could have far-reaching implications. Negotiations with Europe are nearing completion, with the potential for India to attract a staggering \$100 billion in investment. This proposed agreement with Europe is noteworthy for several reasons. Unlike conventional trade deals focused on tariff reduction, India is poised to open up its markets in exchange for substantial

investment, a move that could inject significant capital into its economy over the next 15 years. The pact, unlike typical free trade agreements, comes with binding investment guarantees, a rare feature that could set a precedent for future trade negotiations. The investment is slated to originate from a special bloc of European nations known as the European Free Trade Association (EFTA), comprising Norway, Iceland, Liechtenstein and Switzerland. While negotiations involve this bloc rather than the entire European Union, the agreement could serve as a model for broader regional trade engagements.

The potential investments are earmarked for both new and existing manufacturing projects,

promising to create over a million jobs and bolster India's industrial landscape. Beyond the economic windfall, the deal offers additional perks for India, including enhanced visa provisions for Indian professionals seeking access to the EFTA countries. In return, the EFTA nations seek expanded market access for their goods in India, spanning processed foods, beverages, electrical machinery, engineering products, pharmaceuticals and medical devices. While the deal holds immense promise, its fruition has been a long time coming, with negotiations spanning back to 2008. However, recent reports indicate that key issues have been resolved, paving the way for a potential agreement, pending finalization.

## Coalitions emerged and have existed in India mainly to keep a strong party

**Bharat** has seen more than 60 coalition governments since 1967, when the first non-Congress government in Uttar Pradesh was formed by the Samyukta Vidhayak Dal alliance with Charan Singh as the chief minister. The first experiment lasted a little over 10 months. Coalitions emerged and have existed in India mainly to keep a strong party or formation out of power. They come up when a political force becomes very strong. Earlier, coalitions were formed against the Congress, now parties come together against the BJP. Quite often, complete ideological strangers have come together to pull the plate from under a bigger dog. In 1977, Bharatiya Jana Sangh and Leftist-socialist forces came together as part of the Morarji Desai government to defeat the Congress after the Emergency. In 1989, the Left and the BJP came together to support the VP Singh government to keep the Congress out. In 2019, the Shiv Sena betrayed the mandate it got going into the elections with the BJP as partner and formed the Maha Vikas Aghadi government with the party's bitter ideological opponents, the Congress and the NCP. FirstUp: Budget Session in Parliament, ED to question Hemant Soren... News today On an average, coalition governments

have lasted for 26 months. West Bengal's Left Front regime was a glaring exception. It was the longest serving coalition government which ruled for 34 years between 1977 and 2011. The 9-10 parties were tethered by a convergent Communist-socialist line, and they ruled without the anxiety of having to keep a bigger enemy out. It ruled with such absolute power that for long, the enemy was almost nonexistent. Now, let us look at what is happening to the Opposition I.N.D.I. Alliance. Nitish Kumar has ditched it and gone with the BJP, BRS has deserted it too, Mamata Banerjee has launched a vicious attack on Rahul Gandhi and Congress over the Bharat Jodo Yatra entering Bengal without her knowledge, Udhayanidhi tirade against Sanatan Dharma has made DMK's non-South partners squirm, Akhilesh Yadav is fuming at the slights from Congress leaders like Kamal Nath, more than half of NCP is with NDA while the patriarch Sharad Pawar and his daughter Supriya Sule are nominally with the Opposition, Jharkhand CM Hemant Soren has been arrested for corruption, Delhi CM Arvind Kejriwal may follow him soon, and RJD chief Lalu Prasad Yadav reluctantly prepares to cool his heels for some more months in the slammer. The alliance is in royal disarray, if not

dead already. There are broadly five reasons for this. First, the Congress is the elephant in the room. It still thinks it is bigger than what it currently is, and certainly weightier than others. Both could be misplaced, and 2024 general election results might be the only, albeit unpleasant, way the party rightsizes itself in its own estimation. Second, the Congress's success could come at the cost of regional parties. Its allies are already alarmed by its success in Karnataka and Telangana feel their space is shrinking or could be cannibalised by the Congress later. Third, there are too many 'secular' parties scrambling for the '20 per cent' minority pie. Mamata has spelt it out in as many words, accusing the Congress of trying to steal her Muslim votes. Fourth, the Congress does not have enough heft to carry an ideological hotchpotch. The BJP may get away with breaking a section of the NCP because its otherwise robust Hindutva subsumes the odd minority-leaning ally. The Congress cannot afford either a Shiv Sena trying to ride the Ram wave or a DMK continuously humiliating Hindus. And fifth, the I.N.D.I. Alliance does not have a deft backroom organiser like Harkishan Singh Surjeet of the '80s and '90s who brought disparate forces together.



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



**LONDON:** Climate activist Greta Thunberg joined a march in southern England on Saturday to protest the use of private jets and the expansion of an airport. Hundreds of local residents and activists holding banners and placards that read "Ban Private Jets" marched to Farnborough Airport, which mostly serves private aircraft. Some beat drums while others lit pink smoke flares. The airport, located in Hampshire County about 40 miles (64 kilometers) southwest of London, applied last year to increase its maximum number of flights from 50,000 to 70,000 a year. Groups working to fight climate change, including the organizer of Saturday's protest, Extinction

● **The airport, located in Hampshire County about 40 miles (64 kilometers) southwest of London, applied last year to increase its maximum number of flights from 50,000 to 70,000 a year.**

Rebellion, say private jets are much more polluting than commercial passenger airliners. Flights to and from Farnborough Airport carried an average of 2½ passengers per flight in 2022, the group said. "It is clear that private jets are incompatible with ensuring present and future living conditions on this planet,"

Thunberg said in a video that Extinction Rebellion posted on social media. "We're not going to let this continue. We're not going to let the rich few who are responsible for the majority of aviation emissions get away with sacrificing people and the planet," she added. Farnborough Airport said that it was an important hub for business and corporate travel, and that it recognized the importance of reducing its environmental impact. "The airport's environmental footprint is a fraction that of a traditional commercial airport, yet it serves as one of the largest employment sites in the region," it said in a statement. Thunberg, 21, a Swedish environmental campaigner who inspired a global youth

## NBFC rules not on par with banks: RBI deputy governor

**MUMBAI:** RBI deputy governor M Rajeshwar Rao said that large finance companies retain certain advantages over banks and face comparatively lighter regulation due to RBI's nuanced regulatory approach. Rao, who was refuting criticism that finance companies were being regulated on a par with banks, said that NBFC have a less stringent regulatory framework. The deputy governor said that NBFCs here have bucked the global trend of contraction and grown to control a significant chunk of the country's loans. In a speech titled 'No

more a shadow (of a bank' at a summit organised by the Confederation of Indian Industry here, Rao said, "Globally, the non-bank financial intermediation sector has shrunk by 3% in 2022, while in India have expanded by about 10%, the highest among all economic categories monitored by the Financial Stability Board." The deputy governor noted concern areas, particularly in NBFC peer-to-peer lending, where most of the lenders were individuals. He also raised the issue of NBFCs being

overdependent on banks for funds and lax underwriting standards in a bid to grow fast. "It's time that the NBFC sector comes out of its own shadow as well as that of the banking sector," said Rao. Rao noted India's position as one of the few countries experiencing an increase in share of total financial assets held by NBFCs. "As of March 2023, NBFCs accounted for 12.6% of the credit to GDP ratio and constituted 18.7% of banking sector assets, marking a substantial increase from 13% a decade ago," he said.

## Cyber frauds taking hawala route: Police

**Kolkata:** After arresting two traders from city in connection to a cyber fraud of Rs 1.2 crore, the bank fraud section of detective department busted a new modus operandi adopted by the fraudsters for transfer of the swindled amount. So far, six persons have been arrested in this case. The fraudsters were depositing the

swindled amounts in unconnected accounts belonging to the nabbed traders—Satish Patel of Madan Mohan Burman Street (Jorasanko) and Sekhar Balmiki of Asansol—and employees of trading and textile firms. Money was also transferred to a mobile and a garment store in Chattisgarh. Later, the amount was being dis-

tributed among the swindlers through the hawala route, cops said. This made tracking the money trail difficult for cops. The traders were arrested with the help of the information shared by a bar dancer in Kolkata, who was also arrested in the case earlier. The mastermind was previously arrested from Bengaluru.

## CAPSULES

### HC clears paves way for reconstruction of collapsed building after 25 years

**MUMBAI:** Bombay high court has cleared decks for the redevelopment of a 7 storeyed building at Kherwadi, Bandra (E) that had collapsed over 25 years ago. It has permitted Kherwadi Rajhans CHS to appoint a new developer to undertake the construction.

"Late in the evening on Monday, 3rd August 1998, at about 8 pm, Govinda Tower collapsed. The description... is that it came down like a pack of cards.

The ensuing panic and pandemonium are even now... a full quarter century later, no less alarming than they must have been then," said Justices Gautam Patel and Kamal Khata in the December 13 verdict released on Monday.

Govinda Tower was constructed on a Mhada leased plot by Apex Gas Services Pvt Ltd. Initially four floors were proposed and then three were added. There were two tanks of 20,000 litres above the seventh floor. The judges noted that when the building collapsed "as many as 80 people" were injured and there were "at least 33 confirmed deaths; the number may be more, as high as 42."

Developer Jairam Chawla of Apex Gas and hotelier Dilip Datwani had agreed initially to reconstruct the building. As the redevelopment failed, the residents moved HC in 2001 to direct Mhada and BMC to reconstruct the building and provide them with free houses. In 2009 A A Estate Pvt Ltd offered to reconstruct the building. In February 2014 it entered into a development agreement with the society but thereafter nothing happened.

## Locals throng massively at SARAS fair on Sunday

**Chandigarh:** The 12-day long SARAS fair being organised by Rural Livelihood Mission under the aegis ministry of Rural Development and Panchayati Raj at exhibition ground, sector 34 witnessed a massive participation of locals on Sunday. Rural women folks managed by Self Help Groups across the districts of HP are displaying and selling their handmade products. Apart from HP entrepreneurs from other states including Punjab, Haryana, Jammu and Kashmir, Uttarakhand, Maharashtra, Assam



are participating in the fair and exhibiting their products. Apart from local himachali residing in Chandigarh tricity, the fair witnessed an enormous turn out from locals who appraised the rich heritage of the hill state. Along with handmade

products, organically cultivated and processed pulses, spices, dry fruits, flour (atta), fruits, juices, chutneys, pickles and other forms of foot products were sold in abundance during the fair. People also expressed their inter-

est in handloom, warm woolen clothes, models of temples and musical instruments and other hand made products. The main attraction of the fair was the food festival of Himachali traditional dishes wherein visitors thoroughly relished the vivid cuisines. Along with Kangri, Mandiyali, Bilaspuri and Chambiyali Dham, Siddu, Babru, Momos etc. became the first choice. Later in the evening, visitors couldn't resist themselves on foot-tapping Pahari dances and participated in the cultural evening.

## HDFC Bank Starts with Comprehensive Cyber Fraud Awareness Workshops

**AMBALA/HISAR:** HDFC Bank as a part of its ongoing digital banking awareness drive, conducted a series of secure banking workshops in Delhi, Uttar Pradesh, Rajasthan, Punjab, Haryana, Himachal Pradesh, and Jammu & Kashmir. The Bank started 2024 by organizing over 900 such workshops sensitizing over 28,000 citizens on safe digital banking practices. These workshops were aimed at educating school cum college students, customers, law enforcement agencies, senior citizens, self-help

groups, and employees. Through these interactive sessions, participants gained valuable insights on safe digital banking practices so that they don't fall prey to Cyber Frauds. The workshop covered an array of pertinent topics, ensuring a comprehensive understanding of digital security: 1. IFAW's Background: Attendees were introduced to the mission/role of International Fraud Awareness Week in advocating digital awareness. 2. Cyber Fraud Awareness: Detailed dis-

cussions were held explaining common cyber threats like Vishing, Phishing, Smishing, remote device access, SIM swap, and UPI frauds. Real-life examples were used to deepen understanding. 3. Secure Net-banking and Shopping Tips: The sessions highlighted best practices for secure online transactions, spotlighting the significance of Vigil Aunty and offering invaluable tips for safe online shopping. 4. Preventive Measures: Attendees were guided not to divulge sensitive infor-

mation such as OTPs, CVVs, Debit/Credit card PINs, and UPI pins. Commenting on this Mr. Manish Agrawal, Executive Vice President – Credit Intelligence and Control – HDFC Bank said, "Financial Education and Awareness about frauds while transacting play a vital role in the fast-evolving digital era. The objective of these awareness sessions is to educate participants on various modus operandi used by fraudsters and the secure banking practices that they need to follow.

## Vikas Lifecare Ltd. announces Acquisition of Substantial Stakes

**CHANDIGARH:** Vikas Lifecare Limited makes the largest investment till date, in acquisition of major stakes in the renowned "SKY2.0 Club", Dubai. The acquisition is a share swap deal signed between Vikas Lifecare Limited and the holding company M/s Blue Sky Event Hall FZ-LLC, Dubai, for acquisition of 60% stakes in the SKY 2.0 Club business and all future business ventures in the relevant business segment at an enterprise valuation of about USD 130 Million. The acquisition process shall be completed within this Fiscal Year. The SKY 2.0 is "The Largest Nightclub in the Middle East and Asia", a striking standalone, Open-Air Venue anchored in the heart of the upscale "Dubai Design District". The SKY 2.0 is unlike any other venue; is an experiential trailblazer that promises memorable evenings literally under the Skies, offering world-class entertainment, ground-breaking technology and exemplary

service are all guaranteed. Innovative and experiential, SKY 2.0 offers an interactive experience by employing modern technology in the venue. Bendable screens, Grand Lighting Design, and a Vivacious & Jaunty Sound System wrap the walls of the Sphere-Shaped Venue. Enigmatic and designed to perfection, the architectural marvel of SKY 2.0 emerges from a seamless fusion of visionary nightlife experts and international architects, resulting in a masterpiece that captivates the senses. Sky 2.0 Club has hosted hundreds of Star-Studded Events while The King of Indian Film Industry "Shah Rukh Khan", The Indigenous Rap Star "Badshah": The International Rap Sensation "Little Baby"; The American Rap King "50 Cent"; The Moroccan Star "French Montana" and many more. SKY 2.0 recorded about USD 22.10 Million of gross revenues

accrued from the business during 2023, with about 38.80 % Net Profit Margin and about 36 % Growth in revenues registered while comparing with the Preceding Year. The nightclub business on the global level aggregates about USD 31.46 Billion while accelerating at a CAGR of 8.07%, whereas on one hand the home turf for VLL, India with 25% of the Population aged below 25 Years surfing on the surge in disposable income of Indians, growing at an exorbitant 17.4%, and the shift towards modern cultural paradigm, offers a Huge, Virgin and Niche Market, which is merely a dot in the numbers put up by the global revenues generated from the Clubbing Businesses. Vikas Lifecare Limited (VLL) is an ISO 9001:2015 certified company, conventionally engaged in manufacturing and trading of Polymer and Rubber compounds and Specialty Additives for Plastics.

## Announces plotted development under Hero Earth

**SONIPAT :** Real estate major Hero Realty Pvt Ltd (HRPL) has entered Sonipat real estate market with its flagship premium plotted development brand Hero Earth with a strategic tie-up with Spiti Group from Gurugram. This new tie-up will be the second project under Hero Earth after the astounding success it received for 'The Ark' in Gurugram Sector 85 where all the premium plots were sold out in a single day. Cushman & Wakefield was the transaction advisor for this deal. "Hero Realty's entry into the Sonipat real estate market will prove to be a game-changer. The company's commitment to excellence, innovation, and community development set a new benchmark for the industry. HRPL not only builds premium homes but also creates a thriving commu-

**This premium land on the outskirts of NCR surrounded by lush green fields and picturesque landscapes, Hero Earth offers a wide range of plots in Sector 33 Sonipat, with plot sizes ranging from 1115 sqft to 1615 sqft. The project boasts abundant common open spaces, creating a harmonious environment for residents. Hero Earth presents an enticing opportunity for individuals seeking their dream homes or investment opportunities. This location was chosen meticulously to provide residents with a serene and peaceful environment away from the chaos of the city.**

nity that fosters a sense of belonging and togetherness," said Dr Dharmesh Shah, CEO, Hero Realty Pvt. Ltd. This premium land on the outskirts of NCR surrounded by lush green fields and picturesque landscapes, Hero Earth offers a wide range of plots in Sector 33 Sonipat, with plot sizes ranging from 1115 sqft to 1615 sqft. The project boasts abundant common open spaces,

creating a harmonious environment for residents. Hero Earth presents an enticing opportunity for individuals seeking their dream homes or investment opportunities. This location was chosen meticulously to provide residents with a serene and peaceful environment away from the chaos of the city. Speaking on the occasion, Mr. Rohit Dalal and Ashish Dalal, the Promoters of Spiti

Group said "We are excited to partner with an iconic brand like Hero Realty. This venture would offer best in category plots to consumers in the Sonapat region." Gurugram based, Spiti Group has diversified interests in education, retail, farming and real estate development. Spiti has upcoming projects of plotted developments in Sector 99-A Gurugram, Farukhnagar and Pataudi. Hero Realty, which has a reputation for delivering exceptional projects across the country, went above and beyond to ensure that every aspect of the project is meticulously planned and executed. From the construction materials to the landscaping, no detail was overlooked. The company's commitment to quality was evident in every corner of Hero Earth.

## Temasek offloads 8% in Manipal Health, Mubadala picks up stake

**Temasek offloads 8% in Manipal Health, Mubadala picks up stake Bengaluru:** Singapore's sovereign wealth fund Temasek Holdings has offloaded 8% in Bengaluru-based Manipal Health Enterprises (MHE) paring its stake to 51%, sources told TOI. New investors -- Mubadala Investment Company (Mubadala), Novo Holdings and California Public Employees' Retirement System (CalPERS) -- have bought a minority stake from Temasek, the company said in a statement. Post the transaction, Temasek will continue to hold a majority stake in MHE.

Camilla Macapili Languille, head of life sciences at Mubadala, said, "Given the ever-increasing demand for high-quality hospital care across India, we look forward to supporting Manipal's growth journey in the years ahead."



## Parliament approves 3 bills on J-K local bodies' quota, SC/ST lists

**New Delhi:** The Rajya Sabha on Friday passed three bills pertaining to reservation for Other Backward Classes (OBCs) in local bodies and modification of the lists of Scheduled Castes (SC) and Scheduled Tribes (ST) in Jammu & Kashmir. Rajya Sabha cleared the 3 bills by a voice vote on Friday. (ANI)



Rajya Sabha cleared the 3 bills by a voice vote on Friday. (ANI) The Jammu and Kashmir Local Bodies Laws (Amendment) Bill, 2024, the Constitution (Scheduled Castes) Order (Amendment) Bill, 2024 and the Constitution (Jammu and Kashmir) Scheduled Tribes Order (Amendment) Bill, 2024 – all of which were cleared by the Lok Sabha on Tuesday – were tabled and passed by voice vote in the Rajya Sabha. The Jammu and Kashmir Local Bodies Laws

(Amendment) Bill, 2024 seeks to provide reservation to OBCs in panchayats and municipalities in Jammu & Kashmir and bring consistency in the local body laws of the Union territory with the provisions of the Constitution. Currently, there is no provision for reservation of seats for OBCs in panchayats and municipalities of the Union territory. Read more: Watch: Massive avalanche hits Jammu and Kashmir's Sonamarg, no damage Speaking on the legislation, minister of

state for home affairs Nityananda Rai said the government has taken several steps for the welfare of OBCs in Jammu & Kashmir and this amendment is another step in that direction. According to Rai, there are three main amendments to the bill. Firstly, the bill ensures reservation for OBCs in panchayats and municipal bodies in Jammu & Kashmir. Secondly, the state election commission will be in-charge of conducting elections to panchayats and municipalities, he said.

## Govt, RBI measures have kept inflation in 2-6% range: Finance minister

**NEW DELHI:** Finance ministry said the Indian economy has remained resilient amid global headwinds on the back of robust domestic demand, an investment-led strategy due to a transformed climate and high level of public spending, macro-economic stability, apart from a spate of reforms initiated by government over the last 10 years.

A review of the Indian economy released by the ministry said inflation has been reigned in within 2-6% band because of steps taken by government and RBI. It, however, warned of risks to the external sector from sticky inflation, sluggish growth and fiscal pressures in the global economy, with the tension around Red Sea seen as a potential threat. "Potential risks are expected to emanate from ongoing geopolitical tensions and the recent surge in shipping costs due to re-routing to avoid security risks in international waters, which contains

the potential for triggering inflation, especially in terms of energy costs," the 63-page document released ahead of the interim Budget said. When it came to India, it appeared upbeat on the overall prospect. "Ten years ago, India was the 10th largest economy in the world, with a GDP of \$1.9 trillion at current market prices. Today, it is the 5th largest with a GDP of \$3.7 trillion (estimated FY24), despite the pandemic and inheriting an economy with macro imbalances and a broken financial sector. This ten-year journey is marked by several reforms, both substantive and incremental, which have significantly contributed to the country's economic progress. These reforms have also delivered an economic resilience that the country will need to deal with unanticipated global shocks in the future," the review said. The report said private consumption has been a major growth driver,

post-pandemic, helping counter some of the adverse impact of geopolitical risks and sluggish global demand. It said consumption expenditure is balanced across all components, including durables, semi-durables and services. Consumption demand has got a boost from government's financial inclusion drive and more inclusiveness of rural India, the report argued.

It argued this has contributed to boost private sector capital investment, helping India emerge as fastest growing major economy. While improved balance sheets of banks and companies have helped, a large focus on infrastructure, along with reforms, have pushed growth. "Multiple proxy indicators and industry reports point to emergence of green shoots of private capex upcycle in The report said non-performing assets have come down and there is a strong demand for loans.

## Shohei Ohtani tries to blend in with Los Angeles Dodgers, even if that might prove impossible

**NEW DELHI:** In his new spring training environment, Shohei Ohtani made a notable entrance, clad in a plain white T-shirt boldly emblazoned with the word "BOSS" in large, dark letters. While Ohtani may not hold the reins of the Los Angeles Dodgers, his presence undeniably commands attention as the two-time Most Valuable Player. Addressing a crowd of over 50 reporters during his inaugural interview at Camelback Ranch, Ohtani found himself in the spotlight, fielding inquiries as baseball's sole \$700 million figure. The spectacle highlights the challenge of blending in when one is the focal point.

Yet, Ohtani endeavors to assimilate seamlessly, adopting a rookie-like demeanor in his new team environment. "I'm on a brand new team, so I'm going to act like a rookie," Ohtani remarked through an interpreter, emphasizing his intent to foster camaraderie among teammates.

As the Dodgers kicked off their spring training with pitchers and catchers reporting, Ohtani's multifaceted talents take center stage. Although his pitching duties are paused due to recovery from elbow surgery, his prowess at the plate remains undiminished. Despite missing a substantial portion of the previous season, Ohtani's offensive performance was stellar, boasting a .304 batting average alongside 44 home runs.

Now liberated from pitching concerns, Ohtani anticipates further offensive prowess. "I feel like there's not just one level, but several levels ahead offensive-wise," he expressed.

, poised to elevate his game amidst a stacked Dodgers lineup.

Manager Dave Roberts acknowledges Ohtani's deliberate approach, noting his teammates' keen observation of the superstar's methods. "Everything he does is intentional, which is pretty amazing, but not surprising," Roberts remarked, emphasizing Ohtani's commitment to victory as a Dodger.

## BRS leader meets Revanth, set to join Cong with his wife

**Bharat Rashtra Samithi (BRS)** legislative council member (MLC) and former Telangana minister Patnam Mahender Reddy met chief minister A Revanth Reddy on Thursday night and announced his intention to quit the BRS and join the ruling Congress.

Mahender Reddy, along with his wife Sunitha, who is the chairperson of the Vikarabad zilla parishad, called on the chief minister at the latter's residence and discussed his plans to join the Congress. State



health minister Damodar Rajanarasimha and senior leader Rohin Reddy were also present at the meeting. Speaking to reporters later, Sunitha said she and her husband would

formally join the Congress party within a week. "We have served the BRS for a long time, but have not got any recognition there. We have decided to quit the party after consulting our followers and

well-wishers," she said.

According to a Congress leader familiar with the development said Mahender Reddy has requested the chief minister to consider his candidature for Lok Sabha elections from Chevella parliamentary constituency. In fact, Mahender Reddy had been sulking in the BRS ever since he was denied the party ticket for the assembly elections from Tandur, which was given to sitting MLA Pilot Rohit Reddy.

## Kirill go-ahead goal pushes Minnesota Wild past Pittsburgh Penguins

**NEW DELHI:** In a thrilling matchup in St. Paul, Minnesota, the Minnesota Wild clinched a hard-fought 3-2 victory over the Pittsburgh Penguins, with Kirill Kaprizov emerging as the hero with the go-ahead goal midway through the third period. Kaprizov's decisive strike, accompanied by goals from Matt Boldy and Jonas Brodin, propelled the Wild to their second consecutive win following the NHL All-Star break. The electric atmosphere was further

enhanced by the Wild's celebration of "Marc-Andre Fleury Night," paying tribute to the veteran goaltender with pregame ceremonies and heartfelt video tributes. Fleury, living up to the occasion, showcased his brilliance by turning away 34 of the 36 shots fired by his former team, securing his 553rd career win in an impressive display between the pipes. Pittsburgh, despite spirited efforts, fell short in their quest for victory, with Reilly Smith and Sidney

Crosby notching goals for the Penguins. Goaltender Alex Nedeljkovic made 27 saves but couldn't prevent the Penguins from succumbing to defeat. The Wild drew first blood with a power-play goal late in the first period, as Kaprizov orchestrated a slick pass to Boldy, who rifled home a wrist shot from the slot. However, Pittsburgh quickly responded in the second period, as Evgeni Malkin set up Smith for a thunderous one-timer, leveling the score at 1-

1. Undeterred, the Wild surged ahead once more midway through the second period, with Brodin exhibiting his offensive prowess by maneuvering past defenders for a skillful finish, reclaiming the lead for Minnesota. The relentless Penguins fought back early in the third period, with Crosby capitalizing on the power play to knot the game at 2-2. Yet, it was Kaprizov who proved to be the difference-maker, seizing the moment with a timely goal off a broken play, restoring.

## Second baseman Jonathan India and Cincinnati Reds agree to 2-year contract

**NEW DELHI:** The Cincinnati Reds and second baseman Jonathan India have reached a two-year contract agreement, effectively sidestepping an arbitration hearing that was slated for the following week. India, the recipient of the 2021 NL Rookie of the Year award, will continue to don the Reds uniform under this new deal. India, who was handpicked by Cincinnati as the fifth overall selection in the 2018 amateur draft, has swiftly solidified his place within the team's roster. Over the course of three seasons, he has showcased his prowess at the plate, boasting a .255 batting average complemented by 48 home runs, 171 RBIs, and an impressive on-base percentage of .350.

As India entered arbitration eligibility for the first time, negotiations ensued between the player and the Reds management. India sought a significant increase in salary, tabling a request for \$4 million, a substantial leap from his previous \$760,000 earnings. Conversely, the Reds countered with an offer of \$3.2 million when arbitration salaries were initially exchanged last month. The agreement reached between the two parties now provides clarity and stability for India's future with the team. However, India's continued presence in the lineup poses a challenge for the Reds, as they navigate the influx of young talent vying for playing time.

With the emergence of promising prospects such as Elly De La Cruz, Matt McLain, Spencer Steer, Christian Encarnacion-Strand, and Noelvi Marte, alongside the addition of infielder Jeimer Candelario through free agency, the Reds find themselves in a position of strategic roster management. Balancing the development of these burgeoning talents with India's established role will be a focal point for the team's coaching staff as they embark on the upcoming season. In securing India's services for the next two years, the Reds have made a commitment to continuity and stability within their roster, setting the stage for a promising future both on and off the field.

## Believe in Yourself

Believe in Yourself Once upon a time, there was a bunch of tiny frogs who arranged a running competition. The goal was to reach the top of a very high tower. A big crowd had gathered around the tower to see the race and cheer on the contestants....The race began...No one in the crowd believed that the tiny frogs would reach the top of the tower. You heard statements such as... "Oh, it is WAY too difficult!!!" "They will NEVER make it to the top." "Not a chance that they will succeed. The tower is too high!" The tiny frogs began collapsing one by one, except for those, who in a fresh tempo. They were climbing higher and higher. The crowd continued to yell, "It is too difficult!!!" No one will make it!" More tiny frogs got tired and gave up. But ONE tiny frog continued higher



Story by Avinash Mashani (Author and Motivational Speaker)

and higher and higher, this one wouldn't give up! In the end, everyone else had given up climbing the tower.

Except for the one tiny frog that after a big effort, was the only one who reached the top! Then all the other tiny frogs wanted to know how this one frog managed to do it? A contestant asked the tiny frog how he had found the strength to

succeed and reach the goal. The frog did not respond anything; it stayed mum with that big smile of success on his face. Later it turned out that the winner was DEAF!!!! The wisdom of this story is "Never listen to other people's tendencies. Likely they will be negative or pessimistic. Because they take your most wonderful dreams and wishes away

from you — the ones you have in your heart!!!" People tell you that you cannot do it or it is too difficult or it is impossible. It is their insecurities and they try to stop you. So it is better to be deaf and focus on your goals. Always believe in yourself and always think I can do this! Always think of the power words you have.

## Haldwani violence: Curfew partially lifted; 6 rioters killed, 5 arrested

**Haldwani** Authorities on Saturday lifted the curfew from the outer areas of violence-hit Haldwani in Uttarakhand, two days after restrictions were imposed as communal tensions and violence gripped the town over a demolition drive. Six rioters were killed in Thursday's violence, officials said. However, the curfew will remain in place in the Banbhoolpura area where massive violence took place. The internet services also remain suspended in violence-hit Haldwani, the police said. Security personnel walk past bricks and stones scattered on a road, a day after the religious clashes sparked following the destruction of a madrasa.

(An Islamic school) in Haldwani district of the northern state of Uttarakhand on February 9, 2024.



## The Karnataka Congress legislators staged a protest in New Delhi

**NEW DELHI:** The Karnataka Congress legislators staged a protest in New Delhi against the "financial injustice" meted out to the state in the last five years. The protest by all Congress legislators and MPs from the state, including ministers that comes ahead of the ensuing Lok Sabha polls would demand Centre set right the losses allegedly incurred by the Karnataka to the tune of Rs 1.87 lakh crore, during five years under the 15th finance commission. "Karnataka is number two as far as tax collection is concerned, Maharashtra is number one. As a matter of fact, this year Karnataka is contributing more than Rs 4.30 lakh crores as tax. If we collect Rs 100 as tax and give it to the government of India, we are only getting Rs 12-13 back, that is our share," Karnataka CM Siddaramaiah said, while addressing the demonstrators at Jantar Mantar.



When questioned about the timing of the protest, with the 15th finance commission tenure coming to an end and demand for increased devolution to Karnataka may not find any voice, DK Shivakumar had said the intent of the protest was to ensure that Delhi takes note of the injustice and that it has the mandate to do so. Amidst a proposal within the ruling Congress in Karnataka suggesting that Siddaramaiah spearhead the formation of a forum comprising southern states to ensure fair distribution of resources from the Centre, including tax devolution from the divisible pool, a protest in Delhi has been organized. Siddaramaiah has repeatedly criticized the central government for what he alleges as "stepmotherly" treatment towards Karnataka and disrespect towards the federal structure. He has targeted BJP leaders in the state and their past administration for not addressing the injustices caused by the Centre's policies. In response, BJP leaders, including Union finance minister Nirmala Sitharaman, have vehemently refuted allegations that the Centre is withholding funds intended for non-BJP governed states like Karnataka.

## Technologies from the Mark-2 aircraft, in fact, will flow into the Mark-1A

**NEW DELHI:** India is now stepping on the gas to develop and induct advanced indigenous airborne early-warning and control (AEW&C) aircraft or "eyes in the sky", which will boost surveillance and detection capabilities along the China and Pakistan borders as well as help direct friendly fighters during air combat with enemy jets. The DRDO-IAF combine is actively pushing ahead with programmes to develop six Mark-1A as well as six Mark-2 versions of the Netra AEW&C aircraft, three of which were earlier built and inducted from February 2017 onwards. Sources said defence

ministry will next week take up the acceptance of necessity (AoN) for the six Mark-1A aircraft, which will entail mounting active electronically scanned array antenna-based radars, electronic and signal intelligence systems on Brazilian Embraer jets, at a cost of around Rs 9,000 crore. "These six AEW&C aircraft will be like the first three Embraer-145 jet-based Netra, which have 240-degree radar coverage. But there will be better software and more advanced technologies like new gallium nitride-based TR (transmit/receive) modules for the radars," a source said. The develop-

mental work on the six Mark-2 aircraft, with bigger and more capable versions of the AEW&C radars and sensors to be mounted on second-hand Airbus-321. planes bought from Air India, is already at an advanced stage at a cost of Rs 10,990 crore. "Delivery of the first such AEW&C Mark-2 aircraft, which will also have an antenna in the nose in addition to the main dorsal antenna to give 300-degree radar coverage, should take place in 2026-27.

Technologies from the Mark-2 aircraft, in fact, will flow into the Mark-1A ones," the source added.

## ED raids multiple locations linked to Harak Singh Rawat

**NEW DELHI:** The Enforcement Directorate (ED) on Wednesday conducted searches against Congress leader and former minister Harak Singh Rawat in connection with forest scam case. The searches took place at various loca-

tions in Uttarakhand, Delhi, and Chandigarh. During his time as the state forest minister in the BJP government, Rawat and some of his departmental officers faced serious allegations regarding illegal tree cutting and construction in the Pakhro range of Corbett Park under the Tiger Safari Project. The Forest Survey of India (FSI) reported that over 6,000 trees were illegally cut in the Corbett Tiger Reserve (CTR) for the Pakhru tiger safari, despite only 163 trees being permitted.



## 8 Aurangzeb demolished temple at site of Mathura's Krishna Janmabhoomi complex: ASI

**AGRA:** In response to an RTI query, Archaeological Survey of India (ASI) has disclosed information based on historical records of a 1920 gazette about Mathura's Krishna Janmabhoomi temple complex. Attaching an excerpt from the Nov 1920 gazette, the ASI stated in its response: "Portions of Katra mound which are not in the possession of nazul tenants on which formerly stood a temple of Keshavdev which was dismantled and the site utilised for the mosque of Aurangzeb...". The RTI was filed by Ajay Pratap Singh, a resident of Mainpuri in UP, and the reply came from the office of superintending archaeologist of ASI, Agra circle. Singh had sought specific information about "dismantling" of Keshavdev temple — claimed to be part of Krishna Janmabhoomi temple complex. The RTI reply, while not specifically mentioning the words "Krishna Janmabhoomi," confirmed the demolition of the former temple of Keshavdev at the disputed site by the Mughal emperor. Advocate Mahendra Pratap Singh, president of Shri Krishna Janmabhoomi Mukti Nyas, said that "he will place the key piece of evidence before Allahabad HC and SC". "On basis of historical evidence, we had in our petition mentioned that Aurangzeb issued a decree in 1670 CE to demolish the temple. Following that, Shahi Idgah Mosque was built there. Now ASI in reply to the RTI query has attested the information. We'll put forward ASI reply in HC during the Feb 22 hearing," he said.

## 'He was labelled as a white-ball cricketer...': Ravi Shastri praises Jasprit

**NEW DELHI:** Former India head coach Ravi Shastri has lauded Jasprit Bumrah's unwavering commitment to Test cricket, emphasizing the pacer's desire to break away from the stereotype of being labelled as a "white-ball specialist." In an exclusive interview with 'The Times', recalling their initial conversation, Shastri reminisced, "I remember my first call to him, it was in Kolkata. I asked him would he be interested in Test crick-



et. He said that would be the biggest day of his life." "He was labelled as a white-ball cricketer without asking him. But I knew. I wanted to see how hungry he was. I told him to get ready, be prepared. I told him I was going to unleash

him in South Africa," Shastri said. Despite Bumrah's remarkable success in white-ball cricket, Shastri emphasized the significance of Test cricket, noting, "They will always remember your numbers in Test cricket."

Reflecting on Bumrah's recent exploits, Shastri hailed his exceptional performance in the Vizag Test, stating, "He's so excited to be playing and doing well in Test cricket." Bumrah's achievement as the fastest Indian bowler to reach 150 Test wickets further underscored his commitment to excel in the traditional format. Shastri's admiration for Bumrah's journey from being labelled a white-ball specialist to becoming the top-ranked.

## Kohli will miss the entire ongoing five-Test series against England

**Virat Kohli** has opted out of the ongoing five-Test series against England, citing personal reasons. His absence was confirmed by the BCCI when the Indian cricket board announced the home team's squad on for the remaining three Tests against the visitors. While some of Kohli's fans expressed disappointment over his omission, others voiced support for his prioritization of family matters. The five-Test series



currently stands locked at 1-1, with the third Test beginning in Rajkot on Feb 15. Virat Kohli will miss the entire ongoing five-Test series against England after he continued to excuse himself from cricket duties due to personal reasons. Kohli

15. The fans of the batting icon were quick to point out that it's possibly the end of battles between England's fast bowling legend James Anderson and India's batting icon Kohli. The 41-year-old Anderson, who is only five wickets away from becoming the first fast bowler to take 700 Test wickets, is not likely to be around when an India-England Test series next happens as per ICC's Future Tours Programme.

## Navya Ayodhya Ramayana's essence in a futuristic township

**While** the makeover of Ayodhya has enamoured people from all over the world with its vibrance and grace, its extension as Navya Ayodhya is also attracting attention with its vision that has integrated modern living with wisdom from the Ramayana, reports Shailvee Sharda. The compendium of shlokas compiled in sarga-5 of the Valmiki Ramayana's Bal Kand gives a glimpse of the city of Ayodhya, as described by King Dashrath. "A deeper look and contemplation of that chapter compels one to conclude that modern day benchmarks of quality of life and sustainable co-existence were a reality of the city. One can also gather that the ecosystem of Ayodhyapuri must have served as the basis for evolution of what the world knows as 'Ram Rajya'," remarks Ranvir Prasad, secretary, UP housing and urban planning department, while setting the context of



Navya Ayodhya — the name given to Ayodhya's Green Field Township (GFT). Stating that Navya Ayodhya is emerging as a natural extension of the original town in letter and spirit, Prasad says: "Once in place, Navya Ayodhya would serve as a reference point for those willing to achieve the benchmark of sustainable living." TOI delves deeper into the defining thought: Balancing elements of nature: Descriptions in the Ramayana indicate that a fine balance of all the five elements of life existed in Ayodhya. Embracing the thought as a guiding principle, the brains behind

Navya Ayodhya decided to strike a balance between earth, air, water, fire, and space elements. For instance, greenery has been given significant importance while conceptualizing the design. About 24% of the area in the city has been set aside for green and blue infrastructure which is to be achieved by development of natural water bodies, orchards and parks, landscaping, and so on. Notably, several incidents in the Ramayana are set in forests. It has a rich description of different types of forests — alpine, deciduous, tropical, semi-tropical, rain forest.

## 'He is a car with gears in an era of automatic cars'

**Irfan Pathan** suggests that KL Rahul batting down the order might work well for the Lucknow Super Giants (LSG) in the upcoming IPL season. The team could have a strong playing XI with options like Quinton de Kock, Kyle Mayers and Devdutt Padikkal for the opening positions, which will also allow the team to play with an all-Indian pace attack. The 2024 season of the cash-rich league is likely to begin on March 22, but there is no official announcement yet. Former India all-rounder turned commentator Irfan Pathan was at his creative best when asked to analyse if KL Rahul batting down the order for the Lucknow Super Giants (LSG) in the upcoming Indian Premier League (IPL) season will work for the franchise. "He (Rahul) is a car with gears in an era of automatic cars. He can bat in any gear from first to fifth. He even has a sixth gear. So considering that, KL Rahul batting down the order might not be bad at all (for LSG)," Pathan said during a discussion on a show on Star Sports. When quizzed further about who would open for the Lucknow team if Rahul drops down to the middle order, Pathan picked the name of two foreign players in the LSG camp.

## Amidst diplomatic row, China displaces India as largest tourism market for Maldives

**MALE:** Amidst a diplomatic row between the Maldives and India, Chinese tourists have overtaken Indian holidaymakers visiting the archipelago nation, according to official figures released here on Monday. According to official statistics from the Maldivian Ministry of Tourism, as of February 4, China, with 23,972 tourists occupied the number one slot (11.2 per cent market share in 2024); it was on the number three spot in 2023. India, which was on the number 1 slot in 2023, has slipped down to 5th position as of Sunday with 16,536 tourists (7.7 per cent market share in 2024) coming to this island nation. The development could be a fallout of a full-blown backlash directed at the Maldives following the derogatory remarks against India and Prime Minister Narendra Modi on social media by three Maldivian ministers after Modi posted photos and video on X of his visit to the pristine Lakshadweep Islands on India's west coast earlier in January. Soon after the remarks against Modi went viral, hundreds of social media users, including celebrities, protested with calls.

## Should IAS, IPS officers' kids get quotas, asks judge

**Should** IAS, IPS officers' kids get quotas, asks judge Undeterred by the Chinniah ruling, Congress government in Punjab led by Amarinder Singh had identified Balmikis and Mazhabis (Sikhs) as Maha Dalits and earmarked 50% of the 15% quota govt jobs for which recruitments were done as per Punjab Scheduled Castes and Backward Classes (Reservation in Service) Act, 2006. Punjab and Haryana high court had struck it down and the state government challenged it in the apex court. Politicians have flinched from upsetting the status quo; just as in the case of OBC quotas, for the fear of attracting the wrath of those who have profited the most from it. The Punjab government under Amarinder Singh deviated from the pattern and AAP government took up from where it had left off. Opening the debate before a bench of Chief Justice D Y Chandrachud and Justices B R Gavai, Vikram Nath, Bela M Trivedi, Pankaj Mithal, Manoj Misra and Satish Chandra Misra, Punjab advocate general Gurminder Singh said the most backward among backward class communities must be identified and provided with the means to make them equal in terms of availing opportunities in employment. Senior advocate Nidhes Gupta said SCs constitute 33% of Punjab's population and among them, Balmikis (Churas and Bhangis) and Mazhabis (Sikhs) constitute 29%. He said 43% of Scheduled Caste communities occupy 81% of SC posts in the state govt. The advocate general said, "A member of the backward class securing 56% would have to be preferred over a forward class person securing 99% in the recruitment examination as the latter had access to aeroplanes and all amenities in life, whereas the backward class person had struggle.



## CM Yogi, along with ministers and MLAs from across parties, seeks blessings of Lord Ram in Ayodhya

Lucknow/Ayodhya

On the request of Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath and Vidhan Sabha Speaker Satish Mahana, MLAs of all parties, along with the MLAs and ministers of the Yogi government except Samajwadi Party visited the Ram Temple in Ayodhya on Sunday. Immersed in a devotional spirit, they sang the praises of Lord Ram while sitting with CM Yogi and Vidhan Sabha Speaker Satish Mahana. Tight security arrangements were made for the visit by Home Secretary Sanjay Prasad and DGP Prashant Kumar. Additionally, during the VVIP moment, attention was paid to ensuring that common devotees faced no dif-



faculties. Along with the Cabinet, a large number of common devotees also had darshan of Lord Ram in Ayodhya on Sunday. The devotees were visibly excited to find the Chief Minister in their midst and the entire area echoed with the slogan of 'Jai Shri Ram'. The convoy of UP MLAs and ministers left Lucknow at around

9 am in 10 luxury buses. On their way to Ayodhya, arrangements were made for breakfast for all the public representatives in Barabanki.

The convoy reached Ayodhya at around 11.30 am while the Chief Minister reached Ayodhya from Maharishi Valmiki International Airport. The local residents rid-

ing bulldozers welcomed the team by showering flowers on them and chanting slogans of 'Jai Shri Ram'. Meanwhile, the MLAs and ministers accepted the greetings of the people by shaking hands.

Local artists also performed various forms of folk dance to welcome and congratulate the public representatives. School children were also seen welcoming them. MLAs and ministers were granted entry through Gate Number 11. After this, all the MLAs and ministers along with the Chief Minister went to have darshan of Lord Ram. After the darshan, the team had prasad and also lunch on the temple premis-

es. "I am very emotional", Satish Mahana expressing his emotions after the darshan, UP Assembly Speaker Satish Mahana said, "I am very emotional because when I came to this place, there was a structure standing here, which was broken in front of us on December 6. I visited here when bullets were fired in 1990. I came at a time when the construction of the platform was taking place, and today, I have had the privilege of witnessing the divine presence directly." The BSP MLA Umashankar Singh and Jansatta Dal (Loktantrik) President Raja Bhaiya were part of the team to visit Ayodhya for the darshan of Lord Ram.

## Yogi govt sends 4-member team to Gujarat Institute of Disaster Management to acquire expertise

Lucknow

Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath's steadfast commitment to the safety and well-being of Uttar Pradesh's residents has been evident through swift and effective measures taken during natural calamities such as floods, droughts, earthquakes, and cyclones. In line with this dedication, a specialized team from the Relief Department has embarked on a two-day training program in Gujarat to enhance their disaster management skills. Under the guidance of experts from the esteemed Gujarat Institute of Disaster Management, the team will undergo rigorous sessions on February 12 and 13,

focusing on proactive disaster preparedness and effective crisis management strategies. Sudhir Garg, Additional Chief Secretary, Revenue, highlighted CM Yogi's unwavering emphasis on minimizing casualties during disasters. He added: "The CM has instructed department officials to conduct various learning and training initiatives. Recently, a training camp was convened on February 6 and 7 at IIM Lucknow, where 25 Additional District Magistrates received comprehensive training on climate change, sensitivity, and disaster management from experts representing institutions like IIM Lucknow.

"In continuation of these efforts, a four-member team from the Relief Department has been dispatched to the Gujarat Institute of Disaster Management for specialized training on February 11. By actively participating in the two-day training camp, scheduled for February 12 and 13, the team aims to significantly contribute to minimizing loss of life during calamitous events, including floods and other emergencies in Uttar Pradesh. Noteworthy directives from Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath have led to the establishment of three new State Disaster Response Force (SDRF) units in Uttar Pradesh.

## UP's potential in spiritual tourism was completely ignored by the previous govts: CM Yogi

Lucknow

Taking part in the discussion on budget in the state assembly on Saturday, Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath said that during previous governments in Uttar Pradesh many sectors, including the service sector, which had great potential, were neglected. The potential that Uttar Pradesh had in spiritual tourism was completely ignored by the previous governments, he remarked. The Chief Minister said, "Opposition parties were saying that politics

should not be done in the name of Lord Ram. We have never done politics in the name of Shri Ram. Lord Ram is our deity. Without invoking the name of Ram, no work can be done. The chant of "Ram-Ram" is heard in every aspect of life - waking up, sleeping, crying, and laughing." Continuing his attack on the opposition, he added: "They don't go to Ayodhya for fear of losing their vote bank. It's you who is doing vote bank politics, not us. Even before

the construction of the temple, when there was no court decision, we went to Ayodhya and organized the grand celebration of Deepotsav. We are going today and will continue to go in the future. There should be no doubt about it." The Chief Minister mentioned that the government has allocated funds in the budget for Ayodhya, Kashi, Mathura-Vrindavan, Barsana, Gokul, Govardhan, Naimisharanya, Vindhyavasini Dham, Devipatan Dham.

## Rahul hits out at PM over privatisation

Congress leader Rahul Gandhi said caste census was needed for social justice and development of the country. Addressing a public gathering in Kishanganj during his 'Bharat Jodo Nyay Yatra', Rahul promised to take up this issue. However, he did not utter a single word about chief minister Nitish Kumar, who only a day before dumped RJD and Congress and formed a new government with BJP in Bihar.

It was the Nitish government with RJD and Congress as partner which conducted a caste-based headcount in Bihar and increased the job quota limit up to 75% to set a poll agenda for the Congress in the recently held assembly elections in five states. "We have decided to take up a revolutionary step of conducting caste census for social justice. It is much needed to help people know how many OBCs, Dalits, scheduled castes and poor people in general category are there in the country, Rahul said.

Rahul hits out at PM

over privatisation

"And when we talk of social justice, the entire country looks towards Bihar, which has always taken a lead for social justice," Rahul added. Elaborating further, he said, "The maximum population in the country is of OBCs, who are around 50%. There are 15% Dalits, 12% scheduled tribes and around 15% minorities. I want to tell the OBCs here that only 90 IAS officers decide the budget of the country. They decide as to how much has to be spent on defence, education or farmers. Of them, only three IAS officers are from OBCs." He hit out at the Narendra Modi government at the Centre for privatising public properties. "They have handed over the country's port, airport, hospitals and colleges to the corporate houses and left the poor and suppressed section to face the brunt of privatisation. While the doors of banks as well as PM's office are opened for a select few corporate giants, doors are closed for those running small shops.

## Lift and Escalator Bill 2024 passed with voice vote in both Houses

Yogi govt takes big initiative to curb the increasing accidents due to lifts and escalators in urban areas of Uttar Pradesh, the Lift and Escalator Bill was passed by voice vote after discussion in both the Houses on Saturday. This bill includes provisions such as registration, maintenance, immediate notification to the relevant authorities during accidents, and compensation for the affected person during accidents. All private and public buildings and premises in the state will come under the purview of this law.



## Previous govts exhibited 'inaction,' we transformed UP into a revenue surplus state: CM

Lucknow

Taking part in the discussion on Budget 2024-25 in the Assembly on Saturday, Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath highlighted the significant aspects of the state government's largest budget, while using couplets from Rahim and Tulsidas to strongly critique the leader of the opposition party. Additionally, the Chief Minister compared the current budget with that of 2016-17. Amidst the slogans of Jai Shri Ram, the Leader of the House expressed happiness over the recognition of Chaudhary Charan Singh and other eminent personalities of the country with the Bharat Ratna. He also extended greetings to all 93 members who participated in the budget discussion. He remarked, "A conducive investment climate has been fostered in Uttar Pradesh. As a result, investments exceeding Rs 10 lakh crore will be implemented in the state through a groundbreaking ceremony scheduled for February 19." He emphasized, "This signifies that Uttar Pradesh possessed the potential; its youth were endowed with talent and aspirations, but the state leadership lacked the determination to act. There was a dearth of foresight, vision, and proactive policy-making. However, today, we have successfully transformed Uttar Pradesh into a revenue-surplus state." Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath launched scathing attacks on opposition leader Akhilesh Yadav using couplets from Rahim and Tulsidas. He quoted, "When they were in power, they had their own priorities, and Tulsidas ji aptly remarked about them, 'Sakal padarath ehi jag mahin, karmaheen nar pavaat naahin'. They lacked the will to act. Their priorities did not include development, farmers, youth, women, or the poor." At the outset of his address, CM Yogi remarked, "It was anticipated that when the issue of farmers is raised in the budget speech, the leaders of the opposition parties would surely invoke Chaudhary Saheb. However, 'bigadi baat bane nahin, laakh karo kin koy, rahiman phaate doodh ko, mathe na maakhan hoy.' This is their current state. No one is willing to come together with them, apprehending deceit." Referring to a couplet by Tulsidas, CM Yogi said, "Lord Shri Ram said to Bharat ji that 'barasat harshat log sab karasat lakhai na koe, tulsipraja subhaag te bhoop bhanu so hoi.'" He explained, "Just as the sun takes water from the sea, river, and pond, but no one notices, when it rains in the form of clouds, everyone does. The same holds true for this 'lok kalyankari' and 'lok mangal' budget. This budget has been presented keeping in mind all 75 districts without any discrimination." Today, Uttar Pradesh stands as a revenue surplus state, marking a remarkable transformation from its BIMARU status within a span of 7 years, achieved without the imposition of any taxes.

## FDI worth Rs 2300 crore came to Uttar Pradesh between 2017-23: CM Yogi

Lucknow

In a response to the queries raised by the Opposition during the state assembly's budget discussion on Saturday, Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath underscored the pivotal role of stability and sustainability in propelling infrastructure and industrial development. He elaborated on the state govern-

ment's proactive measures, notably the establishment of the Bundelkhand Industrial Development Authority (BIDA) between Kanpur and Jhansi, marking a significant milestone after 46 years. Presenting a comprehensive blueprint of the state's transformative journey from a BIMARU state to a burgeoning economic powerhouse, CM Yogi

emphasized, "After nearly five decades, a new industrial city is set to take shape in Uttar Pradesh, supported by provisions delineated in the budget and meticulous adherence to procedural formalities. Our endeavors extend to attracting Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) and courting investments from Fortune-500 companies.

## India can aspire to be \$7 trillion economy by 2030: Review

NEW DELHI: The Indian economy is likely to achieve a growth rate of 7% in fiscal year 2025 after growing at or above 7% in 2023-

24, driven by resilient domestic demand despite risks and uncertainties in the global economic landscape, according to a review of the economy unveiled on Monday. It also said India can aspire to become a \$7 trillion economy in the next six-seven years (by 2030) asserting that this would be a significant milestone in the journey to delivering quality of life and standard of living that match and exceed the aspirations of the Indian people.

"If the prognosis for FY25 turns out to be right, that will mark the fourth year post-pandemic that the Indian economy will have grown.

## When devotion and power mingle, shackles of slavery shatter: Yogi Adityanath

Pune

When devotion and power mingle, shackles of slavery shatter, said Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath on Sunday, describing Maharashtra as a land of both. Addressing a gathering on the eighth day of Shri Geeta Bhakti Amrit Mahotsav organized in Alandi, Pune, CM Yogi said: "It was here that Guru Samartha Ramdas provided his guidance to the brave Chhatrapati Shivaji. When devotion and power mingle, the shackles of slavery shatter. This is what we have witnessed in Ayodhya with the construction of a grand and



divine Ram Temple after 500 years of bondage. With the company of saints and the efforts of Prime Minister Modi, we all have been witnesses to the historical date of 22nd January. The new

and grand Ayodhya is inviting you all." During the ceremony, Yogi Adityanath presented an Angavastra and an idol of Lord Ganesha to Swami Govind Dev Giri, along with releasing a souvenir commemorat-

ing the saint's life. He was also honored by Shri Hanakarya Vijayendra Saraswati with traditional 'Angavastra' and Prasad. Reflecting on the occasion of Swami Govind Dev Giri's 75th birth anniversary, Yogi Adityanath expressed his admiration for the saint's lifelong dedication to Vedic Sanatan Dharma and his invaluable contributions to Hindu society. Yogi Adityanath shared his long-standing desire to visit Alandi, a place he had read about in his childhood while studying the Dnyaneshwari. He stated: "At the age of just 15, Pujya Dnyaneshwar.