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Congress pushing Sharia in name of personal law but BJP will bring UCC: PM

KULLU/SHIMLA: Accusing a "communal, casteist and nepotist" Congress of pushing Sharia under the guise of seeking to retain Muslim personal law, PM Narendra Modi pledged Friday that BJP would implement the proposed Uniform Civil Code (UCC) across the country.

"There should be a uniform civil law for all, regardless of whether you are a Hindu, a Muslim, a Sikh, a Christian or a Buddhist. But Congress is opposing UCC. Congress also opposes CAA and talks about bringing back Section 370... This nation will be built by sons of the soil and not those who have received everything as inheritance," Modi said at a campaign rally in Mandi, where BJP has fielded actor Kangana Ranaut. Videos The PM said Congress's stand on critical issues reflected its intention to keep India wallowing in poverty and take it backwards.



'Ensured 10% EWS quota': Modi takes swipe at Congress For 60 years, Congress did not even think that there were poor people in the general category who needed reservation. Modi came and ensured 10% reservation for them," he said. The PM alleged that a conspiracy had been hatched to snatch reservations from SCs, STs and OBCs and distribute these among Muslims, just as Congress had already done in Karnataka. Referring to Calcutta HC's order this week invalidating OBC certificates based on new classifications in Bengal since 2010, he

said another opposition figure — CM Mamata Banerjee — had already refused to honour the ruling. In Himachal Pradesh, Congress gov't didn't even distribute central funds sent during the monsoon disaster last year in a fair manner, he said. Modi, who also addressed a rally in Nahan, said he would inquire into it after the polls. "I sent hundreds of crores to Himachal but the money was spent selectively. The first thing I will do (on returning to office) is... find out who stole the money, dig it out and then hand it over to the people. Mark my words.

Congress gov't has no future: PM

This (Congress) gov't has no future."

The PM said that the mountains of Himachal had taught him to hold his head high with pride. "I cannot tolerate any insult to Mother India. But Congress has a problem with saying 'Bharat Mata ki Jai', and Congress has a problem with saying 'Vande Mataram'. Such a Congress can never do any good to Himachal." Modi hailed candidate Kangana as someone who "represents the belief that girls can choose newer fields and become successful". "But Congress's thinking is parochial. You have all seen the way Congress politicians use derogatory language while speaking about Mandi and Kangana. This is an insult to Mandi, to Himachal and to all the women of the state," he said.

Sunrisers beat Rajasthan Royals to set up IPL 2024 final date with Kolkata

NEW DELHI: Rajasthan Royals' promising young talents faced a tough challenge on a slow track, as Sunrisers Hyderabad's underestimated spin duo of Abhishek Sharma and Shahbaz Ahmed dominated, paving the way for a 36-run victory in Qualifier 2. This win secures SRH a spot in the IPL final against Kolkata Knight Riders, which is scheduled to take place on Sunday. Despite chasing a target of 176, the Royals could only manage 139 for 7, ensuring SRH's third appearance in an IPL final after 2016 and 2018. On a slow track that offered significant turn and grip as the evening progressed and no dew to help batters, Abhishek (2/24 in 4 overs) and Shahbaz (3/23 in 4 overs) forced the Yashasvi Jaiswals, Sanju Samsons and Riyan Parags to press the unwanted 'Harakiri button' in 15 minutes of pure brain fade that ended their hopes of a third final. Their combined figures of 5 for 47 in 8 overs completely



BJP in SC against HC order barring anti-TMC adverts

NEW DELHI: BJP has approached Supreme Court against Calcutta high court's order directing it not to issue certain derogatory advertisements against Trinamool Congress (in violation of the Model Code of Conduct (MCC) during Lok Sabha Elections, 2024. The party mentioned

overshadowed the celebrated duo of Ravichandran Ashwin (0/43 in 4 overs) and Yuzvendra Chahal (0/34 in 4 overs), who gave away 77 runs in their quota of overs. That difference also became the difference between the two sides eventual-

the case before a vacation bench of Justices Bela Trivedi and Pankaj Mithal for an urgent hearing. The court assured that it would examine. A single bench of HC had held that advertisements were violative of the MCC and had restrained BJP from publishing such ads till further orders. ly. From a comfortable 65 for 1 in 7.4 overs, it suddenly became 79 for 5 by the end of the 12th over. Abhishek, who had bowled only three overs in 15 games prior this night, suddenly got the ball to dip and turn while Shahbaz's deliveries gripped.

Searches in J&K's Samba after 'suspicious movement' intel

JAMMU: Police carried out searches in many villages along the international border in Jammu and Kashmir's Samba district on Friday following inputs about suspicious movement in a forward area, officials said. The search party — comprising personnel from Special Operations Group of Samba Police and local police — was led by Gharu Ram Bhardwaj, DySP, SOG Samba. It conducted door-to-door verification in the border belt of Malani, Bein Nallah and surrounding areas under the jurisdiction of Ghagwal police station, besides checking identification documents of people living close to the border at security checkpoints set up along border roads. Drones were also deployed for surveillance. The operation, conducted as a precautionary.

Canada set to lift restrictive citizenship by descent norms; Indian diaspora to benefit say experts

MUMBAI: Canada's immigration minister, Marc Miller, on Thursday night introduced a legislation that will extend citizenship by descent beyond the first-generation. This news has been welcomed by several immigrants including the Indian diaspora. The Citizenship Act was amended in 2009 to add a 'first-generation limit' to citizenship by descent. This meant that a Canadian citizen parent could pass on citizenship to a child born outside Canada only if the parent was either born in Canada or naturalized before the birth of this child.

However, as a result of the first-generation limit, Canadian citizens who were born outside Canada could not in turn pass on citizenship to their child, if the child was also born outside Canada. Nor could they apply for a direct grant of citizenship for a child adopted from outside Canada. The proposed amendment comes in the wake of a court ruling, last year, which held the first generation limit to be unconstitutional.

HC junks Rs 2.5cr recovery notice to Haldwani riot mastermind

Dehradun: Uttarakhand HC on Friday quashed a recovery notice of Rs 2.5 crore served to Abdul Malik, the alleged mastermind of the violence in Haldwani's Banphoolpura area. Malik is currently in jail. The notice sought compensation for the destruction caused during the unrest on Feb 8 when a team of local administration and municipal corporation officials launched an anti-encroachment operation, demolishing an "unauthorised" madrasa and a prayer place. The structures were built on govt land.

After Calcutta HC's order, Rajasthan government plans to review 14 Muslim groups on OBC list

JAIPUR: BJP-governed Rajasthan is considering reviewing 14 Muslim groups on its OBC list, taking the cue from Calcutta high court's recent scrapping of 77 classes, mostly Muslims, categorised as OBCs by Bengal's TMC govt. "We will examine after June 4 (the LS results day, after which the model



code will be lifted) if list from 1997 to 2013 was legal or these (Muslim) communities in the OBC

ter Avinash Gehlot said. He cited the Calcutta HC order and asserted that religion-based reservations were wrong. CM Bhajanlal Sharma accused INDIA bloc, constituent TMC and Bengal CM Mamata Banerjee of "crossing all limits of appeasement and committing a grave sin".

Day before Delhi decides, AAP accuses LG of poll interference

NEW DELHI: A day before all 7 Lok Sabha seats of Delhi go to the polls, the Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) on Friday levelled serious allegations against Lieutenant Governor VK Saxena, stating that he has ordered police to slow down voting in areas that have a large number of INDIA bloc supporters. "Information has been received that today the Delhi LG has ordered the



Delhi Police to slow down the voting in areas where there are a large number of INDIA alliance voters," the AAP leader said on X. "Any such attempt by the administration to make the BJP win is illegal, undemocratic and unconstitutional. And I hope the Election Commission will take cognizance of this, and stop any such attempt," she added. Reacting to Atishi's post, chief minister Arvind Kejriwal said:

How 'mystery of lost key' has spiced up Odisha elections

NEW DELHI: When most of the top opposition leaders flew to Bihar last year to present a 'formidable front' against the ever-strong Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), Odisha CM Naveen Patnaik was one of the few big faces missing at the Patna meeting, which saw the birth of the INDIA bloc.

A month before the June 2023 Patna meeting, Patnaik had made it clear that he would go solo in the upcoming elections, calling it a 'principle' of his party, Biju Janata Dal (BJD). Two months later in August, Patnaik's BJD backed Centre's Delhi Services Bill and also voted against the no-confidence motion moved by the INDIA bloc against the Modi



government in Rajya Sabha, where the BJP lacks majority of its own. With Patnaik backing the BJP-led NDA, the INDIA bloc was dealt a heavy blow in Parliament as it failed to stop the Delhi Services Bill, marking defeat in a battle that Delhi CM Arvind Kejriwal had said was a "semi-final" before the 2024 parliamentary polls. Next month in September, the BJD chief rated PM Modi's government "8 out of 10", and appreciated the Prime Minister for

ed to go solo in Odisha, which witnesses simultaneous assembly and parliamentary elections. PM Modi began his campaign trail in Odisha on May 6 and addressed a poll rally in Nabarangpur and Berhampur. The Prime Minister initially pulled his punches as he made no mention of CM Patnaik. He, however, did attack the state government by mentioning BJD -- the PM named BJD 15 times in his two speeches. In the following rallies, the PM launched a stronger attack, making a broad claim that June 4 would be the expiry date of the BJD government in Odisha and that the BJP would announce the CM face.

Delhi court convicts Narmada Bachao Andolan leader Medha Patkar in defamation case

NEW DELHI: Delhi court on Friday convicted Medha Patkar leader of Narmada Bachao Andolan leader in defamation case filed by Delhi LG VK Saxena. The verdict was delivered by Metropolitan Magistrate Raghav Sharma. According to the provisions of the law, Patkar could face a prison sentence of up to two years, a monetary fine, or both as a consequence of the conviction. The legal dispute between Patkar and Saxena dates back to 2000 when the activist initiated a lawsuit against Saxena for publishing advertisements that were critical of her and the NBA. At the time, Saxena held the position of chief at the Ahmedabad-based NGO National Council for Civil Liberties.

46% of cyber fraud here stems from SE Asia

New Delhi: Jamtara and Mewat have been upstaged as hotspots of financial cyber fraud in India, with 46% of defrauded money now bring lost to cybercrimes originating in southeast Asian countries such as Cambodia, Myanmar and Laos. Organised cyber-crime gangs, according to Indian Cyber Crime Coordination Centre (I4C) CEO Rajesh Kumar, are operating "corporate style" from hubs in these countries, hiring Indian jobseekers through illegal recruitment agents and then compelling them to defraud fellow citizens in India. I4C and state law enforcement agencies have cracked down on some of these illegal recruitment

agents. The foreign ministry has so far facilitated the return of 360 Indians trapped in these cybercrime units, with 60 more due to return from Cambodia soon. According to Kumar, Rs 1,420 crore was lost to 62,587 investment scams, Rs 222 crore to 20,043 trading scams, Rs 120 crore to 4,600 digital arrest scams and Rs 13 crore to 1,725 romance/dating scams, all originating from southeast Asia between Jan and April this year. Last year, more than one lakh investment scams originating from the region were reported on Indian national cybercrime reporting portal and 10,000 FIRs registered.



Mirzapur: A girl who had gone to take a bath in the Ganges at Chunar's Rani Bagh Ghat died due to drowning in the Ganges due to slipping of her feet. As soon as the information was received, there was an uproar among the family members. The family members immediately informed the police station. The administration reached the spot and with the help of divers, recovered the drowned girl. The dead body has been removed and has been sent for post-mortem. Green action is being taken by the administration. There is no possibility of any kind of riot. Name of the deceased girl is Shabana, daughter of Jan Mohammad, resident of police station Dabak, Jamalpur Mirzapur. The age of the girl is said to be around 10 years. She had come to her relative's house in plain clothes and went to take bath in the Ganga and this accident happened. Administration Saroj Kumar Choubey Rajesh Raman Rao were present on the spot.

Recurring incidences of transformer burning with rising heat Sudden fire broke out in the transformer

Mahoba: Due to extreme heat, fire accidents are happening somewhere every day. A sudden fire broke out in the transformer on Friday. Within no time the fire took a huge form and the transformer started burning. The fire brigade reached the spot after receiving the information and brought the fire under control after a lot of effort. On Friday, a sudden fire broke out in the transformer kept in Mullanpura in Panwadi town of the district and the fire took a huge form in no time. Seeing the transformer burning, the people nearby got scared and informed the electricity department and tried to extinguish the fire. When the fire refused to douse down, the fire brigade was informed. Fire brigade personnel reached the spot with great efforts and brought the fire under control. Town residents Manmohan, Ramkripal, Ghanshyam Ashok and Balendu have accused the officials and employees of the electricity department of negligence. They said that every day some dilapidated wires keep breaking and falling. Recently this transformer had blown up 15 days ago. Firefighters have brought the rapidly growing fire under control. As the summer season increases, the electricity load also increases.

Addressing the Challenges of Low Voter Turnout in Elections - Atul Malikram

PRAYAGRAJ: Voting for the five phases of the 2024 Lok Sabha elections has concluded, with an average voter turnout of around 57.44 percent across 429 seats. The Election Commission views a turnout of less than 60 percent as concerning. In light of this, it is crucial to address the factors contributing to the declining voter participation and to identify measures that could improve turnout.

To tackle this issue, we must first raise pertinent questions, seek solutions, and consider making certain facilities more accessible. For instance, why shouldn't any adult citizen be able to vote from any location within the country? Why not implement mobile polling booths for individuals over 75 years old or those who are unwell? Ad-

ditionally, why can't there be a system to transport voters over 75 years old or those in need? Furthermore, why shouldn't voters who are traveling for tourism or essential work be able to cast their votes? Although elections incur costs amounting to thousands of crores of rupees, if increasing voter turnout can be achieved by investing a few crores more in such initiatives, then these measures should be taken into serious consideration.

According to the rules of the Election Commission, you have the right to vote only in your constituency, and for this, you need to register yourself in the voter list. While this is understandable, why not develop a system that accommodates voters who, due to employment, business,

tourism, or medical emergencies, are unable to be in their constituency on polling day? Arrangements could be made in private or government buildings in every city to allow these voters to exercise their right to vote.

We live in an era of advanced technology with new innovations emerging daily. Why not create a technology-based system that allows a voter from Indore to cast their vote even if they are in Kanpur? This could be done through an online mode, with the vote being registered at the Indore polling station. Although there may be some initial challenges, these can be addressed to solve the issue of low voter turnout.

Just as members of the Army, security forces, or employees on election duty

can cast their vote on a ballot paper from their place of work, similar arrangements should be made for individuals who, for various reasons, cannot be at their polling station. Such measures would ensure that everyone has the opportunity to participate in the electoral process, regardless of their location on polling day.

In the current Lok Sabha elections, there are 2.18 lakh voters over the age of 100. Why not arrange for mobile booths to accommodate these elderly voters? Mobile booths could operate in every city, positioned near the homes of identified voters, making it easier for them to cast their vote. Additionally, arrangements could be made to transport elderly individuals over 75 years of age to the polling station.

Ahead of polling, cops form special unit to curb rumours on social media

Prayagraj: For peaceful polls in Prayagraj on May 25 and to curb rumours on social media, the Prayagraj Police Commissionerate officials have taken additional steps. Besides carrying out flag march in the city and rural areas, a special team of cops having expertise in handling social media platforms and tracing culprits through IP address and special software has been constituted. Police officials said a separate control room of cyber cell has been formed for ensuring peaceful and rumour free polls. The control room will have a team of 40 policemen who are experts in surveillance and handling social media sites. The control room termed 'Serious Organised Crime Unit (SOCU)' is keeping strict eye on persons who may cause trouble during polls through data analyses and social media profiling. The unit can keep tabs on social media through special software and intercepting app-based communications.

Through hi-tech apps, the unit can trace IP address and location of persons who spread rumours on social media or are making objectionable posts. Moreover, the unit may also trace calls made through social media apps, officials added. Police officials said that all preparations are complete for peaceful polls. Units of CRPF, BSF, RPF have arrived for poll duties and have been briefed. Flag march and patrolling in the city and rural areas are being carried out to instill a sense of security among voters. Possible troublemakers and those who may pose a threat to peace during polls are under police scanner.

NIU successfully hosts Education Global Summit

Prayagraj: Noida International University successfully hosted the Education Global Summit at Hotel KGF Villa Medical Square, Prayagraj. The event witnessed participation from over 130 principals and managers from schools across Prayagraj, Sultanpur, Phulpur, Mirzapur, and Kaushambi. The educational summit aimed to foster growth and development in the field of education and reward the intellectual minds dedicated to contributing their services in the field of education.

Mr. K.P. Singh, former IG of Uttar Pradesh, Dr. Piyush Prasad, Regional Director of NIOS, Mr. Pushparaj, Executive Director of NIOS, and Mr. Satyanand, Director of Vision Point of Institution were the distinguished guests for today's brainstorming summit. The guests were honored with mementos and shawls by Bhanu Pratap Singh and Ankur Sharma from Noida International University and were invited to visit the university. Mr. Akash Sharma, Director of Admissions at Noida International University stated that the university is committed to providing high-quality education and ensuring 100% employment through self-reliance and vocational education. It's our responsibility to educate people and make the change that we need to see in the future.

The meeting was conducted by Mr. Amar Singh, who highlighted the university's unique position as an educational hub attracting students from 60 countries, in addition to those from India. The event was coordinated by Mr. Ratish Gupta, who extended his gratitude to all attendees. Among the numerous school managers present were Dr. Mukesh Mishra, Ajay Shankar Pandey, Dr. Manu Bhatt, and Mrs. Poonam Gothi.

Nishads key players as riversutra flows through U.P's poll terrain

Prayagraj: Key poll players are leaving no stone unturned to woo the riverine community of Nishads and their associated sub-castes in eastern Uttar Pradesh in the hope of sailing to victory in the ongoing Lok Sabha elections with their support. The riverine community has a decisive say in 37 parliamentary constituencies, 27 of which will vote in the sixth and seventh phases of the current election.

Currently categorised as OBCs, the Nishads are seeking inclusion in the Scheduled Castes and the Nishad party, led by Uttar Pradesh fisheries minister Sanjay Nishad, is spearheading the cause.

In particular, the polls in recent decades have highlighted the electoral importance of this community. The 2022 Uttar Pradesh assembly election was one such democratic exercise at the hustings that put the Nishads in the spotlight.

In recognition of the riverine community's vital role, Congress general secretary Priyanka Gandhi Vadra had launched the "Nadi Adhikar Yatra" in support of the riverine Nishad community's rights to water resources from Baswar village, 15 km south of Prayagraj city on the Yamuna riverbank, before the 2022 Uttar Pradesh assembly election.

The yatra set the tone for the fight among the

Congress, Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), Samajwadi Party (SP) and the Bahujan Samaj Party for the riverine community votes comprising OBCs and 22 influential sub-castes like Nishads, Mallah, Kewat, Binds, Kashyaps and Nishads in the 2022 assembly election in east Uttar Pradesh.

In a counter-ploy, the BJP launched "kamal nauka rallies" along the Ganga and Yamuna riverbanks, highlighting its government's welfare schemes for the community.

Besides, the BJP allotted seats to its ally the Nishad party and won a second successive term with an absolute majority. The Nishad party's tally of seats increased from one in 2017 to six in 2022. The winners included Sanjay Nishad's son Sarvan Nishad who bagged the Chauri-Chaura seat. Sanjay Nishad's elder son Praveen Nishad won the Sant Kabir Nagar Lok Sabha seat in 2019.

"The riverine community has been demanding inclusion in the scheduled caste category for several years," says Prashant Trivedi, faculty at the Giri Institute of Development Studies, Lucknow.

All the major political parties have promised them the SC status but the matter is still pending, he adds.

The community is fighting for its rights at two lev-

els -- mobilizing under the banner of the Nishad party and seeking assistance from other parties where the Nishad party's presence is negligible.

Residing near rivers, the community has a sizeable presence in several districts of East Uttar Pradesh. Majority of community members are with the Nishad party. But in several constituencies, they support other parties if the candidates of their caste are contesting on other parties' symbols, he says.

As the vote of the community is decisive on several seats, all the political parties are working to win their support, Trivedi says.

"The demand for the SC status is being raised for the last 20 years and the main criterion for it is untouchability. Riverine community members assert that they are associated with Nishadraj whose valour is mentioned in the epic Ramayana. Since there is no caste discrimination against them, the community is not likely to get the SC status on technical grounds. The leaders of the community should focus on other issues for economic empowerment - rights to water resources, land and pond patta. The Nishad community's agenda should be broadened," he says.

The community has a strong presence in the

Prayagraj, Devi Patan, Gorakhpur and Varanasi divisions, says NK Sinha, a political observer.

Around 22 sub-castes, including Nishad, Kewat, Mallah, Bind, Kahar, Kashyap, Dhimar, Raikwar, Turaiha, Batham, Bhar, Rajbhar, Dhiwar, Prajapati, Kumahar, Manjhi and Machua, are demanding inclusion in the SC category, Sinha says.

"They are a dominant force in the river basin area that passes through Central and East UP and no political party can ignore them," he adds.

During the SP regime, the then chief minister Mulayam Singh Yadav and later the present chief minister Yogi Adityanath sent recommendations to the central government their reclassification from OBC to SC, Sinha says.

Even as the campaign for the 2024 Lok Sabha election is in full swing in Prayagraj (Allahabad Lok Sabha constituency), silence prevails at Baswar vil-

lage. A resident Chander Nishad says, "The parties made several promises in the 2019 Lok Sabha election and the 2022 assembly polls, but the community's problems have not been resolved. In the 2022 assembly election, we supported BJP candidate Piyush Ranjan Nishad who won the Karchana seat." Sand min-

ing ban is a key concern of the community.

In 2013, the National Green Tribunal stopped the extraction of sand from rivers using heavy machinery, but big contractors continued the mining activities. The Nishad community residing on the riverbanks used small boats for mining but in June 2019, the government banned the use of these small boats, too, in sand mining and action was taken against the community involved in sand mining.

"We are demanding mining contracts for our livelihood, but there is no response from the government," Chander Nishad says.

Vandana Nishad, who led the Nadi Yatra with Priyanka Gandhi, says the fall in earnings from the fisheries business, ferrying of passengers and goods on boats and ban on sand mining has hit the riverine community's earnings. "The much-hyped SC category status to the community is pending. We are not getting jobs in government services. The community is struggling for livelihood. The state government should allot us agricultural land and ponds for our livelihood," she says.

Another villager Gyan Chand Nishad says there are 7% Nishad voters in Allahabad Lok Sabha constituency and 7% in the

neighbouring Phulpur constituency (both in Prayagraj district).

"Our community's vote is decisive. There is a division of Nishad votes between NDA and INDIA in 2024 Lok Sabha election but a majority of the votes will go to the BJP candidate," he says.

On the northern periphery of the district, 35 km from Prayagraj city, Shringverpur village is humming with activity as hundreds of labourers place pink stand stone labs around the 51-feet-high statue of Lord Ram and Nishadaraj on a high platform. This a holy place for Hindus, particularly the Nishads. According to the epic Ramayana, Lord Ram, Sita and Lakshman arrived at this place to the Ganga on their way to forest exile.

The local king Nishadraj ferried them across the river in his boat. "The development of Shringverpur Dham is a matter pride for Nishads. Our identity and legacy will be glorified as thousands of people from across the country will visit here to seek blessings of Lord Ram and Nishadraj," says Nanhe Nishad, resident of Shringverpur.

A 20-acre park and a museum dedicated to the history of the Nishad community is being constructed. Previous govern-

ments did not care for the respect and welfare of the community, he says.

Mohammad Mansur Ali, who runs a bike service center, says Nishad party chief Sanjay Nishad has given call for removal of the mosque located in the premises of the Nishadraj fort. "It might disturb communal harmony in the area. The NDA is trying to polarize voters on the mosque issue to get the Nishad community votes in the 2024 Lok Sabha election," he says.

Another resident Shiv Dularey Nishad says, "Development projects have been launched for the riverine community. Our income will increase with the flow of pilgrims and tourists at the (Shringverpur) Dham. The riverine community will support the NDA government."

At the Nishad-dominated village of Chatnag, residents village ferry pilgrims to the Sangam in boats for religious rituals and a dip at the confluence of the Ganga, the Yamuna and the mythical Saraswati.

Dinesh Yadav is angry over "the protection given to the contractors by the state government."

"We toil hard all day, but are paid merely Rs. 2000 whereas contractors are earning in thousands. The state government should protect our rights to improve our livelihood," he says.

The aim is to propagate Sanatan Dharma:

Himangi Sakhi

Prayagraj. The world's first kinnar storyteller Mahamandaleswar Swami Himangi Sakhi said that the Mahakumbh is going to be organized on the sands of the Sangam of Tirtharaj Prayagraj in a divine grand manner. Preparations for which have started on a large scale. These preparations will also be completed on time. The benefit of which will be availed by millions of Kalpavasi devotees and saints and Mahatmas coming to Prayagraj from every corner of the country and the world.

Mahamandaleswar Swami Himangi Sakhi Maa said that this time during the Maha Kumbh Mela, religious events will continue in the camp throughout the month. During this period, there will be Magh Mahatmya every morning. After that Rudrabhishek puja and havan will continue. He said that during the Mahakumbh, there will be Shri Ram Katha and Shrimad Bhagwad Katha in five different languages throughout the month, which will take place in the morning and evening, while cultural programs Ramlila and Raslila will be organized in the afternoon and night. For this, artists will come from Vrindavan and Chitrakoot. He told that during the Mahakumbh, a large number of disciples and devotees will participate from every corner of the country and from abroad.

Azam Khan, family's conviction in fake certificate case stayed

Prayagraj: The Allahabad High Court on Friday, May 24, granted relief to senior Samajwadi Party leader Mohd Azam Khan and his family in a fake birth certificate case. Fearing the matter, the court put a stay on Khan's seven-year sentence. However, the sentences of his wife Tanzeen Fatima and son

Abdullah Azam were not stayed, although they have been granted bail.

Stating that all three have been granted bail, Khan's advocate, Sharad Sharma, said, "Azam Khan's conviction has been stayed, while Tazeen Fatima and Abdullah Azam's convictions have been rejected."

The case dates back to

January 3, 2019, when Akash Saxena, now a BJP MLA from Rampur, filed a police case alleging that former Samajwadi Party MP Azam Khan and his wife Tanzeen Fatima got two birth certificates made for their son Abdullah Azam Khan. The Sessions Court awarded seven-year imprisonment to Khan, his wife, and their son

in the alleged forgery case on October 18, 2023.

According to the charge sheet, in the certificate issued by the Rampur municipality, Abdullah Azam's date of birth was mentioned as January 1, 1993. The other certificate showed he was born in Lucknow on September 30, 1990. The trio was found

guilty under Sections 420 (cheating), 467 (forgery of valuable security), 468 (forgery for the purpose of cheating), 471 (using as genuine a forged document), 472 (making or possessing a counterfeit seal, etc. with intent to commit forgery), and 120 (B) (criminal conspiracy) of the Indian Penal Code (IPC). Azam

Khan was also disqualified from the Assembly last year after a court sentenced him to three years in jail in a 2019 hate speech case. Khan had won the Rampur Sadar Assembly seat in the 2022 Uttar Pradesh Assembly polls for a record 10th time. He then gave up the Rampur parliamentary seat, which he won in 2019.

Difference between words and actions of EC, running awareness campaign for more voting

Prayagraj: The Election Commission of India is spending billions of rupees to ensure maximum voting in the 2024 Lok Sabha elections through banners, posters at various places or speakers and sound systems installed at intersections. Voters are being made aware but at the ground level everything is completely opposite. This allegation was made by Javed Urfi, former spokesperson of Uttar Pradesh Congress Committee. He said that in both the parliamentary constituencies of Prayagraj, especially in the minority dominated

areas, no family has its entire members named in the voter list and 6 members of the same house have their names in different booths. Those who had died in the past were declared alive and at many places such names came to light and those who were alive were declared dead. Urfi said that the way a difference of crores of voters has been seen in every state across India on the day of voting or on the second day of voting, it seems clear that the Election Commission of India is not being completely honest.

Appeal for no-holds-barred voting process in district

Prayagraj: Regarding the sixth phase of Lok Sabha elections, Industrial Development Minister of Uttar Pradesh Government, Nand Gopal Gupta Nandi, on Friday, on the eve of voting, sat with all the Panna heads and booth presidents of Bahadurganj first sector and made the strategy for the voting day. Panna. The chiefs were asked to contact 60 voters of their page on Friday evening and get all of them to vote on Saturday morning. Minister Nandi said that to ensure 100 percent voting, all Panna Pramukhs and booth presidents should go door-to-door and knock on doors. Sector coordinator should monitor this



work. All Panna Pramukhs, booth presidents and sector coordinators should together ensure that no voter in the locality or booth is deprived of voting. Make people aware that they must

vote for the better future of the nation. The minister said that aim to get maximum voting done before 10 am! To ensure that all the members of each house cast their votes, they have to be

actively voted for! During the meeting, all the Panna Pramukhs were present with their respective pages allotted in the voter list. Also marked voters and families on the page!

PMC issues notice for spreading pollution

Prayagraj: The Prayagraj Municipal Corporation (PMC) has issued notices to nine departments including Prayagraj Development Authority (PDA), Public Works Department (PWD), North Central Railway (NCR), Jal Nigam for affecting the air quality in Smart City Prayagraj.

The notice includes the writ number from the Department of Environment, Forest, and Climate Change and advises implementing measures such as using green curtains to cover construction sites, regularly spraying water with sprinkler machines, employing mechanized road sweeping, and using mist guns to minimize dust.

An official from the PMC stated that the rise in air pollution in the city is a result of ongoing construction activities. To address public concerns, notices have been sent to the relevant departments. Failure to comply with the instructions may lead to further enforcement actions in accordance with the regulations.

Must vote to protect democracy: Umesh Gupta Chappu

Prayagraj: Vice Chairman of the Latest Public Welfare Committee and businessman Umesh Kumar Gupta (Chappu) has appealed to the voters of Allahabad Parliamentary Constituency and Phulpur Parliamentary Constituency to reach the polling station in maximum numbers and vote. Businessman Umesh Kumar Gupta (Chappu) has appealed to the voters to use their votes to rise above religion and caste for the national interest and development and to form a majority government in the country. This is the first duty of a citizen of India. Please ensure your participation in this great festival of democracy by casting your vote. Voting first after waking up in the morning, then Prayagraj should be named among the districts which give more votes, this is my wish. Let me tell you that Umesh Kumar Gupta (Chappu) has been continuously performing rituals every day since last 18th April 2024 to create inclination among the voters regarding voting, are coming, and the process will continue smoothly till the last phase of the elections. Through the ritual, Umesh Kumar Gupta has told the voters that just as our religious activities in life give us energy and inspiration to lead a virtuous lifestyle, similarly voting is also an act of civic religion to maintain the dignity of the nation and the dignity of democracy, which we all do. Citizens have to fulfill. Therefore, all the citizens of Prayagraj district are requested to vote tomorrow on 25th May 2024.

HC directs bank to issue 15 days notice prior to possession of mortgaged property in Shipra Hotels case

Shruti Malviya Petitioner Bank and Arif Iqbal appeared on behalf of Respondent Borrower

Prayagraj: In Case: WRIT-C No.5266 of 2024, in which petitioner and respondent Bank of Maharashtra and Another vs. State of UP and 5 Others respectively. Counsel for Petitioner Shruti Malviya and Counsel for Respondent Arif Iqbal presented their arguments before Justices Manoj Kumar Gupta and Kshiti Shailendra. Supplementary affidavit filed was taken on record. The petitioners are secured creditor as per the provisions of the Securitisation and Reconstruction of Financial Assets and Enforcement of Security Interest Act, 2002 (for short 'the Act, 2002'). They have given financial assistance to respondent no.4. Since there was default in repayment of loan, therefore, the petitioners

had initiated proceedings against respondent no.4 for recovery of dues under the provisions of the Act, 2002. The order under Section 14 was passed on 21.06.2023. Since possession of the secured asset was not delivered to the petitioners despite order dated 21.06.2023, therefore, the instant petition has been filed praying for a writ of mandamus commanding the State- respondents to take appropriate steps for delivery of physical possession of the secured asset to the petitioners.

4. It appears that in purported compliance of the judgment of this Court in Shipra Hotels Limited and another Vs. State of U.P. and others: 2022 (12) ADJ 473 the petitioner-bank issued fifteen days notice to the borrower and guarantor on 26.03.2024 and 01.05.2024.

5. The District Magistrate, who is under obligation to serve such notice,



had issued a notice dated 21.06.2023 giving three days time to the borrower/ guarantor to vacate the mortgaged property. The said notice was challenged by the borrower before Debts Recovery Tribunal vide Securitisation Application No.51 of 2023 and in order

dated 04.04.2024, the Debts Recovery Tribunal, has observed that the bank/ civil authority before taking physical

possession shall serve fifteen days notice on the borrower.

6. Counsel for the petitioner submits that the District Administration is not cooperating in the matter. In the past, the notice given by the District Magistrate was of three days despite judgment of this Court in Shipra Hotels (supra) stipulating a period of fifteen days before possession is taken.

7. Counsel for respondent no.3 concedes that there is no stay in favour of the borrower nor any impediment in delivery of physical possession, except for the fact that notice as stipulated by this Court

in its judgment in Shipra Hotels (supra) has not been served on the borrower so far.

8. Sri Rajiv Gupta, learned Additional Chief Standing Counsel, submits that the District Magistrate will issue fifteen days notice and would make all endeavour to deliver physical possession of the property to the petitioners in terms of order of the Debts Recovery Tribunal dated 04.04.2024.

9. Having regard to the aforesaid facts, we dispose of the instant petition by providing that the District Magistrate shall forthwith issue fifteen days notice to the borrower/ guarantor and, thereafter, make all endeavour to deliver physical possession of the property to the petitioner, provided there is no legal impediment.

Renowned scientist Dr. Ajay Sonkar issued appeal to voters

Prayagraj: Today is the day of voting, this is the day when we make the system realize the importance of our existence through voting. So that it remains a record that our vote has given you a place in the highest house of the country, our vote can also oust you. When we have voted, we can talk to the public representatives with authority and confidence. If we have not voted, then what right do we have to talk about the merits and demerits of the system. I would like to request you to cast your vote keeping in mind the real issues that concern us and our future generations. The one who gets elected on the basis of useless issues will do useless work; we will not have any right to question him. Whatever system we will create our future generations will breathe in the same system. It is very important that we vote not only for ourselves but also for our loved ones.



Opening win for Noida Tuskers and Prayagraj Avengers

Prayagraj: Noida Tuskers and Prayagraj Avengers won their respective matches on the first day today in the two-day Voter Awareness League football competition organized by Northern Football Academy on the football field of CAV Inter College Civil Line. According to the head coach of the academy, Indranil Ghosh, in the two-day league competition of four teams, two matches were played on the first day in which Noida Tuskers defeated Lucknow Nawabs 5-1, while Prayagraj Avengers defeated Agra Stars by 3-1. The objective of this two-day football competition is that everyone, whether old or young, should come together and cast their vote.



BJP doing continual injustice to AId: Shekhar Bahuguna HE CLAIMED THAT UNDER BJP ALLAHABAD LOST RELEVANCE

Prayagraj: It's a sweltering day in the faraway Meja block of Allahabad's Doab district, near the Uttar Pradesh-Madhya Pradesh border. Scores of villagers, including women and children, have gathered beneath a tent outside Khoota village.

Soon after, a convoy of SUVs arrives, led by Congress officials such as former MLA Anugrah Narain Singh, Shekhar Bahuguna, Javed Urfi, and INDIA bloc candidate Ujjwal Raman Singh, as well as Samajwadi and Congress activists. They greet residents and local party workers before seizing the microphone to address the crowd.

"In the case of a hung parliament, the BJD and

YSR Congress might play a significant role. Modi has shot himself in the foot by launching an all-out attack on them for no apparent reason. In any emergent circumstance, Patnaik may feel more at ease working with the INDIA bloc. After all, he would not feel threatened by the Congress. In contrast, the BJP's growth in Odisha is anticipated to present a significant challenge to the BJD. Andhra Pradesh's Congress is also weak. However, the scenario there is considerably different, as Jagan Mohan's sister Sharmila is directing the Congress campaign. Still, the YSR Congress may oppose any alliance government in which the Telugu Desam Party is a

part. Even if Modi is convinced that he would win easily with no outside help, it is politically unwise to target political opponents who are frenemies," said Shekhar Bahuguna while explaining prospects of INDIA bloc forming the government at the centre.

"What do farmers desire? Electricity, tubewells, and lift canals are used to provide water for their crops," he opined. According to Shekhar Bahuguna, the BJP continues to boast about its double-engine government while doing little on the ground.

He said that the local MP, state CM, and country's PM are all BJP members, yet the party has failed to safeguard the wel-

fare of the constituency's residents. Their caravan continued to Khiri and a few other villages after a brief stop. Even though the mer-



cury was not dropping, they went about on foot, greeting residents and knowing some of them by name.

Ujjwal Raman Singh, 51, is a former MLA from the Prayagraj district's Karchhana seat and a Congress contender for

Allahabad MP. Allahabad Lok Sabha seat is in Prayagraj and has about 18 lakh electors, a considerable proportion of whom live in rural regions beyond the Yamuna. The district also has another Lok Sabha seat, the Phulpur constituency, which comprises the Ganga area. The BJP fielded Neeraj Tripathi for the Allahabad Lok Sabha seat, replacing Rita Bahuguna Joshi. Neeraj Tripathi is the son of late Kesari Nath Tripathi, a BJP politician and former West Bengal Governor.

Bahuguna stated that SP leader late Janeshwar Mishra suggested an oil refinery in Allahabad in 1996, but nothing occurred. Former Chief Minister Mulayam Singh Yadav

sanctioned three power plants for this region; two of them are already operational, but the BJP does not want the third in Karchhana to begin operations, he stated. The industries here were all established during the Congress government in the Naini industrial sector. I believe the BJP is doing a continual injustice to Allahabad, he stated.

If elected as MP, Ujjwal Raman stated that one of his priority will be to safeguard the Ganga River. It is not a question of event management for us; it is a matter of religion and survival, he stated, citing worries over contamination in the sacred river. When asked if political observers see the Allahabad election as a

battle between two political legacies -- Singh's father Rewati Raman Singh and BJP candidate Neeraj Tripathi's father Kesari Nath Tripathi -- he said it is not a battle of legacy, but of ideology between two parties, their programmes, and policies. "There is discrimination and step conduct in Allahabad. They do not want Allahabad to grow," said Congress leader Javed Urfi prior to signing off.

During their campaigns, Congress leaders also emphasized concerns like as test paper leaks, stray livestock in rural regions, government employment reservations, and welfare initiatives. The Allahabad constituency will hold elections on May 25.

Editorial

The role of state fiscal capacities in national growth

India's economic progress is a composite reflection of the growth trajectories of its states. Given the federal structure of the country, each state operates with a degree of autonomy in implementing policies that drive their individual economies. This results in a broad spectrum of growth rates across states, highlighting significant disparities. For the nation to achieve holistic growth, it is imperative for all states to experience economic advancement. Despite this, there is a notable discrepancy in the attention paid to fiscal matters at different levels of government. The Union Budget, detailing the central government's finances, often garners substantial scrutiny and debate for its potential impacts on the nation's economic direction. In contrast, state budgets, which are crucial for addressing local needs and fostering regional development, do not attract a similar level of public and analytical scrutiny. Fiscal capacity, the government's ability to generate revenue from available tax and non-tax bases, is crucial for several reasons. First, it underpins a government's ability to provide essential public goods and services. These range from healthcare and education to infrastructure and defense, which are fundamental for the welfare of the citizenry and the smooth functioning of the economy. Without adequate fiscal capacity, governments may struggle to maintain these services at levels that meet public demand and expectations, potentially leading to social unrest or a decline in the quality of life. Second, fiscal capacity is vital for economic development and growth. Governments need resources to invest in infrastructure projects like roads, bridges, and digital networks, which are critical for enhancing productivity and competitiveness. Such investments not only improve current living standards, but also set the stage for future economic expansion. The Asian Development Bank Institute (ADBI) in 2017 and the World Bank in 2015 highlighted the risk of economies falling into a 'middle-income trap' where they are unable to transition to high-income status due to inadequate fiscal capacity among other factors. Moreover, fiscal capacity is essential for macro-economic stability. It allows governments to manage economic cycles more effectively, applying fiscal stimulus in downturns and restraint in booms to maintain economic stability. The Covid-19 pandemic's impact on Indian states underscored this point, as reduced fiscal capacities constrained their ability to respond effectively to the crisis and its economic repercussions. Finally, a robust fiscal capacity enables equitable social development. It allows for redistributive policies that can mitigate income inequality and fund social safety nets for the vulnerable. Studies have shown that factors such as high per capita income, education levels, and low corruption contribute to higher fiscal capacity, which in turn can be used to foster a more inclusive society. Given that state governments account for over 60 per cent of general government expenditure in India, enhancing their revenue-generating capacity is imperative for the needed investment in areas such as education, research and development, and skill development. The Reserve Bank of India recently released a report on state finances, which gives an insight into the state budgets of 2023-24. It has some important findings.

First, revenue mobilisation in Indian states comprises both tax and non-tax revenues, with a significant portion coming from state's own tax revenues (SOTR). Over the years, there has been a noticeable increase in SOTR, growing from 5.7 per cent of GDP in 2003-04 to 6.9 per cent in 2022-23. This growth, particularly in the post-GST era, reflects a shift in the composition of tax.

and considered the Vedas, regarded as Shrutis or revealed texts by many Hindus, as devoid of all sanctity. But the Charvakas were not ostracised, or worse, beheaded for blasphemy. Instead, they enriched the dialogic debate within Hinduism and were countered in a civilised manner by those opposed to them. In the 8th century CE, Adi Shankaracharya, who is considered the 'reviver' of Hinduism, could say without fear: na manro na teertham na veda na yajnah: neither the Vedas or yajna (rituals),

matter. What matters is: Chidananda roopam, Shivo hum, Shivo hum: bliss and awareness, I am Shiva, I am Shiva. In many religions, the declaration of equating oneself with God would be considered blasphemy. For instance, in Persia, a Sufi mystic, Al Hallaj (858-922 CE), almost contemporaneous with Shankaracharya, was put to death for having the temerity to say: Ana'l Haq: I am the Truth'. But not so in Sanatana Dharma. The basic point is Sanatana Dharma is eternal for the grandeur of its philosophical vision, and not only

for its religious practice; it is eternal for the diversity it allows for in thought, and not necessarily its rituals. Therefore, narrowing the interpretation of Sanatana Dharma to exclude all differences of opinion is distorting its greatness and, indeed, the very reason for survival. Unfortunately, this is precisely what we see happening today. Anybody and everybody is 'hurt' by anyone who does not blindly endorse everything that is deemed by the 'hurt' to be a part of Sanatana Dharma, including those ills that urgently need reform.

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Modi government at the Center is trying to win more than 400 seats



This time, the first phase of voting for the Lok Sabha elections is to be held on April 19 and the entire BJP lobby including the Modi government at the Center is trying to win more than 400 seats. But it seems that by giving the slogan of 'This time we cross 400', BJP does not want to win so many seats but wants to snatch them. Otherwise, any government would not only get nervous due to so many protests from different sections of the people all over India, but would also try to pacify the angry people and also accept their legitimate demands. But despite opposition on many issues across the country, not only the Modi government at the Center and Prime Minister Narendra Modi, but even a single BJP worker is not ready to bow down. Not only this, the Modi government at the Center is eager to come to power at the Center for the third time by crushing every protest, every movement and every person who opposes its policies like an intoxicated elephant. In fact, if we look at the two tenures of the Modi government at the Center in the last 10 years, we find that it has not refrained from crushing any movement, any protest or any opposition. Be it the movement by ex-servicemen demanding One Rank One Pension, be it the movement of farmers, be it the

movement of the country's daughters and women wrestlers, or any demonstration by unemployed youth demanding jobs, Be it the movement of women employees of Anganwadi centres, or the protests against EVM Tehelka, or the movements in Jammu and Kashmir and Ladakh to the North-Eastern states. In this way, if we look at the last 10 years of the tenure of the Modi government at the Centre, about twenty types of movements took place at various places; But most of the movements were either crushed badly by this government which suppressed democracy or they were suppressed to such an extent that their voice could not reach the country and abroad. The remaining work in ending these movements was done by a special group of Modiya and those people who have got contracts for various odd jobs in the country. However, if we look

at the movements going on in the country in the last 10-12 years, then first of all we have to look at the protests that took place across the country against the Anna movement and the Nirbhaya incident, due to which the UPA central government was ousted. However, the UPA central government of that time also tried to crush both types of movements; But not to the extent that the Modi government at the Center has done anything to crush all the movements. If we talk about the time after Prime Minister Narendra Modi came to power at the Centre, then the Patel movement of Gujarat, Maratha movement of Maharashtra, farmers movement of Maharashtra, farmers movement of Tamil Nadu, Anganwadi movement, teachers' movements in different states.

Apart from the movement of unemployed youth and the movement of

women wrestlers, all the farmers' movements across the country and the farmers' movement that started in the year 2020 have been crushed by the Modi government at the Center and the BJP state governments. Their demands and problems have been ignored. And the agitators and protesters have been kicked and water cannons have been used. In the first farmer movement against the three agricultural laws, an attempt was made to end the movement by putting all kinds of pressure on the farmers, and this time, when the central government did not fulfill its promises, the farmers decided to march to Delhi. So the attack on them was intensified. Attempts were made to harm them in every possible way, which again led to the martyrdom of 16 farmers. There is still a ban on farmers coming to Delhi as if they are not food providers but terrorists. Recently, Section 144 was imposed in Delhi for more than a month to stop the farmers and even today Section 144 is applicable at some protest sites in Delhi. For example, after the protest by women wrestlers was crushed at Jantar Mantar, Section 144 is still in force and no victim can sit there and raise his voice. Recently, regarding crushing the farmers' movement, Rajasthan's Jat leader Hanuman Prasad Beniwal

wrote on Twitter handle '@narendramodi ji, the way he arrogantly wrote on India is!

Let me remind you that you did not fulfill the promise made to the farmers during the farmers' movement. Therefore, the step to agitate again for the farmers and their rights was forced to be taken. On one hand you say that violence has no place in democracy. Farmers are being shelled at the behest of the other government, keeping in mind the current situation after the Rashtriya Lok Dal, which fought for the farmers of Western UP, joined hands with the BJP, it is your utmost responsibility to Take cognizance yourself and agree to the demands of the farmers! Leader of the main opposition Congress, Rahul Gandhi has spoken many times about suppressing the voice of the people by the Modi government at the Centre. Fearless and impartial journalists and intellectuals of similar nature are also unhappy with this attitude of the government.

Experts and scholars belonging to the rural context are also continuously opposing the policies of the government.

But the government does not care about all this. In fact, now even the police pick up people sitting in any protest and put them in jail, even if.

Why China Blocks the Dalai Lama's Sri Lanka Visit

China has been blocking His Holiness the Dalai Lama's visits to Sri Lanka. Recently, a renowned Sri Lankan Buddhist monk revealed this in a media interview. When asked about China's view on the Dalai Lama, the most venerable Dr. W a s k u d u w e Mahindawansa said, "We respect him and invited him to Sri Lanka, but China did not like that. China pressed against our government as well, we don't like that. He is a Buddhist leader, he has freedom, and we have the freedom to invite." This incident wasn't an exception; China has been blocking His Holiness the Dalai Lama's visits to Sri Lanka since 2015. In fact, China has never expressed its displeas-

ure whenever the Dalai Lama moves from one place to another or meets any person of repute. For China, the Dalai Lama, who was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize in 1989, is a 'separatist'. China has even called him 'wolf in monk's robes'. Why does a benevolent exiled leader agitate an aspiring superpower so much? The answer lies in the complex history of Tibet and the Chinese subjugation of the same over the last 70 years. Tibet lies in the confluence of Central, South and East Asia. It has a recorded history dating back to 602 AD when Namri Songsten became the first king of Tibet, uniting the central Tibetan states. There are records of conflict between China and Tibet, which was ended by the China-

Tibet Peace Treaty 821 AD. The treaty famously mentions, "Tibetans shall be happy in Tibet, and Chinese shall be happy in China." After more than 700 years, China and Tibet both sustained subsequent Mongol invasions. In the latter half of the 16th century, Altan Khan, the Mongol ruler, gave the title of Dalai Lama to Sonam Gyatso, leader of the Gelugpa school of Buddhism. In return, the Dalai Lama decreed that Altan Khan be reincarnated as Kublai Khan, which gave legitimacy to his rule. This event marks the founding of modern Tibet. For the next two hundred years Chinese tried to take hold of Tibet but could not succeed, and their influence declined in the first half of the 20th century.

Iran's counter-attack last week wasn't exactly unpredictable

"Unprecedented" is the adjective used in almost every global newspaper's description of Iran's retaliatory attack against Israel on 14 April, which the Benjamin Netanyahu government responded militarily by firing missiles at an Iranian airbase in Isfahan morning. Iran's counter-attack last week wasn't exactly unpredictable—Tehran made it pretty clear it would respond to a suspected Israeli attack on its consulate in Syria on 1 April that killed two of its senior military commanders. It named its operation "True Promise", reflecting its vow to punish those who attacked its diplomatic mission. But the barrage of Iranian drones and missiles—approximately 300—had no precedent. Neither did the suspected Israeli strike near an Iranian military base that followed. It was the first time, after 45 years of an icy shadow war, that we saw a direct confrontation between the regional archenemies. And that is why the new arc of violence in the Israel-Iran conflict, now marked by direct confrontation, is ThePrint's Newsmaker of the Week. Some view Iran as dealing the first hand or lighting the first match. But certain analysts suggest Tehran's calculation involved not just sending a message to Israel but also to its own proxies in the region. Sanam Vakil, Director

of the Middle East and North Africa programme at the Chatham House think tank, told The Guardian: "Iran's calculation was that if [it] didn't respond, Israel will keep trying to push back and degrade the axis of resistance across the region. This was about reinforcing its red lines and some measure of deterrence." For five days, the world waited with bated breath for Israel's response. The German and British foreign ministers flew into Israel earlier this week in efforts to prevent an escalation of the conflict, but it was clear that Israeli PM Benjamin Netanyahu was going to strike back. It was just a matter of when and how. By launching direct attacks on each other's soil after decades of covert operations, cyber attacks and proxy wars, Israel and Iran have diverted from long-standing foreign policy strategies. On the one hand, Iran had always followed a policy of "strategic patience", which involves propping up proxy forces in the Middle East to fight off Israel and its Western allies, while also projecting power in the region. Hezbollah in Lebanon is a prime example of this. In 1982, when Israel invaded Lebanon to expel the Palestinian Liberation Organization (PLO), Iran's Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) sent in

what was known as the "Prophet Mohammad Corps" to Syria, which was then sent to Lebanon to fight against Israeli forces. This was the birth of Hezbollah. "The Islamic Republic is a survivalist regime," explains Arman Mahmoudian, a lecturer of Russian and Middle Eastern Studies and a PhD candidate in politics and international affairs at the University of South Florida, in an article for Gulf International Forum.

"Hezbollah's foundational purpose raises the question: why has the militant group thus far avoided confrontation? The brief answer is that Hezbollah is too valuable an asset to be deployed recklessly," he adds. By launching 300 drones and missiles into Israel, Tehran effectively abandoned this policy and any previous reluctance it had in attacking Israel directly. Similarly, Israel seems to have diverted from its "reverse periphery doctrine". Previously, under Israel's first prime minister David Ben-Gurion, Israel followed the "periphery doctrine" in a bid to end its isolation in the Middle East. The idea was to pursue relations with non-Arab states at the 'edges' of the Middle East, mainly Iran and Turkey. With Iran and Israel diverting from their traditional strategies, the big question is whether an all-out war is on the horizon.

Beyond Politics: Protecting Sanatana Dharma from Misguided Extremism

What this means is that Sanatana Dharma has allowed for differences of opinion within its fold, including trenchant criticism of some aspects of it, by its own followers. The Hindu faith had not one but six systems of philosophy attempting to understand the truth behind the vast and bewildering plurality of the cosmos. Each of them had a different interpretation. In addition, there is the Lokayata Charvaka school, which cogently argued the materialist school of thought, denied the existence of God,

and considered the Vedas, regarded as Shrutis or revealed texts by many Hindus, as devoid of all sanctity. But the Charvakas were not ostracised, or worse, beheaded for blasphemy. Instead, they enriched the dialogic debate within Hinduism and were countered in a civilised manner by those opposed to them. In the 8th century CE, Adi Shankaracharya, who is considered the 'reviver' of Hinduism, could say without fear: na manro na teertham na veda na yajnah: neither the Vedas or yajna (rituals),

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for its religious practice; it is eternal for the diversity it allows for in thought, and not necessarily its rituals. Therefore, narrowing the interpretation of Sanatana Dharma to exclude all differences of opinion is distorting its greatness and, indeed, the very reason for survival. Unfortunately, this is precisely what we see happening today. Anybody and everybody is 'hurt' by anyone who does not blindly endorse everything that is deemed by the 'hurt' to be a part of Sanatana Dharma, including those ills that urgently need reform.

Lok Sabha elections 2024 phase 6 schedule: Key states, candidates



NEW DELHI: The sixth phase of the Lok Sabha elections 2024 is set to take place on May 25 with a total of 889 candidates in the fray. In this phase, voters from 58 constituencies across eight states and Union Territories will cast their ballots.

Campaigning ended on Thursday for the 58 constituencies, which are spread across six states and two Union Territories, including all seven seats in Delhi. After phase 6, only 57 constituencies will be left for the final phase of polls on June 1.

The voting so far has been completed in 25 states and Union Territories, covering 428 constituencies out of the total 543. The final phase of polling is scheduled for June 1, with the counting of votes set to take place June 4.

As per the final turnout figures for Phase 5 (based on only EVM votes) released

by the Election Commission on Thursday, the overall turnout was 62.2%, way lower than the 69.2% polling recorded in Phase 4, 65.7% in Phase 3, 66.7% in Phase 2 and 66.1% in Phase 1. According to the Association of Democratic Reforms, approximately 39 percent of the candidates in the sixth phase of the Lok Sabha elections are crorepatis with average assets worth Rs 6.21 crore. Constituencies going to polls in Phase 6: Delhi: All 7 seats; North-East Delhi, North-West Delhi, Chandni Chowk, South Delhi, West Delhi, New Delhi, East Delhi

Bihar: 8 out of 20; Valmiki Nagar, Paschim Champaran, Purvi Champaran, Sheohar, Vaishali, Gopalganj (SC), Siwan, Maharajganj
Uttar Pradesh: 14 out of 80; Sultanpur, Pratapgarh, Phulpur, Allahabad, Ambedkar Nagar, Shrawasti, Domriyaganj, Basti, Sant Kabir Nagar, Lalganj, Azamgarh, Jaunpur, Machhlishahr, Bhadohi
Jammu and Kashmir: 1 out of 5; Anantnag-Rajouri
Haryana: All 10; Ambala, Kurukshetra, Sirsa, Hisar, Karnal, Sonapat, Rohtak, Mahendragarh, Gurgaon.

Supreme Court refuses to hear plea on voter turnout data in midst of polls

NEW DELHI: Supreme Court on Friday refused to entertain an NGO's plea for a direction to Election Commission to declare authentic voter turnout figures at the end of each phase of polling and said it was not inclined to issue any interim order amid electioneering.

Hearing an application filed by NGO 'Association for Democratic Reforms' (ADR) in its PIL pending since 2019 and seeking identical mandamus to EC, a vacation bench of Justices Dipankar Datta and Satish Chandra Sharma said, "We are prima facie not inclined to grant interim relief as prayed for in the application as the prayer is similar to that in the 2019 petition. Grant of interim relief would amount to grant of final relief." The Justice Datta-led bench said the voter turnout app was a voluntary step taken by EC to inform the public about approximate voting percentage. "EC is not statutorily required to upload preliminary data. Sometimes a good initiative is like 'aa bail mujhe maar' (counter-productive)," it said,



agreeing with EC's contention that it was not mandated to put out voter turnout figures after polling for each phase and that it decided to provide the figures on its own. Appearing for EC, senior advocate Maninder Singh took the wind out of the application by claiming that it was based on "suspicions, apprehensions and falsehood" and urged the bench not to entertain such a plea as the "so-called public interest petition" was causing grave harm to the electoral process. "Low voter turnout could possibly be due to the continuous attempts by certain elements to create an

atmosphere of suspicion around the electoral process," he said. Singh said the court, in its April 26 judgment, had scrutinised every ADR allegation and dismissed it while questioning its bona fide. "But the PIL factory, within hours of the pronouncement of the judgment, filed this application raising another set of apprehensions based on suspicions. No fact is pleaded to substantiate the allegations," Singh said, adding that as per Article 329(b) of the Constitution, no court shall call into question a parliamentary election except on filing of an election petition after the conclusion of the poll process.

CAPSULES

ED arrests one more in TDS refund fraud case

MUMBAI: The Enforcement Directorate (ED) arrested another accused, Purshottam Chavan, in a money laundering case connected to a Rs 263 crore Income Tax Refund fraud on Monday, following the arrest of his accomplice Rajesh Batreja last week. This case involves the former Income Tax (I-T) inspector, Tanaji Adhikari, who gained the confidence of his seniors while working in the Income Tax department and cleared fraudulent TDS refund claims into the account of his accomplices. The ED said Chavan was involved in possessing part of the Proceeds of Crime (POC) and he was in regular contact with Batreja for the diversion of cheated money through hawala transactions. Chavan and Batreja had shared incriminating messages, which are part of the ED's findings. The ED mentioned that Chavan attempted to hamper the investigation by destroying evidence and during the search of his premises, they found many property documents and foreign currency. Earlier, the ED had arrested former income tax inspector Tanaji Adhikari, and businessmen Bhushan Patil and Rajesh Shetty in the case, who are currently in jail custody. The ED alleged that Batreja assisted Tanaji Adhikari in diverting POC of Rs. 55.50 Crore into three shell companies to convert the same into cash for sending it outside India via the hawala channel. Afterward, he brings part of the money to India as an investment in two companies. Until now, the ED has seized or attached properties worth Rs 168 crore in the case and last year had already filed a chargesheet against Tanaji Adhikari and 10 others in the case. Adhikari, who was the senior I-T tax assistant at the Income Tax office handling the refund of tax deducted at source.

Healthcare, illegal betting ads most violative, says ASCI

NEW DELHI: Healthcare emerged as the most violative sector in India with respect to advertising rules in 2023-24, with the majority of overall violations on account of misleading claims, an annual analysis of Advertising Standards Council of India says. Among the violators, healthcare ads contribute 19% of cases, followed by illegal offshore betting (17%), personal care (13%), conventional education (12%), food and beverage (10%), and realty (7%).

Baby care emerged as a new contender in the top violators category, with influencer promotions contributing to 81% of baby care cases. In 2023-24, the analysis studied 10,093 complaints and 8299 advertising campaigns. Nearly half of the advertisements picked up by ASCI were not contested by the advertisers, it adds. The majority of violations were on account of misleading claims at 81%, followed by ads that promoted harmful situations or products at 34% (the same ad can be processed for multi-

ple objections). Manisha Kapoor, CEO & Secretary General of ASCI, said, "2023-24 has been a truly challenging year, and ASCI stepped up to this by focusing our efforts on digital. About 3200 advertisements were shared with various regulators, such as MIB, Ayush, and MahaRera, for direct violations of the law. We see this as a continuing area of focus. With the highest number of violative ads seen online, advertisers and platforms must work more closely with regulators and self-regula-

tors to keep consumers protected". Further, digital media remained the primary source of violations, accounting for 85% of ads processed, and had a lower compliance rate of 75%, compared to 97% for print and TV. This raises serious questions about the online safety of consumers, a point highlighted last year as well, the report notes. In 2023-24, the number of complaints regarding misleading and violative ads was 12.75% higher over 2022-23. Saugata Gupta, ASCI chairman said, "As

digital emerges as a dominant media in which advertisements thrive, ASCI has geared up to the challenges through constant investment in technology'. Significantly, celebrities continued to appear in ads that were in violation of the ASCI code. ASCI processed complaints against 101 ads featuring celebrities, 91% of which required modification, the analysis said. About 104 celebrities appearing in these 101 ads were found to be in violation of the celebrity guidelines.

'What is your compulsion?': Rahul Gandhi accuses PM Modi of 'protecting' Prajwal

NEW DELHI: Congress leader Rahul Gandhi on Thursday slammed Prime Minister Narendra Modi and accused him of protecting Prajwal Revanna's facing charges of multiple instances of sexual abuse of women. Taking to X, former Congress president wrote, "Why are you protecting a mass rapist, Prime Minister? What is your compulsion?" Gandhi's remarks come hours after Karnataka chief minister Siddaramaiah



urgently requested the cancellation of the diplomatic passport belonging to JD(S) MP Prajwal Revanna, along with concerted efforts to ensure his return to India. Earlier in the day, former Prime Minister and JDS patriarch HD Deve Gowda issued a warning to his grandson Prajwal Revanna to

return to India and instructed him to submit himself to the legal process. The FIR against Prajwal Revanna includes grave charges such as rape, sexual assault, disrobing women, and forcibly video-graphing sexual acts to intimidate the victims. Siddaramaiah emphasizes the urgency of the situation, stressing the need for decisive action by the central government to ensure the accused's cooperation with legal proceedings.

'International Khan Market gang': Jaishankar on Western media's portrayal of India

NEW DELHI: External affairs minister S Jaishankar slammed the Western media and called the anti-India ecosystem the 'international Khan Market gang'. On the portrayal of India by the Western media, Jaishankar said we must ask "why they are doing it". He said that just like there's a 'Khan Market gang' in India, there also exists a global extension of it, 'international Khan Market gang'. "In the country today, there is a certain thought process, or entitlement process for which the metaphor of 'Khan Market gang' is a very good description. TOP PICKS FOR YOU a r t i c l e s h o w 110125113 Countries which have to go to court to decide result of polls are giving us lectures

about how to conduct elections: EAM Jaishankar 'My lowest turnout is higher than your highest,' EAM Jaishankar slams Western media I want to tell you there is an international Khan Market gang as well," Jaishankar said in an interview to news agency ANI. "These are people who are sort of linked, you know, to the entitled people out here. They are socially comfortable with them. They know them. They feel like they advance similar viewpoints. They are essentially a kind of an elitist left-lib thought process. So there's a symbiotic relationship between the two," he said. Talking about how they openly endorse leaders and parties, he said, "When the sales are down in the domestic Khan Market,

the International Khan Market gang feels like, I need to pep up these guys and give them support and you can actually see which stories they play up, how do they slant things and in previous elections perhaps even in this one they've actually openly endorsed parties and will openly endorse leaders and openly said that this party or this leader is bad for India." Jaishankar also claimed that attempt is being made to influence the choices of voters. "I believe it is election influence certainly... And it's not just them, you know, there's a... See, it's a... press, university, think tank, and in some cases maybe some degree of officialdom at some kind of medium level because the guys up there are very smart.

ICICI Prudential Life Insurance launches its First ULIP with Fund Value-based distributor payouts – ICICI Pru Platinum

KARNAL/HISAR, May 24, 2024: ICICI Prudential Life Insurance launched ICICI Pru Platinum, the Company's first unit-linked product which aligns distributor payouts to their customers' fund value – the distributor commissions are linked to their customers' Assets under Management. This unique product incentivises distributors to encourage their customers to stay invested for the entire policy tenure. Notably, it offers customers a cost and tax-efficient route to build wealth over the long-term. ICICI Pru Platinum provides unlimited free switches between asset classes, without any cost or tax implications. Customers can choose from an array of 21 funds under this

product, comprising 13 equity and four each in the debt and balanced categories, besides offering an option of four portfolio strategies. Announcing the launch, Mr. Amit Palta, Chief Distribution Officer, ICICI Prudential Life Insurance, said, "ICICI Pru Platinum, our Company's first unit-linked product designed to make distributor payouts aligned to their customers' fund value, promoting the long-term interests of both. We endeavour to continuously innovate and introduce products and processes which are simple. This is in line with our philosophy of ensuring right product to the right customer at the right price and through the right channel. We have introduced pioneering prod-

ucts on the annuity and pension savings platform. These include an annuity product which offers a 100% refund of all premiums paid from the date of purchase. We also offer a traditional product which allows customers to make partial withdrawals to meet liquidity requirements. Notably, we are the only life insurer in the country to payout commissions to distributors on the same day. Besides, achieving the milestone of issuing ~45% of our savings policies on the same day in FY2024." He further added "Life insurance is all about claims and as a customer friendly brand we aim to settle all claims speedily. This is reflected in our industry leading claim settlement.

Wrong section, delay in blood sample: The lapses in Pune Porsche crash

NEW DELHI: As the investigation into the Pune Porsche car crash intensifies, several lapses in the police investigation have come to light. This includes allegations of the teen accused of driving the luxury car under the influence of alcohol getting preferential treatment, being served pizza at the police station, and more. Commissioner of police Amitesh Kumar on Friday said the authorities are determined to ensure a thorough investigation and a 'watertight' case against the accused. **Who is Vishal Agarwal?** All you need to know about father of teen involved in Pune Porsche crash case 'Sent driver with son': Father of Pune crash accused on why he should get bail Meanwhile, two officials from the Yerawada police station have been suspended for neglecting their duties. The case has

also now been transferred to the crime branch. So what were the lapses in the initial investigation of Pune police? 1. Late reporting: Two officials from the Yerawada police station were suspended on Friday for neglecting their duties related as they failed to inform the wireless control room about the accident on May 19. Inspector Rahul Jagdale and assistant police inspector Vishwanath Todkari were suspended for "late reporting" and "dereliction of duty". 2. Delay in collection of blood sample: Commissioner of police Amitesh Kumar on Friday admitted that there was a delay in blood sample collection of the teen accused in this case. He confirmed that though the juvenile was sent to Sassoon General Hospital around 9am on May 19, his blood samples were collected at 11pm.

Air India Mumbai to San Francisco flight delayed, passengers sit inside cabin for six hours

MUMBAI: Passengers of an Air India flight from Mumbai to San Francisco had to sit inside the passenger cabin for about six hours with poor conditioning as the Friday afternoon flight was inordinately delayed. Flight AI-179 was supposed to depart at 2.25 pm and passengers, which included many senior citizens, had boarded by 3.30 pm, said sources. Passengers took to social media to complain about poor air conditioning and no update on the flight status.

An X (formerly Twitter) user Devang Desai posted: "Passengers are stuck inside flight after reported engine problems. Few passengers decided not to fly."

(Air India) Not departing, not giving correct information. "A couple of senior citizens fainted in the heat. Some were



allowed to deplane," said sources. The other passengers were finally disembarked at 9 pm.

Air India in a statement said: "AI-179 from Mumbai to San Francisco, scheduled to depart at 1600 hrs today, was delayed due to a technical issue arising just before departure. Giving top priority to safety issues, the aircraft was held back for engineering checks. Meanwhile, a few guests decided to discontinue the journey and the flight got further delayed as their baggage had to be offloaded from the

aircraft. The flight pushed back at 1917 but had to ramp return due to one guest feeling unwell. While the ailing guest was being deboarded with his baggage, the night landing restrictions at SFO had set in along with the crew flight duty limitations. Guests have been offered hotel accommodation, complimentary rescheduling and full refunds and served refreshments at the airport. The flight has now been rescheduled at 1030 hrs tomorrow. Inconvenience caused to guests is sincerely regretted."

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further added "Life insurance is all about claims and as a customer friendly brand we aim to settle all claims speedily. This is reflected in our industry leading claim settlement ratio of 99.2% for FY2024 with an average turnaround time of just 1.3 days."

ICICI Pru Platinum provides a choice between two life cover variants. The Growth Plus variant entitles the nominee to receive either the sum assured or the fund value, whichever is higher. Whereas the Protect Plus variant offers the nominee both the sum assured and the fund value. About ICICI Prudential Life Insurance Company (www.icicprulife.com) ICICI Prudential Life is promoted by ICICI Bank Limited and Prudential Corporation Holdings Limited. The Company began operations in fiscal 2001 and has consistently been amongst the top private sector life insurance companies in India on a Retail Weighted Premium (RWRP) basis.

Non-recovery of cash not prima facie proof no graft took place: HC on Sisodia

NEW DELHI: Non-recovery of ill-gotten money can't be prima facie proof that no corruption has taken place because a person now uses new technologies to commit offences without leaving behind any trace, Delhi high court has observed, while denying bail to AAP's Manish Sisodia in the city excise policy case.

In its order pronounced Tuesday and uploaded Wednesday, HC said "recovery of cash from a person may not necessarily be a mandatory requirement in a money laundering case where allegations are part of a conspiracy comprising multiple accused." It added the liquor policy case involves commission of "serious offence" of corruption in public office and laundering, which "strikes at the heart of economic and social systems, undermining the rule of law and eroding public trust in institutions." HC rejects plea of no money being recovered from Sisodia. Delhi High Court rejected the argument that no money was recovered from the former deputy chief minister while pointing out to statements of some hawala dealers and other witnesses recorded in course of the probe. "This court is of the view that the prosecution has made out a prima facie case of commission of money laundering under Section 3 of Prevention of Money Laundering Act (PMLA) against Manish Sisodia at this stage," high court observed. HC said the form "of corruption which has the tendency of stealing legitimate resources of the poor ordinary people and giving it to the rich can be one of the worst."

"It noted that the new excise policy has "eradicated" the common and small-time businesses. and gave the entire playing field in the liquor business to those who had "money, power and had created a cartel" on the basis of financial gains to those formulating a policy, which adds to the seriousness of the offence." The courts of law may be considered as constant thorns in the way of free-flowing corruption and, even if that be so.

NSE Listed Companies' Market Capitalization Surpass USD 5 Trillion

Vatika Times SHIMLA: The market capitalization of Indian listed companies on NSE surpassed USD 5 Trillion (Rs 416.57 trillion) on May 23, 2024. On the same day, the Nifty 50 Index touched an all-time high of 22,993.60. The Nifty 500 index also touched an all-time high of 21,505.25 today indicating that growth in equity market is not restricted to only the large, capitalized stocks. The journey of market capitalization of Indian listed companies

from USD 2 trillion (July 2017) to USD 3 trillion (May 2021) took about 46 months, USD 3 trillion to USD 4 trillion (December 2023) took about 30 months and the latest USD 1 trillion addition took only about 6 months. The top 5 companies by market capitalization are Reliance Industries Limited, TATA Consultancy Services Limited, HDFC Bank Limited, ICICI Bank Limited and Bharti Airtel Limited. In the last 10 years, Nifty 50 index has delivered 13.4%

returns (Total price index CAGR). During the same period, domestic mutual fund assets under management (Equity and Debt) increased by 506% from Rs 9.45 trillion end of April 2014 to Rs 57.26 trillion end of April 2024. The Foreign Portfolio investors (FPIs) assets under management (Equity and Debt) increased by 345% from Rs 16.1 trillion end of April 2014 to Rs 71.6 trillion at the end of April 2024. Growth in market capitalization is not restrict-

ed to the top companies but is observed across stocks.

The constituents of Nifty 100 index now account for 61% of market capital as compared to 74.9% of total market capital as of April 2014. The resource mobilization by corporates including the Small and Medium Enterprise in the primary market has been encouraging and has provided an effective alternative mechanism in addition to the traditional methods of fund raising.

Liquidity in secondary market has also improved significantly in Capital Market Segment. The equity segment's daily average turnover has increased by over 4.5 times from Rs 17,818 crores in FY15 to Rs 81,721 crores in FY24. The achievement of this milestone is a testament of the vision outlined for the Amrit Kaal which includes a technology-driven and knowledge-based economy with strong public finances, and a robust financial sector.

Urbanization led to overall 60% enhancement in warming in Indian cities: IIT study

BHUBANESWAR:

Urbanization alone has led to an overall 60 percent enhancement in warming in Indian cities, with eastern tier-II cities leading the way. It was revealed through a study conducted by the researchers from IIT Bhubaneswar. This research provides a science based quantitative ranking of urbanization for Indian cities. The study titled 'Urbanization and regional climate change-linked warming of Indian Cities' published in the journal



'Nature Cities' provides insight by carefully separating regional climate change and urbanization in multiple cities. The researchers investigated the contributions of local-scale urbanization and regional climate change to the warming in 141 major Indian cities over the

past two decades. They took 18 years of high-resolution land surface temperature data from NASA's Aqua satellite for the period between 2003 and 2020. They also compared urban and rural warming trends. The study found that Tier II cities in eastern India showed stronger urbanization-driven warming compared to larger metro cities like New Delhi and Mumbai. "This disparity underscores the importance of targeted urban planning.

Congress says EC withholding voter data; poll panel says application 'misleading'

NEW DELHI: The Congress criticised the Election Commission (EC) on Thursday for withholding voter data from the public and accused the poll panel of failing to fulfill its constitutional obligations as well as exhibiting a biased inclination. Congress spokesperson Abhishek Singhvi accused the EC of attempting to act as the "election department" of the ruling Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) by not addressing complaints of model code violations by Prime Minister Narendra Modi and home minister Amit Shah. Instead, the EC has been issuing generalized directions to political parties, which Singhvi referred to as "false equivalences." Singhvi's remarks followed the poll panel's submission of an affi-

davit to the Supreme Court, in which the commission stated that the "indiscriminate disclosure" of polling station-wise voter-turnout data and its publication on the EC website would lead to chaos in the ongoing Lok Sabha election machinery. Singhvi argued that the EC's actions regarding complaints against top BJP leaders and its refusal to disclose voter data are not befitting of a high-level constitutional institution. "This is against the constitutional responsibilities of the institution. This is the Election Commission, not the election agent of any party. When a constitutional institution does not follow the Constitution and shows inclination towards power, then it should be understood

that this is the end of democracy," Singhvi said. "We are not asking the EC about EVMs (electronic voting machines) but about disclosure of data. Through this stand in its ridiculous affidavit, the EC is falling into the BJP's trap to orchestrate decimation and destruction of electoral democracy," he added. Singhvi alleged that the reply filed by the EC in the apex court is just an "escape mechanism." This reply of the Election Commission is just an escape mechanism. Whereas anyone can get this data by paying money to the Election Commission," Singhvi alleged. "Will cause chaos; application is misleading, false and based on mere suspicion." Earlier, EC had filed a counter affidavit

Samsung 'Solve for Tomorrow' Conducts First Ever Design Thinking Workshop to Develop Problem-Solving Skills in School Students

KARNAL: Samsung, India's largest consumer electronics brand, has introduced the first ever design thinking & training workshop in select schools across the country. This unique initiative, part of Samsung's 'Solve for Tomorrow' programme, focuses on enhancing essential skills such as problem-solving, critical thinking, probing, and creativity among students through the Human-Centered Design Thinking framework. The national education and innovation competition aims to foster a culture of innovation amongst the next generation. Tailored specifically for India, the one-day workshop has been conceptualised to encourage students to

appreciate the idea of design thinking and nudge them to identify and solve real-world problems. As part of the academic curriculum, Human-Centered Design Thinking is a powerful practice for solving-problems. Using processes and tools from the design world, the-Human Centred Design framework impresses upon empathy, definition, ideation, prototyping and testing of a solution to improve the lives of users. "Samsung Solve for Tomorrow is part of our vision to empower the next generation and create an ecosystem of innovation in the country. We believe that they are the flag-bearers of innovation and require nurturing from a young age. The design thinking workshops

have been introduced as a pilot in 10 schools this year to motivate young students to execute projects, which involve problem-solving, collaboration, and creative thinking. Through these offline sessions, school students will get a unique opportunity to question basics, identify real-world issues and propose tech-based solutions," said SP Chun, Corporate Vice President, Samsung Southwest Asia. This is how a one-day Design Thinking Workshop looks like: -Introduction to Basic Concepts of Design Thinking -Five Steps of Design Thinking Process 1. Empathy: Students engage in role-play and interviews, empathizing with various user types

Cyclone 'Remal' to impact West Bengal, adjoining Bangladesh, IMD

NEW DELHI: A low-pressure area over the southwest & adjoining west-central Bay of Bengal moved northeastwards and is likely to concentrate into a depression over central parts of the Bay of Bengal by the morning of May 24 and is expected to intensify further into a cyclonic storm over the east-central Bay of Bengal by May 25, according to India Meteorological Department. And subsequently, it would move nearly northwards and reach near Bangladesh and adjoining West Bengal coasts by 26th May evening as a severe cyclonic storm. In a statement, the IMD said, "Low Pressure Area over southwest & adjoining westcentral Bay of Bengal moved north-eastwards and lay as a well-marked low pressure area over west central & adjoining south

Bay of Bengal at 0830 hrs IST of today, the 23rd May, 2024. It is very likely to continue to move northeastwards and concentrate into a Depression over central parts of Bay of Bengal by morning of 24th May, 2024." "Thereafter, it is very likely to continue to move northeastwards, intensify further into a cyclonic storm over east-central Bay of Bengal by 25th May morning. Subsequently, it would move nearly northwards and reach near Bangladesh and adjoining West Bengal coasts by 26th May evening as a severe cyclonic storm," it added. If the cyclone is formed, it will be named 'Remal', and it will be the first cyclone in the Bay of Bengal this pre-monsoon season. According to the IMD, a light to moderate rainfall at most places with heavy to very heavy rainfall.

'Not polarising to show Congress brought religion-based quota': PM



NEW DELHI: "To show that Congress violated the Constitution by enacting laws to provide reservations on the basis of religion is not polarisation," PM Narendra Modi asserted, taking head-on the criticism that he has tried to promote polarisation through his speeches. The second round of polls, Modi also stood by his statement that his predecessor Manmohan Singh had indeed said Muslims had the first claim on the nation's resources. He also declared that he was determined to fulfil BJP's commitment to implement a Uniform Civil Code. "It is clear that separate laws for communities are detrimental to the health of society. We cannot be a nation where one community is progressing with the support of the Constitution while the other community is stuck in a time warp due to appeasement. We will do everything in our capacity to make UCC a reality in India," the PM said, while also

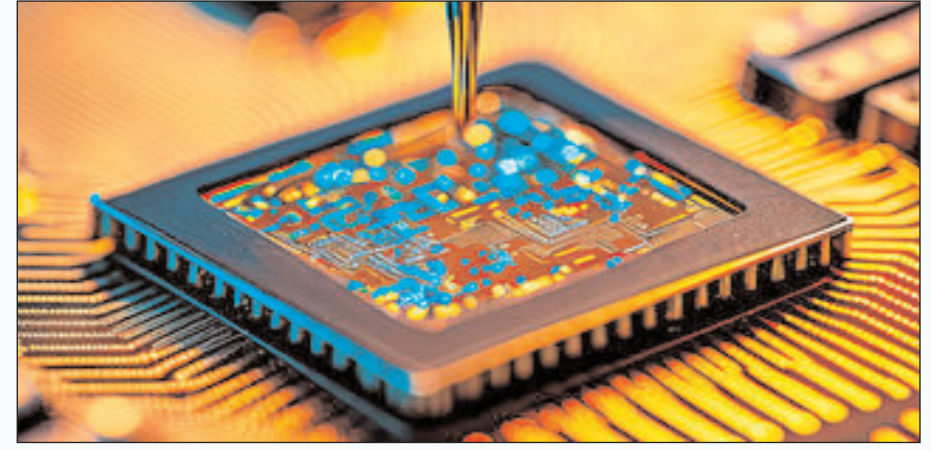
renewing his vow to move forward on his 'one nation-one poll' plan. Modi expressed confidence of getting a third straight term, and said he was striving for a 400-plus tally to foil the "evil designs of opposition parties to take away reservations and rights of SCs/STs and OBCs and give it to their vote bank". The PM came down hard on the push for redistribution through measures such as wealth and inheritance tax. "I do not think they are solutions by any stretch of imagination. These are actually dangerous problems disguised as solutions. Would you work day and night if the govt

would take away your money at the end in the name of redistribution?" he asked, adding these ideas would "kill" the start-up revolution and were merely a way to please "the opposition's vote bank". He further said that these ideas carried the risk of creating "complete and irreversible communal disharmony". "Our Constitution protects the property of all minorities. This means that when Congress talks of redistribution, it cannot touch the properties of minorities, it cannot consider Waqf properties for distribution, but it will eye the properties of other communities," he added.

Modi dubbed Rahul Gandhi's proposal to conduct a survey to estimate people's assets "Maoist thinking and ideology" and a "recipe for disaster" which would lead to "raiding every home". Asked about the opposition's charge that he would change the Constitution in case he got a super mandate, Modi said, "It is ironic that people who have changed the Constitution maximum number of times are saying that we will change the Constitution. But before asking such a question, you should analyse my track record." Exuding confidence about BJP's prospects in the South, Modi said opposition parties had raised a "false bogey of discrimination" to divert attention from their failures. On foreign policy, he was unfazed about India being seen as disregarding the "rules of the international order" to pursue its national interests.

Beyond Rs 76k-crore: Government to scale up semiconductor package

NEW DELHI: Government is looking at rolling out a fresh multi-billion-dollar incentive package for semiconductor companies after nearly exhausting the Rs 76,000-crore plan that was launched in Dec 2021 for supporting investing companies, top sources told TOI. Preliminary work on the new package, which is "in all likelihood be much bigger than the previous one", has already begun, even though announcements in this regard will be made only once the new govt takes charge post the national elections, they said. "The new package would be one of the key agendas for the new govt and will be taken up on a priority basis," one of the sources said, pointing out that new proposals that are coming in for semiconductors necessitate a fresh package. "The matter would be tabled before the new Cabinet as some of the proposals are at an advanced



stage and would require immediate assurances from the state in terms of incentives," the source said. Success of Dec 2021 package is prompting the govt to work out a new one, especially in view of the aggressive stance of countries such as the US and China, which have announced much bigger packages for companies that are investing in semiconductors. Under the current plan, govt extends fiscal support of up to 50% of a project's cost to eligible display and semiconductor fabricators. This has been almost exhausted after

the spate of investments that came in India, which had previously failed to get any credible proposals for semiconductor manufacturing after trying for decades, finally managed to score big after American Micron emerged as the first major player to enter the space with a Rs 22,500-crore testing and packaging unit in Gujarat in June last year. This was followed up with approval to three proposals worth nearly Rs 1.3 lakh crore in Feb this year. These comprise: Rs 91,000-crore project of Tata to set up India's first semiconductor fab unit.

Modi praised me earlier but now wants my defeat: Sharad Pawar

PUNE/NASHIK: Sharad Pawar on Sunday said PM Narendra Modi is inconsistent with his views and his stand. "When he spoke in Delhi, he said I have done historic work as Union agriculture minister. In Baramati, the PM said he came into national politics by holding my finger. But now, he says that anything and everything should be done to defeat me in Baramati," Pawar said at a public rally on Sunday.

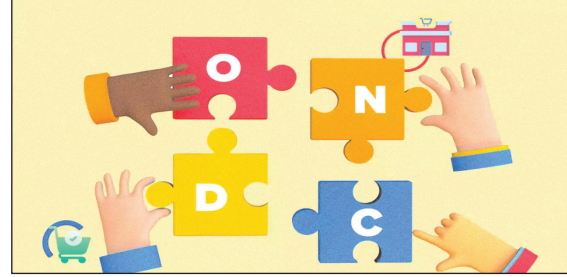
Delhi plans to plant 2.3 lakh trees and 3.8 lakh bushes in parks

Delhi: To reduce dust pollution and increase green cover, the Municipal Corporation of Delhi plans to plant 2.3 lakh trees and 3.8 lakh bushes in parks, schools, open spaces, and roadsides this year. In 2023-24, the city planted two lakh trees and 3.25 lakh plants. The horticulture department requested zonal office requirements to complete the assignment. "We will plant when the details are acquired. An officer stated schools, hospitals, parks, and below flyovers are used for this. He stated that the government will continue roadside tree planting in some colonies at homeowners' request.

MCD plans to carpet or repair 50 km of interior roadways by Oct. to reduce dust. Between April 2023 and February 2024, 139 km of roads were resurfaced or repaired. A civic council wants to resurface 180km of roads by Oct. Road maintenance and resurfacing are ongoing. After winter, we started dense carpet work on damaged areas. Work is being done with MLA or Mukhyamantri Sadak Punarnirman Yojna non-plan head funding "said the official. Our 52 mechanical road sweepers are for PWD roads. He added that 195 water sprinklers, jet machines, and 30 mobile anti-smog guns are reducing dust pollution on roadways. PWD gave MCD 60 anti-smog weapons to reduce dust near construction sites. In highrises, 15 smog cannons are deployed. The official claimed these work as needed. In response to summer fires, MCD has limited unauthorised entry and the carrying of cigarettes, bidis, lighters, and matchboxes. "Supervisory staff must notify Delhi Fire Services immediately of fires. Junior engineers and supervisors have SOPs for 24/7 landfill supervision. The official stated fresh solid garbage is unloaded, compacted, and coated with bio-cover to prevent fires.

Government e-commerce platform accepting unicorns

Delhi: Open Network for Digital Commerce (ONDC), a UPI-like alternative to e-commerce heavyweights, is onboarding unicorns like MakeMyTrip, PolicyBazaar, Cars24, and Zerodha to build traction. While ONDC was created to support small businesses like kirana stores and democratize online shopping, the gov-



ernment believes large players will give consumers more choice and boost demand in smaller towns and cities. The goal is to assist consumers and businesses without platform fees. "It gained popularity in the last two years. Five lakh sellers—70% small and medium—have joined. ONDC processed 72 million transactions in April

"Rajesh Kumar Singh, industry and internal trade secretary, told reporters. Singh expects all types of players to join, when asked if big startups would overwhelm smaller ones. "The intent is noble, let us see how it works and to what extent we can actually crack some of the issues you raised in terms of market concentration," said.

EC publishes a "rate list" for enticing competitions

Delhi: you can get a buffet or a packed lunch that includes two curries, rice, achar, roti, and sweets for Rs 80. You can also get a mini meal of chhole bhature or poori aalu for Rs 37. You can also get a small cup of tea or coffee for Rs 6. These prices do not include the cost of a roadside eatery or canteen. Every cup of tea or coffee, packed lunch, or small meal provided to a political worker conducting a

campaign during the capital election will be tracked and contributed to the candidate's overall poll expenditure. Not only will food costs be important, but so will the price of the chairs and tables that will be used at candidate polling places or during election gatherings. The candidates' election expenses also include the cost of renting vehicles for campaigning, posting posters, banners, and

hoardings, hiring a man to beat a drum, hiring horses and elephants for a road show, and hiring videographers, photographers, and drones to record the events. Every penny spent by the candidates is tracked from the time of nomination filing to the casting of ballots, with the total amount not to exceed the Rs 75 lakh cap on election expenses set by the Election Commission of India.

Airtel partners with Google Cloud to provide Indian businesses cloud and gen-AI solutions

Delhi: Bharti Airtel and Google Cloud are partnering to offer Indian businesses cloud and generative-AI solutions. The telecom company will use Google Cloud products to accelerate cloud adoption and modernization through the agreement. Airtel will offer cloud-managed services to its corporate customers, including over 2,000 large organizations and a million developing businesses. This partnership targets India's big and rising public cloud services industry, which IDC predicts will be worth \$17.8 billion by 2027.

Bharti Airtel managing director and CEO Gopal Vittal said, "Cloud and AI solutions will drive India's digital transforma-



tion. We're excited to collaborate with Google Cloud to provide safe and scalable cloud solutions for government, companies, and startups. Our collaboration will speed the implementation of generative AI in the country and uncover its potential to solve challenges. Airtel will also use Google Cloud's

generative AI to improve its mobile, broadband, and digital TV consumer experiences and internal processes. Airtel will also offer similar services to its Indian and global B2B customers. According to Google Cloud CEO Thomas Kurian, "Our strategic partnership with Airtel is a major step for accelerating cloud

Sahil Khan held in C'garh in 15k cr betting app case

MUMBAI: Actor Sahil Khan was arrested on Sunday in connection with his alleged role in the Rs 15,000 crore Mahadev betting app case. Khan (50) was produced in court and was sent to police custody till May 1. An SIT of crime branch nabbed him from a hotel in Jagdalpur, Chhattisgarh. Khan, who had been working as a fitness expert until recently, had fled the city on April 24 and had been dodging the police by constantly changing his location. After his anticipatory bail application was rejected by Bombay HC on April 24, police had been trying to nab him. To track down his whereabouts, police were tracking his location which showed he was constantly on the move at different points of time.

Gadchiroli in Maharashtra, Goa, Karnataka, Telangana, and Chhattisgarh. A senior crime branch officer said Khan was a partner in a betting app firm. "He had been promoting the app through social media and had also forged some documents.

One-year DDA flat maintenance with RWAs

Delhi: Delhi Development Authority would give residents' welfare societies maintenance work within a year of creation to ensure flat maintenance. This will also apply to Diwali Special Housing Scheme 2023 units. This conclusion followed Real Estate Regulatory Authority criteria. A maintenance fee is normally collected by DDA during allotment. It has maintained flats for 10-20 years, depending on the scheme. A DDA official stated that applicants must join the registered agency or RWA to maintain common services. Per pocket, one RWA will be registered. All new DDA plans require upfront monthly costs for one year, depending on flat type. "DDA shall do daily maintenance from maintenance charges for one year or until RWA is formed, whichever comes first. An RWA will get the balance

maintenance fund if it is founded before one year. If a RWA is not created within a year, it will be done on actuals "said the official. "For subsequent years, the necessary arrangement will be communicated to the residents," he said. Residents expect standard changes to speed up DDA flat maintenance, which had been delayed for a long period. The authority defined maintenance as green space maintenance, campus, colony, and housing pocket cleaning, light fitting replacement in common areas, lift maintenance and operation, and common area electrical bill payment. "After transfer, the urban authority will be responsible for common areas in many housing pockets. The authority indicated in a pamphlet that DDA will maintain the area until the urban body takes possession.

Paytm shares start flat on bourses after declining 3.74%

NEW DELHI:

Shares of One97 Communication, owner of brand Paytm, were trading flat on BSE and NSE. Shares were trading at 391.00, marking an increase of 0.68% or 2.65 points from its previous close at 09:27 am.

Earlier, shares of Paytm dropped by 3.74% to settle at 380.45 on Thursday, after hitting upper-circuit for four consecutive sessions.

The stock prices, on Wednesday rose to Rs 395.25 and Rs 395.05 on the BSE and NSE, respectively, defying broader market trends.

This surge follows Paytm's recovery from a recent slump, with its stock rebounding more than 21% from last Thursday.

Reports indicate that Enforcement Directorate (ED) found no significant violations of foreign exchange rules in its ongoing investigation into Paytm Payments Bank Ltd (PPBL). However, it came



across some lapses in the company's KYC processes and reporting of suspicious transactions. The scrutiny on Paytm has intensified as the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) tightens oversight on fintech firms globally. Recent actions by the RBI include directing to cease certain operations of PPBL due to non-compliance issues, affecting One97 Communications despite its 49% stake in the banking entity. The RBI's stricter stance comes as concerns over customer due diligence, data privacy, and systemic risks prompt a reevaluation of oversight mechanisms, primarily

focusing on digital customer identification practices.

In response, the RBI has increased inspections and meetings with fintech companies, aiming to tighten compliance and ensure the integrity of the financial ecosystem.

The evolving regulatory landscape may lead to higher compliance and capital requirements for fintech firms, potentially resulting in sector consolidation. Industry stakeholders like Ashish Fafadia of Blume Ventures believe this scrutiny will foster compliance and support investment in law-abiding companies.

Premature move on monetary policy front could undermine efforts to check inflation: RBI

MUMBAI: The Reserve Bank of India's job to bring down inflation is not over, and any premature move on the policy front could undermine the success achieved so far on the price situation, according to RBI governor Shaktikanta Das. According to the minutes of the February Monetary Policy Committee (MPC) meeting released by the central bank on Thursday, Das had said at this juncture, monetary policy must remain vigilant and "not assume that our job on the inflation front is over". He stressed that the MPC must remain



committed to successfully navigate the "last mile" of disinflation that can be sticky.

Das made the remarks while voting for status quo in the key interest rate earlier this month.

"As markets are front-running central banks in anticipation of policy pivots, any premature move may undermine the success achieved so far," the governor said, as per the minutes.

100% FDI in space sector a game changer: IN-SPACE chairman Pawan

BENGALURU: A day after the union cabinet, in line with the Centre's reforms to open up the space sector, allowed 100% foreign direct investment (FDI) under the automatic route, space regulator and promoter Indian National Space Promotion and Authorisation Centre

(IN-SPACE) chairman Pawan Goenka termed it a "game-changing decision that will propel India to new heights in the space sector". Lauding PM Narendra Modi's vision Goenka said the move will boost participation of non-government entities in space research and man-

ufacturing. "By opening doors for massive investment and global collaboration, this move will transform India's space capabilities," he said. Elaborating on the impact, Goenka said that this reform comes at an opportune time when the space sector is witnessing massive growth.

CAPSULES

Byju Raveendran, board to skip 'procedurally invalid' extraordinary general meeting

MUMBAI: A day ahead of the extraordinary general meeting (EGM) which a group of Byju's major investors have called to seek removal of Byju Raveendran from position of CEO as well as a reconstitution of the firm's board, Byju's said that Raveendran and the board members will not attend the EGM which it said is "procedurally invalid." Following the resignation of representatives of Prosus, Peak XV Partners and Chan Zuckerberg Initiative from the board of Byju's in June last year, it has been reduced to a family-run entity, comprising Raveendran, his wife and co-founder Gokulnath and his brother Riju Raveendran. "This EGM is procedurally invalid, contractually in contravention of our AOA (Articles of Association) and SHA (Shareholders Agreement), legally on the wrong side of the Companies Act, 2013," a company spokesperson said in a statement on Thursday. Byju's said that with Raveendran and board members deciding to skip the EGM, it will not have the required quorum and cannot proceed to discuss or vote on the agenda. "As custodians of Byju's, it is the responsibility of the founders to respect the established procedures of law and protect the company's integrity," the company added. The EGM is supposed to take place on Friday morning, according to the EGM notice reviewed by investors claim that they will hold the EGM as per plan but if the resolutions are put to vote, then they will test the law in court, lawyers said.

Indians extremely demanding, but unwilling to pay: Uber CEO

BENGALURU: Uber CEO Dara Khosrowshahi said that Indians are extremely demanding, but unwilling to pay. The Uber top boss was in conversation with Infosys co-founder Nandan Nilekani in Bengaluru on Thursday at an interactive session on building population scale technology. "India is one of the toughest markets out there. If we can succeed here, we can succeed anywhere," Khosrowshahi said. Uber is also planning to expand to low-cost service segments of two-



and three-wheelers in India. The company will be getting into bus services in some of the geographies. "It is also an extraordinary opportunity for us to expand our services to a wider population. We don't just want to be an upper-middle-class product. We want to be available to everybody."

Khosrowshahi said companies and govts around the world can learn from the scale and ambition of India's digital public infrastructure. He added that as a technology company, Uber views open-source tech stacks with a lot of interest and recognises the opportunities they bring for everyone.

Khosrowshahi said that Uber's approach has changed since the pandemic. As much as the focus is on the customers, he also said there is a growing focus on improving the experience for its drivers. Uber has signed an MoU with the Open Network for Digital Commerce (ONDC) to explore an integration with the network to expand the range of mobility offerings on the Uber app. Khosrowshahi said that Uber made \$3 billion in terms of profits during the pandemic.

Bank deposits losing sheen? Why more savers are moving to higher-yielding investment

One of the reasons for the decline in CASA ratios could be the increase in bank fixed deposit rates. Bank deposits losing sheen? Indian banks are facing a significant challenge as the preference of urban savers shifts towards higher-yielding investment options like mutual funds and direct stock ownership. This trend is eroding the banks' biggest strength - access to low-cost current and savings account deposits. The rise of technology and the increasing familiarity with Dalal Street (the Indian stock market) among rural savers are



further intensifying the struggle for deposits in the banking industry. This democratization of technology is fundamentally changing the dynamics of financial savings, to the disadvantage of traditional high-street banks.

As of September 2023, the collective CASA ratio (current and savings account deposits) of all commercial banks in India stands at 40.5%, down from 43.1% in March 2023 and 45.2% in March 2022. This is a decline of nearly 5 per-

centage points in 18 months, according to report. One of the reasons for the decline in CASA ratios could be the increase in bank fixed deposit rates. State Bank of India's CASA ratio dropped to 41.18% as of December 31, 2023, a decline of 330 basis points compared to the previous year. P R Rajagopal, executive director of Bank of India, highlighted the shift in savings patterns, particularly in urban areas. Digitization has provided savers with access to alternative savings products like mutual funds, reducing their reliance.

'India to be small aircraft maker ATR's biggest market in 5 years'

NEW DELHI: Franco-Italian regional aircraft major ATR sees India emerge as its biggest market in the next five years. And as that happens, the turboprop-maker says "it will be foolish not to increase our footprint here" in terms of sourcing of components, pilot



training and others. "India currently has 65 ATRs - 45 with IndiGo and 20 with Alliance Air. IndiGo is to get five more. Startup carrier Fly91 (which is being launched by aviation industry veteran Manoj Chacko) will get its first leased ATR anytime now and the second in a week or so," Jean-Pierre Clercin, ATR's head of commercial for Asia Pacific, said. "Indonesia has about 100 ATRs and is currently our biggest market. India and Brazil come after that. But the way Indian econo-

my and air travel in the country is booming, within five years India will have the maximum ATRs given the government's focus on regional air transport through udesh ka aam naagrik (UDAN) scheme," Clercin said. ATR feels India will need 50-150 such planes in the next decade. "That is the official estimation. But given the way India is developing, the actual number could be even higher. Much higher," he said. The turboprop major is in talks with several Indian airlines for more orders.

Foreigners pursue every avenue to access hot India bond trade

Overseas investors are showing such keen interest in India assets that they are taking proxy exposure to the country even if they don't have the license or physical presence to trade there.

Foreign funds lacking direct access to India's \$1 trillion government debt market are increasing their exposure via instruments such as supranational bonds and swaps ahead of the nation's upcoming inclusion in global bond indexes. There's an "increased engagement from global investors, with momentum picking up this year," said Siddharth Bachawat, head for markets at Barclays Bank India. "In addition to interest from index-tracking managers ahead of the inclusion, discretionary activity from a



wider investor base has also been notable." Indian sovereign bonds have gained prominence after JPMorgan Chase & Co's move to add them to its global debt indexes from June. The number of issuances by sovereign, supranational and agency entities offering investors an exposure to the country rose to a record in 2023, with the value of such offerings reaching \$3.2 billion, a five-year high, data compiled by

Bloomberg show. "There's been a marked increase in the sales of rupee-denominated supranational, sovereign and agency debt," said Wontae Kim, research analyst at Western Asset Management. Investors such as William Blair Investments and M&G Investments are venturing into supranational bonds. Issued by multilateral agencies like the World Bank and denominated in Indian rupees, these

triple-A rated notes give overseas investors exposure to local debt without having to secure a license to operate onshore.

"Given India's disinflation trend and improved technical outlook with impending index inclusion, we favor duration in India," said Johnny Chen, fund manager at William Blair in Singapore. Also, buyers don't have to pay 20% withholding tax as these securities are settled offshore, which results in higher yields, according to Claudia Calich, head of emerging-market debt at M&G Investments in London. "Even if the pretax yield on supranational bonds tends to be lower than on India government debt, the yield is higher on an after-tax basis.

Attach bank accounts of ex-promoters of DHFL: Sebi



NEW DELHI: Markets regulator Sebi has ordered the attachment of bank accounts as well as shares and mutual fund holdings of Dheeraj Wadhawan and Kapil Wadhawan - former promoters of Dewan Housing Finance - to recover dues totalling over Rs 22 lakh. This came after the brothers failed to pay the fine imposed on them by Sebi in July last year in a case concerning the flouting of disclosure norms. The pending dues of Rs 10.6 lakh each from the Wadhawans comprise the initial penalty amount, interest, and recovery cost, it added. In July 2023, the regulator imposed a Rs 10 lakh penalty each on Wadhawans.