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

## An OBC as Haryana's chief minister could polarise non-Jat votes

● "According to statistics, SCs comprise 21% of Haryana's population. Jats constitute 27% and other castes make up 12%."



**CHANDIGARH:** The choice of an OBC as Haryana's new CM fits snugly into BJP's strategic outreach to the backward classes, constituting 40% of the state's population, ahead of elections. Many see Nayab Singh Saini catalysing BJP's bid to polarise the non-Jat vote. That he is someone with whom predecessor Manohar Lal Khattar goes back a long way spares the saffron party the risk of collateral damage due to the sudden change. This isn't the first time that the BJP-led govt in Haryana has attempted to woo the backward classes with a potentially game-changing move close to elections. The saffron party

previously introduced reservations for backward classes in municipality and panchayat polls, making it the first instance of a state doing so without carrying out a caste survey. The proposed provision of "reserving" promotions in govt departments under the Scheduled Caste quota is seen as one such move. Manohar Lal Khattar resigns as Haryana Chief Minister amid rift with JJP. According to statistics, SCs comprise 21% of Haryana's population. Jats constitute 27% and other castes make up 12%. Sources in BJP

### Khattar's resignation as Haryana CM, 24 hours after PM Modi's praise

**CHANDIGARH/NEW DELHI:**

BJP on Tuesday re-arranged its chessboard for LS and assembly polls by replacing two-term Haryana CM Manohar Lal Khattar with Nayab Singh Saini, a Lok Sabha MP and state BJP chief, and ending the coalition with Dushyant Chautala's Jannayak Janata Party (JJP). Chautala was deputy CM in the outgoing govt. The exercise, prompted by the desire to re-energise the rainbow coalition comprising OBCs and others that BJP has tried to mobilise to deal with Congress's plan to rally the dominant Jats against it and send a message to the socially backward categories in general, saw the party's veteran Anil Vij, who held the home

said the party leadership's decision to appoint Saini CM as part of its social engineering exercise was based on an internal survey on anti-incumbency against Khattar. The change also reflects the presumption that Jat votes would now be divided among INLD, JJP and Congress.

## CAA rules leave no room for states to process, decide pleas

**NEW DELHI:** Even as CMs of West Bengal, Tamil Nadu and Kerala have threatened not to implement Citizenship (Amendment) Act, 2019, state govts may have little leeway to block the Centre's move to grant citizenship to minorities from Pakistan, Bangladesh and Afghanistan.

The constitutional scheme of things puts central govt exclusively in charge of all such matters, with 'citizenship, naturalisation and aliens' figuring as entry no. 17 in the union list under the Seventh Schedule. Additionally, CAA Rules, 2024 have ensured that committees at district and state/UT level, tasked respectively to verify documentation and take a final call on citizenship, are packed with central govt officers, even as state/UT concerned is represented by a sole invitee to each committee. What's more, the quorum of each committee



shall be two, including the Chair. This practically means that the committees can do complete verification of applications and decide on grant of citizenship without mandatorily involving the state representative. The Chair of both the empowered committee and the district-level committee are central govt officers. While EC will be headed by director (census operations) of the state/UT concerned, DLC will work under senior superintendent or superintendent of posts. The officer of director (census operations) reports to office of census commission-

er and Registrar General of India, which falls under home ministry's purview. The senior superintendent/superintendent of posts is an officer of the department of posts under central govt. Centre officially implements Citizenship Amendment Act, 2019, notifies rules. Along with the head, all members of EC — officer of subsidiary Intelligence Bureau, jurisdictional foreigners regional registration officer (FRRO), state informatics officer of NIC of state/UT and postmaster general of state/UT — are central govt officers. Of the two invitees to EC, only one is a state/UT govt

representative — from the office of principal secretary (home) or additional chief secretary (home) — and the other (jurisdictional divisional railway manager) is from railways. DLC is no different. Its other members — district informatics officer/assistant (of NIC) and a nominee of Centre — are all central govt officers. Here too, just one of the two invitees is from state govt — a representative not below rank of naib tehsildar or equivalent from the office of district collector — while the other (jurisdictional station master of railways) is a central employee.

## India slams China for objecting to PM Modi visit to Arunachal

**NEW DELHI:** India slammed China for objecting to PM Narendra Modi's visit to Arunachal Pradesh, reiterating that the state is and will remain an integral and inalienable part of India. Like in the past, Beijing had again protested the visit by Modi saying India's moves will only complicate the boundary question. "We reject comments made by Chinese side regarding visit of PM to Arunachal Pradesh. Indian leaders visit Arunachal Pradesh from time to time, as they visit other states of India," said MEA spokesperson Randhir Jaiswal. The official said objecting to such visits or India's developmental projects does not stand to reason. Further, it will not change the reality that the State of Arunachal Pradesh was, is, and will always be an integral and inalienable part of India. The Chinese side has been made aware of this consistent position on several occasions," he added. China, which claims Arunachal Pradesh as South Tibet, routinely objects to Indian leaders' visits to the state to highlight its claims. Beijing has also named the area as Zangnan.

### Rahul & Owaisi lying, CAA only gives citizenship: Shah

**HYDERABAD:** Union home minister Amit Shah claimed on Tuesday that AIMIM chief Asaduddin Owaisi and Congress leaders Mallikarjun Kharge and Rahul Gandhi are lying about Citizenship Amendment Act (CAA). He assured minorities in the country that the act has no provision to take away anyone's citizenship. Addressing two meetings in Hyderabad, he said, "I assure my minority brothers and mothers that CAA is about giving citizenship to religious minorities in Pakistan, Afghanistan and Bangladesh.

## Meet Sheena Rani, the force behind Agni-5 missile with multiple warheads

**NEW DELHI:** Missile expert R Sheena Rani spearheaded a Defence Research Development Organisation (DRDO) team that was behind India's first flight-test of Agni-5 missile with multiple independently targetable re-entry vehicle (MIRV) technology, which was launched on Monday from the Dr A P J Abdul Kalam Island off the Odisha coast. The 57-year-



old led the missile project as programme director at Hyderabad-based Advanced Systems

Laboratory (ASL) of DRDO, which developed the missile with multiple nuclear warheads that has not only put India in an elite club of nations but also raised China's eyebrows as the 5,000-km-range missile covers almost all of India's neighbouring country with its range. She is also the associate director of DRDO's ace lab ASL, which has developed several Agni

variants. Rani, who previously worked at Isro's Vikram Sarabhai Space Centre for eight years, joined DRDO as a lateral entry in 1999 soon after the Pokhran-II nuclear tests in 1998, and has been working for the country's Agni missile programme since then. Though several Agni variants have been developed and inducted into the forces under the missile programme.

## Nijjar row: New Zealand says it respects India's territorial integrity

**NEW DELHI:** Walking the diplomatic tightrope on the India-Canada diplomatic spat over the killing of a Khalistan separatist in Canada, the visiting New Zealand deputy PM and foreign minister, Winston Peters, said Tuesday that the South Pacific country respects the rule of law as much as it does India's territorial integrity. New Zealand is part of the Five Eyes alliance whose shared intelligence, according to the US, informed Canadian PM Justin Trudeau's allegation about Indian involvement in the killing of Khalistani Hardeep Singh Nijjar in the Vancouver area last year. In the middle of growing concerns over expanding Chinese presence in



the Pacific Islands, the minister also welcomed India's efforts to shore up ties with countries in the region. "We respect India's territorial authority, but we also respect the rule of law. It's not our spat. We are not a part of this. But if you ask us where we are on the rule of law, we are defenders of it. If you ask us where we are on sovereignty, land

area sovereignty, we are totally believers in it," Peters told, ahead of his meeting with his counterpart S Jaishankar. As the 2 countries look to ramp up defence and security ties, Peters is also expected to meet NSA Ajit Doval on Wednesday. While the US and UK, also members of the English-speaking Five Eyes, have publicly called

## SC says give Kerala a bailout, govt expresses reservations

**NEW DELHI:** As Kerala govt is facing extreme fiscal problems due to the Centre's decision to put a cap on its borrowing capacity, the Supreme Court on Tuesday asked the Union govt to consider a bailout package as a one-time measure with a condition that the amount given could be adjusted in the first quarter of the next financial year.

A bench of Justices Surya Kant and K V Viswanathan asked the



Centre to be liberal and give some concession and to the state as a one-time measure. The court clarified that the Centre would be at liberty to put stringent conditions on the state for the next financial year and also that the amount released to the

state would be readjusted in the next quarter. "You can be slightly liberal in relaxing the norms and give a one-time package as a special case before March 31. You can impose rigid conditions on the state next year. You can give extra concession," the bench told additional solicitor general N Venkataraman. Additional solicitor general N Venkataraman expressed the Centre's reservation.

### Govt clears Rs 16,000cr for strategic highway near China border

**NEW DELHI:** The road transport ministry has sanctioned around Rs 16,000 crore for construction of over 600km of the 1,748-km Frontier Highway in Arunachal Pradesh, indicating govt's priority to improve connectivity and infrastructure along the border, reports Dipak Dash.. The greenfield highway (NH 913) will run close to the India-Tibet-China-Myanmar border-barely 20 km from it at several locations. Road transport and highways minister Nitin Gadkari on Tuesday said the development of the highway stretches will significantly enhance connectivity to border areas. "It is anticipated to curb migration and facilitate reverse migration towards the border areas of Arunachal Pradesh.

### German national behind Mahadev app gambling operations

**MUMBAI:** A German national is responsible for creating the program of the Mahadev Online Book gaming-betting app, along with several other similar apps in different countries, said the Enforcement Directorate, which is investigating a money laundering case involving the promoters. This German national is not only the mastermind behind the app's programming but also one of the key promoters of the Mahadev group. The ED is currently investigating the transfer of money to the German national in his home country and other foreign entities. According to ED sources, the Mahadev group operates through three layers. The first layer involves developers who created the gaming-betting program based on local needs, ensuring that 40% of the total collect-

ed money is distributed to winning players-users using the app, while the remaining 60% goes to Mahadev as profit. The second layer consists of individuals like Saurabh Chandrakar and Ravi Uppal, who manage the app and the group's operations. They handle the collection and transfer of money through hawala and shell companies. The third layer comprises panel operators who run the operations of the group on the ground. They provide online links to users for placing bets and playing games, collect money online from users, and then divert it to the second layer for layering. Despite recent actions taken against the group, the operations continue, with the panel operators withdrawing cash after collecting money from users and sending it to Dubai via hawala.



# Meja Urja Nigam Celebrates Inauguration of Developmental Projects Linked to Dedicated Freight Corridor by Hon'ble PM

**Prayagraj:** On the momentous occasion of foundation laying of developmental projects worth over Rs 1,06,000 crores by Hon'ble PM Narendra Modi, Meja Urja Nigam celebrated it at its Junction Cabin station by organising various activities under Pakhwada. On 12.03.24, Prime Minister Narendra Modi inaugurated various developmental projects worth over Rs 1,06,000 crores at the Dedicated Freight Corridor's Operation Control Centre in Ahmedabad, Gujarat. Meja Urja Nigam, being a direct beneficiary of DFC also



joined the live telecast, directly connected with Central control room in Ahmedabad.

Meja Urja Nigam, being is directly linked with DFC at the new Unchdih station. Meja Urja Nigam's CEO, Shri Kamlesh Soni,

along with GM(O&M) Shri Ajit Basak and GM (FM & Maintenance) Shri GP Singh, graced the event with their presence, alongside other MUNPL officials. On this special occasion, MUNPL's MGR team organized

various competitions and conducted a pakhwara in the surrounding villages to raise awareness. Students from local schools and colleges actively participated in the pakhwara. MUNPL CEO Shri Kamlesh Soni expressed his heartfelt gratitude and said, "It is truly inspiring to witness the remarkable progress and commitment towards building a 'Viksit Bharat'.

As direct beneficiaries of the DFC, this moment fills us with immense pride. The inauguration marks a significant step towards bolstering connectivity

and enhancing operational efficiency, which will undoubtedly propel our nation's growth forward." He emphasized the pivotal role of the energy and railway sectors in driving the country's development, particularly highlighting the transformative impact of the dedicated freight corridor in fostering connectivity across India. Shri Kamlesh Soni also said that the DFC's integration has significantly improved connectivity between mining stations and MUNPL, streamlining our operations with greater efficiency.

## ZARI JAIPUR Reveals the Highly Awaited UDHARAN



**Jaipur:** ZARI JAIPUR, a prominent fashion brand, recently hosted a captivating evening during the Jaipur Times Fashion Week, showcasing a harmonious blend of Legacy, Tradition, Craftsmanship, Emotions, and a Contemporary outlook. The focal point of this spectacular event was the presentation of their themed collection, 'Udharan', for the upcoming Spring/Summer 2024 season, held at the Jaipur Marriott. Ankit Palawat, Director at ZARI JAIPUR, expressed, "Udharan goes beyond being a mere fashion show; it sets an epitome

for all, where every stitch and detail narrates a story of craftsmanship, elegance, and innovation. Each garment in our collection is deeply entrenched in the essence of gotta, marodi, zardosi, paying homage to the garments passed down through generations. Udharan encapsulates everything Zari stands for: 'Udhaaran pyaar ka,' 'Udhaaran kalaakari ka,' 'Udhaaran Apnepan ka,'" added Preet Palawat, Creative Director at ZARI JAIPUR. Founded in November 2005, ZARI has established itself as one of the leading players in

Women's Ethnic wear nationwide. The brand is synonymous with originality and exquisiteness, offering a wide range of full trousseau collections, including designer Lehenga, Suits, Sarees, Gowns, and Indo-Western outfits. ZARI boasts a strong presence in both online and offline retail, with locations in Indore, Raipur, Udaipur, and Bilaspur. The flagship store is located in Jaipur. With 6 retail stores, wholesale across 80 cities and 5L+ buyers, a huge manufacturing unit, ZARI provides direct or indirect employment to more than 2000 people.

## LG performs aarti at restored Vasudev Ghat

**New Delhi: Delhi** Development Authority on Tuesday opened its first restored ghat along the river Yamuna, Vasudev Ghat, for public. Lieutenant governor VK Saxena inaugurated the place and performed aarti in the evening. Spread over 16 hectare, the main ghat stretches to a length of 145m and has 25 steps to the holy water of Yamuna. "The authority has got silt removed from the banks for the convenience of visitors coming to this place. The place has five-hectare greens restored and developed



in Charbagh style," stated DDA. "Not just this ghat, DDA is also trying to revive entire Yamuna floodplains and other ghats in Delhi by restoring them. I am quite confident that with this, not only will the banks of Yamuna get back its old form, but people will also get a pleasant feeling by

coming here. However, to maintain the sanctity of this place, we should also take responsibility in the conservation of Yamuna," Saxena said. Other attractions adorning the site included a statue of Maa Yamuna amidst beautifully carved pavilions and lush green lawns with flowerbed.

## Union Cabinet likely to approve 2 more Delhi Metro corridors today

**New Delhi:** Union cabinet is likely to approve the development of two more Delhi Metro corridors — Lajpat Nagar to GBlock in Saket and Inderlok to Indraprastha — on Wednesday, barely days before the dates for Lok Sabha election are announced. The two stretches have cumulative length of around 20 km. Sources were tight lipped about the cost of

these stretches under the DMRC Phase-IV, which will provide direct connectivity. While the 8-km long Lajpat Nagar-Saket G Block corridor will have eight stations, the 12-km Inderlok-Indraprastha line will have 10 stations. "These two lines will bring down the travel time as passengers won't have to take long detours (by trains) to reach the destinations. These will

connect busy commercial areas. Once the projects are approved, DMRC will start the bidding process. There is a greater need to connect more part of Delhi with Metro to deal with increasing congestion," said a source.

Officials said expediting the two corridors is part of the Centre's vision to ease travel in Delhi-NCR and also to curb pollution.

## How pharmacists & frauds ran the racket from 2 W Delhi flats?



**New Delhi:** Nestled in the upscale DLF Greens in west Delhi's Moti Nagar, the two flats betrayed no sign of unusual activity. However, investigators were shocked at the scale of operations going on towards the manufacturing of fake cancer and chemotherapy drugs. Special commissioner Shalini Singh said a crime branch probe revealed how people from various fields had formed a nexus to target patients, not just from Delhi and neighbouring states but other countries too. A key player, she said, was Vipil Jain from Baghpat, who ran the show in Moti Nagar. Having spent his childhood in Seelampur, he quit studies before finishing Class X. "After

failing to finish basic education, he started dedicating his time at a medical store in Seelampur as a store boy. Initially, he started supplying medicines from wholesale markets to local medical stores," Singh said. A few years ago, he happened to discuss the idea of refilling cancer injections as these were expensive. Falling in the lifesaving drug category, selling fake injections could fetch big money, he believed. He chose expensive injection brands and involved two friends — Parvez and Neeraj Chauhan — to arrange for empty vials and supply the refilled ones. Jain allegedly used to fill the vials with Fluconazole, an anti-fungal drug.

## CS visits Sangam Vihar, asks officials to address its woes

**New Delhi:** Days after lieutenant governor VK Saxena identified poor civic conditions in Sangam Vihar, chief secretary Naresh Kumar on Tuesday visited the area, a cluster of unauthorised colonies in south Delhi, and directed the agencies concerned to address the shortcomings. Kumar was accompanied by senior officials of Delhi Jal Board, Municipal Corporation of Delhi, revenue department, irrigation, and flood control, DSIIDC, PWD and social welfare. The visit largely concentrated on removal of debris, improving civic amenities, construction of steel frames and slabs over open drains, preventing waterlogging, and completing the construction of roads.

## CBI Busts Passport Racket At Gzb RPO

**New Delhi:** Blowing the lid off a major 'bribe-for-passport' racket at the regional passport office (RPO) in Ghaziabad, Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) has initiated a probe against the officials, including passport assistants and senior assistants posted there, on bribery charges. The central probe agency has reportedly stumbled upon a range of malpractices, including officials allegedly accepting bribes through payment gateways and involvement of private individuals as middlemen, sources said. The agency has filed an FIR against at least five people, including two officials who have been identified till now, and will soon make arrests, they said. "Searches are being conducted at the premises of the accused persons in Meerut, Muzaffarnagar and Ghaziabad (UP)," CBI spokesperson RC Joshi said. The allegations detailed in the FIR indicate a major nexus of touts and officials at the RPO. According to the allegations in the FIR, the accused hatched a conspiracy to obtain undue pecuniary advantage in lieu of resolving the issues of passport applicants which were pending at the RPO. "It has been alleged that accused private persons used to contact the concerned dealing hands; all officials working at regional passport office for sending police verification report, scanning of documents, printing and dispatch of passports of the applicants whose files were pending at the RPO," said the spokesperson. "In lieu of these, the private individual allegedly paid illegal gratification to the accused passport officials using different payment gateways," the official added. It has been alleged that an accused private person obtained bribe of Rs1.6 lakh between June 2022 and July 2023 in lieu of resolving the issues of passport applicants. "The alleged amount, so obtained, was transferred by him through UPI into bank wallets, bank accounts of accused passport officials, their family members, friends and known persons through various transactions," a CBI officer said. The FIR names four officials viz Ravi Kishan, Chandrakant, Pawan Kumar and Jandail Singh who are working as passport assistants and senior passport assistants at the RPO.

## NOTICE

This inform you all that in my class 10th (CBSE BOARD ROLL NO. 23259242 year 2021 in marksheet as well as in certificate mine and my father name is ( TEJASAV KESHARWANI AND RISHI KEAHARWANI is printed ).And in class 12th (CBSE BOARD ROLL NO. 23738487 year 2023)marksheet mine and my father name is ( TEJASVA KESHARWANI AND RISHI KESHARWANI is printed ) Therefore mine and my father correct name is ( TEJASAV KESHARWANI AND RISHI KUMAR KESHARWANI is it .)

## Congress performs mock puja for 'kids' born out of 'BJD-BJP wedlock'

**BHUBANESWAR:** Amid BJD-BJP alliance negotiations, the Congress on Monday launched an attack on both the parties by organising a mock puja for 10 symbolic children, each named after the different scams, born from the 'BJD-BJP marriage' solemnized by the opposition party here on January 25. Mining scam, chit fund scam, unsafe women, unemployment, corruption in government schemes, monopoly of non-Odia contractors, inflation, power crisis, tribal land grab and sale of government jobs are the 10 names of the symbolic children, branded by the Congress. In the run-up

to the assembly election in Telangana, the Congress had solemnised a satirical marriage between BRS and BJP to underline the alleged unholy nexus between the two parties. Buoyed by the Telangana victory in December last year, the Congress in Odisha organised a similar mock marriage between BJD and BJP. "We had earlier performed the marriage between BJD and BJP for their secret and tacit alliance. Now, when both parties are gearing up for a formal alliance, we have conducted annaprashana," said Bijay Patnaik, Congress campaign committee chairman.

## Robot waiter at Ahmedabad street cafe wows netizens

**AHMEDABAD:** Restaurants and cafes worldwide are starting to use robots for various tasks like serving food and cleaning tables. In cities such as Noida, Chennai, Coimbatore and Bengaluru, robot-themed restaurants have become popular. Now, a street cafe in Ahmedabad is going viral for using a robot waiter to serve snow cones to customers. The video shows a mobile truck named Robotic Cafe using a robot named Aisha to serve customers flavored ice golas. This robot, priced at Rs1,35,000 is specifically



designed for this task. A food blogger from Ahmedabad shared the video on Instagram and wrote, 'Robot serving ice gola, first time in

Ahmedabad. Starting from 40 & worth it. Hygienic & fully automatic.' Food lovers and internet users were astounded by the fusion of food and

technology, expressing their admiration in the comments section. One user said, 'This is so incredible,' while another commented, 'It's definitely worth experiencing.' In 1983, Shayne Hayashi introduced robots at the Two Panda Deli in Pasadena, California, USA. It became the first restaurant in history to use robotic wait-staff. Tanbo R-1 and Tanbo R-2 were the names given to these robots, which were designed to serve Chinese food to customers.



## CAA rolls out, Jaripatka erupts, Pak Hindus apply within 2 hrs

**Nagpur:** Sitting at his office in Wadi, Rajesh Jhambia suddenly jumped with joy at around 7.45pm. "It's been uploaded now," he exclaims, quickly opens his computer and prints out a copy of the Citizenship Amendment Rules (2024).

"I was checking the ministry of home website since morning for the notification to be uploaded. Otherwise, it would have been too early to rejoice," he says, as he starts messaging the news to his friends. By 10.30pm, the online portal through which applications can be made was up. Jhambia uploaded two forms, helping Sagar Wadhwa and Pradeep Haswani apply for Indian citizenship. Wadhwa had come to India from Quetta, the capital of Balochistan province, in 2012, while Haswani had arrived from Ghotki, a town in Sindh, in 2013. These were perhaps among



### "Nagpur is a hub for immigrants from Ghotki"

Four years after the Citizenship Amendment Act (CAA) was passed in Parliament, the law became applicable from Monday. The govt had passed the Act but the rules were not notified, due to which CAA had remained merely on paper so far. There is a sizeable population of Hindu immigrants from Pakistan, most from Sindh and Balochistan. "Nagpur is a hub for immigrants from Ghotki district of Sindh province. Those from Balochistan come from different cities like Dalbandin, Mastung to even the province's capital Quetta," says Jhambia. The CAA brings relief to persons from communities like Hindus, Sikhs, Jains, Parsis, Christians and Buddhists who reached India.

The first applications made under the CAA. Both were able to apply immediately under CAA, saving some months of wait

time. An Indian citizen for nearly a decade, Jhambia is the secretary of Sindh-Hindi Panchayat, the organization.

## In high spirits: One-third liquor thekas to be helmed by women in Lucknow this yr

**Lucknow:** Just as whisky is not only a man's drink, the liquor business is not for men only — at least in the City of Nawabs.

As per latest data as many as 370 out of 1,046 liquor shops in Lucknow have been allotted to women entrepreneurs this fiscal. In high spirits: One-third liquor thekas to be helmed by women in Lucknow this yr

From April 1, the women shop owners will take over the reins of more than one-third of the business which has been predominantly dominated by men in the past. Officials said that overall

participation of women has increased by 7% compared to the previous year in Lucknow and more shops have been taken over by women this time. Though no special incentives or relaxations are offered to the women, the upwards trend shows that women are no more hesitant to take a plunge into the alcohol trade.

Dist. excise officer of Lucknow, Rakesh Singh said, "35% of the total licenses issued for the next financial year have been obtained by women entrepreneurs. As numbers of female applicants have been

going up over the past three years, their participation is also increasing in the same proportion." The maximum interest among the women has been for IMFL liquor shops through which trade of whisky, vodka, rum, gin and wine takes place followed by beer shops. Sushila Jaiswal, a licensed-beer shop owner from Hazratganj, said, "It is not difficult to manage the retail stores as technology tools are available for close monitoring. CCTV cameras with sound systems would be installed at the shop and I would oversee the business."

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

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

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

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

## SC: Sans motive, celebratory firing deaths aren't murder

**New Delhi:** SC has termed as "unfortunate" practice of celebratory firing during marriage ceremonies, which often lead to "disastrous consequences". While adjudicating an appeal filed by an accused, who was convicted for murder as his celebratory firing during a marriage ceremony caused death of a person, a bench of Justices Vikram Nath and S C Sharma held that a person could not be held guilty of murder in such cases if there was no motive and prior enmity and it should be a case of 'culpable homicide not amounting to murder'.



The bench quashed his conviction under IPC Section 302 and held him guilty of an offence under IPC Section 304 Part II and awarded him a sentence already undergone (eight-year jail term).

## 30-yr-old labourer stabbed to death in Ghazipur, 1 held

**New Delhi:** A 30-year-old man was allegedly stabbed to death in east Delhi's Ghazipur on Tuesday. The accused, identified as Shishpal (23), has been arrested.

Police received information on Tuesday morning about a stabbing incident at Bakra Mandi in Ghazipur. The victim, Dharmendra, was rushed to a hospital, where he was declared dead. An FIR was registered under section 302 (murder) of the IPC.

## Sebi orders Vedanta to pay Cairn UK 78cr

**Mumbai:** Markets regulator Sebi on Tuesday ordered Anil Agarwal-controlled Vedanta to pay Rs 77.6 crore to Capricorn UK Holdings (earlier Cairn UK Holdings) as interest for delayed payment of dividend by the Indian company. Sebi also banned some of Vedanta's current and former top executives from the market for 1-2 months for their part in delay in payment of dividend to Capricorn UK Holdings, a former promoter of Cairn India.



The case dates to 2017 when I-T authorities asked Vedanta (then Cairn India) to transfer any unpaid dividends to Capricorn UK Holdings to it for a tax

dispute. After that, Vedanta had transferred Rs 666.5 crore to the tax authorities. Sebi orders Vedanta Ltd to pay Rs 77.62 crore

with 18% per annum interest to Cairn UK Holdings Limited for delayed dividend payment. Sebi bars Navin Agarwal, Tarun Jain, Thomas Albanese, and GR Arun Kumar from accessing the securities market for two months. Vedanta Aluminium COO Sunil Gupta elected CII Odisha State Councils new VC

Sunil Gupta, COO of Vedanta Aluminium Business and CEO Jharsuguda, elected vice-chairman of CII's Odisha State.

## PSU banks lead decline in complaints with regulator

**Mumbai:** RBI's integrated ombudsman has recorded a decline in the volume of grievances from regulated entities in FY23. Grievances dropped to 2.35 lakh in FY23 — a nearly 39% reduction from the 3.8 lakh recorded in FY21. This marks the second year in a row with a significant decrease in complaints, following last year's drop to 3 lakh. Between 2020-21 and 2022-23, the public sector banks category experienced the most substantial fall in grievances, declining from



1.75 lakh to 1 lakh. This signifies a 41% decrease or 72,830 fewer complaints. Conversely, within the same period, the non-banking financial companies category saw an increase in grievances, climbing from 31,158 to 33,072 — an rise of

1,914 complaints. Despite a sharp decline in grievances from the public sector, private, and foreign banks compared to the pandemic years, complaints against payment banks rose from 2,168 in FY21 to 3,456 in FY23. Regarding categories,

most grievances are related to mobile and electronic banking. From 2020-21 to 2021-22, this category saw a modest reduction in complaints from 44,385 to 39,388, yet the proportion of overall complaints increased from 13% to 14.7%. However, from 2021-22 to 2022-23, there was a significant rise in complaints (from 39,388 to 39,855) and their share of the total (from 14.7% to 20.3%). The decline in complaints was due to the drop in grievances under the 'others' category.

## Uddhav Thackeray following Amit Shah jibe: Yes, make Aaditya CM

**Delhi:** At a Dharashiv gathering, Shiv Sena (UBT) president wanted his 33-year-old son Aaditya to become Maharashtra CM. After Union home minister Amit Shah accused him of dynastic politics, he responded. I want to become an Aaditya CM. Thackeray responded you gotta elect him to that office first. On March 5, Shah accused opposition lawmakers of prioritizing family over public welfare at a rally in Chhatrapati Sambhajnagar. He urged BJP and other parties to avoid using Balasaheb Thackeray photos in election campaigning.

Why are you stealing my dad's photos? He advised using parent images for campaigns if you have guts. Thackeray criticized Shah for visiting Maharashtra multiple times but avoiding volatile



### Indian airports want to update their ATC towers.

**Delhi:** As aviation-focused UNO Technology observes strong interest from state-run and private airport operators to introduce new features to existing ATC infrastructure, Indian airports are trying to boost the efficiency of their air traffic control towers. "Three to four projects a year is our goal. Two to three significant private airport operators in India are with us. The Adani Group is already in communication with us. The company was recently named a specialist contractor for the construction of the high-visibility ATC room at the Noida international airport in Jewar. They are using an inventive framing technique without mullions for the windows in the visual control room.

areas. "Why didn't he visit burning Manipur? He avoided visiting Arunachal Pradesh, which China

is attacking. He goes to Maharashtra only to frighten opponents" said. He claimed BJP raised

## HI to identify core group at women's Nat'ls

**Bengaluru:** The Indian women's hockey team's fourth-place finish at the Tokyo Olympics three years ago raised the profile of the game and created awareness. But the failure to qualify for the Paris Games has set the sport back by at least a decade. Chief coach Janneke Schopman's exit amidst allegations of gender disparity and toxic work environment only added to the turmoil. To put women's hockey back on track will be an arduous task and the reality is not lost on Hockey India president Dilip Tirkey.

The Senior Women's National Hockey Championship starting in Pune on Wednesday, may well mark a new beginning, but the former India skipper emphasised on strengthening the



foundation. "This edition is crucial for Indian hockey. The Nationals are usually conducted in September-October, but given the circumstances, we decided to advance it. Many Indian players are either injured or retired, so we need to put together a fresh core team and move forward. Hockey India did not want to wait for another six months to do that," Tirkey told. With the Nationals for both men and women

losing their sheen due to the absence of international stars, Tirkey said measures have been taken to make amends. "For a player to make the core group, it is mandatory that he or she plays the National Championships, unless under exceptional circumstances. If there are no international engagements, players should turn up for their respective state units. International players must take part to ensure the success

of the Nationals, to help in lifting the profile of the event and attract youngsters towards the sport."

### DRAG-FLICK & 'KEEPING IN FOCUS

Lack of expertise in drag-flicks and penalty corners proved to be the downfall for the women's team in the Olympic qualifiers with nine PCs wasted. Tirkey pointed out that Hockey India will catch and groom them young. "We have to find quality players, especially drag-flickers and goalkeepers. At the Olympic qualifiers, our poor penalty corner conversion rate cost us a Paris berth. It is very crucial to find flickers and hitters now. These skill sets are crucial in modern hockey. We will identify the top 10 academies in the country and give them a common curriculum.

## Man gets 3-week parole to arrange for fine amount

**New Delhi:** Delhi High Court has granted three weeks' parole to a man convicted under the NDPS Act on the ground of arranging funds for payment of fine in terms of the sentence awarded to him. "This court is of the considered opinion that since the parole apart from re-establishing social ties, is sought on the ground of arranging funds for payment of fine, there appear to be sufficient reasons for releasing the petitioner on parole," said Justice Anoop Kumar Mendiratta.

The single judge bench observed that there were sufficient reasons for releasing the convict on parole, subject to him furnishing a personal bond of Rs 25,000 to the satisfaction of the jail superintendent. One Harish Yadav was convicted and sentenced to 10 years. Later, he was further sentenced to simple imprisonment of six months in default of payment of fine.



## Editorial

### How Gaganyaan marks a new chapter in India's space odyssey

In the pantheon of India's space exploration endeavours, Mission Gaganyaan stands out as a bold and ambitious project. It signifies India's resolve to join the league of nations capable of sending humans to space and safely returning them to Earth. This mission is not merely a testament to India's growing prowess in space technology but also a beacon of its scientific spirit and quest for cosmic knowledge.

Like Carl Sagan said, we, on Earth, are living amidst a shooting gallery of comets and asteroids. The need for humanity to become a multi-planetary being is not a luxury but a necessity.

#### The Architectural Marvel of Gaganyaan

Mission Gaganyaan is an intricate tapestry of cutting-edge technology and innovation, designed to propel India into the elite club of countries with human spaceflight capabilities. The mission's architecture is a triad of crucial components: the Crew Module (CM), the Service Module (SM), and the launch vehicle, GSLV-Mk III.

The Crew Module is the heart of Gaganyaan, designed to house the Vyomnauts, providing them with life support and safety throughout the mission. It is a fortress of human ingenuity, equipped with advanced systems to ensure the crew's well-being in the void of space. The Service Module, attached to the Crew Module, is the powerhouse of the mission, equipped with propulsion, power, and life support systems. It ensures that the Crew Module has the necessary resources for survival and mission success. The GSLV-Mk III, India's most potent rocket, serves as the chariot for Gaganyaan. It is tasked with the monumental responsibility of propelling the spacecraft beyond the clutches of Earth's gravity into orbit.

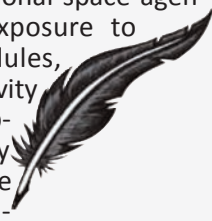
#### The Chosen Protectors of India's Space Dreams

The selection of the crew, an elite group of Indian Air Force (IAF) pilots, is a narrative of unparalleled rigour and meticulousness. The process was not merely about selecting India's finest pilots but about finding individuals who embody resilience, intellect, and the indomitable spirit of exploration. The chosen Vyomnauts, after a stringent selection process involving medical evaluations, psychological assessments, and rigorous physical tests, are Group Captains Prasanth Balakrishnan Nair, Angad Pratap, Ajit Krishnan, and Wing Commander Shubhanshu Shukla. These individuals represent the zenith of professionalism and dedication, poised to be the torchbearers of India's manned spaceflight.

#### Training for the Unknown

The training regimen for these Vyomnauts is as comprehensive as it is intense, designed to prepare them for every conceivable challenge of space travel. From acclimatising to the micro-gravity environment to handling the unforeseen contingencies of space, the training covers every spectrum of the mission. They undergo extensive sessions in specialised facilities like the Human Centrifuge and parabolic flights to adapt to the physiological demands of space travel. Simulators and virtual reality setups provide them with a taste of the space environment, honing their skills in spacecraft operation and emergency procedures. Moreover, their training extends beyond the confines of Earth.

Collaborations with international space agencies provide them with exposure to advanced training modules, including extravehicular activity (EVA) and advanced life support systems, ensuring they are well-versed in the nuances of human spaceflight.



# Why India is right to exclude Muslims from the Citizenship Amendment Act

The Citizenship Amendment Act (CAA) is a tiny window of legislation at the intersection of a subcontinent's dark-crimson history, tumultuous geopolitics and upwardly spiralling aspirations. For Islamists and their intrepid western 'liberal' allies, this window is where simplistic, anti-India propaganda converges. For the religious minorities who have faced unrelenting discrimination, murders, rapes, conversions, and land grab in Pakistan, Afghanistan and Bangladesh, it is a enough of an opening to climb into sunshine. One cannot imagine what implementation of CAA will do in border states like West Bengal, Rajasthan, Punjab and Kashmir. Pockets of a mute, invisible, exploited and vulnerable population will come alive. Horrors like the one in Bengal's Sandeshkhali — in which many of the victims of rape, murder and land grab by TMC goons like Sheikh Shahjahan were Hindu refugees driven away from Bangladesh — will meet with swift and fierce resistance. If India had the CAA rules in 1979, there would be no Marichjhapi massacre. The then Left Front government and CPM cadre in Bengal presided over the killing of nearly 1,700 persecuted Dalit Hindu



refugees who had fled Bangladesh to settle in West Bengal. They were butchered across 100 islands in the Sunderbans delta. Even their drinking water wells were poisoned. The stock, uninformed attack against the CAA is that it is anti-Muslim. Why should citizenship applications of only persecuted Hindus, Christians, Sikhs, Buddhists, Jains, and Parsis from these three Islamist countries be expedited? Why shouldn't persecuted Muslims like Shias and Ahmediyyas of Pakistan not be included in CAA? There are six good reasons why India is justified and wise not to include Muslims from these three nations. First, CAA is a nar-

row-window legislation to protect persecuted 'religious' minorities, not 'sects'. Muslims from these countries can still apply under the old Citizenship Act. Former Pakistani singer Adnan Sami got Indian citizenship and is a much loved and respected figure in India today. The US has a similar narrow-window legislation called the Lautenberg-Specter Amendments which give preferential shelter to persecuted minorities from Russia and Iran.

Second, the historical premise of CAA is the Liaquat-Nehru pact that was signed after Partition in 1950 to safeguard minorities in the divided subcontinent. India kept its

part of the deal. Minority population has grown by over 5 per cent in seven decades. But Pakistan, Afghanistan and Bangladesh didn't keep their word. Percentage of religious minorities have dwindled to single digits in Pakistan and Bangladesh, and close to zero in Afghanistan. Third, now-hounded Islamic sects like Shias and Ahmediyyas were at the forefront of the movement to create Pakistan.

India is not obligated to protect them from one another now. Fourth, India has the right to defend itself against demographic and cultural takeover. It has already lost several body parts in the course of

the 1,000-year demographic war unleashed against it by colonisation and Islamic invasions. It has seen large tracts of its territory, especially along the border. It must not accommodate further demographic usurpation. Fifth, India should learn what not to do from the western model of 'liberalism' which the Left and far-Left have long hijacked. In the name of 'multiculturalism' and 'cultural enrichment', Left-leaning parties in the West have facilitated unbridled immigration to grow their vote bank. It has gaslighted white populations to drop all survival instincts against demographic takeover. This model makes 'liberal democracies' ripe for takeover by parasites and the very enemies of democracy. And sixth, India has nothing to prove by being magnanimous vis-a-vis Pakistan, Bangladesh or Afghanistan. All are right now failed or struggling states while India is the fastest rising global economic and military power. India neither needs their validation nor needs to belittle them for liberal brownie points. The CAA is absolutely fine and effective as it stands. It is the first step to making Bharat the natural home for the persecuted people of all Indic religions.

## Modi's India is ensuring it doesn't end up on the losing side this time

Many centuries ago when the world at large didn't have much clue about statecraft and strategy, Kautilya had advised Chandragupta Maurya, his disciple, that the country with which his kingdom would share an immediate border will always be its enemy. But the enemy's enemy will be a friend and hence all strategic calculation must be undertaken keeping this basic premise in mind. It seems India was following this exact logic when a set of very interesting images from Afghanistan splashed across the media this week. An Indian delegation led by JP Singh, joint secretary in the Ministry of External Affairs, met Taliban's foreign minister Amir Khan Muttaqi in Kabul. The Indian delegation also met former President Hamid Karzai,

officials of the UN Assistance Mission to Afghanistan as well as some people from the business community. This was the second such public engagement between India and Taliban after the latter returned to power in 2021. The first public engagement took place in 2022 when at that time also, Joint Secretary Singh met Taliban's foreign minister Muttaqi. In the last three years since Taliban has come back to rule the country by establishing the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan, India's diplomatic engagement with the new rulers has been on a very firm footing. Time and again, India's foreign policy establishment has invoked civilisational ties and the role of history to justify maintaining strong ties with Kabul. Not without Prime

Minister Narendra Modi urging Taliban to form an inclusive government in the country. Although, India has not accorded diplomatic recognition to the state set up by Taliban yet but it has continued to engage the various stakeholders in Afghanistan including Taliban itself. A major part of this engagement is focused on humanitarian aid to people of Afghanistan which is being coordinated by a technical team posted by India since June 2022. As a part of this aid, India had provided Afghanistan with food-grains to tide over an unprecedented food shortage, medical aid that also included Covid-19 vaccines besides continued support for more than 500 projects in critical sectors such as power, water supply, road.

## Why The Economist's analysis of North-South economic schism is frivolous rather than factual

On leap year's leap day, an analysis that can't be leapt. With two articles titled "To see India's Future, go south" and "India's north-south divide", The Economist argues that India's economic rise is over-reliant on South India and Prime Minister Narendra Modi is trading ideological aims for national unity. Similar arguments have been utilised by a parliamentarian from a major political party to demand a separate nation. This party had organised a movement in New Delhi in February, demanding 'Our Tax Money, Give it to us.' It is being portrayed that the ruling party in the Centre stands for an illiterate, underdeveloped, Hindi-speaking North India, while the opposition stands for a developed, inclusive, and Hindi-opposing South India. This portrayal oversimplifies the complexities of Indian politics and regional dynamics, necessitating clarification to challenge attempts to undermine India's sovereignty.

First things first. The protests against the alleged divide are not economic but political. The analysis of the economy notably excludes the Western states of Gujarat and Maharashtra, which collectively contribute to almost 24 per cent of India's GDP. However, a strong demand for separatism still doesn't



exist. Among these states, Gujarat has been ruled by the BJP for nearly three decades. The Economist, not for once, mentions these states and their stats. Political leaders of the opposition in the South are leveraging economic injustice to solidify their political positions, often in response to challenges posed by Prime Minister Modi's popularity and his party's strategies. These leaders also support the farmers' protests in North India despite their purported concerns about tax distribution. This raises questions about the sincerity of their motives regarding the North-South economic divide.

A historical perspective may shed light on why West and South India have experienced more economic growth than the North and East. From 1952 to 1993, the Government of India implemented a freight equalization policy that subsidized the transportation of minerals. This policy incentivised the development of manufacturing facilities near the coastline, where transportation of raw materials was more feasible. Although the policy was eventually revoked, its impact persisted as new investments favoured regions with existing infrastructure. The role of migrants in contributing to GST collections in states like Karnataka, Telangana, and Tamil Nadu is significant. For instance, an IT engineer from Uttar Pradesh settled in Bengaluru contributes to income tax collections, while workers from Bihar purchasing goods in Tamil Nadu contribute to GST revenues. Consider the service they are adding to these states. This commercial activity contributes to state-wise tax collections, which are then redistributed by the union government based on developmental needs. If the argument of using Karnataka's money for UP is made, then the same argument of using Bengaluru's money for Hassan can also be made and similarly, using the billionaire's money to uplift the masses. If the last two would be illogical.

## Agni V with MIRV gets India into global deterrence league

Agni V with MIRV gets India into global deterrence league (File) DRDO conducts first flight test of indigenously developed Agni-5 missile with Multiple Independently Targetable Re-Entry Vehicle (MIRV) technology. PTI

The successfully test-fired Agni-V ballistic missile equipped with Multiple Independently Targetable Re-Entry Vehicle (MIRV) technology vastly extends India's strategic envelop.

#### Power of extended range

The Agni-V boasts an intercontinental ballistic missile (ICBM)

range, exceeding 5,000 kilometres. This extended reach significantly alters India's strategic landscape. Traditionally, India's missile arsenal primarily focused on deterring threats from its immediate neighbours. However, the Agni-V's extended range allows India to potentially engage targets across vast distances, encompassing a broader spectrum of potential adversaries. This expanded reach compels any potential aggressor to consider the wider ramifications of a conflict with India. The psycholog-

ical impact of this extended deterrence capability is undeniable. The stakes have just gone up.

#### MIRV technology: A game changer

The integration of multiple independently targeted re-entry vehicle technology turbocharges India's capability to launch a survivable multiple nuclear attack from a single source. MIRV allows a single missile to carry multiple independently targeted warheads. During the final stages of flight, these warheads separate and manoeuvre towards

pre-designated targets. This capability significantly complicates an enemy's missile defence system. Previously, an enemy could potentially expend a single interceptor missile to neutralise an incoming threat.

However, with MIRV technology, the enemy's defence system would need to engage and destroy each independently targeted warhead, exponentially increasing the defensive burden. This complexity significantly enhances the effectiveness of the Agni-V as a deterrent.



## More checks on Big Tech for anti-competitive acts



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

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

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

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

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

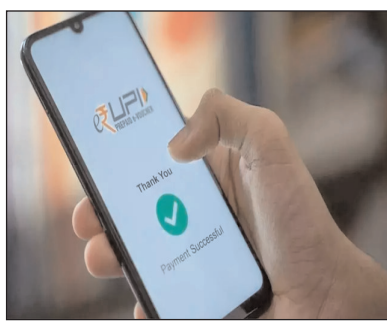


from these market segments of the market. On, Sebi chief Madhabi Puri Buch had also flagged about froth building up in mid and small-cap funds, referring to high valuations. The regulator had also, through MF industry trade body Amfi, alerted fund houses to strengthen their risk

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

## Now in Nepal, Scan & Pay With UPI

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



can easily accept UPI payments from merchants connected to the

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

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

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



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

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

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

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

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

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



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

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

**Apple's** agreement with Google to use it as the default search engine on iPhones includes a provision for the two companies to "support and defend" the deal against government scrutiny. Apple's Senior Vice President of Services, Eddy Cue, revealed this during an antitrust trial. The trial aims to determine whether Google pushed its way onto Apple devices at the expense of competitors. Apple, Google agreed to 'defend' search deal from regulators Representative image (IANS)



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

## Panasonic's arm looks to boost production in India

**TOKYO:** Panasonic Electric Works Company, a subsidiary of one of the world's largest electronics companies, wants to enhance its production capacity in India. It is also planning to expand its footprint in the Indian market over next five years, with a focus on wiring device business segment, including switchgear and lighting. The company is planning to leverage its surplus facilities at its Sri City Industrial Park factory.

## Pakistan inflation slows to 23.1% yr/yr in Feb

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

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

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

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



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



## PIROJSHA GODREJ FOUNDATION LAUNCHES WILDLIFE PHOTOGRAPHY CONTEST; BITTU SAHGAL TO JUDGE THE ENTRIES

**GURUGRAM:** Pirojsha Godrej Foundation, a philanthropic organization which supports non-profits working on education, climate action, biodiversity conservation and healthcare launched the Wildlife Photography Challenge. The contest entries will be judged by Bittu Sahgal, renowned environmental activist, and Founder of Sanctuary Nature Foundation. The Pirojsha Godrej Foundation has been instrumental in advancing sustainability and environmental conservation in India.

The Foundation, through its collaborations with non-profits and think tanks across the country has addressed issues such as biodiversity conservation, climate change, and renewable energy. The Foundation also aids in preserving the biodiversity of the Vikhroli Mangroves and collaborates with organizations such as Nature Sanctuary Foundation and WWF for Nature – India for conservation efforts. The wildlife photography contest is set to raise widespread awareness

about the nation's biodiversity and create avenues for rekindling the interest of people in their floral and faunal cohabitants. Commenting on the contest, Bittu Sahgal, said, "Photography allows people to pause and take in their surroundings. Wildlife photography is a powerful conservation tool that encourages people to appreciate and commune with nature and, hopefully, feel motivated to add their strength to protect what is precious." The Nature Sanctuary Foundation focuses on producing science-

based communications and implementing holistic conservation projects addressing wildlife, human, and climate issues. Through organizing nature festivals, climate workshops, and advocacy efforts, it works at the intersection of biodiversity, economics, and climate change.

The Foundation aims to foster a sustainable, biodiverse future and promote collaborative conservation efforts globally, continuing its commitment to India's environmental preservation and advocacy.

## India's job market was affected by global headwinds and pandemic hiring

"It's a tough situation this year," remarked the anonymous kid. "The job market is small. Only a few consulting and IT firms recruit"



**Delhi:** The job market is worse this year due to global macroeconomic challenges, and freshers like him are suffering. "It's a tough situation this year," remarked the anonymous kid. "The job market is small. Only a few consulting and IT firms recruit. The campus placement drive is also delayed. Freshers

aren't wanted by companies." Birla Institute of Technology and Science, Pilani (BITS Pilani) made headlines after its management went out to its huge alumni network for campus recruitment. A global economic downturn like this has not occurred in decades. Technology is heavily impacted, with 4

lakh workers put off globally since January 2022. The letter stated that global uncertainty causes a funding winter, which causes cost-cutting in small and large firms and affects recruiting at all levels, including campus.

The WhatsApp appeal came after 72 students were rejected for employment this placement sea-

son. These occur as Japan and the UK enter recession. These long-term global challenges have also harmed India.Tech companies in India fired nearly 36,000 workers in two years. These global macroeconomic variables have reduced hiring and salary even at India's best universities like BITS Pilani, the IITs, and the IIMs, analysts say. There are fewer employers recruiting this year and offering lesser compensation. The industry is in recession since they overhired during the epidemic and think they shouldn't hire more, said a BITS Pilani Hyderabad placement cell member.

## India International EV Expo to Showcase 5,000 Cutting-Edge Electric Vehicle Technologies and Charging Infrastructure Solutions

**New Delhi:** The 4th edition of the India International EV Show is set to take place from March 15th to 17th, 2024, at the India International Convention and Expo Centre (IICC) in Dwarka, New Delhi, serving as the venue for this prestigious exhibition. Recognised as India's largest gathering in the electric vehicles industry, the event provides a vital platform for engineers, mechanics, scientists, and decision-makers to come together. The India International EV Show 2024 promises an electrifying showcase of innovation and industry prowess. With over 150 exhibitors presenting diverse products and services, visitors can explore over 5,000 cutting-edge technologies



spanning electric vehicles, components, charging infrastructure, and smart mobility solutions. The event is set to draw over 50,000 industry professionals, enthusiasts, and stakeholders, offering unparalleled networking opportunities for businesses. Complementing the exhibition are 12 conferences and seminars, providing insights into key topics such as battery technologies and charging infrastructure development. Additionally, launching over 30 new products will mark a significant milestone in advancing

electric mobility in India, shaping the industry's future. The exhibition is organised by Futurex Group along with the Society of Manufacturers of Electric Vehicles (SMEV) as the Industry Association Partner. The event is supported by the Federation of Automobile Dealers Associations (FADA), Automotive Research Association of India (ARAI), International Centre for Automotive Technology (ICAT), India Energy Storage Alliance (IESA), IPC International Inc & Electric Mobility Financiers.

## Dibber, Northern Europe's largest chain of preschools, expands presence to Gurugram

**GURUGRAM :** Dibber, Northern Europe's largest preschool chain with 600+ preschools across 10 countries, has announced the opening of its first preschool in Gurugram offering Nordic pedagogy, an emerging pedagogy of choice focusing on children's social, emotional, physical, cognitive and educational needs. Dibber's purpose statement is 'we develop lifelong learners with a heart for the world' and part of this is - having a heart for oneself and others. Dibber's Nordic inspired pedagogy is adapted locally and infuse with the rich cultural heritage and ethos of India, ensuring a child centered, holistic approach that is both culturally relevant and globally competitive. The school was inaugurated by Mr Kamal Yadav, BJP District President for Gurugram and Mr



Marvin D'Souza, CEO, Dibber Schools India. Speaking at the launch, Mr D'Souza said: "Our decision to expand into this vibrant city stems from our commitment to providing children with the best possible start on their educational journey. With our innovative pedagogy, nurturing environment, passionate teachers, and commit-

ment to quality education, we strive to empower young minds to become lifelong learners and develop appreciation, understanding, and empathy for the world around them. We are excited to embark on this journey in Gurugram and look forward to making a positive impact on the lives of children and

families across the region. Dibber was founded by two passionate educators Randi and Hans Jacob Sundby in 2003. They developed the 'Dibber Childhood' a well-researched framework, that offers every child a supportive and caring environment where they develop positive relationships, experiences, and friendships.

At Dibber, every child is seen as unique and valuable, and is respected as individuals. Spanning 13000 sq foot, in Sector 50 Gurugram, the school has a capacity to accommodate more than 125 children. Drawing inspiration from Nordic learning principles, the school offers natural open spaces, extensive outdoor areas, a splash pool, and an extensive outdoor playground. Dibber's Gurugram facility also school in Gurugram features dedicated rooms for Dibber's unique 'Learning Friends' and offers a range of extra-curricular activities such as music, drama, movement and second language learning. Dibber Gurugram will offer both full-day and half-day programs designed to provide a holistic environment where learning and nurturing are a priority.

## Nihar Shanti Pathshala Funwala language learning program impacts over 10 lakh students in rural India

**CHANDIGARH/AMRITSAR:** As a country, we have made significant inroads into making education accessible to all, including rural India. Education is the primary driver of progress in society, and as a brand that shares this purpose, Nihar Naturals Shanti Badam Amla identified building language proficiency as a way to contribute. The brand has partnered with LeapForWord, a non-profit organization, and launched Nihar Shanti Pathshala Funwala, an English



language proficiency program. This program uses phonetics to educate teachers in their mother tongue enabling them to teach English with ease. The program is available on WhatsApp and YouTube maximizing its reach across dif-

ferent parts of India, making the English language accessible to all. Restating the brand's purpose of driving progress through education, Bose Awasthi, Chief Marketing Officer, Marico Limited said,

"We take immense pride in the deep connection that Nihar Naturals Shanti Badam Amla hair oil has formed with consumers, who recognize the brand's purpose. In 2019, Nihar Shanti Pathshala Funwala was created with the primary objective to enhance reading and comprehension proficiency among students in rural areas. We achieved this with the introduction of our unique English Literacy Program that equips educators to promote literacy in a language

that opens doors to better higher education opportunities. Witnessing the program's impact on teachers and students has been truly fulfilling. In 2023 alone, the brand has collaborated with 1.4 lakh government schools, successfully educating 2 lakh teachers, thereby positively impacting over 10 lakh students across 142 districts. With the support of our valued Nihar family across the country, we hope to make this movement bigger and better, year on year."

## UGC asks institutions to add 5G, 6G courses

The Department of Telecommunications (DoT) organized a committee to study telecom-related topics in the communications engineering curriculum to address 6G trends and difficulties and maximize 5G features. The committee identified PhD research subjects based on 6G requirements in Optical Communications, Satellite Communications, Broadcasting, RF Engineering, Telecom Standardization, IPR, and more. Higher education institutions must review the panel recommendations and improve the M.Tech and Ph.D programs. According to the University Grants Commission, future researchers and engineers must be prepared to handle emerging wireless cellular technologies and their threats. 6G communications goals require consensus on new concepts and enabling technology.

Thus, communications engineering undergraduate and graduate courses must be updated for the



pre-6G period. Active 6G research and development can make India a leader in advanced telecommunications.

We gain global competitiveness, attract investments, nurture indigenous innovation, and boost technology-led economic growth. The Commission said the central government wants 10% of global patents filed and awarded. The committee also identified additional topics for UG and M.Tech courses based on what IITs and top universities teach, including 5G NR and core, satellite, optical wireless communication, Millimetre wave and THz band communication, reconfigurable intelligent surfaces, and more.



## Government allows donor egg & sperm in surrogacy



**"It further says that "surrogacy using donor gamete is allowed subject to the condition that the child to be born through surrogacy must have at least one gamete from the intending couple".**

**NEW DELHI:** There is new hope for couples dreaming to become parents via surrogacy. The Centre has amended Surrogacy (Regulation) Rules, 2022 to allow use of a donor gamete – ova or egg cells and sperm – if one of the partners is certified to have a medical condition that prevents use of his or her own gametes. In usual circum-

stances, a couple undergoing surrogacy must have both gametes from the intending couple. The story But Surrogacy (Regulation) Amendment Rules, 2024, that have been notified by the government, state that the district medical board must certify that either spouse is suffering from such a condition. It further

says that "surrogacy using donor gamete is allowed subject to the condition that the child to be born through surrogacy must have at least one gamete from the intending couple". It adds, "Single women (widow or divorcee) undergoing surrogacy must use self-eggs and donor sperm to avail surrogacy procedures."

**NEW DELHI:** A teenage Indian-origin student at Illinois University froze to death near a club that denied him entry. Akul Dhawan, 18, was on a night out with his friends, according to a report by the Champaign County Coroner's Office in Illinois, a month after the incident. The Indian-American student died of hypothermia following "acute alcohol intoxication and prolonged exposure to freezing temperatures, which significantly contributed to his death."

Akul's parents had filed a complaint with the University of Illinois Police and questioned the police about the protocol they followed during the search.

Akul's parents alleged that cops carried out no search near the Busey-Evans Residence Hall and University police failed to follow their missing search protocols. The parents have accused the University of Illinois Police of being negligent.

In an open letter released in The News Gazette, Akul Dhawan's parents had said, "As parents, we need answers. We have filed an official complaint with the UI police. We have the following questions for the university officials and police: The police say that



they searched around the Busey-Evans Residence Hall at 2:09 a.m."

Earlier on January 31, the University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign in a press release said that the University of Illinois Police continue to probe the circumstances surrounding the January 20 death of Akul Dhawan, a student at the University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign. It said that the information collected so far supports the initial belief that the death was accidental, and no foul play occurred. It said that Dhawan was found deceased at about 11:08 am (local time) on

January 20 in the 1200 block of West Nevada Street, Urbana.

According to the press release, a friend who lost contact with Dhawan called the police at 1:23 am (local time). According to the statement, investigators have shared a timeline of the police response to that call.

A series of tragic deaths among Indian students at US colleges has sparked widespread concern, highlighting broader issues of mental health and campus safety for international students.

**"No excuse for violence..." US on attacks against Indian stu-**

**dents**

In 2024, seven young men of Indian and Indian American descent have met untimely deaths under various circumstances, ranging from suspected suicides and overdoses to violent acts. Last week White House official

John Kirby condemned attacks on Indian students and asserted there is "no excuse for violence based on race, gender, or any other factor".

"The president and this administration have been working very, very hard to make sure we're doing everything we can to work with state and local authorities to try to thwart and disrupt those kinds of attacks and make it clear to anybody who might consider them that they'll be held properly accountable," Kirby said amid a slew of attacks on Indian and Indian American students in various parts of the United States.

Also, Eric Garcetti, the US Ambassador to India, said that the Biden-led administration is "very committed" to assuring Indians that the US is a "wonderful and safe" place to pursue higher studies.

The Indian government and the mission in the US offered support and counselling to the distressed students and their relatives.

## Wreckage of Pakistan submarine, which sank in 1971, found off Vizag

**VISAKHAPATNAM:** A newly acquired Indian Navy deep submergence rescue vehicle (DSRV) has recently located the wreckage of PNS Ghazi, the Pakistani submarine that sank on December 4, 1971 during the India-Pakistan war. The Tench-class submarine, which served earlier in the US Navy as USS Diablo, was found at a depth of around 100 metres about 2 to 2.5 km off the coast. However, Indian Navy does not want to touch it out of respect for those who fell in action, in true Navy tradition, sources here said.

The sinking of PNS Ghazi with 93 men (11 officers and 82 sailors) on board off the coast of Visakhapatnam was consid-



ered a high point in the war, which ended with the creation of Bangladesh in 1972. Pakistan had despatched US-made PNS Ghazi to mine India's eastern seaboard and to locate, shadow and sink INS Vikrant, India's British-built Majestic-class aircraft carrier.

**'2 submarines lying at bottom of sea off Vizag coast'** Ghazi left Karachi on November

14, 1971 and quietly sailed 4,800 km around the Indian peninsula to reach Vizag coast. India despatched its destroyer, INS Rajput, which tracked the Ghazi and dropped depth charges, leading to its sinking. The Pakistani military has a different view, attributing its sinking to accidental explosions. PNS Ghazi is not the only submarine that lies on the floor of the Bay of Bengal near Vizag. A Japanese submarine of the Imperial Japanese Navy (RO-110) was sunk off the coast of Rambilli locality, in undivided Vizag district, during World War II (Feb 12, 1944). The submarine was sunk by HMAS Launceston and HMIS Jumna using depth charges.

## After fresh arson, section 144 again in 9 Sandeshkhali areas

**SANDESHKHALI:** In a fresh incident of arson at Sandeshkhali, locals mobbed a bheri controlled by absconding Trinamool functionary Sheikh Shahjahan's brother and torched a structure set up to oversee fishing operations there on Thursday afternoon, prompting police to once again clamp fresh prohibitory orders under section 144 of CrPC in nine places under five gram panchayats - Trimoni Bazar, Kaharpara, Patrapara, Khulna Hat and Jeliakhali - from



Thursday night. Villagers alleged the bheri, spread over six bighas, was one of several farmlands forcibly grabbed by Shahjahan's brother Siraj and converted into fishing

farms. "The prohibitory restriction will continue till 12pm on Feb 24," a senior district police officer said. As news of the arson spread, hundreds of women gathered at the spot and

staged an agitation demanding the arrest of the two brothers. The locals alleged the arson took place soon after Siraj and his men visited Jhupkhali under Bermajur gram panchayat II on Thursday morning and threatened women with dire consequences. "Siraj and his gang roamed around the bheri area and threatened women. Villagers chased them out. Later, a mob set the structure (ala ghar) adjacent to the bheri on fire," a villager said.

## Ex-model held for stalking motivational speaker for 6 months

**LUCKNOW:** Lucknow police arrested Deepesh Thakur, 26, for stalking a motivational speaker on her multi-city tours over a period of six months. A fashion model and son of a prominent hotelier in Maharashtra, Thakur had been relentlessly following the speaker to her events, aspiring to marrying her.

According to police, Deepesh meticulously tracked the speaker's movements, attending all her programmes across the country. His obsession escalated to the extent that he would book rooms in five-star hotels in advance ahead of her scheduled appearances, even flying from Mumbai to attend the events in different cities. During the event in



Lucknow, the man's relentless pursuit prompted intervention from law enforcement agencies. Lucknow police swiftly responded to the situation, thwarting his bid to spoil the show. Additional DCP, Central Zone, Manisha Singh, confirmed the arrest and subsequent booking of the suspect. Investigations revealed that the accused, before his

infatuation with the motivational speaker, worked in the entertainment industry and appeared in advertisements for skincare products. He is a commerce graduate from a reputed college in Mumbai. Police disclosed that similar cases of stalking involving the same speaker have been reported in other cities, too, including Jalandhar and Kolkata.

## Quad a message that others can't veto our choices: EAM Jaishankar

● " "The natural question that greets any new arrival is the reason for their existence. So let us look at why the Quad? The answer is very simple "

**NEW DELHI:** Foreign minister S Jaishankar said on Saturday that Quad - which seeks to promote free, open and inclusive Indo-Pacific - is here to stay, grow and contribute, calling it a laudable initiative that makes not just the region, but the world as a whole more free, open and much more respectful of international law and a rules-based order.

Speaking at the inaugural Quad Think Tank Forum, the minister said Quad comprises five messages, one of which is a statement that in this day and age, others "cannot have a veto on our choices". The minister also said that the four-nation group reflects the growth of a multi-



polar order and that it's a post-alliance and post-cold war thinking.

According to Jaishankar, Quad is against spheres of influence and expresses the democratising of the global space and a collaborative, not unilateral, approach.

"The natural question that greets any new arrival is the reason for their existence. So let us look at why the Quad? The answer is very simple. It is there for global good and it is there for the global commons. It is facilitated by the emergence of the Indo-Pacific," said the minister, adding that Quad is propelled by a change in the global order that requires more, not less, collaboration among the like-minded.

Jaishankar said Quad seeks to build resilient supply chains in telecom, cyber security, semiconductors and artificial intelligence (AI), promoting cyber awareness and capacity building in the Indo-Pacific, which is vulnerable to cyber threats. Detailing his expectations of the Forum, which was launched in partnership with the Raisina Dialogue, the minister said it should generate new ideas, promote the Quad and also counter any negative propaganda about the group. Jaishankar described the coalition of India, US, Japan and Australia as an "overhead light" that is a "creative, flexible, nimble, responsive and open-minded" enterprise. Joining through virtual mode.

## Sec 144 near Siliguri after

**jumbo intrusion**

**SILIGURI:** The forest department has imposed Section 144 at Teepark and Bhola More on the outskirts of Siliguri after an elephant ventured into the area from Baikunthpur forest. The department sounded an alert in surrounding villages urging people not to step out of their homes at night. The jumbo, seen at Bhola More area on Saturday, had probably entered through Canal Road and Bhalobasha More, said a forest official, adding that they were trying to drive back the jumbo into the forest.

"Forest teams from Baikunthapur division and Sukna elephant squad have been deployed," said principal chief conservator of forests Niraj Singhal. Recently, the department had chased away two elephants - which had taken refuge at Zero Point on the Indo-Bangla border in the Phansidewa Bandargach area - to Mahananda.



## No deportation': MHA clears 'misconceptions' about CAA



NEW DELHI: The ministry of home affairs on Tuesday with respect to Citizenship Amendment rules said that "Many misconceptions have been spread regarding the CAA. It will not take away citizenship of any Indian citizen, irrespective of religion. Eligible persons under CAA-2019 can apply for citizenship on."

Busting myths related to CAA the ministry said "Indian Muslims need not worry as CAA has not made any provision to impact their citizenship and has nothing to do with the present 18 crore Indian Muslims, who

have equal rights like their Hindu counterparts. No Indian citizen would be asked to produce any document to prove his citizenship after this Act." Additionally MHA said that, the Citizenship Amendment Act (CAA) eliminates legal obstacles to rehabilitation and citizenship, ensuring protection for individuals' cultural, linguistic, and social identities through their citizenship rights. On a question about the date from which the citizenship will be granted under the CAA, the MHA portal said, "Persons granted

citizenship by registrar neutralisation under Section 6B of the Citizenship Act 1955 shall be deemed to be a citizen of India from the date of his/her entry into India". When asked about this FAQ, a home ministry official confirmed that citizenship under the CAA will be granted with retrospective effect as prescribed in the law. "The date of the applicant's entry into India will be the date of granting Indian citizenship under the CAA. It could be 10 years ago, 15 years ago or 25 years ago," the official said.

## Assam CM Sarma vows to resign if unqualified individuals get citizenship under CAA

NEW DELHI: Assam chief minister Himanta Biswa Sarma has said that he will be the first to resign if even one person, who has not applied for the National Register of Citizens (NRC) in the state, gets citizenship under the Citizenship (Amendment) Act, 2019 (CAA). Sarma made this declaration in response to the protests that have erupted across Assam following the implementation of the CAA. Protesters are concerned that lakhs of people will enter the state due to the new law. Protests against the CAA have been taking place all over Assam. Effigies of Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Union home minister Amit Shah, as well as copies of the law, have been burned in protest. The Asom Jatiyatabadi Yuba Chatra Parishad (AJYCP) burned effigies in Lakhimpur, while the Congress burned copies of the law in various parts of the district. Sarma has assured the people of Assam that those who have come to India after 2014 will not be granted citizenship, and he



believes that the number of such applicants will be minimal. He stated that people do not want to be considered foreigners and that the number of citizenship applications will be insignificant in most districts. "I am a son of Assam and if a single person who has not applied for the NRC in the state gets citizenship, I will be the first to resign," PTI quoted Himanta Sarma as saying on the sidelines of a programme at Sivasagar. The chief minister emphasised that the CAA is not a new law and that the time has come for applications to be submitted on the designated portal. He believes that the data on the portal will reveal the truth about the claims made by those opposing the Act. Sarma also men-

tioned that in about a month, it will be apparent whether lakhs of people or just a few thousand are applying for citizenship in Assam. Sarma expressed his respect for both the protesters and the supporters of the CAA. However, he believes that enough has been said about the Act and it is now time to prove the claims made by both sides. He also stated that the CAA rules will enable the Indian government to grant citizenship to persecuted non-Muslim migrants from Bangladesh, Pakistan, and Afghanistan who arrived in India before December 31, 2014. The law includes Hindus, Sikhs, Jains, Buddhists, Parsis, and Christians. The implementation of the CAA was delayed.

## CAPSULES

### US and UN express concern about CAA

WASHINGTON: The US gov't and the United Nations on Tuesday expressed concerns about the Citizenship (Amendment) Act 2019, with the UN calling the legislation "fundamentally discriminatory in nature."

"As we said in 2019, we are concerned that CAA is fundamentally discriminatory in nature and in breach of India's international human rights obligations," a spokesperson of the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights told Reuters. He added the office was studying whether the law's implementation rules comply with international human rights law. The US has also signalled reservations. "We are concerned about the notification of CAA on March 11. We are closely monitoring how this act will be implemented," a state department spokesperson told Reuters separately. "Respect for religious freedom and equal treatment under the law for all communities are fundamental democratic principles," the spokesperson added. The Indian embassy in Washington did not immediately respond to a request for comment on the state department and the UN human rights office reactions.

### IAF's Tejas aircraft crashes near Jaisalmer, pilot ejects safely

NEW DELHI: A Light Combat Aircraft (LCA) Tejas of the Indian Air Force (IAF) crashed near Jaisalmer in Rajasthan on Tuesday during an operational training sortie. While the pilot ejected safely, a court of inquiry has been ordered to ascertain the cause of the accident.

## 'Scary and fearful experience': Kerala couple lose passports, credit cards, and cash

NEW DELHI: What could be more terrifying than losing your passport in a foreign country? An unfortunate couple witnessed the same incident when they were travelling to Florence to present the research papers and attend the lecture. Jothydev Kesavadev, a physician and diabetes researcher, shared his horrifying experience on his social media account, X, and said that they lost their passports, credit cards, and cash to pickpockets in Milan, Italy. This incident occurred



on March 5 at 6:20 pm while entering Milan Central railway station in Italy to take a train to Florence, they bumped into "a tall, lean African-American man." "His large trolley bag hit my right knee and I almost fell down. My wife, out of shock forgot the surroundings and bent down to help

me out. When I looked back I saw a woman passing by her and then the woman and the man disappeared instantly. Since we were getting late for the train, we went upstairs to the platform. My wife 10 minutes later opened her handbag and then with a shock realised that

her wallet containing the passports, credit and debit cards and cash was missing." After discovering that pickpockets looted them, the couple went to Italian Police office to report about the same. "After a long wait (police were attending to other cases), we were called inside. Police officer on duty was very kind and considerate, and prepared a very detailed FIR. He asked us to contact Indian Consulate at Milan. We were still hoping that we will get the passport back."

## SC bar chief seeks presidential reference on electoral bond ruling

NEW DELHI: Seeking a relook of the SC's verdict on electoral bonds, SC Bar Association chief Adish C Aggarwala Tuesday wrote to President Murmu requesting her to seek presidential reference on the ruling. Revealing names of contributing corporates would render them vulnerable to victimisation, he contended. Later, an advocate posted on X a resolution purportedly passed by SCBA and signed by its honorary secretary Rohit Pandey that said "members of the executive commit-



tee have neither authorised the president to write any such letter nor do they subscribe to his views". Disclosing such sensitive information, that too retrospectively, will result in a chilling effect on corporate donations and

participation in democratic process," Aggarwala wrote. "The possibility of them (corporates) being singled out by parties that had received less contribution from them, and harassed cannot be ruled out if names of

corporates and their quantum of contributions to parties are revealed. This will be reneging on promise given to them while accepting their voluntary contributions," he wrote. Electoral bond scheme came into effect due to provisions of Finance Act, 2017, he said, adding "It would be perverse to doubt legislative intention behind this scheme... If we enforce this judgment retrospectively, releasing all sensitive information, it will shatter reputation the nation enjoys."

## Modi is going to be PM again, is highly popular: US Congressman

NEW DELHI: In a recent interview, US Congressman Rich McCormick, a Republican from Georgia, expressed unwavering confidence in Prime Minister Narendra Modi's prospects for re-election in the upcoming Lok Sabha elections, citing his widespread popularity

and progressive leadership. "Prime Minister Modi is incredibly popular. I was just over there. I actually had lunch with Prime Minister Modi and several other congressmen, and to see his popularity across party lines really... He is going to be prime minister again," McCormick remarked. Talking about PM Modi's progressive economic policies and inclusive approach, McCormick praised India's economic growth under his leadership, ranging from four to eight percent annually. He highlighted the significance of India's strategic relationships on the global stage and its potential impact on the world economy. While acknowledging some elements of protectionism in India's economic policies,

McCormick underscored the importance of trust and collaboration between nations, particularly in technology-sharing endeavors. He contrasted India's approach with that of China, emphasizing India's commitment to democratic principles and strategic alignment with the United States. As a member of the House Committee on Armed Services and House Foreign Affairs Committee, McCormick represents Georgia's 6th Congressional district, which boasts a substantial Indian American population. He reiterated the need for fostering genuine trust and understanding between the United States and India, emphasizing the mutually beneficial nature of their strategic partnership.

## Gehlot Jr, Nakul Nath in Congress 2nd list for LS polls

NEW DELHI: Resolving the post-delimitation conundrum in Assam, Congress fielded sitting MP Gaurav Gogoi from Jorhat and retained Pradyot Bordoloi in Nagaon in Assam, as per its second list of 43 candidates for the 2024 elections announced Tuesday. It had named 39 candidates last week. Gogoi's Kaliabor seat was disbanded after redrawing of maps, and he was seeking either Nagaon or Jorhat, while Bordoloi was wary of shifting elsewhere. The two MPs are Congress's big hopes in Assam where poll battles have tilted towards BJP after 2014. Former Rajasthan CM Ashok Gehlot's son Vaibhav Gehlot will contest from Jalore, while Nakul Nath, son of former MP CM Kamal Nath, will



defend Chhindwara. Vaibhav lost from Jodhpur in 2019. Rahul Kaswan, BJP MP who joined Congress on Monday, will fight from Churu (Rajasthan). Congress again focused on SC/ST/OBC/minority faces (33 out of 43), as it declared 12 of 14 seats in Assam, 10 each in MP and Rajasthan, seven in Gujarat, three in

Uttarakhand and one in Daman and Diu. Congress' K C Venugopal and Ajay Maken said, "The 2024 election is poor versus rich. The guarantees we've announced show we are trying to address issues of farmers, youth, tribals, dalits and women." In Rajasthan, Congress has fielded MLAs Brijendra Ola and Lalit Yadav from Jhunjhunu and Alwar, respective-

ly, while Ganesh Godiyal (Pauri) and Pradeep Tamta (Almora) are among three candidates named from Uttarakhand. Ketan Patel will contest from Daman. In Assam, the party has dropped MP Abdul Khaleque from Barpeta, replacing him with Deep Bayan. Sources said Khaleque had after delimitation staked claim.

## Traffic rules taught to school bus drivers

Karnal: District Police Karnal is running a traffic rules awareness campaign as per the orders of Inspector General of Police Traffic and Highways and under the direction of Superintendent of Police Karnal Shashank Kumar Sawan. Under this campaign, the team has been visiting different places to create awareness among the drivers. Under the direction of DSP Traffic Shri Omprakash ji and under the leadership of Manager Police Station Traffic Shri Suresh Kumar and headed by SI Satpal Singh, the team today participated in this campaign by visiting RS Public School, Adarsh Public School and Montfort World School and other schools of the city. Necessary equipment was checked in the buses and challan was also issued by the team to those school buses in which these necessary equipment were not found as per the traffic rules.