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## After Amethi, 'shehzada' will flee Wayanad too, taunts PM Modi

● " West Bengal, whic Modi said "big and influen- tial" figures, both within India and abroad, have aligned to oust him from office"



CHHATRAPATI SAMBHAJINAGAR:

PM Narendra Modi took a swipe at Congress MP Rahul Gandhi at a campaign rally on Saturday, saying after Amethi, "Congress shehzada" will have to "run away" from Wayanad as well. The PM was in Maharashtra and Karnataka to campaign for BJP and NDA candidates. "Shehzada is facing a difficult situation in Wayanad. Shehzada and his gang are waiting for polling on April 26 to get over so that they can find another safe seat for him. Their own alliance partners are abusing the shehzada in Wayanad. And they are using such abusive language against him, which

even I have not used against him," Modi said in Nanded. He addressed two public rallies, one each in Nanded and Parbhani districts of Maharashtra. He mentioned that surveys indicated a favourable voting pattern for NDA in the first phase of Lok Sabha elections held on Friday and dismissed INDIA bloc as unable to pose a challenge. Modi highlighted internal conflicts within the opposition alliance, stating that some INDIA bloc politicians are not actively campaigning for their candidates.

"There are 25% seats, where the alliance is facing infighting and even talking about putting their partners in prison," he said. In Parbhani, the PM criticised Maha Vikas Aghadi alliance in Maharashtra, accusing Congress and the "fake Shiv Sena" of neglecting sadhus killed in Palghar. During a rally in Chikkaballapura, 60km from Bengaluru, which marked the PM's fourth appearance in Karnataka this election season, Modi said "big and influential" figures, both within India and abroad, have aligned to

oust him from office. He expressed his gratitude for the "protective shield" he gets from "Nari Shakti" (women empowerment) and "Maatru Shakti" (motherly power), enabling him to confront and overcome challenges. In an interview with a regional Malayalam television channel, Modi reiterated his plans to intervene in the Karuvannur Cooperative Bank scam, while denying allegations of political use of central agencies. He reaffirmed his commitment to combating corruption.

## Caste census, no Agnipath: Rahul Gandhi-Tipu pitch in 1st rally

LUCKNOW: Congress MP Rahul Gandhi and Samajwadi Party chief Akhilesh Yadav urged voters to choose INDIA bloc over NDA, stressing that 2024 Lok Sabha elections would shape the future of the country.

At their first joint rally, held in Amroha on Saturday, they accused BJP of attempting to alter the Constitution, which they claimed went "against the very basic spirit of India". They also promised to scrap the Agniveer military hiring scheme and conduct a caste census in UP if INDIA bloc is voted to office. Rahul alleged that PM Modi had waived loans worth Rs 16 lakh crore of a handful of his friends. "With this amount, MNRGA honorarium for entire India can be paid for the next 25 years.



Likewise, the amount is enough to waive loans of all the farmers across the nation for over two decades. "Underscoring that this money belonged to the taxpayers, he said: "It should be used for the benefit of 70 crore Indians rather than 20-odd close friends of the PM." He highlighted the promises made by INDIA bloc and urged voters to consider the long-term implications of their choice. "The 2024 elections is not related to the current generation of

voters. It will impact the future of our children," he said. In his address, Akhilesh responded to Modi's remarks that "shooting of the film 'Do shehzade ki jodi' is on but it has already been rejected by the people". "I want to draw the attention of those who said there were no takers of our film. They must know that their 'first day first show' was a flop and the winds from western UP would ensure their exit not just from the state but also from India.

## Elon defers visit to India; Congress says 'writing on the wall'

NEW DELHI: Maverick American billionaire Elon Musk has postponed his India visit citing work commitments, and said he would make it later this year. Musk was scheduled to meet PM Modi during his visit and announce investments worth billions of dollars around a greenfield electric car project for Tesla, apart from satellite venture Starlink. Musk, who had just a few days ago announced his visit through a post.

## Delhi LG & AAP in bitter row over CM Arvind Kejriwal's sugar levels

NEW DELHI: A virtual public spat broke out between the LG's office and AAP on Saturday over the controversy related to chief minister Arvind Kejriwal's insulin levels in jail. Even as his application seeking administration of insulin and consultation with his own doctor is before a Delhi court, which had asked ED and Tihar Jail authorities to file their replies by Saturday, with an order expected to be pronounced on Monday, LG V K Saxena's office released a medical report submitted to him by the jail on Friday.

It reiterated what the officials had conveyed to the court - that the CM's blood sugar levels, since he was sent to jail on April 1, were "not alarming" and administration of insulin was not required "as of now".

However, a note from the LG's office questioned the CM "surreptitiously" seeking treatment at a private clinic in Telangana, calling it "curious", and drew attention to the "south Indian liquor cartel that played a key role in framing and execution of the excise policy of the AAP govt."

The response from AAP was swift. Condemning the "derogatory" language used by the LG's office, AAP accused BJP and LG of orchestrating "a grand conspiracy to kill CM Arvind Kejriwal in custody since they are unable to find any evidence against him in the alleged Delhi liquor scam."

The report submitted to the LG said Kejriwal had been on an "insulin reversal programme" on the advice of a Telangana-based private doctor and his dosage of insulin had been stopped much before his arrest (on March 21), but no document related to it was provided to the jail administration.

## Nitish Kumar taunts Lalu over 'too many kids', Tejashwi hits back

PATNA: Bihar CM Nitish Kumar stirred a new controversy on Saturday with a dig - apparently at RJD chief Lalu Prasad for promoting his sons and daughters own politics - saying, "Paida to bahut kar diya...Itna jyada paida karna chahiye kisi ko, bal bachcha (Should anybody have so many children)?" Nitish's remarks, made at an election rally in Katihar in support of JD(U)



candidate Dulalchandra Goswami, who is locked in a direct contest with Congress's Tariq Anwar, evoked a sharp reaction from RJD politicians. Though the CM didn't mention anyone by name, his remarks seemed to target Lalu's political

dynasty, which includes his wife Rabri Devi, who became Bihar CM when Prasad had to step down due to a fodder scam conviction. This time Lalu's daughter Rohini Acharya is making her political debut, from Saran. Earlier her elder sister, Misa Bharti, and two sons - Tejashwi Prasad Yadav and Tej Pratap Yadav - had entered active politics. While Misa is a Rajya Sabha member.

## 5,000 red-eared slider baby turtles seized at Chennai airport

CHENNAI: Customs officers at Chennai airport on Saturday seized around 5,000 red-eared slider turtle hatchlings that were abandoned at the international arrival terminal. A search was launched for the flyer who had smuggled in the hatchlings from Malaysia. Red-eared slider turtles seized at Chennai airport. Two suitcases that were part of the checked-in luggage that arrived on a Batik Air flight on



Friday night were not claimed by any passenger. Customs officers and CISF personnel checked the baggage with metal detectors for suspicious articles, after which they were opened, revealing sev-

eral plastic boxes inside with holes, full of red-eared slider turtle hatchlings. The species were identified with the help of wildlife bureau officials. The hatchlings were sent back to Malaysia on Saturday.

## Why Saudi Arabia is making a high-risk \$1 trillion bet on tourism

Saudi Arabia's ambitious plans extend beyond AIUla, with Neom being another significant project in the kingdom's north-western region. Futuristic enclave is designed to attract a substantial number of newcomers to live and work in the area. Plans for Neom include a 100-mile-long city known as the Line, an octagon-shaped floating industrial complex, and an outdoor ski resort featuring artificial snow.

Mei Wang marveled at the sandstone vistas, lush palm trees, ancient tombs and five-star resorts. These images beckoned to the 30-year-old entrepreneur as she watched Divas Hit the Road, a Chinese travel show.



So she set out with her mother, flying from Guangzhou to the ancient oasis town of AIUla in Saudi Arabia. In Arabic, AIUla means "glory," and the kingdom envisions a lot for this historical region, which is the size of New Jersey. It will become one of the world's great tourist attractions—in the words of Melanie de Souza, AIUla's top marketing official, a destination for "luxury seekers, wanderlust nomads, intrepid voyagers and silver foxes." Along with developing resorts, shops, restaurants and a contemporary art museum with Paris' Centre Pompidou, the Royal Commission for AIUla is overseeing tourist-friendly archaeological excavations of colossal tombs that date to the first century BC. And then there's the new Sharaan Nature Reserve, which showcases a repopulated world of rare beasts: the wild goats, known as ibex,

with their long horns curving like scimitars; the striking black-and-white oryx antelopes; fleet-footed gazelles; and, one day soon, endangered Arabian leopards. Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman, who chairs the commission, has camped here for several winters, hosting dignitaries such as US Secretary of State Antony Blinken and Senators Kirsten Gillibrand of New York and Lindsey Graham of South Carolina. But on this day in March, the weather isn't cooperating for the Wangs. A huge storm brings torrential rain, wind gusts and even hail. At the resort where they're staying, guests' cars are stuck in wet sand.

## Man who set himself on fire outside Trump trial in New York dies

NEW YORK: A man has died after setting himself on fire on Friday outside the New York courthouse where Donald Trump's historic hush-money trial was taking place as jury selection wrapped up, but officials said he did not appear to have been targeting Trump. The man burned for several minutes in full view of television cameras that were set up outside the courthouse, where the first-ever criminal trial of a former US president is being held. An NYPD spokesperson said the man was declared dead overnight at a hospital. Officials had previously said he was in critical condition. Witnesses said the man, who was in his 30s.

## Bahujan Samaj Party nomination chaos in Aonla and Bareilly

BAREILLY: In a day of high drama for Bahujan Samaj Party (BSP), the nomination form of party candidate Chhotelal Gangwar from the Bareilly constituency was rejected on Saturday for "leaving a few columns blank." confusion erupted in the Aonla seat as two members - Abid Ali and Satveer Singh - filed their nomination forms on the BSP symbol, both claiming to be the party's "official choice." BSP's district president lodged a complaint against Singh for "forging party president Mayawati's signature on the nomination form". Despite Singh's claim that Mayawati offered him the ticket, the returning officer accepted Abid as BSP's official candidate after a video conference with Mayawati. BSP workers refused to leave the col-

lectorate premises in Aonla until the returning officer cleared Abid's nomination. On his part, Abid expressed suspicions of a conspiracy, alleging ties between Singh and SP candidate Neeraj Maurya. "Satveer Singh is a friend of Maurya's, and both live in the same village in Shahjahanpur. I am sure this is a conspiracy of Maurya to shift Muslim voters in his favour. We want strict action against him," he asserted. Adding fuel to the fire, BSP district president Rajiv Kumar Singh claimed to have evidence against Singh and Maurya. He told, "We have caught Maurya's driver and found Singh's documents in his car. We have gathered enough evidence against the two and have submitted an application at the Kotwali police station."

# Every class in Prayagraj is saying I am Modi's family

Prayagraj: 52 Lok Sabha candidate Neeraj Tripathi ji interacted with all the respected members present in the "Candidate Public Relations and Dialogue Program" organized at Kesharwani Dharamshala located in village Chundwa of Bara Assembly. Tripathi informed about the various ongoing public welfare schemes of the Center and the State. Gave detailed information in, not only Indians but the whole world knows that India has witnessed unprecedented development in the last ten years under the able leadership of Prime Minister Narendra Modi.

In this program, District President Vinod Prajapati, former District President Vibhav Nath, Bharti Mandal President Akhilesh Patel, Mandal in-

charge Brijesh Pandey, Assembly in-charge Bhola Tiwari, Nagar Panchayat President Shankargarh Parvati Kotari Yuva Morcha District President Sudhakar Pandey, District General Secretary Pushparaj Singh Patel, Mandal President Mahila Morcha Uma Verma, Booth President Manoj Kesharwani. And Tomato Guru ji Sector Convener Deepak Kesharwani Hari Shankar Srivastava Mandal General Secretary Sujit Kesharwani and all the respected members were present, in the "Candidate Public Relations and Dialogue" program in village Shivrajpur of Bara, on 25th, villagers were asked to press the lotus symbol button and Modi was declared Prime Minister for the third time. Ap-



pealed to provide their invaluable support for the development of Prayagraj, every person has pledged to bloom lotus for the happiness, progress and prosperity of Prayagraj, to the

people present under the public relations program in village Baghla Bagicha Madanpur of Shankargarh Mandal of Bara on 25th May. Appealed to give blessings of public opin-

ion to BJP in the Lok Sabha elections, the double engine BJP government, while moving forward in the field of education, health, sports and industry, has done amazing work

in making the rural areas equipped with facilities, the digital revolution in the Modi government has helped the common people. It has played a significant role in making life easier, seeing the happiness on the faces of every section of the society, our belief has become even stronger that Modi is going to grace the post of Prime Minister for the third time, the public once again roared Modi government, city Necessary meeting of Hemwati Nandan Bahuguna Smriti Samiti District Prayagraj in Naini area of ??Southern Assembly. An introductory meeting was organized under the chairmanship of MP Allahabad Rita Bahuguna Joshi, in which a dialogue was established with all the respected members.

## Farmer dies of electrocution in UP Anger among the villagers after the incident

Unnao: Due to the negligence of the electricity department, accidents are happening every day due to dangling wires. If we look at the figures in the last one week, hundreds of acres of wheat crop have been burnt to ashes due to spark falling from the high tension line. Meanwhile, a farmer who came to the field to harvest wheat on Saturday got hit by the electrical wires, due to which he died. There is anger among the villagers after the incident. The police have sent the body for post-mortem and started investigating the case. Dinesh Singh (65), a resident of village Munnukheda of Asiwan police station area, had come to harvest the wheat crop standing in the field in village Matlabpur. Meanwhile, the electric wire was already broken in the field itself and the supply was still on. Dinesh died after getting electrocuted by the broken wire. When farmers harvesting wheat in the nearby fields saw this, they informed the electricity department about the incident and got the supply stopped. Cops from Fatehpur police station reached the spot and sent the body to the mortuary for post-mortem. After the death of the farmer, there was a lot of anger among the villagers against the officials of the electricity department.

## Indi alliance candidates' deposits will be confiscated: Keshav Prasad Maurya SP cycle has been punctured

Kanpur: This time there is a strong wave of BJP in the Lok Sabha elections and lotus will bloom on all the seats of Uttar Pradesh. Not only this, the security deposits of the candidates of Indi alliance on all the

Sabha seat on Saturday. The Deputy Chief Minister said that the workers should not only be fed lotus but also the deposits of the candidates of Indi alliance also have to be confiscated. SP's cycle has

double engine government in the state is working on the mantra of Sabka Saath, Sabka Vikas. BJP will win 80 seats in Uttar Pradesh. He said that before Modi became the Prime Minister, terrorists used to enter our country and spread terrorism, but after the formation of Modi government, our forces are entering the country which promotes terrorists and destroying their forts. This time, after the BJP government comes to power, one country, and one election will be implemented. He said that after forming the government this time, BJP will implement the Uniform Civil Code law. The work of security of the country's borders and hoisting the tricolor even in Pakistan occupied Kashmir will be done under the leadership of Narendra Modi. It is necessary to win 400 seats for providing housing to the poor, developing Kanpur which is known as Manchester of the East, transforming Uttar Pradesh from a goon state to a developed state and providing tap water to every house.

been punctured, from here SP's cycle has come down to Saifai. Ajay Kapoor, who recently joined BJP, has broken the claws of the party. To win 400 seats, the lotus flower button has to be pressed at 4 pm on 4th June. The country is moving ahead in the world under the leadership of PM Narendra Modi. Under the leadership of Narendra Modi, the



seats of the state will be fortified. NDA alliance is going to cross four hundred seat mark this time. Samajwadi Party's bicycle has been punctured in the state. These things were said by Uttar Pradesh Deputy Chief Minister Keshav Prasad Maurya in the nomination meeting of BJP candidate Ramesh Awasthi for Kanpur Lok

## Gene editing as the next gen plant breeding tool for breeders

PRAYAGRAJ: The basis of plant breeding is the availability of trait variation and diversity in different crops, that can be brought together into a variety or hybrid with multiple superior qualities or characteristics. Plant breeders have been collecting wild variants of different crops for transferring better traits from wild to domesticated varieties. Random genetic variation historically has also been generated by treating seeds with various agents and selecting for plants with superior traits. These breeding methods were limited to plants that could be crossed with each other. However, genetic modification gave the breeders an opportunity to incorporate genes from different species into the plants, thereby increasing manifold, the available repertoire of genetic variation.

The latest addition to breeder's toolbox-gene editing, can enable changes similar to previously induced random changes (practiced by breeders in the past), generate variation similar to wild varieties as well as introduce genes in a plant,

efficiently and in the most precise manner. The non-specificity and randomness in the previous processes led to a laborious, time-consuming and multi-generation selection process to select the plant with the required trait. These limitations can be overcome by gene editing, with precise and specific changes being made based on our knowledge of the trait.

Knowledge based and user friendly- The precision of the technology requires detailed prior information regarding the gene being modified and the variation being executed. Gene editing technology is being hailed as user friendly and easy to execute as its enabled by the enormous historical crop-wise data associating a gene to trait and the complete genetic sequence of multiple crops and varieties that has become available in recent years. Detailed information about the gene being modified as well as the precise modifications are the prerequisite for gene editing.

The intermediate GMO phase- The editing machinery and the target sequence can be inserted in the plant to carry out the

change and later bred out or it can be provided transiently to affect the change. Therefore, the process of gene editing might have a GMO phase but the final variety or product would be devoid of any foreign gene insertion and have only the small variation at a designated position. Researchers are actively working towards a process without a GMO phase for editing, this will improve the efficiency and further reduce the time for accomplishing the change.

The possibility of unintended changes- Gene editing technology is based on the exact gene sequence but due to redundancy in the short sequences, there is a possibility of editing occurring in not-target sites. This possibility can be managed and reduced with better design of the components as well as using improved editing machinery. Researchers are continually working to improve the design and reduce any unintended changes. However, active weeding out of any edits that may have occurred in other traits as well as back crossing with the parent plant to breed out unin-

tended changes if any, can take care of any such concerns.

Dr. Shivendra Bajaj, Executive Director, Federation of Seed Industry of India (FSII), said "The technology has a lot of potential- Be it trees, plants with multiple genomes, orphan crops or wild varieties, gene editing has the potential to solve multiple challenges quickly. The information and knowledge from various plants can be applied to make crop plants climate resilient, low input requiring, pest resistant and sustainable for the environment. Devastating disease can be addressed using editing e.g greening disease of oranges, Panama disease of banana, viral disease of tomato, nematode infections of soybean, fungal diseases of American chestnut and Elm trees, cacao fungal disease and pest etc. Crops can be improved to yield better with lesser fertilizer and water inputs and withstand extreme climate conditions. The first gene edited crops that are in the market are with improved consumer traits like better quality soybean oil and non-browning mushroom. Many other

crops with enhanced consumer traits are in the pipeline, including low gluten wheat, high fibre wheat, tomatoes with enhanced flavour, berries without seeds and thorns, non-browning apples and potatoes etc."

Dr. Ratna Kumria, Director-Biotechnology, Alliance for Agri Innovation (AAI), said "Gene editing can open a whole new horizon for plant breeders, including many more food crops for cultivation and improvement, enabling multiple improvements in a short time and making plant breeding less time consuming and labour intensive. Gene editing will allow plant breeders to change the way crops are grown in fields as well as contained environments to harness their potential to the fullest. The technology itself is evolving towards improved precision and addressing current concerns. Gene editing will increase our pace for developing high yielding, stress resilient, sustainable and nutritive varieties in multiple crops in the next decade or so, positively impacting food security in a sustainable manner."

## Has NOTA been altering influence of smaller parties, independents in Prayagraj?

Prayagraj: Since the inception of the NOTA (None of the Above) option on the poll ballot, it has notably outperformed numerous small political parties and independent candidates during the Lok Sabha polls, particularly in the Prayagraj region. The NOTA option, symbolising a voter's rejection of all running candidates and expressing their disapproval of the available choices, was introduced during the 2014 Lok Sabha elections. Analysis of data from the past two Parliamentary polls indicates that NOTA gained traction across all four seats of the Prayagraj region, encompassing Allahabad, Phulpur, Pratapgarh, and Kaushambi.

While the percentage of NOTA votes has risen across all four seats, data highlights the most substantial increase on the Allahabad seat, where the NOTA percentage surged nearly fourfold in the 2019 polls compared to the 2014 elections. In the 2014 elections for the Allahabad seat, there were a total of 23 candidates, and NOTA secured the 11th position in terms of options used. A total of 3,624 voters chose NOTA, constituting 0.22% of the total votes cast. In the 2019 elections, the percentage of NOTA votes increased to 0.86%. With 14 candidates in contention, NOTA climbed to the fifth position, following candidates from the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), Samajwadi Party (SP), Congress, and Communist Party of India (CPI).

Similarly, the NOTA vote percentage nearly doubled in the Phulpur parliamentary seat. In the 2014 elections, with 15 candidates competing, NOTA secured the fifth position. A total of 8,424 voters opted for NOTA, constituting 0.44% of the total votes cast. This percentage rose to 0.81% in the 2019 elections.

In 2019, NOTA attained the fourth position among the 14 candidates contesting for this seat, trailing behind candidates from the BJP, SP, and Congress. NOTA was chosen by 7,882

voters. Interestingly, despite the considerable anticipation surrounding Shivpal Yadav's party, Pragatisheel Samajwadi Party, which entered the fray with great fanfare, it was at 11th position, seven places behind NOTA.

The NOTA vote percentage more than doubled in the Pratapgarh parliamentary seat as well. In the 2014 elections, with 15 candidates in the running, NOTA secured the sixth position. A total of 9,098 voters opted for NOTA, representing 0.53% of the total votes cast. In the 2019 Lok Sabha elections, NOTA claimed the fifth position among the eight candidates vying for this seat, with 12,159 voters choosing it, increasing the NOTA vote percentage to 1.33%.

A similar trend was observed in the Kaushambi parliamentary seat. In the 2014 elections, with 11 candidates in contention, NOTA secured the fifth position, with 15,169 voters opting for it, constituting 0.87% of the total votes cast. This percentage rose to 1.51% in the 2019 elections. NOTA

claimed the sixth position among the 12 candidates contesting from the Kaushambi seat in this election, with a total of 14,769 voters choosing it.

Recognition in 2013, candidate status in 2018

NOTA was initially used in the United States in 1976 and later adopted by many countries. It was officially recognized in India in 2013. The Election Commission of India filed a petition in the Supreme Court in 2009 to introduce the NOTA option, but it couldn't be implemented due to the lack of consent from the Central Government at that time.

On September 27, 2013, the Supreme Court of India ruled in favor of integrating the 'none of the above' option into ballots, mandating its inclusion in all electronic voting machines (EVMs). Consequently, the Election Commission introduced the NOTA option with a specific symbol, positioned in the last panel on all EVMs. In 2018, NOTA attained the status equivalent to that of a candidate in the fray.

## Bus overturns in UP's Unnao, leaving one person wounded

Unnao: A bus carrying 32 people, including seven children, toppled on the Lucknow-Agra road here in the early hours of Saturday, police said. According to authorities, the group was traveling from Delhi to Jaunpur district to attend a marriage celebration. The bus overturned near Sabli Kheda village. It appears that the collision occurred when the driver lost control of the vehicle. However, the driver was able to slow down the vehicle and prevent a severe accident, according to Arvind Kumar, the area's Circle Officer (CO).

There were 32 passengers on the bus, including seven children. One of the passengers got serious injuries and was sent to a Lucknow hospital, he added. A few others had minor injuries and were released after receiving first assistance, he added.

## Fire dept expands manpower, equipment as rural incidents surge

Prayagraj: The fire department is on high alert and has bolstered manpower and equipment in rural areas due to a rise in crop fires in Prayagraj. They've urged farmers not to burn stubble and have issued guidelines to prevent fire outbreaks in agricultural fields. Volunteers in various blocks have also been mobilised to raise awareness among farmers and help control fire incidents.

During the Rabi crop harvesting season, incidents of field fires have ravaged crops worth lakhs of rupees in the Prayagraj region over the past few weeks. Most of these incidents have been concentrated in the Koraon area across the Yamuna River. An investigation revealed that burning stubble was the primary cause of these field fires, according to chief fire officer (CFO) RK Pandey. In the last 24 hours alone, fires broke out in Bara, Kaundhiayra, Lalapur and half a dozen villages in the Khiri area, resulting in the destruction of crops across several bighas of land.

RK Pandey stated that the fire department is taking proactive measures to prevent such incidents in rural areas. Ten fire stations across the district, including those in Naini, Soraon, Koraon, Meja, Bara, Phulpur, Handia, Karchhana, and other locations, along with one in the city, remain on high alert around the clock. Fifteen large fire tenders and five small fire vehicles are operational and prepared to respond to incidents promptly. Additionally, the department recently received 75 firefighters and an additional fire tender, which have also

been deployed. Pandey added that Power Department officials have been requested to cooperate and inspect wires, as many fire incidents have occurred due to short circuits and sparking.

The CFO also urged farmers and villagers to refrain from smoking near fields and to avoid burning dried leaves and other materials in orchards, as fires can easily spread due to winds. It's important to keep matchboxes and other flammable materials out of reach of children, and villagers should ensure that fires are fully extinguished after cooking food. Farmers should also clear crops and vegetation at least 5 meters away from transformers, electric double poles, or fuse sets near their fields.

Additionally, farmers should immediately report to the power department if they notice high-tension wires hanging loose above their fields. Villagers should fill ponds with water to ensure that fire tenders have an adequate water supply. In case of fire, villagers should promptly call the fire station, the nearest police station, dial 112, or contact a police outpost. It's crucial to provide accurate address details with landmarks and routes to ensure that fire tenders reach the spot in a timely manner.

Rising fires: At least 300 incidents of fire have been reported in rural areas in April this year, compared to 268 incidents during the same month last year. Up until March 2024, rural areas witnessed 225 fire incidents, whereas last year saw 1367 fire incidents in rural areas.

# UP Board results declared: CM congratulates students

**You are all the bright future of 'new UP'**

"You are all the bright future of 'new Uttar Pradesh'. With such hard work, devotion, and patience, I wish you all success in all your endeavours. May Maa Sharada's blessings always be with you all!," he said in a Hindi post on X.

The board examinations were held in 8,265 locations from February 22 to March 9. Board officials stated that the answer papers were verified between March 16 and March 30.

"Prachi Nigam of Sitapur district was the Class 10 topper, scoring 98.50 percent. Shubham



Verma, also from Sitapur, finished top in the Class 12 test with 97.80 percent," Education (Secondary) Di-

rector Mahendra Dev said. According to Dev, the board administered the test in a "record-breaking"

amount of days. "For the first time, the exam was completed in a record 12 working days."

The review of response sheets was finished in the same number of working days," he stated.

The official stated that 27,49,364 (27.49 lakh) students, including 14,39,243 (14.39 lakh) males and 13,10,121 (13.10 lakh) girls, took the Class 10 test. Overall, 86.05 percent of males and 93.40 percent of girls passed the exam. According to Dev, the number of Class 12 applicants was 24,52,830 (24.52 lakh), with 13,41,356 (13.41 lakh) males and 11,11,474 (11.11 lakh) girls. The pass rate was 77.78 percent for boys and 88.42 percent for girls.

**Raj Singh of Jwala Devi Saraswati Vidya Mandir Inter College becomes topper of class 10th**  
Shreya Mishra and Ashika Singh bagged first spot in Intermediate Exam

PRAYAGRAJ: A total of 12 students of Prayagraj are included in the top 10 list of UP Board in class 10th. Raj Singh of Jwala Devi Saraswati Vidya Mandir Inter College, Civil Lines, Prayagraj became the topper of class 10th by scoring the highest marks in the district. Raj Singh is fourth in the state merit list. He has got 587 (97.83%) marks out of 600. Raj is a resident of Dhata in Fatehpur district. His father is a farmer.

Whereas, Shreya Mishra of S P Inter College Sikaro Koraon Prayagraj and Ashika Singh of Vikas Inter College Palnagar Sahson bagged the first spot in the Intermediate Examination of UP Board in the district with 484 (96.80 percent).

Raj Singh says, "I want to give the same message to all the students that they should attend class every day while studying and listen to the teachers. They should complete their work on the same day, they will definitely get success".

At the second place, four students from Prayagraj got the same number in High School Exam. Nitin Mishra of Jwala Devi Saraswati Vidya Mandir Inter College, Garvita

Srivastava of LBST Inter College, Manda, Saurabh Mishra of Gopal Vidyalaya Inter College, Koraon and Anamika Singh, student of Jaglal Jagat Bahadur Patel Intermediate College, Virbhanpur, Soraon, these four students got 583 marks (97.17 per cent) out of 600. Similarly, Aakriti Singh of Gopal Vidyalaya Inter College, Sudhanshu Mishra of KNN Inter College Bhagwatnagar Bahria and Anshika Dwivedi of Cambridge High School Shankargarh are at ninth rank in the merit of UP. He has scored 582 (97%) marks out of 600 in High School.

Students from rural schools have also performed well in the UP Board exams. There are four students of the district who are in the top-10 rank in class 10th, all of whom are from rural areas. Akanksha Tiwari of SP Inter College, Koraon, Vidushi of BLSS Convent Sikandra, Manvi Patel and Khushi Saroj of Jaglal Jagat Bahadur Patel Intermediate College, Virbhanpur Soraon are included. All four have secured 581 (96.83%) marks out of 600. There are eight girls of class 10th of Prayagraj who managed to bag the top-10 merit list in the state, whereas the number of male students is only four.



**Girls in happy mood after UP Board results.**

## Aadhaar card mandatory in UP Govt schools to weed out 'fake students'

Prayagraj: In order to maintain transparency, the basic education department has made holding an Aadhaar card essential for both newly registered and existing students in Uttar Pradesh's government primary and upper primary schools. Currently, 1.88 crore students attend 1.3 lakh government primary and upper primary schools spread throughout 75 districts in the state. With its "School Chalo" initiative, the state government hopes to reach around 2

crore children aged 6 to 14 years in the 2022-23 academic year. "To eliminate any possibility of bogus students, the basic education department has decided to make Aadhaar cards essential for 1.88 crore children registered in 1.3 lakh government schools," said Vijay Kiran Anand, director general of school education.

"At the moment, more than half of students have Aadhaar cards. We are already assisting the remaining 50% of students in ob-

taining their Aadhaar cards. Verification has been made mandatory so that the department has an accurate count of kids enrolled in government schools," he added. Until last year, guardians were required to have an Aadhaar card. Every student is now required to take it. According to authorities, the move would increase transparency and allow recipients to get their entitlements in a easier and smooth manner because the Aadhaar card elimi-

nates the need for numerous documents to establish identification.

In its report on the general and social sector for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2016, the Comptroller and Auditor General of India highlighted various inconsistencies in student enrollment in government schools. Between 2011 and 2016, an estimated 20 lakh students dropped out of school every year. However, according to state government data, the average dropout rate was 0.63

lakh students each year over the stated time. To prevent such manipulations, the HRD ministry issued a notification in 2017 stating that students will henceforth be required to obtain an Aadhaar number in order to get mid-day meals across the country.

"The use of Aadhaar as an identification document for the delivery of services, benefits, or subsidies streamlines the government delivery process and allows beneficiaries to get their entitlements immediately and

seamlessly," reads the notification. In recent years, the U.P. Board has made Aadhaar cards mandatory for students, which has aided in the detection of fraudulent candidates. As a consequence, the number of candidates has decreased from 60 lakh in 2017 to 52 lakh this year, according to an official. "Both the national and state governments have been attempting to integrate the Aadhaar number with school education subsidy schemes," an official said.

## About 180 criminals serving prison sentence in UP pass Class 10-12 board exam

Prayagraj: About 180 offenders in various jails across 30 districts of Uttar Pradesh, including Ghaziabad, Agra, and Lucknow, passed the Class 10 and Class 12 board examinations, according to results released on Saturday. The UP Board of High School and Intermediate Education has declared board results, with a pass percentage of 89.55 for Class 10 and 82.60 for Class 12. According to the statis-

tics, 89 of 91 convicts who appeared for Class 10 board examinations passed, while 87 of 105 inmates who took Class 12 exams passed.

According to the official announcement, twenty-one Ghaziabad convicts took the Class 12 board examinations, and 17 passed. Similarly, 11 detainees from Bulandshahr jail took the exams, and ten passed. All four inmates who appeared from Hardoi Prison cleared the board examinations.

## In the District Sainik Bandhu meeting, problems of soldiers, ex-servicemen and brave women were heard and their solutions were found

Prayagraj: The meeting of District Sainik Bandhu Prayagraj was held in the Sangam Auditorium in the presence of a large number of ex-servicemen, brave

Officer. The coordination was done by former Subedar Shyam Sundar Singh Patel and staff etc. On this occasion, about 17 applications were received on which the problems of

Kumar, N Muzaffar, Pramod Kumar etc. were present. During the meeting, former Subedar Shyam Sundar Singh Patel gave a memorandum addressed to the Chief

assured to send it soon. The presiding ADM City said that we respect all you soldiers, all your problems will be solved, you all keep patience. Everything will be completed, some tasks

may take some time, which people welcomed with applause and expressed happiness. In the end, Group Captain Ashok Kumar Pandey gave vote of thanks to everyone. Prominent people who participated in the meeting included Shyam Sundar Singh Patel, R.K. Mishra, Sheetal Prasad, Sudhir Dwivedi, Ramsagar, Indrajit Mishra, SK Shukla, Adil Rashid, JSP Srivastava, Umesh Kumar Dixit, Vinod Kumar, Ashok Kumar Gupta, Sanjay Singh, JB Rai, PNK Dilip etc. were included.



women and soldiers, which was presided over by ADM City Madan Kumar on behalf of the District Magistrate, Steering Group Captain Ashok Kumar Pandey, District Sainik Welfare

the soldiers were personally heard and resolved which were related to Municipal Corporation, Revenue, Police Department etc. On this occasion Officers of many departments, Ajit Kumar, Sanjay

Minister of Uttar Pradesh on behalf of the ex-servicemen in which the Ex-Servicemen's Home of Uttar Pradesh Tax is waived off like it is waived off in 16 states, which ADM City took and

## 15 YEARS AFTER NPS COMES INTO EFFECT Most UP teachers, staff still to draw benefit

PRAYAGRAJ: The state government is yet to deduct contributions from the salaries of a majority of teachers and non-teaching staff of government-run primary and upper primary schools of the state, towards the new pension scheme (NPS), which was introduced 18 years ago. In Prayagraj alone, out of 8,307 teachers and non-teaching staff which was appointed after 2005 and are covered under the NPS, deductions from 1502 employees (18%) has begun, putting the old age of others at risk, said UP Prathmik Shikshak Sangh district president Devendra Kumar Srivastava.

So far, only 3,636 employees have been allotted the Permanent Retirement Account Number (PRAN) while even applications for PRAN allocation of the remaining 4,671 staff have not yet been submitted. Not only this, deductions towards pension of 266 teachers of 33 primary schools attached to government-aided secondary schools of

the district too have not been started till date, he added.

The situation is the same of teachers of Sanskrit schools, where pension deductions are yet to begin, claimed affected teachers. The result of the new pension scheme not being implemented properly is that after retirement, teachers and employees are struggling to even get treatment for ailments, they add. The condition of teachers and employees of 181 government-aided secondary schools is comparatively better than those at government-run primary and upper primary schools. Here, 2,025 employees are eligible for NPS, including 1,486 teachers and 539 non-teaching staff members. Out of these, pension contribution deduction of 1,785 has begun.

The NPS was introduced in January 2004 for central government employees and this was implemented in UP with effect from April 1, 2005 after noti-

fication was issued on March 28, 2005. However, for 11 years nothing was done to ensure NPS benefits cover the teachers and staff of government-aided secondary schools. A government order for deduction of pension contribution from salaries was issued in May 2016 but till date a majority of the staff are yet to get a PRAN allotted to them, teachers claimed.

Though officials are reluctant to comment on record over the issue as the matter is pending at the government level, they say that the delay in completing formalities for allotment of PRAN is due to many district inspectors of schools (DIOSs) failing to complete formalities.

However this situation has landed many a teacher appointed after April 2005 in a tight spot, where despite putting in years of service and being eligible for NPS, they are not getting any pension. Drawing a salary of around Rs 60,000 to 70,000 per month while in

service, today, these teachers are struggling to eke out a living after retirement.

In Prayagraj itself, be it Kalpana Sagar of KP Intermediate College, Asha Vyas and Anand Nidhan Singh of Mangla Prasad Intermediate College, Bampur; Rani Sharma of KVM Intermediate College, Kamla Nagar; Usha Srivastava of Firoz Gandhi Intermediate College, Garapur; or Ram Singh of Subhash Anglo Bengali Vedic Intermediate College, all are struggling to survive with dignity.

Take the example of Harish Chandra, an affected teacher. "I was appointed as a teacher at Gandhi Intermediate College-Patel Nagar in Jhansi in 2007 and I retired on March 31, 2020. Despite deductions from salary under NPS, after 13 years of service I am not getting any pension," he said. Kamlesh Parihar, another affected teacher, said that he was appointed a lecturer of economics at Crosthwaite Girls Intermediate College in 2007 and retired in March 2018.

## Editorial

### India's commitment to harnessing clean energy

India's progress in renewable energy infrastructure. Some of the above factors provide the structural framework for locating India's approach to renewable energy security discourses. One needs to underline here that over the years, India has made tremendous progress with regard to boosting the domestic infrastructure for harnessing renewable energy. This progress is evident from the fact that by 2030, India will be able to harness 500 GW of renewable sources, as per the report of the Ministry of New and Renewable Energy, Government of India. This demonstrates India's commitment to harnessing clean energy. Similarly, a recent report published by the Ministry of New and Renewable Energy highlights that the installed capacity of various sources of renewable energy is "Solar, 48.55 GW; Small Hydro, 4.83 GW; large hydro, 46.51 GW; biopower, 10.62GW; Nuclear, 6.7 GW".

A cursory survey of India's quest for harnessing renewable energy demonstrates that over the years, India has scaled up its renewable energy sector. In this regard, it is pertinent to highlight that India started its journey to acquire renewable energy by diversifying into the nuclear energy sector in 1945 when the Tata Institute of Fundamental Research (TIFR) was established. It is pertinent to highlight that in 1957, the Atomic Energy Research Centre came up and was later renamed the Bhabha Atomic Energy Research Centre (BARC) in 1967. Over the years, India has made a quantum in harnessing nuclear energy the commissioning of the first civilian nuclear reactor, Apsara, as the BARC website suggests, in 1957.

The two recent wars — the Russia-Ukraine War as well as the Israel-Hamas War — as well as sanctions on Iran and Russia have had much impact on global energy geopolitics. Contrary to expectations, the above-mentioned wars have also demonstrated the vulnerability of developed countries in terms of accessing energy, especially those in the advanced Global North, like European countries, which are facing major challenges due to the wars. In this regard, it may be added that the Red Sea chokepoint crisis has further aggravated the global energy crisis. Some of the aforementioned geopolitical crises have demonstrated that many advanced European countries were ill-prepared to face the recent crisis, thus putting stress on their access to energy. However, Global South countries have also faced challenges equally due to the above-mentioned wars. What needs to be underlined is that Global South countries are in a precarious position due to the non-availability of energy, which has aggravated other crises, including food and related crises. The reason for identifying the vulnerability of the Global North and Global South in the present geopolitical crisis is to locate how the energy crisis affects the accessibility of energy. In this context, one must emphasize the importance of renewable energy discourses. It is pertinent to highlight how India provides a leadership role to the global community, particularly to the Global South, in addressing the issues of the energy crisis by initiating a host of renewable energy initiatives.

Three important issues need to be addressed while discussing India's role in the global renewable energy discourses. These are: India's initiative with regard to the renewable energy sector. How India's policy towards the renewable energy sector will provide a model for the Global South countries in particular and Global North in general in addressing the crisis. To assess India's contribution to global discourses on the renewable energy sector.



## To take on the successor government

The third one is due to depart in May, all of them being replaced by civilian 'technical personnel'. The Indian acceptance of the Muizzu diktat with grace and dignity did ensure that the new President had nothing to fear from India or be suspicious about the larger Ocean neighbour in the north. Muizzu's estranged political mentor and jailed former President Abdulla Yameen had injected those unnecessary and unjustified fears and suspicions into the bilateral discourse with his 'India Military Out' request in the closing months of his presidency in 2018. Barring India's regional adversary China's uni-

lateral declaration that they would defend Maldives' 'sovereignty and territorial integrity in case of external threats', there was nothing to suggest that either India or any other nation or force was threatening the archipelago-nation at the time — or, even in the past six years since Yameen lost the presidential polls of 2018. Yet, after losing power and leaving without a cause, to take on the successor government of President Ibrahim Solih of the rival Maldivian Democratic Party (MDP), Yameen launched the by-now-infamous 'India Out/India Military Out' campaign, often confusing his goal and pur-

pose. In the end, the protests withered away, yet, Yameen's coinage became a political burden for his estranged aide Muizzu, who needed some handle to off-load the same, once elected to power. In more ways than one, New Delhi's quiet acceptance of Muizzu's election (unlike perceived an propagated by some in Maldives) and also the ready acceptance of his request for withdrawing the military personnel engaged exclusively in urgent evacuations during medical emergencies and natural disasters showed how matured nations and governments handle situ-

ations of the kind — without allowing it to go out of hands. All of it was only a continuation of the way India rushed aid to lil' Maldivian brother at the height of the unprecedented world-wide Covid crisis — before and after — when New Delhi pumped massive funds into infrastructure and massive development projects in the country. Long before the present, India, in another era had rushed the Indian Air Force (IAF) to thwart a mercenary-led coup-bid in 1988 ('Operation Cactus'), and the Navy to for rescue, relief and restoration work after the 2004 'Asian tsunami).

# Ukraine has already lost the war and it is time NATO pulled the

Those opposed, think that letting Ukraine join NATO while the war with Russia has raged on for over two years now, will likely provoke sharp and dangerous reactions from President Vladimir Putin. Besides, there is a growing perception that Ukraine has already lost the war and it is time NATO pulled the plug.

Placing NATO on Russia's doorstep with the inclusion of Ukraine, even though it cannot pay its way with a devastated economy, is a violation of previous understandings, according to Russia. It was one of the reasons why Russia went to war against Ukraine in the first place. The other was Ukraine's harsh treatment of Russian-speaking populations in the Donbas region bordering Russia. However, Secretary of State Antony Blinken recently told reporters in Brussels that 'Ukraine will become a member of NATO. Our purpose at the summit is to help build a bridge to that membership'. If Biden does not win the presidency in November, then this process of 'bridge' building will most likely not be pursued. Trump is certainly not in favour of mollycoddling Ukraine's security at the expense of Russia. Various member countries such as Poland that want Ukraine in



NATO may not find much purchase with Trump in the White House. Candidate Donald Trump has let it be known he will 'settle' the war in Ukraine, if elected to office, 'in 24 hours', without specifying how. His formula flies in the face of those in Europe and America who do not want to concede any Ukrainian territory to Russia. Trump favours ceding the territory claimed by Russia in the Donbas region.

and beyond. Others think this will encourage Russia to invade again but surely this can work both ways. There will have to be a massive international reconstruction effort in what remains of Ukraine after a settlement in any case. This means business for many. Nevertheless, the brightest hope of a swift end to the war in Ukraine is

Trump back in the saddle.

Similarly, Trump has a 2020 formula for ending the war in Gaza. He wants Jerusalem and the West Bank-occupied territories as part of Israel and simultaneously a Palestinian state established. Only America can make this happen. This solution is likely to be supported by the major Arab countries already drawn in by the Abraham Accords from Trump1.0. Trump's ideas on Iran, North Korea, China, Taiwan, Japan, the Philippines, and Vietnam, are not that different from those of Democrat President Joe Biden and the State Department. They will have to evolve after he comes to office of course. India will continue to be considered a strategic ally of the US in the South Asian region and as a

bulwark against Chinese hegemony. There will be more collaborations, joint ventures, American investment, and defence technology transfer. India is likely to rapidly gain from more manufacturing relocations from China. Trump and Narendra Modi also have a personal chemistry that will help. However, the IT industry may face challenges with visa restrictions on working in the US. Pakistan will probably receive less American support than it does at present with a Republican administration in office. It will most likely be clubbed with China strategically. American relations with Russia will proceed at a better pace, as Trump has no real quarrel with Putin, and Trump will withdraw all sanctions against Russia and encourage his western allies to do so. To some extent this will free Russia to forge better ties with the West, instead of being limited to a Chinese embrace. The presumptive Republican Party nominee Donald Trump, is inching ever closer to the US presidency as his legal challenges melt away. Polls show him ahead of President Joe Biden. Even critics who think it will be a close election give Trump a 50-50 chance right now. NATO in Europe, much closer to the war in Ukraine

than the US across the Atlantic, is scrambling to mobilise resources to 'Trump-proof' themselves in anticipation. Trump has recently said Russia can do 'what the hell it likes' to any European country that does not pay its share in NATO and its war support to Ukraine. Europe realises it needs to think much beyond Ukraine going forward because Trump's transactional and quid-pro-quo style will not treat their security as guaranteed by Uncle Sam. Finland, for example, has just ordered 64 F-35A fighter jets from the US and has decided to double artillery shell production.

The outgoing NATO Secretary General, Jens Stoltenberg, is drumming up support for the now 32 member-country NATO to establish a new five-year, 100-billion-euro fund for the battle in Ukraine. But many in Europe and America realise that Ukraine is militarily unequal, finding it difficult to find more conscripts let alone trained soldiers and that there is massive corruption in addition to gross incompetence. Twenty of the 32 member-NATO have set a target of spending 2 per cent of GDP for defence this year as called for earlier. But Trump says NATO security guarantees would only apply to those countries that actually meet their defence

## Celebrating Indian cinema on French Riviera

The famed seaside resort filled with the faint licorice smell of mimosa saw the birth of Italian neo-realism with the screening of Rome Open City by Roberto Rossellini. The festival brought some of the best films from around the world, including Jean Cocteau's Beauty and the Beast, Alfred Hitchcock's Notorious, and Gilda by Charles Cukor. Among the thousand delegates, a young man born in the distant town of Gurdaspur, India, was in Cannes to screen his directorial debut, Neecha Nagar. Chetan Anand, the highly educated son of a lawyer, had no previous experience in cinema or family in the film industry. For his debut film, written by Hayatullah Ansari with dialogues by KA Abbas, he cast his wife Uma Anand along

with Kamini Kaushal, Rafiq Anwar, Rafi Peer, and a much younger Zohra Sehgal. The music for the film was composed by sitar maestro Pandit Ravi Shankar. The film that effectively used the expressionist montage technique to portray the gulf between the rich and the poor appealed to the jury at Cannes. Chetan Anand's Neecha Nagar became the first Indian film to be honoured at Cannes, sharing the top prize, the Grand Prix du Festival International du Film. Inspired by the success of Neecha Nagar at Cannes, a young Indian advertising executive, Satyajit Ray, wrote a letter to Chetan Anand saying that he was making his own first film. Another aspiring filmmaker who saw the film during its

limited screenings in India was Mrinal Sen. In 1956, towards the end of the Cannes Film Festival, an unknown Indian film was scheduled to be screened at midnight. It was titled 'Pather Panchali' and was the debut film of Satyajit Ray. Pather Panchali's journey from Calcutta to Cannes was fraught with political shenanigans. Ultimately, the direct intervention of the Prime Minister's office enabled the print to reach the projection room at the Palais de Festival in Cannes as India's official entry. However, the national award-winning film had arrived in Cannes starved of any advance publicity and the filmmaker was not present. Ray later recalled, "I had no means of going, so I stayed back."

## Israel's retaliation against Iran has taken place, and India is caught in the crossfire

US media outlet Axios, Biden apparently told Netanyahu, "You got a win. Take the win." The US is apparently organizing a "diplomatic response" along with other G7 nations that is likely to involve fresh sanctions on Iran's missile and drone programmes. US secretary of state Antony Blinken, according to Axios, has said that "strength and wisdom must be the two sides of the same coin" in a veiled message to Israel. Germany and the UK have sent their foreign ministers Annalena Baerbock and David Cameron, respectively, to Israel to plead with Netanyahu not to retaliate. The result of this coordinated western pressure on Israel, so far, has been poor. Israel is reserving its right to strike back at Iran. Netanyahu flatly told the visiting German and British ministers that Israel will make its "own decisions" and "do everything necessary to defend itself." Israel's defence minister Yoav Gallant has told his American counterpart, Lloyd Austin, that Israel has "no option but to respond" while the Jewish state's military chief has said that the inevitable response will come at a place and time of Israel's choosing. Israel's 'war cabinet' is meeting again to decide on the modali-

ties of response, and according to Jerusalem Post, an Israeli media outlet, the country has already decided on the type but not the timing of the counter-strike on Iran. From the outside, all this may seem a little mystifying.

After all, Israel's air and missile defence system, with a large degree of help from a consortium of partners including the US, the UK, France and even Jordan managed to thwart 99 per cent of the Iranian projectiles.

Why can't Israel 'show restraint' when the combined West, led by Israel's staunchest ally America, is imploring it to do so? India, too, has urged an immediate cessation of hostilities and a return to the path of diplomacy. There are two reasons behind it. One, it is a little misleading to assume that Iran's attack on Israel was "symbolic". Iran's barrage of cheap drones and missiles along with its prompt signals of de-escalation were carefully calibrated to serve the twin purposes of projecting strength, reassuring its regional proxies as well as avoid a stinging retaliation from the Jewish state, and by extension, the United States.

Iran was telling Israel that the Jewish state (or the US) can no longer target its military, mili-

ties, or assets on its soil or in the region without any costs. The April 13 attack was a response to a purported Israeli airstrike on Iranian embassy compound in Damascus on April 1 in which top Revolutionary Guard commanders were eliminated. Therefore, it can be said that Iran was trying to establish a 'new normal' by moving away from relying solely on terrorist proxies such as Hezbollah or Hamas and shifting from asymmetric warfare to direct confrontation. Financial Times quotes Ahmad Dastmalchian, Iran's former ambassador to Lebanon, as saying that the attack on Israel "opened a new chapter in Iran's defence policy" and represented a "paradigm shift from strategic patience to a multi-layered defence". That's why even though Iran had expressed its intention well in advance with Washington, capitals in West Asia and even India (refer to MEA's travel advisory to Israel and Iran on 12 April, one day before the missile strikes took place, and had swiftly announced, post the air offensive, that Iranian objectives have all been met and "the matter can be deemed concluded", Israel still gets to have its say.

## The group of students at a primary school in Chhattisgarh's Bastar

**NEW DELHI:** The group of students at a primary school in Chhattisgarh's Bastar district took a stand against a teacher who arrived intoxicated. The viral video depicts the intense scene as the teacher hastily starts his motorbike amidst a barrage of slippers thrown by the students, ultimately fleeing the premises. This dramatic confrontation sheds light on the challenges faced by students in accessing quality education and the pressing need for accountability within the education system. As per the 'X' post, the incident took place at Pilibhatta Primary School, where the teacher's recurrent presence in class while under the influence of alcohol had become a growing concern. Rather than fulfilling his teaching duties, he frequently resorted to sleeping on the floor, disregarding the needs of his students. Frustrated by his behavior, the students confronted him,

**Such incidents not only tarnish the reputation of the education system but also have detrimental effects**

only to face verbal abuse in return. Matters reached a tipping point when the teacher arrived intoxicated once again last week, prompting the students to take decisive action. This incident is not isolated, as another disturbing event recently surfaced in Chhattisgarh's Bilaspur district. A teacher was caught on camera openly carrying alcohol onto school premises, displaying a blatant disregard for the standards of conduct expected in such settings. The footage serves as a stark reminder of the urgent need for enhanced oversight and accountability measures within edu-

cational institutions. Such incidents not only tarnish the reputation of the education system but also have detrimental effects on the well-being and academic progress of students. As these videos continue to circulate online, they serve as a clarion call for authorities to address systemic issues and ensure that students are provided with a safe and conducive learning environment. Reactions on post In response to the viral video, social media users have expressed admiration and support for the students' actions. With comments such as "Well done, children," "Bright future with these kids," and "Salute to students," there is widespread praise for the students' courage and determination in standing up against perceived injustice. One user highlighted the inspirational aspect of the students' actions, stating, "These kids must

## Govt takes Third Mumbai plan another step closer to reality

**MUMBAI:** The urban development department (UDD) has invited suggestions and objections from the general public from 124 villages that have now been made a part of the proposed Third Mumbai. Third Mumbai largely consists of area that falls under the influence zone of the recently opened Mumbai Trans Harbour Link (MTHL), or Atal Setu. MTHL is expected to have a major impact on the economic development and growth of the region and the state govt has decided to tap the potential that will emanate from this project. On Dec 12, Mumbai Metropolitan Region Development Authority

(MMRDA) was appointed the New Town Development Authority (NTDA) for area that falls under the MTHL influence zone. MMRDA has envisaged Third Mumbai as a liveable and environment-friendly greenfield sustainable business centre with smart city features. It will have regional-level amenities with mixed-use and integrated residential areas for job creation and economic growth of Mumbai Metropolitan Region (MMR). Of the 124 villages, 80 villages are from Navi Mumbai Airport Influence Notified Area (NAINA), 33 villages from the Khopta New Town

Notified Area, two villages from Mumbai Metropolitan Regional Plan and nine from the Raigad Regional Plan. Since some of the areas from NAINA and Khopta New Town Notified Area have been moved to NTDA, UDD has decided to seek suggestions and objections about the modifications. A notification issued by state UDD said: "The suggestion and/or objections in respect of the proposed modification [are sought] from the general public within 30 days (April 3). The suggestions and/or objections shall be addressed to the joint director of town planning, Konkan Division, 3rd floor.

## High court confirms death to man who killed his son, sister & her family members

**NAGPUR:** The Nagpur bench of the Bombay high court on Thursday confirmed the death penalty for Vivek Palatkar, who was convicted of killing his son, sister, and three other family members. Palatkar's victims included his son Krishna, his sister Archana Pawankar

(45), her husband Kamlakar (48), her mother-in-law Meerabai (73), and her daughter Vedanti (12). The sessions court had sentenced him to death after recording the testimonies of 29 witnesses. The accused also had other crimes registered against him. Additional

government pleader Sanjay Doifide, who argued the case on behalf of the prosecution, drew the court's attention to statements from witnesses, including the accused's daughter and sister's daughter, who miraculously survived the bloody attack.

## Karya, NGO create Kannada Q&A bot for TB

**Bengaluru:** Not-for-profit organisation Karnataka Health Promotion Trust (KHPT) has teamed up with Bengaluru-based data cooperative Karya to develop a voice-based tuberculosis Q&A bot in Kannada. Currently, the app is in beta. A patient can ask in Kannada, "What types of food are okay to eat with my TB medicines?". And get the response in the same language: "You don't have to worry too much about what you eat with your medication. Most things are okay, but it's good to eat lots of Vitamins A, C and E. You can get this by adding more fruits and vegetables to your diet! Here are some examples of what you can add: orange, mango, sweet pumpkin and carrots, guava,

amla, tomato, nuts and seeds." The app has a call to action button which connects them to a helpline when necessary. The Global TB (tuberculosis) Report 2022 showed that 21.4 lakh TB cases were notified in India in 2021, 18% higher than 2020. KHPT has built a digital Kannada repository in ten dialects including Mangaluru Kannada, Sirsi Kannada, Belagavi Kannada, Mandya Kannada and Ballari Kannada through an exhaustive data collection exercise. This includes data anonymised from those affected with TB, caregivers, social workers, frontline health-care workers and communities to improve health outcomes of TB patients. KHPT and Karya interviewed 1,600 people to

obtain 1,000 hours of data. They collected details on symptoms, treatment adherence, side effects, cost of treatment and benefits of the direct benefit transfer programme. "We used the automatic speech recognition (ASR) engine to capture human speech by identifying lexicon models and acoustic patterns of speech and converting it into text," said Bisujaksha Vedantham, lead for digital transformation in KHPT. Vedantham said the pilot is currently being run in 13 districts. Mallika Biddappa Tharakan, lead - knowledge management at KHPT, said 700-800 people across these districts are covered in the initial pilot programme.

## Big consumer divide: Mass market lags, premium end soars

**MUMBAI:** It's the great consumption divide in India: discretionary spending remains subdued in the mass markets, but the premium end seems to be faring well, an analysis of the commentary made by companies in their December quarter earnings calls showed. Bata India, for instance, said the mass market segment continues to be a "drag" on its overall growth even as its portfolio of premium brands have seen robust demand. Tanishq has seen a

slowdown in the sub 50,000 and 1,00,000 categories (in terms of transactions by new customers). And, in the quick service restaurant space, pricey gourmet pizzas seem to be the flavour of the season. "Lower-income households (under 3-5 lakh annually) have been hit the most. High inflation has reduced the ability to spend on discretionary items," said Rishav Jain, MD at consulting firm Alvarez & Marsal. 'Consumer sentiment still subdued'

However, discretionary spending of the top three-five crore households (earning over Rs 10-15 lakh annually) is less impacted. Categories such as international travel, premium alcohol, premium beauty and personal care, premium home improvement have performed relatively better. In macroeconomic terms, we call it the K-curve," Jain added. Brands with a good part of their consumers extending to lesser affluent households and deepening their pres-

ence to smaller cities have witnessed low or negative same-store sales growth in the past few quarters, analysts said. Companies are struggling to get consumers to transact more, with even the festive season having failed to fuel mass discretionary consumption. "Consumer sentiment remains subdued, despite the third quarter traditionally being a strong and festive quarter... reflecting a cautious approach to mass discretionary spending," said Ravi Jaipuria.

## Chocolates with betel instead of cocoa, but just as delicious

**Bengaluru:** How about chocolates made out of betel leaf instead of cocoa beans? If you are wondering how they'd taste, here is what researchers at Bengaluru-based Indian Institute of Horticulture Research (IIHR) said: "They are quite yummy... you won't miss the cocoa much." IIHR has been working on chocolate bars made out of betel leaf powder, betel leaf oil extract, sugar and preservatives. Prototype of the betel chocolate-making technology, along with the chocolates, were showcased at the National Horticulture Fair, which was inaugurated on IIHR cam-

pus in Hessarghatta Tuesday. Principal scientist Hima Bindu told TOI: "We wanted to make this crop a value-added product which benefits farmers and is also welcomed by urban residents. We want to highlight its medicinal properties too — antimicrobial, anti-inflammatory, antioxidant, etc." The idea of a betel leaf chocolate was born when betel vine growers in Ramanagara and surrounding areas, along with Andhra Pradesh and Tamil Nadu, faced problems during the Covid lockdown. "Betel vine is a heritage crop. We got appeals from farmers to come up with solutions as they did-

n't know how to sell the produce. While we were exploring options, the idea of betel-flavoured chocolates was conceived." Explaining the process, Bindu said the leaves are dried, converted into powder and laced with other ingredients. These chocolates are not only tasty but also healthy as they contain medicinal properties and protect consumers from oral bacteria," she said, adding: "This could be one of the reasons why our ancestors used to have betel leaf in the form of paan. The leaves contain compounds that can help fight various bacteria and fungi, making them useful.

## Ex-army man from Kalimpong 'tricked' into Russian Army

**KALIMPONG:** A 47-year-old man from Kalimpong allegedly tricked into a job in the Russian army has appealed to the government in a video message to rescue him before he is sent to fight Ukraine. Urjen Tamang, a resident of Chibo-Purbung in Kalimpong, speaking in Hindi in the 3-minute video, has blamed recruitment "agents" for duping him promising employment opportunities abroad as a security guard but recruited him in the Russian Army without his consent and that he is now compelled to fight the ongoing war against Ukraine. In the video, Tamang claimed that he was misled by agents regarding the job, as he was initially informed that the job was for a security guard position in Moscow, Russia. He



had reached Moscow on January 19 this year where he was received by a Gorkha/Nepali individual who subsequently accommodated him in a hotel for a night. The next day he was sent to a group of Tamil agents where he stayed for a night. He was then lodged in a hotel for about 10 days before being relocated to an army camp. "I was taken to the army camp for normal training for approximately 18 days. There, I was asked to sign a bond. Thereafter, I was transferred to a jungle camp where I received training on handling guns

and ammunition. It became evident that we were being prepared for frontline combat for the Ukraine War," Tamang had said in the video requesting the Government of India to help and rescue him. Speaking to TOI, his 44-year-old wife, Ambika Tamang said she has not spoken to her husband since March 22. In their last communication, Tamang had mentioned that the Russians were taking them somewhere further from the camp. "I don't know which camp, I don't know if he meant the jungle camp or the army camp. He cannot

even understand the language there and he is alone, I don't know what to do". Ambika said. When asked about how he found himself in that situation, Ambika said that her husband doesn't talk much and he didn't tell her about his Russian relocation in depth. "He told me that he wants to go abroad to work. He didn't say much. He had arranged everything and had come home for a few days during winter. He was running here and there even when he was home, arranging documents and other things," Ambika said, adding that he flew to Delhi and then to Russia by January 19. Tamang had retired from the Indian Army in 2018 as a havildar and had been working as a security guard in a private firm.

## Brief court on steps taken to control noise pollution: HC

**Hyderabad:** Asking TSPSB and govt officials to be honest in their communication, Telangana high court on Tuesday directed director general of police and Hyderabad police commissioner to brief the court within two days the steps they are taking to control noise and sound pollution at function halls in Hyderabad and all over the state. The court, while making S e c u n d e r a b a d Cantonment Board as a respondent to the case, issued notices to the state govt, municipal, police and pollution control officials. The case was posted to Thursday for further hearing. A bench of Chief Justice Alok Aradhe and Justice J Anil Kumar, which took up a letter written to them by an additional chief engineer.

**CAPSULES**

## Jefferies stops coverage on Paytm until regulatory issues ease

**Jefferies** stops coverage on Paytm until regulatory issues ease Jefferies Financial Group Inc. has become the first major foreign brokerage to drop coverage on Paytm-operator One 97 Communications Ltd. until the news flow around the struggling Indian fintech major "settles down". The investment bank has moved the stock to "not rated", weeks after lowering it to underperform after the Reserve Bank of India last month ordered Paytm Payments Bank to halt its key operations, citing non-compliance. Paytm has seen its shares lose more than half of their value since the banking regulator's surprise clampdown amid concerns over the continuity of its business model. "Without a banking license, Paytm's business model will now become similar to pure payment service providers," analysts Jayant Kharote and Prakhar Sharma wrote in a Feb. 18 note. "Paytm's focus will now move to ensuring customer retention, and we believe it will dip" into its 85 billion rupees (\$1 billion) cash reserves for spends on retaining users, the analysts said. The RBI last week granted Paytm an extension of deadline to wind down much of its business. The company has been given until March 15 to stop accepting new deposits, from Feb. 29 earlier. Meanwhile, the company has tied up with Axis Bank to replace affiliate Paytm Payments Bank to continue its merchant payments settlement operations, allowing it a shot to stay in business.

## MCM celebrates International Happiness Day with culmination of 2-day International Conference on Happiness

**Chandigarh :** Mehr Chand Mahajan DAV College for Women, Chandigarh, marked the celebration of International Happiness Day in a befitting manner with the culmination of 'The Soul in Symphony: Journey of Happiness through Self Actualization and Self Realization'- a two-day multidisciplinary international



conference. The valedictory of this enriching conference was graced by accomplished writer and poet Dr. Surjit Patar, Padma Shree Awardee, Dr. Jaspal Singh, Principal (Retd.), Dr. Sarabjit Sohal, Chairperson, Punjab Sahitya Academy, Dr. Gurdip Sharma, General Secretary, SD Pratinidhi Sabha, Dr. Vinod Sharma and Sh. Prem Vij. In his address interspersed with his poetic creations and verses from Gurbani, Dr. Patar impressed upon the therapeutic power of

poetry and showed how poetry teaches the way of living life. Terming true poetry as a sure shot way to self-realization, he asserted that the silences within a human come out as metaphors in the form of poetry, and poetry that is 'satyam', 'shivam', 'sundaram' brings true happiness. His soulful rendition of his poetry exemplified how creativity is a highly potent way to happiness. Categorizing happiness into two types, namely worldly happiness and spiritual happiness, Dr. Jaspal highlighted the fleeting nature of happiness and said

that complete surrender to the divine ensures happiness. Quoting extensively from Gurbani, Dr. Jaspal pointed out the similarities between the scientific and spiritual perspectives of soul as he talked about Darwin's Theory of Evolution and the Big Bang Theory, and how Gurbani makes a mention of these two. He concluded on the note that eternal happiness can be attained through God's name. Dr. Sohal said that self-realization occurs when we become conscious of our thoughts as these shape us into what we are.

## Vi Introduces eSIM for its Prepaid Customers in New Delhi

**GURUGRAM :** Vi, a leading telecom provider, today announced the launch of eSIM services for its prepaid customers in New Delhi. This marks a significant step forward in providing seamless, faster, and eco-friendly connectivity for millions of Indians. eSIM on a compatible smartphone or smartwatch device will enable greater convenience and flexibility for Vi prepaid customers. eSIM supports multiple profiles on a single device, so one can conveniently use a second sim card without removing primary sim. Most importantly,



eSIMs are a step towards sustainability and, overall, leads to faster connectivity and seamless adoption of new technologies. With this launch all Vi customers, both post-paid and prepaid, can now enjoy the eSIM feature on their handsets. Praveg Gupta-Cluster Business Head-Delhi and Rajasthan, Vodafone Idea Limited,

said "At Vi, we believe in introducing services and offerings that bring convenience and value for our customers. Embracing eSIM technology not only reflects our ongoing efforts to meet the evolving needs of our customers but also leverages advanced technologies towards a sustainable future."

## Dissent within Mahayuti over likelihood of ticket for Mandlik

**Kolhapur:** The likelihood of Kolhapur sitting MP Sanjay Mandlik's candidature has caused dissenting voices to emerge within the Mahayuti parties. This time, the local BJP functionaries are opposing Mandlik, who is expected to contest on a Shiv Sena ticket once

again. Sangram Kupekar from Gadhinglaj tehsil, who is a member of BJP state executive council, told his supporters to request local BJP leaders to call deputy chief minister Devendra Fadnis, and urge him not to give the ticket to Mandlik again.

Kupekar was with the Shiv Sena (UBT) before joining BJP last year. Speaking to his supporters Kupekar said, "All the local politicians should dial our state leaders. Request them not to let the sitting MP get a ticket once again."

## Embassy of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia Hosts An Evening of Love Walk for Humanity

**New Delhi:** The Embassy of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia hosted a heartwarming "Love Walk for Humanity" on the eve of Valentine's Day, February 14, 2024 curated and presented by Dr Sanjanaa Jon. The Love Walk for Humanity aimed to transcend the traditional celebration of Valentine's Day by fostering love and compassion for humanity. In a world grappling with conflicts, attacks, and hatred, the event aimed to build a collec-



tive love for humanity, extending beyond personal relationships to include care for the environment, animals, and all aspects of life. Distinguished guests in attendance included Raghav

Chandra, Managing Director, Audi Delhi South, H.E Demeke Atnafu Ambassador, Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of Ethiopia to India, H.E Fleming Raul Duarte

R a m o s Ambassador of Paraguay, H.E Jason Hall, Ambassador of Jamaica to India Ambassador of Venezuela Mrs Capaya Rodriguez Gonzalez, H.E KL Ganju, Honorary Consul of Comoros, Dimitrius, Greek Embassy, Hissain Omar Saiddon Deputy Chad Embassy, Gokul Ji, Nepal Embassy, Dr. Sanjanaa Jon, Social Activist, Fashion Entrepreneur, Philanthropist, Filmmaker, Philanthropist, Animal Lover.

## Tata AIA Life launches Tata AIA Rising India Fund

**KARNAL / HISAR:** Tata AIA Life Insurance (Tata AIA), one of India's leading life insurers, has launched the Tata AIA Rising India Fund, a Fund that opens a unique avenue for consumers to participate in India's growth story. The New Fund Offering (NFO) will remain open until March 31, 2024, with units being offered at an NAV of Rs. 10 per unit during the NFO period. The Rising India Fund will invest in key sectors and companies, that are driving the Atmanirbhar Bharat



**We will continue to strive towards generating the alpha in our fund performance**

story. These include infrastructure, manufacturing, banking, digital, defense, etc. The fund will invest in companies across market caps and would be sector agnostic, enabling the fund manager to harness diverse opportunities driving India's growth engine. On the

NFO launch, Harshad Patil, Executive Vice President, and Chief Investment Officer (CIO) of Tata AIA, said, "In the recent years, India has displayed its global influence by becoming the fastest growing major economy. Through this new fund, we would like to offer our consumers

an avenue to participate in and benefit from this incredible journey. Our consumers have always benefited from the long-term growth potential of the Indian equity market by investing in the ULIP funds that Tata AIA offers.

We will continue to strive towards generating the alpha in our fund performance. With a robust driven research process and a bottom-up stock selection approach, we are committed to providing lasting value and returns to our policyholders.

## Current high interest rates make this the right time to invest in a pension product

**Sonapat/Panipat:** Several market experts are of the view that interest rates in India will decline over the next few months from the current levels of approx. 7% giving customers an opportunity to now lock-in their investment in an annuity product at the current interest rate. The ICICI Pru Guaranteed Pension Plan Flexi stands out among annuity products as it helps customers build a retirement fund by making systematic investments. This ensures a sure and stable income after retirement, which is particularly beneficial in a market like India where interest rates are predicted to decline. Additionally, a variant of this plan offers a unique feature which provides a 100%

refund of all premiums paid, making it the life insurance industry's first such product. So how does investing in an annuity product now benefit customers? Pension or annuity products which are only offered by life insurance companies provide a guaranteed regular lifelong income. The rate of interest is locked-in at the time of purchase. Retirees prefer a steady income not affected by interest rate movements, annuity or pension products are the best option, which offer regular income enabling them to be financially independent. Since the interest rate is expected to fall going forward, customers buying an annuity product will be able to lock-in their

investment at the current interest rate. Let's take the example of Mr. Prajapati, who initially invested his savings of Rs. 1 crore in deposits at 8% interest, earning him Rs. 67,000 monthly, which supported a comfortable lifestyle. However, when he tried to renew his deposits after a few years the interest rate dropped to 6%, his monthly income reduced to Rs. 50,000, affecting his standard of living. Let's see what would have happened if Mr. Prajapati had invested his money in an annuity product. Assuming the interest rate of 7%, he will receive approx. Rs. 58,000 per month for the rest of his life. This will remain constant irrespective of the any movement in interest rates.

## Congress leader Pradeep speaks on freezing of Congress accounts and arrest of Kejriwal

**Kaithal:** Haryana Pradesh Congress Committee State Executive Member and former Chief Minister of Haryana Ch. Pradeep Kumar Chaudhary, a special supporter of Bhopendra Singh Hooda, reacted strongly to the freezing of Congress accounts by the BJP government, terming it completely illegal and undemocratic. Pradeep Kumar was meeting youth and dignitaries while promoting Congress policies in the area. While talking at the extension grain market located in the town, Congress state executive member Pradeep Kumar said that the code of conduct is in place in the entire country, but right in the midst of elections, such action against the country's largest opposition party



Congress shows political malice. Pradeep Chaudhary said that fair elections are necessary for a healthy democracy. For fair elections, every party should get a level playing field. It is necessary for all parties to get equal opportunities during elections. But the ruling BJP is continuously targeting the opposition with the intention of establishing a monopoly on the

country's politics. He alleged that hasty action is being taken against opposition leaders by independent investigative agencies. Opposition leaders are being sent to jail without proving their guilt. The action taken against Arvind Kejriwal, leader of India Alliance ally Aam Aadmi Party, appears to be part of this series. Congress leader Pradeep Kumar

said that all people should raise their voice unitedly against the opaqueness in the transaction of election donations, freezing of Congress accounts and targeting of opposition leaders, because democratic systems are being tampered with and constitutional institutions are being violated. Loss of credibility is harmful for the democracy of the country.

## Courts cannot direct states to implement particular schemes: SC

**NEW DELHI:** The scope of judicial review in examining policy matters of the government is very limited and the courts cannot direct the States to implement a particular policy or scheme on the grounds that a "better, fairer or wiser" option is available, the Supreme Court has said. The observation came while disposing of a PIL seeking formulation of a scheme on setting up of community kitchens to combat hunger and malnutrition. The top court refused to pass any direction in the matter observing that the National Food Security Act (NFSA) and other welfare schemes are being implemented by the Centre and states. A bench of Justices Bela M Trivedi and Pankaj Mithal said legality of the policy, and not the wisdom,

## Odisha: Congress MLA Suresh Routray's son Manmath joins BJD



**BHUBNESWAR:** Six-time Congress MLA Suresh Routray's son Manmath Routray has officially joined the ruling BJD in Odisha on Wednesday. Manmath, a former commercial pilot, made his entry into the BJD at the party headquarters in a procession accompanied by his supporters. He was inducted into the party by its MPs Manas Mangaraj and Sasmit Patra. "I will work for the ideology of my father and also Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik. Both leaders have one agenda in life and that is develop-

ment. I will work for the development of Odisha," he said. Suresh Routray had on Tuesday said that he wanted his son to contest elections as a Congress candidate. "I accept Manmath's decision of joining the BJD as he is mature enough to make decisions on his political career," said Routray, the MLA of Jatani.

Stating that he would not contest the ensuing polls due to his age, the 80-year-old leader, Suresh Routray declared that he would not run in the upcoming elections but would support the Congress candi-

date over his son, Manmath said he has his father's "blessings". "My father wanted me to join the Congress, but I decided to start my political journey under Naveen Patnaik's leadership," he said. Speculations suggest that the BJD might nominate Manmath for either the Bhubaneswar Lok Sabha seat or the Jatani assembly segment.

Manmath resigned as a pilot of Air India and returned to the state in January. He was accorded a grand welcome by his father and his supporters.

## UEA Offers Indian Students UK Higher Education Scholarships

**Delhi:** The University of East Anglia (UEA), one of the UK's top 25 universities, has launched a variety of scholarships for Indian students. Graduate and undergraduate applicants for 2024-2025 can apply for these scholarships, which cover tuition, housing, and living expenses. Indian postgraduate students studying Economics, Humanities, Engineering, Chemistry, and Law are eligible for the £4,000 UEA India Award. Following

**Global Undergraduate Excellence award: This distinguished award offers UEA undergraduate programmes to outstanding overseas students**

UEA's entrance requirements immediately qualifies candidates. Undergraduate Scholarship: UEA India High-achieving Indian undergradu-

ates at UEA can get a £4,000 tuition price discount in their first year. Global Undergraduate Excellence award: This distinguished award offers UEA undergraduate programmes to outstanding overseas students. Valued at £4,000 each year, exceptional applicants may receive £10,000. Gita and Sonny Mehta India Scholarship: UEA's Department of Literature, Drama, and Creative Writing offers this scholarship to bril-

liant Indian writers. Applicants must submit a separate £28,500 application. David Sainsbury Full MSc Scholarship: This scholarship covers the tuition cost (£31,500), maintenance grant, and £4,000 travel fees for Global Plant Health applicants. Scholarships are individual and cannot be combined. The UEA website lists deadlines. Framework is part of Norwich Research Park, Europe's.

## Research Internships from UGC Give Students Stipends, Insurance, and Academic Credits

**Delhi:** Stipends, insurance, and academic credits are awarded to fourth-year undergraduates who complete research internships. Participating enterprises must pay interns a set amount, according to UGC norms provided to higher education institutions. Nodal officers for research internships will negotiate

with corporations for the program at higher education institutions.

Higher education institutions may also seek group internships. The Four Year Undergraduate Programme's fourth year will include the research internship. Every student will have an internship supervisor to help them finish

their work on time. The UGC solicited stakeholder input on this guidelines draft. UGC chairperson M Jagdish Kumar said it implemented a credit framework at the undergraduate level following the National Education Policy 2020. He claimed the internship is mandatory to boost student employability.

Educational institutions will survey local market demand for research internships. Surveys and courses will inform internship projects. Educational institutions must publish internship projects and mentor information. Industry representatives should have been in career counseling, it said.

## Over 1,300 beggars got skills

**Delhi:** The economic survey says the Delhi government started skill development for homeless beggars last year. It claims 1,312 of Delhi's 16,000 homeless and pavement residents were taught between March and September 2023. The government said an interdepartmental committee would train city homeless before the 2023 G20 Summit. The lieutenant governor and chief secretary ordered.

## Within two months, Physics Wallah's 'Alakh AI' had 1.5 million users

**Delhi:** In less than two months, Physics Wallah's indigenously-built AI education package 'Alakh AI' has seen over 1.5 million users. It debuted the suite in late December 2023. Alakh AI offers AI Guru: Personalised Tutor, Sahayak: Smart Companion Powered by AI, and NCERT Pitara. At its flagship event, Vishwas Diwas, Physics Wallah launched innovative educational technolo-



gy projects. With the theme 'Padhai Ka Naya Andaaz (A New Era in Education)', the edtech platform featured innovative technologies to make learning more personalized, effective, and engaging.

"Padhai Ka Naya Andaaz" is more than a theme; it is our commitment to provide a learning experience that transcends traditional boundaries, making education more personalised,

effective, and engaging for every student," Physics Wallah CEO and Founder Alakh Pandey stated. This effort centers on Physics Wallah 2.0, a futuristic strategy that employs technology to improve student achievements. Physics Wallah has launched new technologies and offered up to 80% off most online courses. Its FY23 sales was Rs 798 crore, growing 3.4 times from the previous year.

## Translating legal books into local languages takes time

**Delhi:** The Bar Council of India (BCI) has formed a national committee to introduce legal education in 12 Indian languages in accordance with the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020. Experts say few books are available in many languages, but the process is informal and run by private players. BCI chairman Manan Kumar Mishra said the Ministry of Education is accelerating regional language legal education. In partnership with Bharatiya Bhasha Samiti, all textbooks and



help materials are being translated within six months to launch the new courses in 2023-24. The biggest issue for BCI is translating technical jargon into local languages. Local professors, lawyers, and translators are helping. "The idea is to help students from rural backgrounds and also make court

proceedings at the taluka and district level simpler for all," Mishra. Providing legal instruction in indigenous languages is laudable, but it would take years, says advocate Mohit Sharma. The first two are practice-oriented, while law is learned by reading as many case studies, materials, etc. as feasi-

ble. This would require extensive, time-consuming translation." Another concern is that lecturers recommend mostly foreign-authored literature. "This adds to the excessive translation workload before local language legal education," said Saket District Court Advocate Sumit Kumar and Karambir

## UGC Chairman Encourages Youth to Support 'Mera Pehla Vote Desh Ke Liye'

**"To encourage and motivate young, especially first-time voters, and invite people from all walks of life to disseminate the 'Mera Pehla Vote Desh Ke Liye' campaign"**

**Delhi:** University Grants Commission (UGC) Chairman M Jagadesh Kumar called on Wednesday

to encourage and motivate young, especially first-time voters, and invite people from all walks of life to disseminate the "Mera Pehla Vote Desh Ke Liye" campaign. Jagadesh stated, "UGC is organizing activities with the Ministry of Education (MOE) and the Election Commission of India (ECI) to motivate young, especially first-time voters, and emphasize the importance of voting for national welfare. HEIs worldwide should run the "Mera Pehla Vote Desh Ke Liye" campaign from February 28 to March 6, 2024. He said universities/colleges/HEIs will hold voter awareness programs in specific locations. Colleges/Institutions will use ECJ and

Ministry of Education videos, banners, selfie points, and voter commitments to drive the campaign. The voter's promise will be promoted to youth. The UGC Chairman said local youth achievements will be recognized and youth icons will be involved to boost its effect. Jagadesh wrote on X, "Let's join in the world's largest democratic proves. First-time voters should know their voting duties and make educated judgments. UGC urges all universities and students to join this electoral participation movement. From signing the pledge.

to organizing electoral awareness events, vote for a better future for our country"

## Canada Extends Foreign Ownership Ban to Address Housing Crisis

**"Migrants and international students are driving up housing demand, while growing costs slow construction"**

**Delhi:** Canada extended the foreign ownership ban for two years to address housing affordability problems. Migrants and international students are driving up housing demand, while growing costs slow construction. Deputy Prime Minister Chrystia Freeland said the government will use all available options to provide



affordable housing for Canadians, extending the prohibition until January 1, 2027. An influx of migrants and international students has aggravated Canada's housing affordability dilemma by increasing demand for homes amid rising costs and slow building. Deputy Prime Minister Chrystia Freeland extended the foreign ownership ban of Canadian homes until January 1, 2027, to demonstrate the government's commitment to this situa-

This extension keeps houses for Canadian families and prevents them from becoming speculative investments. To prevent residents from being priced out of local home markets, Canada is extending the foreign ownership ban.

Foreign ownership has raised housing affordability difficulties in many cities and towns.

The government took a proactive approach to protect Canadians' housing accessibility despite

rising challenges. Canada's cap on international student permits and ban on post-graduation work permits show a complex housing crisis response. Newcomers have stressed housing markets, pushing the government to take steps to manage population growth and lower housing costs. These initiatives coincide with worries about immigration's influence on health-care and education, underscore the need for comprehensive solutions.

## Computerized EWS lottery determines school entrance.

**Delhi:** The Delhi High Court ruled that schools must follow the Directorate of Education (DoE)'s computerized draw of lots for economically weaker section (EWS) admissions. Justice C Hari Shankar noted that the computerized draw of lots is based on the class strength communicated by the schools, and if a school does not have enough general students, it must apply to the DoE to reduce the number of EWS students. A pupil seeking admission to a private school's pre-primary class after a successful DoE computerized draw of lots petitioned the court. The school denied admission to the petitioner because the actual number of general category admissions was less than what was communicated to the DoE, and it had already admitted 25% of the actual number under the EWS category per legal mandate. "Once a school communicates the number of general category and EWS seats available with it for being filled in an ensuing academic year.

## Dr. Sushil Gupta will win in Kurukshetra with record breaking votes: Sultan Jadaula



**Kaithal:** Senior Congress leader and former Chief Parliamentary Secretary Sultan Singh Jadaula said that India Alliance candidate from Kurukshetra Lok Sabha constituency Dr. Sushil Gupta will win with the blessings of the public with record breaking votes in the Lok Sabha elections. Dr. Sushil Gupta has settled in the hearts of the public due to his friendly, clean and neat image.

People from every section of the society are flocking to the public

meetings of Dr. Sushil Gupta in every village of Pundri Assembly Constituency and the public is ready to show victory to Dr. Gupta by showing BJP the way out of power. Congress leader Sultan Jadaula is campaigning in various villages of the constituency by appealing to the villagers to vote in favor of the alliance candidate Dr. Sushil Gupta. Jadaula alleged that BJP had promised in the elections that it would put Rs 15 lakh each in the accounts of the poor, provide

employment to 2 crore people, M.S.P. Implement it, make gas cylinders cheaper, implement Swaminathan Commission report, reduce inflation, but after winning the elections, BJP went back on all the promises. Today, rising inflation, unemployment and corruption have made life difficult for people. He said that this time BJP has given the slogan of crossing 400, but looking at the situation in the country today, it is clear that this time BJP will fall face down.

## M Dharma claims long-awaited victory after a final round of 68 at Gurgaon Open 2024 powered

**Nuh :** M Dharma of Bengaluru claimed a long-awaited victory after he signed for a final round card of four-under 68 and finished an impressive five strokes ahead of the rest of the field at the INR 1 crore Gurgaon Open 2024 powered by Amrutanjan played at the Classic Golf & Country Club in Nuh, Haryana.

The 38-year-old Dharma (66-69-67-68) totaled 18-under 270 for the week to end his seven-year-long winless streak as he triumphed for the first time since 2017. Dharma's third professional win earned him a cheque worth INR 15 lakh that lifted him from 40th place to seventh position in the TATA Steel PGTI Ranking. Khalin Joshi (69-71-68-67), another Bengalurean, produced the day's joint lowest round of 67 to clinch tied second place at 13-under 275. The other two joint runners-up along with Khalin were Delhi's Saarthak Chhibber (71-70-64-70) who regis-



tered a career-best finish and Bengaluru's Yashas Chandra (69-69-69-68) who secured his third top-10 of the season.

M Dharma, who enjoyed a two-shot lead ahead of the last round, further built on his lead with birdies on the fifth, seventh, eighth and 12th where his good hitting form saw him land the ball within 10 feet. Sitting with a comfortable four-shot lead after 12 holes on a day characterized by less wind and calm conditions, Dharma dropped two bogeys on the last six holes but also capitalized on the par-5s 14th and 18th with birdies to close out the match with relative ease. Dharma said, "I've

had to wait a long time for this victory so I'm just soaking in the moment. My terrific ball-striking was the best aspect of my game this week. Even though I came close to winning a number of times over the last few years, I kept patience, didn't lose heart and stuck to my task by continuing to practice hard. This positive approach finally paid off for me

"Today I felt in control after making three birdies on the front-nine.

The big change in my game has been that I now don't get angry with myself or lose focus after dropping a bogey or two. I take it in my stride and look to come back stronger."

## Opt for Hybrid funds to help cut tax outgo - 10 mutual fund schemes to consider

**Wealth** managers recommend conservative investors to opt for hybrid schemes before the financial year closes to save on taxes in mutual fund investments. The government's removal of indexation benefits for pure debt schemes in Budget 2023-24 shifts focus to hybrid funds with 35%-65% equity allocation for tax efficiency.

**Tax planning guide:** Opt for Hybrid funds

to help cut tax outgo - 10 mutual fund schemes to consider **Tax benefits of hybrid funds:** As the financial year comes to an end, it's important to keep a tab on your tax outgo for FY 2023-24. Wealth managers advise conservative investors to consider hybrid schemes before the financial year ends to save on taxes in mutual fund investments, states an report. The government's removal of

indexation benefits for pure debt schemes in Budget 2023-24 makes hybrid funds with 35% to 65% equity allocation a viable option. Indexation, which adjusts inflation with the asset's cost, lowers tax liability. Certain schemes like balanced hybrid, multi-asset, and dynamic asset allocation still offer indexation benefits. Investors purchasing these schemes before March 31 and

holding them till April 1, 2027, will pay a 20% long-term capital gains tax with indexation benefits, gaining an extra year's advantage. Viral Bhatt, founder of Money Mantra, suggests that moving funds from bank deposits to such schemes can enhance post-tax returns for low-risk investors. Here's a look at mutual fund schemes where you can get indexation benefit

## Maharaja Agrasen Medical College, Agroha, Inaugurates Cardiac Cath Lab

**Hisar :** Maharaja Agrasen Medical College, Agroha, in partnership with RKM Cardiac Center, has inaugurated a state-of-the-art Cardiac Catheterization Lab through a Public-Private Partnership (PPP) mode. This cath lab started operations in March 2024 and has achieved early success by completing over 50 angioplasties and 100 cardiac procedures within just one month of its establishment.



Leading this center is Dr. Raghav Sharma, Chief Cardiologist of RKM Cardiac Center, Dr Raghav Sharma having RKM Hospital Family Heart Station,

Cardiac Cath lab and Angioplasty Centre. who specializes in complex angioplasties, rotablation, CTO cases, and IVUS/OCT/FFR-guided angioplasties, having completed over 40,000 heart-related procedures. Dr. Raghav Sharma will oversee the operations of this cardiac center every Tuesday and Friday, alongside Dr. Ashok Kumar, who brings extensive experience serving at a prominent hospital in Gurugram and has

also worked as the principal cardiac specialist in Fatehabad district. to prothe initiative by Maharaja Agrasen Medical College, Agroha, aims vide affordable and accessible cardiac care to all residents of Agroha and Hisar.

Through this collaboration, the institution strives to enhance the quality of healthcare services and effectively address the community's cardiovascular healthcare needs.

## HC seeks status of criminal cases filed in 2020 Delhi riots

**New Delhi:** Delhi High Court on sought status of criminal cases registered following riots that broke out in the national capital in Feb 2020. A bench of Justice Suresh Kumar Kait and Justice Manoj Jain asked police to furnish details after noting that over 750 FIRs were registered in the aftermath of vio-

lence and the investigation in 273 was still pending. Communal clashes had broken out in northeast Delhi on Feb 24, 2020, after violence between citizenship law supporters and protesters spiralled out of control leaving at least 53 people dead and around 700 injured.

The bench was hearing a public interest litigation by Jamiat Ulama-I-Hind seeking setting up of special investigation team (SIT) to hold an independent probe into the riots.

The petitioner's lawyer said that SIT should be set up at least in those cases where the stage of filing of chargesheet has not even come till now. "How much time will you take? That was 2020 and we have entered 2024...Total cases registered is 757; transferred to Crime Branch 62; number of cases chargesheeted

367; number of cases pending trial 250 and pending investigation is 273. Therefore, pending cases are 273 as on April 2. So many cases," said the bench, relying on the figures furnished. During the hearing, the court observed that the cases were registered in 2020 but several of them were still pending and asked the police the reason behind it. The petitioner had approached the high court in March 2020 seeking several reliefs, including preservation of the CCTV footage of the riots in northeast Delhi. The PIL claimed that FIRs have not been lodged against persons responsible for the riots and alleged that the police is not accepting the complaint in which the accused are named and they are insisting to give a complaint.

## Amarjeet Chhabra is playing an important role in strengthening BJP with humanitarian service

**Kaithal:** Haryana Rice Millers and Dealers Association State President and senior BJP leader Amarjeet Chhabra, full of values and spirit of philanthropy inherited from his parents and family, is popular in Kaithal district due to his friendly, social and religious image. He has settled in the hearts of the people and is always ready to selflessly serve the needy and suffering humanity. Along with filling one's own body donation form in the interest of humanity, we are also continuously raising awareness about body donation in the society. Along with this, State President Amarjeet Chhabra is working hard day and night at the grassroots level to strengthen the BJP in the



district and connect people of every section with the BJP organization. For this, former Haryana Chief Minister Manohar Lal and current Chief Minister Naib Singh Saini have also patted and congratulated him. While talking to journalists here, State President Amarjeet Chhabra said that BJP's resolution letter is the guarantee of the country's successful Prime Minister Narendra Modi. Prime Minister Modi does what he says.

Every class has been taken care of in the BJP's resolution letter and the poor, young farmers and women, all the sections have been taken care of in the party's resolution letter. The opposition parties want to spread fear and confusion in the country. Claiming to win 10 out of 10 Lok Sabha seats of Haryana state, Amarjeet Chhabra said that Modi wave is going on in the entire country and people have full faith in Modi's guarantee. BJP candidate Naveen Jindal is getting full support from the people of Kurukshetra Lok Sabha constituency and Jindal will win with record breaking votes. Congratulating Prime Minister Narendra Modi and the entire central leadership for issuing an

excellent manifesto, he said that the manifesto that has been issued is a sure guarantee, because the country knows that Modi's guarantee means a sure guarantee. Lakhs of youth have been given employment in the BJP government. Every class is happy in the BJP government. BJP leader Amarjeet Chhabra said that along with free ration and better health services, Modi has promised to make the country the world's third largest economy by 2029. After the resolution letter, it is certain that there will be only one guarantee in the country and that is Narendra Modi's guarantee of development. He said that BJP has resolved to promote the youth of the country.

## Sommet Education Foundation to develop the Indian Talent

**Chandigarh:** Indian School of Hospitality (ISH) and Sommet Education has announced a collaboration with Accor, a global leader in hospitality, to unveil the Indian Talent Development Initiative. The three-year alliance was officialised at the HICSA 2024, 19th Hotel Investment Conference in Bengaluru. This endeavour will be led by the Sommet Education Foundation, with Accor serving as its founding patron. The Indian Talent Development Initiative aims to invest in the skills of the Indian youth and deliver them opportunities for growth in the thriving hospitality industry. Under the initiative, Sommet Education Foundation and Accor will sponsor 16 deserving individuals from disadvantaged backgrounds to enrol in ISH's Intensive Culinary Arts Programme and Intensive Pastry and Bakery Programme.