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

As Lakshadweep interest peaks, experts appeal for responsible tourism

● The Lakshadweep, comprising 35 islands (of which 10 are inhabited) has witnessed four major El Nino



Lakshadweep
The coral reefs of India's Lakshadweep archipelago are in a precarious state due to climate change and natural disasters. Lakshadweep's stunning pictures mask the precarious state of its environment, particularly the coral reefs — making it important for the government to mandate and ensure responsible tourism practices and also continuously monitor the fragile ecosystem of the archipelago. Prime Minister Narendra Modi posted this picture on his X account of an aerial view of one of the

pristine beaches, in Lakshadweep on Thursday. (Narendra Modi/X) Prime Minister Narendra Modi posted this picture on his X account of an aerial view of one of the pristine beaches, in Lakshadweep on Thursday. (Narendra Modi/X) The Lakshadweep archipelago, comprising 35 islands (of which 10 are inhabited) has witnessed four major El Nino Southern Oscillation-related temperature anomalies in the past two decades (1998, 2010, 2016 and

2019), and three catastrophic cyclones in the last four years (Ockhi, Maha and Tauktae) resulting in widespread coral bleaching and mortality, the Lakshadweep Research Collective, a team of ecologists and marine biologists said in a letter to then-president Ram Nath Kovind in 2021, responding to the administration's publication of the draft Lakshadweep Development Authority Regulation of 2021 (LDAR). The group, 60 scientists and researchers, asked the President

to withdraw the draft LDAR 2021 which sought to develop the islands as a major tourist destination, underlining that the region's unique geography, ecology, and long human history placed natural limits on the kinds of development the archipelago can support. The draft has been put on hold since, but the constraints remain the same — something that needs to be kept in mind at a time when interest in Lakshadweep as a tourist destination is peaking.

UK's new visa rules will impact Indian students, workers

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



students at the post-graduate level and in non-research courses. The UK has been a favoured destination for Indian students seeking higher education abroad, shows Bureau of Immigration data. In 2022, around

55,000 Indian students were studying in the UK, according to Indian foreign ministry statistics. UK Home Office data showed that 1,42,848 sponsored study visas were issued to Indians in the year ending June 2023 — a 54 percent

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

Science centres to come up at 2 govt ..

NEW DELHI: Delhi government has decided to set up science centres at two state-run schools with exhibits and interactive models on virtual reality, immersive experience, augmented reality, holographic projections and astronomy apart from physics, chemistry, biology and math-

ematics. The science centres will be located in schools at Vasant Vihar and Karol Bagh. The aim of Directorate of Education (DoE) is to equip such educational facilities that provide an effective method to students to learn science by way of leveraging interactive display of models and exhibits

that demystify the modern world of technology and innovations," said an official. Officials said DoE will soon identify experienced agencies to design the rooms and open areas and the exhibits and interactive models at the science centres. While technical speci-

fications of all models and exhibits will be framed by the agency concerned, the final approval will have to come from the education department. The total cost of the project is likely to be about Rs 3 crore. The aim of Education (DoE) is to equip such educational facilities.

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

Delhi: The two major Grand Alliance (GA) partners in Bihar JD(U) and RJD are very close to finalising the number of Lok Sabha seats they will contest along with Congress and the Left parties in the coming elections. The assertion holds credence after Bihar deputy CM Tejashwi Yadav, visited the official residence of CM Nitish Kumar in the afternoon and had one-on-one discussions on the seat-sharing issue. It is believed that Tejashwi carried his father's message to Nitish on the issue. "While seat-sharing has almost been finalised and leaders keep talking over the phone, there are some glitches over a few seats which both RJD and JD(U) want to contest. This issue will also be sorted soon," said a senior RJD leader. He said as per a rough formula, RJD and JD(U) will contest 16 seats each while Congress will be given five seats and the Left three. One plus or minus is negotiable, he added. There are 40 Lok Sabha seats in Bihar. "Nitish is adamant on 17 seats as his JD(U) had contested the same number of seats in the 2019 LS elections and won 16 in partnership with BJP. If RJD and JD(U) fight 17 seats each, the Left may have to compromise and will be given one seat only," said a Grand Alliance.

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

DELHI. The BJP received a total of Rs 256.25 crore from Prudent Electoral Trust, while the BRS received Rs 90 crore and the YSRCP Rs 16 crore from the fund during the financial year that ended in March 2023.

INDIA reaches 'understanding' for 40 Maharashtra seats

NEW DELHI: The Congress also held a formal meeting with ally Samajwadi Party (SP) for Uttar Pradesh. The Indian National Developmental Inclusive Alliance (INDIA) on Tuesday arrived at a general understanding for nearly 40 Lok Sabha seats in Maharashtra but negotiations between the three partners in the state



will continue for the remaining eight seats, including the prestigious Mumbai (South) constituency, leaders aware of the development said. The Congress also held a

formal meeting with ally Samajwadi Party (SP) for Uttar Pradesh. In the meeting, some Congress leaders suggested that the SP should take the lead if it is decided that

Mayawati's Bahujan Samaj Party is brought on board later, said the leaders quoted above. The SP, however, is understood to have said it was not going to approach the party. The Congress's national alliance committee met the Shiv Sena (UBT), the Sharad Pawar faction of the Congress Party and the SP at the residence of panel chairman Mukul Wasnik.

CBSE mandates schools to file SQAA focusing on curriculum

Delhi: The CBSE schools have been directed to file the annual self-assessment under the School Quality Assessment and Assurance Framework (SQAAF) which was introduced in March 2023. This will be the first year for the schools to apply for the SQAA 2023-24



to evaluate the quality enhancement processes on parameters set under SQAAF. The schools

were expected to submit the SQAA report between April 1 and December 31, 2023, the deadline was extended to March 31, 2024, as only 40% of schools submitted the assessment report. Speaking to Education Times, Pragya Singh, director, school assess-

ment, CBSE, says, "To maintain the standard of education, the schools are being assessed on curriculum, pedagogy and assessment, which carries 40% weightage. Standards have been prepared in different areas of school functioning like curriculum, pedagogy, assessment.

Nepal sends five hundred kinds of souvenirs to Ayodhya

Delhi: The Mahantha of Janaki Temple of Janakpur, Ram Roshan Das handed over the exquisitely decorated souvenirs to the Shri Ram Janmabhoomi Tirtha Trust General Secretary Lord Ram, according to Ramayana, traveled to Ayodhya and married Sita

whose second name is Janaki. The souvenirs included gold-silver articles, various kinds of sweet dishes, clothes, fruits, cosmetics, furniture among others. Over 500 exquisitely gift baskets were sent to Ayodhya from Nepal's Janakpur city believed to be the birthplace of Sita ahead

Ram Mandir on January 22. These gifts and souvenirs were packed in small buckets crafted with bamboo and wrapped in colorful clothes. "Sita is our daughter and since Janakpur is her parental home, it is our duty to send her all necessary staff required for a new home.

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

Delhi: Schools began disclosing the final grades given to each candidate last Friday as part of the admissions process, which began on November 23. For 25 per cent of the seats at private schools allotted to the economically disadvantaged segment (EWS), the Directorate of Education (DoE) will supervise the centralised online admissions process. According to officials, schools will conduct



a draw of lots before determining the final list in situations where two or more students have similar scores. The deadline for the admissions process is

set for March 8. Private schools in Delhi are set to release the first list of candidates selected for admission to nursery, kindergarten.

Prefabricated toilets to be installed in Ayodhya

Delhi: The Ayodhya Development Authority (ADA) will oversee the implementation of the prefabricated toilets scheme, covering major ghats, just in time for the upcoming Makar Sankranti snan (holy dip) event on January 15. The move follows Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath's directive to develop Ayodhya as a religious tourism destination. The selection and operation of the 500 prefabricated toilets will involve an agency selection process, utilizing the quality cost-based selection method. Control rooms, supported by a 24/7 toll-free helpline, will be established for user support. Access to these toilets will be free for the public for at least 12 months, with the selected agency responsible for maintaining cleanliness.

The Law Commission's opinions on simultaneous polling

Delhi: The public is being asked for proposals "for making appropriate changes in existing legal administrative framework to enable simultaneous elections in the country" by the group on "One Nation, One Election," which is led by former President Ram Nath Kovind. The committee announced to the public that it will review the proposals submitted by January 15th. Individuals can contact sc-hlc@gov.in or publish their recommendations on the committee's website, onoe.gov.in. The group has met twice since forming in



September of last year. It also recently sent letters to political parties asking for their opinions and to communicate with them on a "mutually agreed date" over the suggestion to hold simultaneous elections for the Lok Sabha and assembly, as well as other polls. The parties, which comprised seven registered unrecognized parties, 33 state parties, and national parties, received a reminder from the committee later on.

Real estate businesses will pay a considerable 21% less than they would have otherwise



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

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

nesses will pay a considerable 21% less than they would have otherwise, thanks to the 24-month Covid zero period (March 2020–22) during which all interest and penalties are eliminated. At the conference, the developers of 52 city real estate projects were in attendance, and all eyes were on the updated estimate of dues following the UP government's adoption of multiple rec-

ommendations from the Amitabh Kant committee to resurrect delayed projects. All that realtors owe is the Noida Authority. In contrast to the pandemic waiver, however, this relief will be granted on a case-by-case basis following an examination of petitions. The developers will have a detailed discussion of the offer with Manoj Kumar Singh, the commissioner of industrial

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

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

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

'Desert Cyclone 2024' joint military exercise in Rajasthan

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



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

India and the United

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

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

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

Ram Nath Kovind is seeking public feedback on "One Nation, One Election"



The public is being asked for proposals "for making appropriate changes in existing legal administrative framework to enable simultaneous elections"

Delhi: The parties, which comprised seven registered unrecognized parties, 33 state parties, and national parties, received

a reminder from the committee later on. The Law Commission's opinions on simultaneous polling were also presented before the panel. On the matter, the law panel can be convened once more. The public is being asked for proposals "for making appropriate changes in existing legal administrative framework to enable simultaneous elections in the

country" by the group on "One Nation, One Election," which is led by former President Ram Nath Kovind. The committee announced to the public that it will review the proposals submitted by January 15th. Individuals can contact sc-hlc@gov.in or publish their recommendations on the committee's website, onoe.gov.in. The group has met twice since forming in September of last year. It also recently sent letters to political parties asking for their opinions and to communicate.

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

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

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

Exquisitely gift baskets were sent to Ayodhya from Nepal

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

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



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

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

500 prefabricated toilets to be installed in Ayodhya

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

the upcoming Makar Sankranti snan (holy dip) event on January 15. The move follows Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath's directive to develop Ayodhya as a religious tourism destination. The selection and operation of the 500 prefabricated toilets will involve an agency selection process, utilizing the quality cost-based selection method.

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

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

Delhi: As many as 57 leaders, including railway minister Ashwini Vaishnav, education minister Dharmendra Pradhan, environment minister Bhupender Yadav, health minister Mansukh Madaviya and former PM Manmohan Singh, will complete their tenures in April. Uttar Pradesh will have the highest number of vacancies at 10, followed by Maharashtra and Bihar (six each), Madhya Pradesh and West Bengal (five each), Karnataka and Gujarat (four each), Odisha, Telangana, Kerala and Andhra Pradesh (three each), Jharkhand and Rajasthan (two each),



and Uttarakhand, Himachal Pradesh, Haryana and Chhattisgarh (one each). Four nominated members are retiring in July. Sixty Rajya Sabha MPs from BJP, including nine Union ministers, are among the 68 completing their tenure this year and many of them are likely to contest Lok Sabha polls, giving a chance to others.

JD(U) and RJD are very close to finalising the number of Lok Sabha seats

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



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

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

Haryana state federation calls for two separate trials for National Championships

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

Dawood childhood house and three other properties owned by his family in Ratnagiri

NEW DELHI: Dawood Ibrahim's childhood house and three other properties owned by his family in Maharashtra's Ratnagiri went under the hammer.

The properties were registered under the name of Dawood Ibrahim's mother, Amina Bi. The auction was organised under the Safema act, officials said. The auction took place at the Aayakar Bhavan in south Mumbai. Only two of the four listed properties, which received four and three bidders, respectively, attracted successful bids, with a single person emerging as the successful bidder for both.

There were no bids for the other two properties.



An agricultural land with the reserve price of Rs 15,440 was auctioned for Rs 2.01 crore, the highest bid at the auction. A total of four bidders came for this

property. Another agricultural land fetched the highest bid of Rs 3.28 lakh against the reserve price of Rs 1,56,270, officials said. The name of the successful bidder

was not disclosed. According to a participant the winning bidder was a Delhi-based lawyer. Earlier in 2017 and in 2020, over 17 properties belonging to the

underworld don were auctioned off by Safema.

Dawood, a key accused in 1993 Mumbai Mumbake village before moving to Mumbai in 1983.

DCGI has also asked the drug controller cum licensing authorities

Delhi: "DCGI has also asked the drug controller cum licensing authorities to direct all blood centres to adhere to the revised guidelines for recovery of processing charges. When a person donates blood, it is not transfused into a patient directly. The donated blood, referred to as whole blood, is processed in centrifuges to separate it into transfusable components. This includes red cells, platelets and plasma. The exercise is referred to as blood processing and a cost is incurred on this. Centre released a

guideline in 2022 stating that private blood banks cannot charge more than Rs 1,550 for processing whole blood. Processing charges for packed red cells, fresh frozen plasma, and platelet concentrate all of which are required for transfusion in patients have been capped at Rs 1,550, Rs 400, Rs 400 respectively for private labs.

In government-run blood centres, the cost of processing whole blood and packed red cells have been capped at Rs 1,100. The Drugs Controller General of India banned all charges

on blood units, except supply and processing costs. DCGI has sent out a letter stating this to drug controller cum licensing authorities in all states and Union territories. Referring to the meeting of Drugs Consultative Committee held in September last year, DCGI wrote, "It was recommended with respect of agenda No. 18 of ATR point 3, for overcharging of blood, it was opined that blood is not for sale, it is only for supply and only processing cost may be charged by a blood centre.

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

NEW DELHI: Indian Meteorological Department (IMD) on said that, "cold day" to "severe cold day" conditions are likely to continue over some parts of Punjab, Haryana, Chandigarh, Delhi and Rajasthan for next two more days and significantly decrease thereafter. According to the latest forecast from the India Meteorological Department (IMD), dense to very dense fog is expected to persist over Northwest India for the next two days, gradually diminishing afterward. In their daily bulletin, the IMD reported minimum temperatures ranging from 6 to 10 degrees Celsius across significant regions. These areas include most parts of Punjab, Haryana, Chandigarh, Delhi, West Rajasthan, and select portions of East Rajasthan and West Uttar Pradesh. This information provides valuable insights into the prevailing weather conditions, aiding residents and authorities in making informed decisions

based on the forecasted temperatures. "These are above normal by 3-5°C over many parts of Madhya Pradesh, Bihar, Jharkhand, Maharashtra and some parts of Haryana, Delhi, Chhattisgarh, Odisha. These are below normal by 2-4 degree Celsius in some parts of West Rajasthan. Today, the lowest minimum temperature of 2.8 degree Celsius reported at Bikaner (West Rajasthan)," said the IMD. The IMD also forecasts the persistence of dense to very dense fog conditions during the night and morning in certain areas and isolated pockets across Punjab, Haryana, Chandigarh, and East Rajasthan until January 7. Additionally, dense fog is expected in isolated pockets for the following 24 hours after that period. "Dense to very dense fog conditions are very likely to prevail for a few hours in morning in isolated pockets over West Uttar Pradesh.

32% of posts at DPCC are vacant

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

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

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Subordinate Services Selection Board. A residents' forum named URJA had shared a report stating that the agency was virtually absent in one of the hotspots of Delhi for implementation of the summer action plan despite several anomalies on the ground. According to the report, in Wazirpur, a large number of people did not see anti-smog guns in their area, many large construction sites did not display the registration certificate in public domain and no teams were seen monitoring open burning. "Delhi has been suffering from pollution for the last so many years, but surprisingly, no concrete efforts are being taken to control the same. DPCC has been facing a staff crunch for a long time now and it is impacting pollution control measures across the city," claimed Amit Gupta, who filed the RTI query. Officials of DPCC did not respond despite several attempts.

180 Delhi villages at Raj Niwas to discuss the problems that they face

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



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

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

After 40 years, rhinos return to sanctuaries in Assam

GUWAHATI: After 40 years, rhinos have returned to stay at Laokhowa and Burachapori wildlife sanctuaries of greater Kaziranga, Assam, following a massive eviction through which 1,282 hectares of forest and government land were cleared of illegal settlements last year.

Until 1983, Laokhowa - Burachapori in Nagaon district had 45-50 rhinos. While poachers killed a few, the surviving rhinos left for Orang National Park on the north bank of the Brahmaputra following encroachment and human settlements over the last

several decades. Laokhowa-Burachapori Wildlife Sanctuary (WLS) and the first addition to Burachapori WLS - total 309.20sqkm - has witnessed the return of two rhinos to the landscape after almost a gap of 40 years and they have made the landscape their home since November last year, officials said. While many rhinos were killed, the degradation of grassland habitat amid anthropogenic pressure wiped out the animals from here. "Happy to share that after 40 years our iconic Rhinos have returned to Laokhowa and Burachapori.

Celebrated SAHBHAGITA DIWAS on 06th January at MCD, Community Hall

New Delhi Municipal Corporation of Delhi, Assessment & Collection Department, Najafgarh Zone, Sector-9, Dwarka, New Delhi celebrated SAHBHAGITA DIWAS on 06th January 2024 at MCD, Community Hall, Sector-23, Dwarka, New Delhi since the month of January-2024 is being celebrated as Sahbhagita Month.

Smt. Kamaljeet Sehrawat, Councilor Dwarka-B Ward was the Chief Guest. She appealed the residents of Dwarka to enroll their respective Group Housing Societies and Residents Welfare Associations on MCD



portal and take the advantage of the Scheme. Large number of Dwarka residents including representatives of various Group Housing Societies and Residents Welfare

Associations attended the meeting. Sh. Ajay Kumar, Joint Assessor & Collector, Najafgarh Zone, MCD briefed the attendees about salient features of Sahbhagita Scheme

including its launching and registration through online Portal <https://mcdonline.nic.in/citizen/dmc/web/citizen/info> and requested for Geo-tagging of their properties.

MCD finalising road network plans for three illegal colonies

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



One Delhi brings Delhi Metro and DTC closer together

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

RWA scheme for tax rebate to kick off

Delhi: Aimed at benefiting all registered RWAs and group housing societies, MCD is set to launch a redesigned Sahbhagita Scheme. The registration process for the scheme will continue until March 31. The benefits of the scheme include the allocation of 10% of the total property tax collected from an area towards incentive to RWAs or group housing societies, provided at least 90% of the residents are property tax compliant. Further, an additional 5% of the total property tax collected will be allocated towards wet waste disposal Incentive if the residents contribute to 100% waste segregation at source, 100% composting, recycling of dry waste, and handling over the remaining dry waste to authorised agencies, said an official. MCD has requested RWAs, group housing, and education organised across all 12 zones of MCD on the day of launch.

Editorial

2024: Global Election Fest

The greatest power in the world (the United States), the most-populous country (India), the biggest trading bloc (the European Union), the largest Muslim country (Indonesia), the largest Spanish-speaking country (Mexico) and the territory that is the most contentious one between the two superpowers of this century (Taiwan), all will hold elections in 2024. A total of more than 3.7 billion inhabitants around 70 countries – or almost half of the global population – will head to cast their votes in either presidential or legislative elections in the coming year.

In addition to these, other elections to watch out for include the potential presidential elections in Venezuela to those in Ukraine, from Indonesia to South Africa and Mexico, besides the United Kingdom – where a substantial change of course would not be expected regardless of the outcome. However, what might be the worrisome aspect of these elections is the litmus test which democracy will undergo. Surveys by different international think tanks and institutes indicate dissatisfaction with the present-day working of democratic institutions – a sentiment common throughout the nations of the west – meaning, the US and Europe – even though they see themselves as democracy's home ground.

The verdict of these polls may have profound consequences on the lives of people and on a world that is going through a turbulent time, with on-going brutal wars in Ukraine and Gaza, as the West seems falling into decline, with no clear alternative. On a geopolitical level, this electoral jamboree might have a major impact. Major disruptive results include the return of Donald Trump to the White House, a third consecutive victory in Taiwan by candidates that Beijing considers hostile, or a consolidation of the extreme right in the European Union, all of which could lead to far-reaching consequences. 2024 will be a historic election year, when democracy will undergo a major test with elections in approximately 70 countries including the United States, India, Mexico and South Africa. More than 3.7 billion voters will head to the polls, and their results may have global impact and ramifications. The current year will be the greatest year for democracy and democratic institutions worldwide. Yet the report said while 35 countries experienced declines in political rights and civil liberties, 34 saw overall gains. Autocrats were neither infallible nor unbeatable. The geopolitical and economic impacts of so many ballot box battles, occurring more or less at once, may combine to further destabilise an unstable world – for good or bad. The European continent will see elections in Austria, Belgium, Croatia and Finland., as well as for the European Parliament in June. A recent Ipsos opinion poll in western countries found a widespread belief that current democratic systems favour the rich and powerful and ignore everyone else. Freedom House, the independent, US-based watchdog concluded in its 2023 report that the Global Freedom Index declined for the 17th consecutive year. The principle of free speech, essential to a fully functioning democracy, is also under attack. Islamists from Venezuela to Chad.

The pervasive fear is that they may accelerate advances by nationalist-populist, anti-migrant, xenophobic parties of the far right, matching those seen recently in Italy, the Netherlands and Slovakia. The results will shape the new chamber, with possible new legislative majorities.

The increase in the BJP's votes in the 2019 Lok Sabha election was an unprecedented

The increase in the BJP's votes in the 2019 Lok Sabha election was an unprecedented phenomenon in India's political history. It is Modi alone who has been voted back to power with an even bigger mandate than achieved in the first term solely based on his popularity fuelled by his governance model. The BJP built on this popularity by expanding the organisation, which has rapidly expanded over the last 10 years. Not only have the numbers swelled, first under Amit Shah and then Jagatprakash Nadda, the

organisational structure has been made more cohesive and dynamic. Today, the BJP has a disciplined and structured organisation which has seamless communication up to the booth level.

This is a model unique to the BJP. Powered by the structural cohesion, the BJP campaigns 365 day., while the opposition does not see a schedule which is followed even from dawn to dusk. A sizeable segment, which was traditionally not considered BJP voters, started voting for the BJP as beneficiary voters

after 2014. This new vote-bank has caused a lot of damage to the politics of casteism and appeasement in the country. As a result of this reshaping of vote-bank, the impact of regional parties in national politics has shrunk. Any new government is born out of aspirations and hopes of change. The same hopes and aspirations facilitated the Modi government's surge to power in 2014. Over the next 10 years, Modi caressed these aspirations and hopes with a government that was responsive and delivered.

Being the visionary that he is, Modi has set India on the growth trajectory which is forward looking and envisions the roadmap for the country's transition from a developing nation to a developed one – the realisation of an Amrit Kaal. Today, people look at Modi not only with aspirations brimming in their eyes, but also trust that these aspirations will be met. In the last 10 years, the outlook from 'despair' to 'hope' has been Modi's biggest achievement. It is this feat which evokes trust in Modi.

Long-standing problems with sugar mill income taxes need to be solved



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

The government's decision will also compel the commercial sugar mills to pay the farmers a reasonable price. As a result, the government is taking sugarcane growers' interests into consideration when making this decision. 10, 000 crore through NCDC to improve Cooperative Sugar Mills A new initiative called 'Grant-in-Aid to NCDC for Strengthening of Cooperative Sugar Mills' has been introduced by the Ministry of Cooperation. The Government of India is contributing a grant of Rs. With this award, NCDC will be able to lend cooperative sugar mills up to ten thousand crore rupees. The cooperative sugar mills will have the option of using for working capital, ethanol

plant establishment, cogeneration plant establishment, or all three tasks. The NCDC has sanctioned more than Rs. 3010.57 crore for 24 cooperative sugar mills thus far. Additionally, when it comes to purchasing ethanol and establishing CROGEN power plants, the Central Government is favoring cooperative sugar mills. It appears that the Petroleum Ministry will put cooperative Choni mills on par with commercial companies for ethanol purchase under the ethanol blading program. Additionally, work is being done to create Kojan power stations powered by bagasse from sugarcane. These actions will boost cooperative sugar mills' revenue and company operations. The GST rate on molasses has been lowered from 28% to 5% in order to support cooperative sugar mills. By October 2023, the government plans to lower the 28 percent GST current-

ly applied to sugarcane to just 5%. Distilleries will have more liquidity as a result. Since their primary source of raw materials is molasses. The decreased GST will mean that they need less working capital. Higher margin distilleries are being developed by cooperative sugar mills without ethanol or distillery operations. You can sell it to make extra money. As a result, the RBI made a number of significant decisions to alleviate the challenges that cooperative banks were facing in conducting business. The Prime Minister and Cooperation Minister Amit Shah led the central government's attempt to address these issues.

Now, in order to grow their company, urban cooperative banks are allowed to create new branches. Like commercial banks, cooperative banks will likewise be allowed to pay off

debts in full. Urban cooperative banks have been given additional deadlines to meet the targets for priority sector lending (PSL). To facilitate regular communication between RBI and Urban Co-operative Banks, a nodal officer has been designated. The cooperative banks now have the authority to relocate their offices or build additional branches and ATMs while they are at home. Customers of urban cooperative banks are now able to access financial services. For both rural and urban cooperative banks, the maximum amount for personal house loans has been raised by more than twice. With the new criteria, rural cooperative banks can now diversify their business by lending to the residential housing and commercial real estate industries. As of now, cooperative banks are CGTMSE Member Lending Institutions (MLIs). As a result, the member cooperative banks can now receive risk coverage for loans of up to 85%. Additionally, cooperative banks will now offer loans to businesses in the cooperative sector without the need for collateral. It appears that long-standing problems with sugar mill income taxes are beginning to be resolved. In fact, payments made to

sugarcane farmers by cooperative sugar mills prior to the assessment year 2016-17 will be allowed to be claimed as expenditures, thanks to the Union Budget 2023-2024 and the efforts of Cooperation Minister Amit Shah and Prime Minister Narendra Modi, who are working to resolve income tax-related issues that have been hanging over for decades. In section 155 of the Income-tax Act, a new sub-section 19 (1) has been added in response to this. In July 2023, CBDT released Standard Operating Procedures related to this as well. The National Federation of Cooperative Sugar Factories Limited study states that cooperative sugar mills have benefited by Rs 46,524 crore as a result, resolving long-standing income tax difficulties. The state's farmers will benefit from this. Additionally, the government has decided that cooperative sugar mills will not be required to pay extra income taxes when they give farmers greater payments for their sugarcane, up to the State Advised Price or a fair and remunerative price. With the help of this provision, cooperative sugar mills will be able to offer their members a greater price for sugarcane.

The Americans seem stuck like a broken record on the Bangladesh

It collaborated in the assassination of Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman in 1975, allied with General Ziaur Rahman's Bangladesh Nationalist Party and has since openly colluded with organisations that openly target Hasina. During the tenure of former PM Khaleda Zia from 2001-2006, an arms haul that filled about 10 trucks, it is said the arms came from Pakistan. For some reason, the Americans seem stuck like a broken record on the Bangladesh question today. Democracy has become the leitmotif of Washington's relationship with Dhaka, even though the word and all its connotations were never allowed to come in the way of the invasion of Iraq in 2003 and sever-

al other interventions across the world. You would think that the Americans would know better, considering they are the oldest democracy in the world. For some reason, though, they are convinced that Hasina has been behaving like a tsar, a despot and an autocratic all rolled into one – a jumbo combo, which may even be true. t least since the Ukraine war – which has openly criticised the West for instigating an "Arab Spring" in Bangladesh. Meaning, according to Moscow, on the pretext of suing for democracy, Western nations are trying to unseat an elected government. Some of the charges are startling. It seems that a diplomat in the US mission in Dhaka, Matthew Bay, met Jamaat-e-

Islami leader Syed Abdullah Muhammad Taher on the US embassy premises, to discuss the political situation in Bangladesh just a couple of months before the polls.

You could argue that the Americans – or at least, the Democrat Party – seem particularly oblivious to the lessons of history. Back in 1971, the US sided with Pakistan against the creation of Bangladesh because Pakistan was giving the Americans access to the Chinese leadership, in the hope that Beijing would neutralise the powerful Soviets – and wilfully ignored. The fact that the Jamaat had sided with the Pakistan Army and against its own people.

NDA government, it seems that the BJP's agenda is to rule the country?

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

Not even the Jats consider him their leader. Respect is lacking when these folks won't let bent and sold Jats drink their own water to go to the government. However, the way a serious security breach in Parliament was revealed on the anniversary of the December 13 incident raised eyebrows. How did several youths bring suspicious and explosive stuff to the visitors' gallery? On December 19, 49 Lok Sabha MPs were suspended. Next day, December 20, two Lok Sabha MPs were suspended.

a-half years, 143 MPs have been suspended till December 20. The Modi government has suspended Rahul Gandhi, Azam Khan, Sharad Pawar, Raghav Chhadha, and Sanjay Singh from both Houses. They include Rahul Gandhi. Raghav Chhadha was reinstated by the Supreme Court. The 143 suspended MPs include 109 Lok Sabha and 34 Rajya Sabha members. Most of these MPs were suspended for disrupting Parliament security, while TMC MP Kalyan Banerjee was punished for imitating Rajya Sabha Chairman and Vice President Jagdeep Dhankhar. I don't think the administration should fear opposition questioning. The government fears what? In 3.5 decades, Parliament has laughed a lot at impersonation without hurting anyone. After the heated argument, commotion, and attack in Parliament, all MPs, ministers, the Prime Minister, Chairman, and other significant persons laughed, ate, and spoke over tea in the Central Hall in all prior governments. Journalists often told us that the hubbub in Parliament between parties and the opposition was political. In truth, both are one, which is how those images were printed, showing both presidents happy and smiling.

Regarding denigrating Jats and farm-

ers, I think Jats don't bend down, even if they break. Broken cot and twisted Jat are not respected in the Jat community; he is thought dead. Whether under Mughal or British authority, the Jat has been cut off, but it is not disposed of. However, the Jat community has never condoned the Modi government's attempts to disrespect them and encourage casteism. Only Jat society avoids hypocrisy and discrimination. Where was the soul of the Jats who are now beating their chest when the government openly insulted the international level sports women daughters of the Jat society to save one of its MPs trapped in a criminal case? Why didn't the president comment? Narendra Modi and Amit Shah have promised Jat reservation how many times? However, nothing has been given. No wonder it can't win in the Jat belt without giving Jat leaders tickets. The question is how much the BJP values Jat MPs and MLAs. Speaking of the Centre, two Jat ministers have been given responsibility of the ministries for a modest fee, yet they can't help society. They're not invited to special meetings. They say "tea is good" if someone comes for work, but they can't do it. They can't even swap clerks. How should the Jat community handle such leaders?

CAPSULES

Air India acquires first A350-900 aircraft through Gift City

Delhi: Air India said it has completed the acquisition of its first A350-900 aircraft by way of a finance lease transaction with HSBC through the GIFT City. This is also the first wide-body aircraft to be leased through the GIFT City, the country's first International Financial Services Centre (IFSC). In a release, the airline said the transaction was facilitated by its wholly-owned subsidiary AI Fleet Services Ltd (AIFS) and is also the first financing transaction from the orders for 470 aircraft that were made earlier this year. Tata Group-owned Air India, which has embarked on an ambitious transformation plan, expects the first A350-900 aircraft to arrive in India by the end of this year. According to the release, the airline has successfully acquired India's first Airbus A350-900 aircraft through a finance lease transaction with HSBC. "The steps taken by Air India by establishing a finance company for the purpose of aircraft leasing and financing at IFSC will go a long way in developing IFSC as a preferred destination for aircraft leasing and financing in India as well as globally," he added.

1 in 4 Indians struggled to port their mobile number in last 24 months:

Delhi: One out of four mobile connection subscribers in India who ported their number to a different mobile service provider in the last 24 months, struggled with the process. Only 47 per cent consumers rated the porting process as easy, a new report revealed on Friday. According to the online community platform LocalCircles, 11 per cent of consumers said the process was "very difficult", and 14 per cent said it was "quite difficult". About 23 per cent said it "wasn't difficult but wasn't easy either", 29 per cent mentioned it was "quite easy", and 18 per cent said porting was "very easy". The report received more than 23,000 responses from citizens residing across 311 districts of India. About 44 per cent of respondents were from tier 1 cities, 32 per cent were from tier 2 cities, and 24 per cent of respondents were from tier 3, 4 cities and rural districts. Interestingly, the report mentioned that the consumers' original mobile service operator created bottlenecks or was slow in processing when they tried to port their number to a new operator. "This indicates that there are improvements that are urgently needed on the process front.

L&T bags Rs 7,000 crore contract for underground road project

Delhi: Engineering and construction conglomerate Larsen & Toubro (L&T) on Friday said it has bagged a mega order worth over Rs 7,000 crore to design and construct an underground road tunnel. The project was won by heavy civil infrastructure business vertical of L&T Construction from Mumbai Metropolitan Region Development Authority (MMRDA). The contract is for design and construction of an underground road tunnel between Orange Gate, Eastern Free Way to Marine Drive coastal road in Mumbai. In a statement, the company said that the scope of work for the project comprises design and construction of twin road tunnels using tunnel boring machines (TBMs), connecting these tunnels to the existing elevated Eastern Freeway at Orange Gate near its southern terminal through transition ramps and to Marine Drive in Mumbai. The project is expected to be completed in 54 months. L&T is a USD 23-billion multinational firm which is engaged in engineering, procurement and construction projects, hi-tech manufacturing and services.

**Godrej Properties acquires 109-acre land parcel in Nagpur**

Delhi: Godrej Properties Ltd (GPL), one of India's leading real estate developers, announced that it has acquired a land parcel of around 109 acres in Nagpur. The development on this land will comprise primarily plotted residential units and will offer an estimated saleable area of 2.2 million square feet, the company said in a regulatory filing. The land parcel is strategically located near Samruddhi Mahamarg, (the expressway connecting Mumbai and Nagpur) and MIHAN SEZ, and offers good connectivity to the Mumbai - Kolkata highway and the Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar International Airport, Nagpur. The location offers a well-developed social and municipal infrastructure that includes hospitals, schools, retail, and entertainment venues.

Achieved 95% conviction rate, arrested 625 accused in '23: NIA

NEW DELHI: As many as 43 suspects were identified in cases related to vandalism on Indian high commissions in UK, US and Canada, thanks to the National Investigation Agency's (NIA) efforts at crowd-sourcing of information. Also, as part of its stepped up investigations into these cases in recent months, the agency carried out more than 50 raids and searches and examined 80 people in India for alleged links to the conspiracy behind the attacks. Sharing this update as part of an year-end review, the NIA said it has scored an overall conviction rate of 94.7%, arrested 625 accused and ensured the attachment



of 240 assets, including 156 bank accounts, all worth around Rs 56 crore, in 2023 as part of an intensified and focused fight against terrorists, gangsters, drug smugglers, human traffickers and other criminals working against national interests. The NIA said its scaled-up operations across India in 2023 saw a 28% rise in arrests from 490 in 2022 to 625 this year. While 65

accused were arrested this year in ISIS cases, 114 were arrested for jihadi terror cases, 45 in human trafficking cases, 28 for terrorist and organised criminal activity and 76 in Left-wing Extremism-related (LWE) cases. The agency registered 68 cases in 2023, including 18 related to jihadi terror across multiple states, three related to J&K, 12 related to LWE, seven involving terrorist and

organised crimes in Punjab, five cases concerning the north-east region and two related to fake Indian currency notes.

The number of people chargesheeted and convicted in NIA cases stood at 513 and 74 respectively, as against 459 and 79 in 2022. The NIA managed to track down and arrest 47 accused in 2023, 14 more than last year. Also, arrests were made upon deportation and extradition - those in the net include Amritpal Singh alias Ammy, Amrik Singh, Manpreet Singh alias Peeta and Mandeep Singh deported from the Philippines. Vikram Brar was arrested upon deportation from the UAE.

Government building strong base of domestic defence industrial ecosystem

GUWAHATI: Defence minister Rajnath Singh said keeping in mind the aspirations and capabilities of a New India, the country needs strategic autonomy and the government is developing a strong base of domestic defence industrial ecosystem to achieve that. He was speaking at the 21st convocation of Tezpur University (TU), a central varsity located near the Assam-Arunachal Pradesh bor-

der in northern Assam. Tezpur is an important Army base and the headquarters of the 4 Corps, which is responsible for the security of India's northern boundary with China in the Tawang sector. The defence minister asked TU to put forth before the Centre its request to set up a centre for defence studies, proposed to be named after Ahom general Lachit Borphukan, on its premises in Tezpur. The central university started

teaching soldiers, deployed along the LAC, to read and write Mandarin, including military terminologies, from 2023. Stating that the country's domestic defence production has touched Rs 1.08 lakh crore for the first time, Singh said India's defence sector is scaling new heights after the present government under PM Narendra Modi set a mammoth target to make India self-reliant or 'atma nirbhar'

in the defence sector. "We are the first such government, which has put restrictions on ourselves so far as import of arms and weapons is concerned," Singh said, reminding the gathering of the fifth positive indigenisation list under which 509 defence equipment will be produced in India by the people of the country. "In addition, we have also issued the fourth positive indigenisation list of defence PSUs.

Fast-shrinking Chor Bazaar fights to keep edge in e-age

MUMBAI: Almost everything that Haji Ebrahim Record Shop stocks has lost relevance. Or it is just worth a decorative piece in homes where "antiques" are still valued. Be it a gramophone, an old typewriter, rotary dial telephones or long-playing (LP) records, they all are past their prime. And it is essentially vintage quality of the merchandise available at Chor Bazaar - spanning a few dusty labyrinthine streets near Bhendi Bazaar in South Mumbai - that has

earned the neighbourhood its fame. However, some famous streets at Chor Bazaar are complete a misnomer. Like Mutton Street and Chimna Butcher Street. Though originally home to many qasais (butchers), there is no mutton shop or slaughterhouse here. "They still have a community hall there," says Haji Hasan Rahimo (74), pointing to a fading signboard of Bombay Bakar Qasab Jamaat Khana. If Mutton Street was

once the heart of Chor Bazaar, only half of it remains today, the other half getting gobbled up in the Saifee Burhani Upliftment Trust (SBUT), the massive redevelopment project of Bhendi Bazaar. A brainchild of the leader of the Dawoodi Bohras, the late Syedna M o h a m m e d Burhanuddin, to decongest Bhendi Bazaar and give cleaner, bigger and better homes to the residents, SBUT is transforming the locality. Though only half of Mutton Street.

HP, Google tie up to make affordable Chromebooks

Delhi: In a boost to the government's Make in India plans, HP and Google have joined hands to manufacture budget Chromebook in India with which they plan to target the affordable notebook segment for students and educational institutions, and government procurement. The Chromebook devices, which are likely to be retailed at around Rs 20,000 and even lower in case of bulk deals, will be manufactured at the Flex facility near Chennai, where HP has been producing a range of laptops and desktops since August 2020. The



production will begin from October 2 and will cater to demand for affordable PCs, mainly from the education sector. This is the first time that Google Chromebooks will be manufactured in India. HP is committed to advancing digital equity, and we have been driving many initiatives to enable digital education across India.

Manufacturing Chromebook laptops in India will allow Indian students to get easy access to affordable PCs. Google looks to get deeper into the Indian education system with budget notebooks. "At Google, we've been working closely with the local education ecosystem, supporting them in their transition to digital-first learning experiences through our products and teacher programmes. The local production of Chromebooks with HP marks an important step in our efforts to continue.

Unescorted 2-year-old adds to 'donkey flight' mystery

AHMEDABAD: Amidst the unfolding saga of the "donkey flight" grounded in France, one passenger stands out - a two-year-old boy from Gujarat who was onboard as an unaccompanied minor. However, he is now untraceable. Gujarat police have launched an investigation to locate the child, identify his parents or guardians, and unravel whether he was part of

a complex plan orchestrated by human smugglers, possibly facing a fate similar to the many children abandoned on the US-Canada border. A Gujarat police CID officer said: "We have been trying to locate the child and his parents or guardians as many families have left their homes in north Gujarat." The flight to Nicaragua, carrying 303 passengers, including 96 from Gujarat, was

grounded by French authorities in Vetry on December 21 over suspicions of human smuggling. A subsequent court order on December 24 released passengers, with only 276, including 72 from Gujarat, landing in Mumbai. Among the list of Indian passengers sent back, a copy of which possesses, is a child born on August 2, 2021.

Foreign airlines keen to set base at Noida airport

Delhi: With Delhi-NCR preparing for its second airport in 2024, airlines, including foreign carriers have shown strong interest to connect flights from Noida International Airport at Jewar to overseas destinations, said Christoph Schnellmann, chief executive officer, Noida International Airport. We have seen strong interest from domestic carriers and international carriers as well. We have been busy introducing our airport project to the international airline community and their interest has been very, very high," he added.

Increasing number of Indians want to fly, and more people from



abroad want to fly to and from India. Domestic and international carriers want to serve that demand, and are very interested in Noida as the second international airport serving Delhi-NCR. The response that we have been getting has been very encouraging," The airport's foundation was laid in November 2021, and it is well on its way to finish the first phase of construction by 2024 end. In the first

Startups see 72% funding fall in January-September

Delhi: Funding for Indian startups declined by as much as 72% year-on-year to \$6.6 billion in the January-September period, data sourced from market research platform Tracxn showed. In the year-ago period, companies had garnered investments worth \$23 billion. The decline underlined subdued investor appetite and their reluctance to fund ideas that fail to demonstrate business viability. A dearth in the availability of easy money has left several startups stranded - X rival Koo, for instance, is looking for a strategic partner with "distribution strength" for a wider reach. Cash-strapped quick commerce firm Dunzo, which has laid off several employees, is banking on investors for a bailout.

New look by year end: Manish Malhotra to design uniform for Air India crew & other staff new

Delhi: Designer Manish Malhotra will design new uniforms for over 10,000 Air India employees on the frontline, including cabin crew, cockpit crew, ground and security staff as part of the Tata Group airline's new global brand identity amid an ongoing modernisation programme. Air India says it expects to roll out the new uniforms by the end of this year. AI CEO & MD Campbell Wilson said: "Air India is delighted to be collaborating with Manish Malhotra to realise our shared ambition of representing the very best of a vibrant, bold, and progressive India on the world stage." Manish Malhotra said: "It's an absolute honour to collaborate with Air India, our national flying ambassadors. Reimagining their uniforms is the onset of a journey of joy and collaboration, and I am excited to embark on it. Our shared ideology is simple yet profound: to evolve without erasing, to modernise without forgetting. Together, we aim to intertwine tradition with the future, crafting uniforms where comfort meets authenticity, wrapped in timeless elegance."

Check B737 MAX for loose rudder nut, Boeing tells airlines

NEW DELHI: US aerospace major Boeing has asked operators of Boeing 737 MAX globally - which in India include Air India Express, SpiceJet and Akasa - to carry out safety checks on this aircraft after finding a loose bolt in one of the planes.

Shri Ram Lalla's consecration ceremony a 'National Festival', declare holiday in educational institutions on January 22

Ayodhya Chief Minister will start Cleanliness Campaign in Ayodhya on January 14. Chief Minister Yogi examines the preparations for the consecration ceremony, says, there should be no compromise on cleanliness and security. Resting place of VVIPs should be decided in advance, instructs CM. Deploy tourist guides to introduce the visiting devotees/tourists to the glory of the Navya, Divya and Bhavya Ayodhya. Get verification done of outsiders residing in Ayodhya? Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath has directed the declaration of a holiday in educational institutions across the state on January 22, considering the emotional significance of the consecration ceremony of the eagerly awaited new idol of Shri Ram Lalla in Ayodhya dharm.

Terming this special occasion as a 'national festival', the Chief Minister has said that liquor shops should be kept closed

Terming this special occasion as a 'national festival', the Chief Minister has said that liquor shops should be kept closed in the state on January 22. During his visit to Ayodhya on Tuesday, the Chief Minister held a meeting with the officials of Shri Ram Janmabhoomi Teerth Kshetra Trust following the darshan and worship of Shri Ram Lalla and Hanuman Garhi. Taking information about the Vedic rituals of Pran Pratistha starting after Makar Sankranti, the Chief Minister directed officials to extend all necessary cooperation

to the Teerth Kshetra Trust for the security and other arrangements for the ceremony. After this, the Commissioner took stock of the preparations from the local administration officials in the presence of local public representatives in the auditorium and gave necessary guidelines. The Chief Minister emphasized the need for enhanced hospitality for dignitaries attending the consecration ceremony in Ayodhya. The resting place of each VVIP should be selected in advance. Considering the weather, it is possible that some guests may arrive a day or two earlier. In such a situation, better arrangements should be made for their stay.

The Chief Minister emphasized the availability of hotels, dharamshalas, and home stay options in Ayodhya.

Chief Minister visits Municipal Corporation Jalkal Bhawan After darshan and worship at Sankatmochan Hanumangarhi

Chief Minister visits Municipal Corporation Jalkal Bhawan After darshan and worship at Sankatmochan Hanumangarhi and Ramlala, Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath visited Kubera Tila, where he offered prayers to Jatayu ji. Subsequently, the Chief Minister inspected the Municipal Corporation Water Works Building in Beniganj Amaniganj, observing ongoing development works. Takes stock of arrangements in Panchavati



Ashram Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath also took stock of arrangements at Panchavati Ashram. During the inspection, he directed that high standards of cleanliness be maintained, ensuring provision for hot water. He emphasized the importance of clean pits and blankets. The Chief Minister underscored the significance of respectful behavior from the staff deployed at the ashram towards the residents, urging them to work with a spirit of service.

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

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

Friday as part of the admissions process, which began on November 23. For 25 per cent of the seats at private schools allotted to the economically disadvantaged segment (EWS), the Department of Education (DoE) will supervise the centralised online admissions process. According to officials, schools will conduct a draw of lots before determining the final list in situations where two or more students have similar scores. The deadline for the admissions process is set for March 8.

CAPSULES

Implement 'Kumbh model of cleanliness', 'Ramnagari' must look the cleanest & most beautiful: CM Yogi



Ayodhya During his first visit of the year 2024 to Ayodhya on Tuesday, Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath directed officials to implement the 'Kumbh model of cleanliness' in Ayodhya and ensure that the 'Ramnagari' appears the cleanest and the most beautiful among cities. He specifically instructed, "Dust should not be visible on the roads, and toilets must be cleaned daily." The Chief Minister conducted a thorough inspection of the ongoing development projects and expressed concern for the well-being of the saints and sages. His visit also included a trip to Kubera Tila, where he paid homage to Jatayu. In relation to the ongoing development projects, the Chief Minister gave clear instructions to the concerned officials that it was imperative for them to execute the tasks maintaining high-quality.

CM congratulates cricketer Mohd. Shami and athlete Parul on receiving Arjuna Award

" 'National Sports Award-2023', honored the famous bowler Mohd. Shami, resident of Uttar Pradesh who made India proud"



Lucknow, January 9 Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath on Tuesday congratulated cricketer Mohammed Shami and athlete Parul Chaudhary for being honoured with the prestigious Arjuna Award. President Draupadi Murmu conferred the award on Mohd Shami and Parul Chaudhary, both residents of Uttar Pradesh, at a formal ceremony

in New Delhi. Congratulating cricketer Mohd. Shami, the Chief Minister posted on X, "President Draupadi Murmu Ji, under the 'National Sports Award-2023', honored the famous bowler Mohd. Shami, resident of Uttar Pradesh who made India proud globally

with his outstanding performance in the 'Cricket World Cup 2023'. Heartly congratulations to Shami on being honored with the prestigious 'Arjuna Award-2023'! Your remarkable achievement will inspire young players." Similarly, in his message to athlete Parul Chaudhary on receiving the award, CM Yogi wrote, "Heartfelt congratulations to Parul Chaudhary for being presented with the 'Arjuna Award-2023' by President Draupadi Murmu Ji at the 'National Sports Awards 2023' for her excellent performance in athletics, and enhancing the glory of Uttar Pradesh! You are our pride. Best wishes for your bright future.

Science centres to come up at 2 govt ..

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



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

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

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

85 IIT-Bombay students get Rs 1cr-plus

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



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

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

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

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

Yogi govt gears up to ensure hassle-free movement of devotees

Yogi govt gears up to ensure hassle-free movement of devotees in Ayodhya during Ramotsav. Training being provided to taxi and bus drivers for good behaviour alongside traffic etiquette. Restriction on consumption of intoxicants & chewing tobacco, no additional charges for passengers. Lucknow, January 9 In preparation for the consecration of Lord Rama in the grand Ram Temple built in Ayodhya, the Yogi government of Uttar Pradesh is gearing up to provide a comfortable, hassle-free ride for the devotees. Under the directives of Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath, the Transport Department has initiated a plan in which taxi and tourist bus vehicles will be reserved as needed during the various programs organised in Ayodhya. Directives have been issued to taxi and tourist bus drivers to ensure the necessary reservations under differ-



ent programs. Additionally, taxi and bus drivers have been instructed to practice safe driving, adhere to traffic rules, behave well with tourists, and wear uniforms mandatorily. Instructions have also been given to drivers to abstain from any form of intoxication and chewing tobacco during this time, along with emphasizing the regular cleanliness of the vehicles. The department has also issued warning against charging passengers

more than the specified fare under any circumstances. It is noteworthy that the atmosphere across the country has become charged with anticipation for the consecration ceremony of Lord Rama, scheduled to take place in Ayodhya on January 22. In light of this, the state government is making preparations to ensure smooth transportation arrangements while also prioritizing the convenience of the devotees during the program.

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

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

Aadhaar Not Mandatory For Admission To Private Schools In Delhi



Delhi: The Delhi High Court has said in an order that Aadhaar number for admission to private schools in the national capital under the Economically Weaker Section (EWS), Disadvantaged Group (DG), Children with Special Needs (CWSN) categories is not mandatory, refusing to interfere with an earlier order. The court said demanding Aadhaar card from students during admission would mean infringing their right to privacy. It was hearing an appeal filed by the Delhi government against the order by a single-judge bench. A bench headed by Chief Justice Satish Chandra Sharma dismissed the appeal stating that the

● **Aadhaar card did not violate a child's right to free and compulsory education, rather it served as a safeguard against fraudulent applications and admissions based on false identities**

requirement is prima facie in conflict with the constitutional provisions (under Article 21) pertaining to privacy. "The issue of obtaining sensitive personal details of a child, as observed in the K S Puttaswamy case (by the Supreme Court), would have the potential of infringing their right to privacy under Article 21 of the Constitution of

India," the bench said in an order passed last week. Presenting the Delhi government's view, standing counsel Santosh Kumar Tripathi argued that Aadhaar card serves a practical purpose and is aimed at keeping a check on duplicate applications. He added that the policy was initiated to modernize the admission process for the EWS and DG categories in entry-level classes in private, unaided, recognised schools. It was also argued that mandating an Aadhaar card did not violate a child's right to free and compulsory education, rather it served as a safeguard against fraudulent applications and admissions based on false identities

Over 1,400 Children Of Labourers To Benefit From Atal Awasiya Vidyalayas In UP

● **Each of the schools is being built on an area of 10-15 acres with classrooms, recreational areas**

Delhi: In a move to benefit the children of labourers, construction workers and those orphaned during the Covid-19 pandemic, Prime Minister Narendra Modi recently inaugurated 18 'Atal Residential Schools' in UP. The first academic session of the schools has already started with around 80 students which include 40 boys and 40 girls. These students were admitted in



Class 6 based on their merit in divisional-level entrance examination. The cost of setting the Atal Awasiya Vidyalayas is about 1,115 crore. The average cost of construction of one school is nearly 65 crore. The residential schools built under the programme have been designed to accommodate 1,000 students each. Chief Minister saying, "Around 1400 children who lost their parents and guardians in the Covid era are given

admission in 18 schools of the first phase of the Atal Awasiya Vidyalayas. The schools will focus on skill development of the students and promoting Sports. The curriculum at the school is based on the National Education Policy." Each of the schools is being built on an area of 10-15 acres with classrooms, playground, a mini auditorium, hostel complex, mess and residential quarters for staff members.

DoE launches CUET mock test modules

Delhi: To help students of Delhi government schools, the directorate of education (DoE) has prepared a full-fledged module of the Common University Entrance Test (CUET) mock examination. Students can log in from the department's website and practice. The IT branch has prepared the module with

academic support from the Core Academic Unit. Majority of the subjects taught in DOE schools are covered in it. The mock test also includes general test questions. It was inaugurated by DoE director Himanshu Gupta. It took us close to 3-4 months to finish the preparation of the papers. All the lat-

est formats as prescribed by the National Testing Agency (NTA) have been followed "In courses such as commerce and mathematics, where the number of questions has been reduced, the same format has been followed," said a senior teacher who was part of the module preparation.

After Abu Dhabi And Africa's Zanzibar, UK Now Invites IITs

● **"Government official recently expressed the country's interest in collaborating with India's premier institutes"**



Delhi: After Abu Dhabi and African country Zanzibar, the UK might become the next destination to have the offshore campus of the prestigious Indian Institutes of Technology (IIT). A top British government official recently expressed the country's interest in collaborating with India's premier institutes. Similarly, many universities from the UK are also looking forward to set-

ting up their branch campuses in India and are working out on formulating a final regulatory framework from the University Grants Commission (UGC). The official said that the UK was in a process of clearing the regulatory framework so that universities from their country are able to set up their campuses in India. Steve Smith, the International Education

Champion of the UK government, noted that discussions were ongoing between the governments and authorities of the two countries for setting up campuses of IITs in the UK. Two of India's top IITs have already entered into agreements with foreign countries for setting up their offshore campuses abroad. While IIT Madras is setting up its campus in Tanzania's Zanzibar, IIT Delhi is setting up an offshore campus in Abu Dhabi. The increase in India's industrial reputation and startup growth ecosystem has attracted the attention of many global universities. Many of our IIT graduates have gone on to top jobs and are leading the global markets.

US Issues Record 90,000 Visas To Indian Students

Delhi: The United States has issued a record number of visas to students from India in the months of June, July and August. The US Mission in India announced on X (formerly Twitter) that more than 90,000 visas were issued to the aspirants from India who filed applications to pursue their higher education from the US. In the post on X, the US Mission also said that almost one in four student visas worldwide was issued in India. Greeting the Indian students, the US Mission



said, "Congratulations and best wishes to all the students who have chosen the United States to make their higher education goals a reality." The numbers were released as the US

Mission was closing its applications for the session. A recent report highlighted an increase in the number of Indian students who are heading abroad for their higher education. The

rise is a result of eased application formalities, financial aid and scholarships offered by foreign universities to attract students from India. Earlier, France had also expressed its desire and goal to welcome around 30,000 students from India. The country is making efforts to increase the intake of Indian students by 2030. The aim will be achieved by fostering academic excellence, boosting cultural ties and enhancing long lasting friendship between the two countries.

All You Need To Know About Education In Dubai

Delhi: United Arab Emirates is one of the growing economies in the world. The city is expanding in various sectors which is consequently leading to increased job opportunities for students who graduate from there. Few reasons that are making Dubai a preferred destination to study abroad for Indian students. The sectors such as oil and gas, tourism, trade, finance, logistics, manufacturing, and renewable energy are growing at a high pace in Dubai. The recent boost in the economy has resulted in increased job opportunities. Students who wish to pursue their higher education from Dubai will also benefit from improved and increased jobs in these sectors. The country therefore has emerged as a major higher-education destination in recent years. The easy



application process and other flexible government policies further simplify international student recruitment in the United Arab Emirates. The government policy such as the new long-term 'golden visa' for outstanding students rewards top-performing international students. The students who benefit from this policy are given a 10-year residency permit which helps them to begin with their careers soon after graduating in the country. A major attraction of the students or working professionals in Dubai is the Tax free income that they earn.

The employees in the United Arab Emirates enjoy tax free salaries which acts as one of the key selling points for study in Dubai. Pursue affordable degree from UK, US universities Most of the international universities have set up their branches in Dubai. A student can pursue a degree from any recognised university of the US, UK or more by enrolling in its branch located in Dubai. These degrees will be cheaper as compared to studying the same in the respective Countries. Dubai has a smooth visa process wherein the institutions will help in the application process, thus making it much easier. No language problem Over 80% of the population in the country including the locals in Dubai speak in English. This makes it convenient for foreign students.

CBSE switch underway, but Jagan plans US system for Andhra govt schools

● **School bags, books, uniforms, shoes-socks, belts etc are provided free once a year under the Jagananna Vidya Kanuka scheme**

Divya Delhi: Nearly two and years after a road map was announced to introduce CBSE curriculum, the Jaganmohan Reddy government signed an agreement with International Baccalaureate (IB) to introduce the American education system in government schools. In February 2021, Jagan announced a road map to introduce CBSE curriculum in all the government schools, beginning with Classes 1 to 7 from 2021-22. But, only 1,096 high schools out of about 45,000 government schools had switched to CBSE till last year, with the rest continuing to follow the AP



State Council of Education Research and Training (SCERT) curriculum. The IB syllabus, in vogue in the American schools, will be introduced in the government schools at the foundation level initially and expanded to the higher classes gradually," Jagan said, after the agreement was signed "IB, which specialises in modern, innovative examination patterns, will vastly improve our students' worldly knowledge and help them grab good opportunities in global universities." The same day, the Andhra Pradesh Cabinet gave its approval for the MoU with IB. "The tangible outcome of this transformation is students who graduate from Class 10th, 12th will receive a joint certifi-

Ahead of the next year's state election, Jagan's present idea comes on the back of initiatives like Jagananna Ammavodi, which provides Rs 13,000 annually to poor mothers for sending their children to schools

cate of AP board and IB," the document says. While a top education official says the plan is to introduce IB for Class 1 from 2024-25, There are 62,530 schools, including private ones, which are recognised by the Andhra Pradesh government and follow the SCERT curriculum. They have to switch to IB once the state adopts the pattern. The over 320 schools — including private, Navodaya, Kendriya Vidyalayas that offer CBSE and ICSE courses — can continue to operate under these central boards. Ahead of the next year's state election, Jagan's present idea comes on the back of initiatives like Jagananna Ammavodi.

National School of Drama To Set Up New Campus In Tripura

Delhi: The Tripura government has allocated a plot of 2.36 acre to the National School of Drama (NSD) to set up a campus in the state. The campus will be set up at Ranirbazar in West Tripura district, and a memorandum of understanding (MoU) was signed regarding it, "Following NSD's request, the state government has provided a plot of 2.36 acre. A MoU was signed between the two sides on Tuesday," Subir Roy, NSD Agartala centre's programme coordinator. Now, we will do mutation of the land, before starting the work for setting up a full-fledged NSD Centre in Tripura. Presently, the NSD Centre is functioning from Nazrul Kalashetra," he said. At present, the Agartala centre is offering a one-year course in 'Theatre in Education', which will be extended to two years, he added.

This is a decrease of at least 9% compared to the previous year



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

● **Industry players, however, said the average realisation may not be the best indicator of how much producers are earning.**

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

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

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

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

According to the DRHP, retail individual bidders will be able to purchase up to 10% of the issue, while non-institutional investors would be able to purchase up to 15% of the offer. MobiKwik Systems Ltd., a unicorn once again filed documents for an initial share sale in an attempt to collect up to 700 crore, just over two years after shelving its IPO proposal. But compared to the 1,900 crore it had suggested when it filed the draft documents the amount to be generated through the Initial Public Offering

(IPO) is significantly less. Peak XV Partners-backed One MobiKwik Systems Ltd. is now attempting to raise 700 crore through a new share offering, as per the Draft Red Herring Prospectus (DRHP) submitted. A pre-IPO placement of up to 140 crore worth of the company's securities may be contemplated. Should such a placement be made, the next issue's size will be diminished. According to the draft papers, 250 crore of the proceeds from the new offer will go toward financing expansion in the finan-

CAPSULES

44,000 cr GST evasion exposed in fake invoice crackdown

Delhi: The Ministry disclosed the results of a special drive to identify non-existent/bogus registrations and issue fake invoices without any underlying supply of goods and services. Efforts will also be taken to identify the recipients to whom such non-existing taxpayers have passed the input tax credit and to identify the mastermind and act. Drive on May 16, 2023, to detect suspicious/fake GSTINs, conduct requisite verification, and take further remedial action to weed out fake billers from the GST ecosystem and safeguard government revenue. Based on detailed data analytics and risk parameters, GSTIN identified fraudulent GSTINs for State and Central Tax authorities in the drive. It was planned that details of such identified suspicious GSTINs, jurisdiction-wise, would be shared with the concerned State/Central Tax administration to initiate a verification drive and conduct necessary action. If, after detailed verification, it is found that the taxpayer is non-existent and fictitious, action will be initiated for suspension and cancellation of the taxpayer's registration. Further, the matter may be examined for blocking the input tax credit in the Electronic Credit Ledger.

The drive started in mid-May last year. "A total of 29,273 bogus firms involved in suspected ITC evasion of 44,015 crore have been detected. This has saved 4,646 crore of which 3,802 crore is by blocking ITC and 844 crore is by way of recovery. So far, 121 arrests have been made in the cases," a finance ministry statement said. All Central and State tax administrations launched a special All-India .

Ola Electric past the 40% market share

Ola Electric stormed The company offered discounts nearing 18% or 20,000 on the S1 X+ electric scooter, its cheapest offering in the market,

as it moved to grab a larger share of the e-two-wheeler market ahead of a potential public listing early this year. While there were negligible discounts on



the TVS iQube and Bajaj Chetak after the festive season, Hero's Vida V1 and Ather's 450 range of scooters had cash discounts of just

26,500, according to a report by Motilal Oswal.

past the 40% market share milestone in electric two-wheeler sales in December, driven by deep discounts and an extensive offering of aggressively priced e-scooters at multiple price points.

Mostly pertain to the initial implementation phase of GST

Delhi What has left India Inc worried is not just the multiplicity of notices, lack of uniform process, poor coordination between Centre and state tax authorities, and even understanding in the case of certain tax officials of the VAT (Value-Added Tax) era. Concerns around interpretation also exist as such notices mostly pertain to the initial implementation phase of GST, when there were several teething troubles and constant tweaks in policy decisions. After sector-specific probes, the scope of the notices over the past few months expanded to cover "underpayment" of tax, "incorrect avilment of input tax credit" and "reconciliations

● **But tax notices have been issued to companies across sectors from consumer durables**

differences" between returns filed and financials. This picked up pace before the end of three-year limitation period on September 30 for sending show cause notices for FY 2017-18, which was the first year of the GST regime. The limitation period begins after the filing of annual returns for the year to which the demand is related. Deadlines for filing annual returns had been

repeatedly extended during the initial GST phase and later during the COVID-19 pandemic, hence, the limitation period for 2017-18 was also extended till September 30 this year. Notices have also been sent for subsequent years from FY19 to FY22. Dabur India, LIC, Bajaj Allianz, ICICI Prudential, Star Health and Allied Insurance, Maruti Suzuki, Akzo Nobel, Sheela Foam and ICICI Lombard General Insurance are among companies that have received notices or tax demands. But tax notices have been issued to companies across sectors from consumer durables and smartphones to insurance and banking to online gaming and service providers.

Parts of Hindi heartland, northeast with ease and are comfort

Delhi: Over the years, behemoths like Amazon and Flipkart have added vernacular languages to their apps, set up fulfilment centres in smaller cities, partnered with kirana store owners and expanded their logistics services to attract more customers in these regions. In fact, in the last-concluded annual festive sales, Amazon, Flipkart and Meesho delivered in areas like Hayuliang in Arunachal Pradesh, Longewala and Chittorgarh in

Rajasthan. Categories like apparel, footwear and accessories like bags, watches, luggage etc, are popular in the northeast driven by seasons, trendy assortments, discounts... While apparel remains a popular category in the Hindi heartland, electronics, home decor & furnishings and jewellery also are quite popular," Karan Dhall, partner at Kearney. In terms of the consumer mix, women are expected to drive e-commerce

sales in the coming years. In fact, analysts estimate 65% of new internet users up to 2025 to be females, taking the total share of female users to 49% from the current 46%. "... digital commerce is expected to boom in everyday categories such as beauty & personal care, and accessories primarily driven by growth in the female consumer base," they added. Northeast and parts of the Hindi heartland are emerging as the new e-commerce hotspots, fuelling the next wave of growth for the estimated over \$80 billion industry, according to a recent study jointly conducted by consulting firm Kearney and Meesho. ing disposable incomes and consumer appetite for varied options and styles, cities like Varanasi, Allahabad, Gorakhpur, Noida, Jamshedpur and Ranchi are increasingly taking to online shopping. The trend is also in part being driven by the restricted.,

Saudi oil price cut to offer India room for better deals

Delhi: India and China have been lapping up the Russian barrels shunned by western buyers since the Ukraine war as sanctions and banking curbs on Moscow made payments difficult. Before the war, Russia accounted for less than 1% of India's oil imports. Today, it has

replaced Saudi Arabia as the second-biggest supplier on the back of hefty discounts. China and India account for 80% of Russian oil exports. Russia's gain has come at Saudi Arabia's expense as the discounts by Russian sellers, an opaque shipping system and elevated prices kept the oil flowing in spite of the G7 price cap of \$60 per barrel. But as an extended production cut equivalent to more than 2% of daily global supplies fails to excite oil prices, Riyadh may have found a window to muscle its way back. Saudi Aramco cut OSP (official selling price) of flagship Arab Light crude for Asia to their lowest in 27 months, a move that can work well for India if it prompts oil to slide further to boost prospects of cheaper fuel for consumers and keep the

energy import bill from bloating. Aramco slashed the OSP by \$2 per barrel for February shipments, marking the second consecutive reduction after the \$1.5 per barrel discount announced in December for January loading. The world's largest oil exporter also pruned prices for North America, North West Europe and the Mediterranean. The Saudi move is seen as a bid to protect market share amid onslaught from rival producers. Asia is important as it is considered the growth engine for global oil demand because of China and India the world's second and third-largest oil consumers, respectively. Saudi Arabia sees a serious competition from the US fracking boom as shale oil found its way into Asia around 2017.

Milestone- Single malts overtake global giants for 1st time

● **"In our estimate, the local brands grew by around 23% in 2023, while the imported ones grew at a more conservative 11%. This is a milestone"**

Delhi: "In our estimate, the local brands grew by around 23% in 2023, while the imported ones grew at a more conservative 11%. This is a milestone," Vinod Giri, director-general of CIABC, told T8OI. The numbers are seen as a milestone for homegrown players. "It's not everyday that such a feat is achieved. From being mocked around till just a decade-and-a-half back, Indian whisky makers have come a long way as they are now second to none in terms of quality and refinement," says Thrivikram Nikam, joint MD of Amrut Distilleries. India is a fast-growing market and very diverse, with the younger



audience experimenting. and gravitating towards niche products. Consumers want new stuff, and there is a lot of value in newness," says Kartik Mohindra, chief marketing officer at Pernod India. Paul P John, chairman of John Distilleries that makes its single malts in Goa, says the foreign brands are "panicking now" as Indian companies grow bigger. Move over Glenlivet, Macallan, Lagavulin and Talisker - it's now time for homegrown single malts, whose sales have for the first time overtaken those produced by the global giants. Early estimates prepared by industry body Confederation of Indian Alcoholic Beverage

The craze for 'Made in India' brands has prompted Diageo and Pernod Ricard which source their single malts mainly from Scotland, to join the party launching local brands. Diageo had introduced the Godawan in 2022, while Pernod recently launched its first Indian single malt Longitude 77. "Companies (CIABC) show that Indian single malt brands have cornered a share of around 53% of total sales in 2023. Of the total sales of around 6,75,000 cases (of nine litres each) of single malts in India last year, around 3,45,000 cases were retailed by Indian-origin makers, while the remaining 3,30,000 were by Scottish and others.

BYD overtakes Tesla Tas biggest EV marks

Tesla was still the top seller of EVs on an annual basis, delivering more than 1.8 million vehicles

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