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Sandeshkhali echoes in PM Modi's poll call for change in Bengal

● "Modi alleged that Bengal under Trinamool had 'plumbed the depths of corruption and crime'. 'They have created a new model of corruption'"



ARAMBAG: PM Modi launched BJP's Lok Sabha campaign in Bengal from Hooghly's Arambag on Friday, using Sandeshkhali as a metaphor for every alleged wrong in the state, and telling women and Muslims that CM Mamata Banerjee's Trinamool Congress was working against their interest.

Much of Modi's 29-minute speech focused on Sandeshkhali, which arrested TMC strongman Sheikh Shahjahan allegedly used to lord over, and was peppered with appeals to "Bengal's mothers, sisters and daughters" not to vote for TMC. "What Trinamool did to Sandeshkhali's sisters and daughters crossed

all limits. The mastermind was arrested after nearly two months," the PM said, referring to Shahjahan being traced early Thursday to a hideout near his troubled turf after being on the run for 55 days. "Someone must have been there to protect him," Modi told the crowd. "The country is sad and angry at what Trinamool has done in Sandeshkhali. Rammohun Roy, who did so much for women's empowerment, would have wept had he witnessed what

happened there...Will you forgive Trinamool? Won't you take revenge for what it has done?" "Sandeshkhali is just a trailer..." BJP's Dilip Ghosh trains guns at Mamata Banerjee Pointing to MLA Suvendu Adhikari and state BJP chief Sukanta Majumdar on the dais, the PM said that all this while, his party's Bengal leadership braved police's baton charge "to protect Sandeshkhali's women". "Police were forced to arrest the Sandeshkhali mastermind," he said. Modi

alleged that Bengal under Trinamool had "plumbed the depths of corruption and crime". "They have created a new model of corruption. From teachers' recruitment to municipality appointment, from land grab to chit funds to cattle-smuggling, Trinamool is deep in scams. The piles of cash seized from their leaders' homes have not been seen even in cinema." On Mamata accusing the Centre of holding back funds for development schemes, Modi said.

Corrupt will go to jail, says PM Modi referring to ED operations in Jharkhand

DHANBAD: Kicking off BJP's campaign in Jharkhand ahead of the Lok Sabha polls, Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Friday hit out at the Jharkhand Mukti Morcha (JMM)-led Mahagatbandhan govt for letting tribals down and equated the INDIA bloc with corruption. Shortly after inaugurating Hindustan Urvarak & Rasayan Limited (HURL) fertilizer plant and a slew of projects worth around Rs 26,000 crore, PM Modi while referring to the recent ED crackdown, said "Jo khayega, wo jail jayega. Yeh Modi ki guarantee hai (those who resort to corruption will land in jail. This is Modi's guarantee)." During his first visit after the new JMM-Congress-RJD govt in the state under Champai Soren, Modi said: "JMM means Jamkar Khao Party. They (JMM & Sorens) can't think beyond family and dynasty."



PM Modi lashed out at Congress too and said for JMM and Congress, tribals are just a vote bank and they have practically done nothing for their overall development. BJP govt at the Centre is working with the mission of "sabka vikas". "The guarantee of Modi starts from the point from where people start losing their hopes from other political parties," he added. Taking a dig at the deteriorating law-and-order situation in the state since alliance

govt came in power in 2019, Modi said: "...Rangdari (extortion), appeasement and infiltration has increased in the state because of the corrupt and dynastic govt". Modi said JMM and Congress were busy in filling their own coffers and have amassed huge "benami" assets. Indirectly referring to IT raids on Congress MP Dhiraj Sahu in February this year, Modi said, "I was surprised to see such piles of cash from a Jharkhand leader's

establishments that were unearthed. And when central agencies start investigating against corruption, they all gang up to evade summons and fair probe. But under BJP govt all such leaders will have to return what they have plundered (jo loota hai woh lautana padega)." He dubbed the state govt anti-development and accused it of trying to stall Central projects like free ration to poor and Jal Jeevan Mission.

Documentary on 2020-21 farmers stir barred from Bengaluru film fest

BENGALURU: 'Kisan Satyagraha', a documentary on the 2020-21 farmers' protests in Delhi, has been barred from screening at the ongoing 15th edition of Bangalore International Film Festival (BIFFes) following instructions from the Union information and broadcasting ministry. The documentary is directed by acclaimed Kannada director Kesari Haravoo. According to officials, the screening of the documentary was not permitted because of its sensitive subject.

"All the movies to be screened are cleared by the I&B ministry. However, the ministry did not give a green signal to 'Kisan Satyagraha'... The Central authorities have told us that the matter pictured in the documentary is a sensitive subject and hence it should be withheld from being screened at the film festival. Following the instructions, we have withdrawn the screening of 'Kisan Satyagraha'. Otherwise, it should have been scheduled for screening on Friday," said G Himanth Raju, registrar, Karnataka Chalanchithra Academy.

Two other documentaries - one on Israel and the other on Ukraine (20 days in Mariupol) - have also not been given permission to be screened. 'Kisan Satyagraha' captures the stir seeking repeal of three farm laws. It has been screened at four international film festivals. It won the best documentary award at the White Unicorn Film Festival.

Delhi police on alert after Bengaluru cafe blast

NEW DELHI: Delhi Police has gone on alert following the explosion of an improvised explosive device (IED) at a cafe in Bengaluru on Friday afternoon. Local police units have been asked to scale up deployment in markets with high footfall, besides increasing patrolling at vital installations, sources said.

Rs 39k crore deals to buy missiles, air defence guns inked

NEW DELHI: In a booster dose for the combat capabilities of the armed forces before the fiscal ends, the defence ministry on Friday inked five major capital acquisition contracts for missiles, air defence guns, aero-engines and radars worth Rs 39,125 crore. The biggest contract was for the Rs 19,519 crore procurement of over 220 BrahMos supersonic cruise

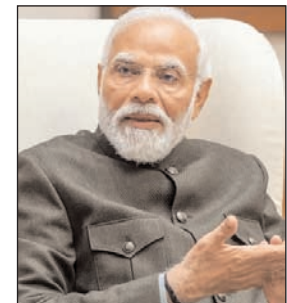


missiles, with an extended-range of 450-km for frontline warships, inked with Indo-Russian joint venture BrahMos Aerospace. Another Rs 988 crore contract was for the associated shipborne BrahMos vertical launch systems, an

official said. Two IAF contracts were inked with private sector giant L&T. The first was the Rs 7,669 crore deal for 61 "flights" of close-in weapon systems, derivatives of the L-70 air defence guns, for terminal air defence of select locations in the country. The second Rs 5,700 crore deal was for 12 high-power radars and augment the existing.

PM, ministry to meet on Sunday to brainstorm over 'Viksit Bharat' plan

NEW DELHI: Barely days before the Model Code of Conduct (MCC) kicks in, Prime Minister Narendra Modi and his Council of Ministers will on Sunday discuss the roadmap for India to emerge as a developed nation by 2047. This will be the last meeting of the full house of ministers of Modi's second term. Full-day meet will be attended by all secretaries as well. Sources said this will be the first presen-



tation of the full "Vision India@2047" before the Council of Ministers. On earlier occasions, some presentations related to sectors such as and welfare were made. "This will be a key

meeting considering that in the interim Budget, the FM announced that govt will present a detailed roadmap for Viksit Bharat' in the full budget in July. Since the PM is confident of his govt returning, we expect that he will speak his mind on the bigger plan. We will have at least two months to incorporate the suggestions and inputs that would emerge from the brainstorming.

Hours later: Injured remain in shock, complain of hearing loss

NEW DELHI: In the hours that followed the blast at The Rameshwaram Cafe on Kundalahalli Road in Whitefield on Friday afternoon, the nine injured people — three employees and six customers — were in a state of a daze as they underwent treatment at various hospitals. Some of them complained of loss of hearing which only left them more perplexed at the turn of events. Divya, the managing director and co-founder of the Cafe, told media persons that the priority was to tend to the injured. Doctors later confirmed they were all out of danger. Two of the injured appeared to be in a state of shock



hours after the incident, still trying to comprehend what had hit them. An injured man, who identified himself as an employee, from Assam, said he did not know how the blast happened. "I was at the cafe from 6am and it happened when I was working. I do not know how it took place," he told media persons, unable to hear properly with his left ear. An injured customer said he lived nearby and was at the cafe for lunch. "There was no sign of anything going wrong, nothing suspicious. It just happened," he said. Brookfield Hospital medical director Dr Pradeep Kumar told media persons that three people injured in the cafe blast were admitted to his health facility and were still in shock. "One woman has sustained 40% burns

and will need a simple surgery. None is in a life-threatening condition. The other two have minor injuries. Of them, one woman has had splinter injuries. She had cuts on the right side of the body which seems to have faced the blast. A CT scan will be performed. All three have ear drum damage," he added. "It seems like a low-intensity blast based on the injuries we have seen. Because a severe blast would cause the skull to open, bone injuries and rip off the skin. As a physician, I will not be able to tell anything about the chemicals used. But the clothes of those injured are kept aside.

GDP numbers propels Sensex and Nifty to new peaks

MUMBAI: India's GDP growth rate for Oct-Dec, which at 8.4% beat estimates by every economist and analyst by wide margins, enthused Dalal Street investors and the subsequent buying pushed Sensex and Nifty to new all-time peaks on Friday. The day's rally also lifted India's market capitalisation to almost at Rs 400 lakh crore or \$4.8 trillion, also a new all-time high. A slightly easing inflation number in US also added to the positive sentiment, market players said. Robust economic data also added to optimism, with manufacturing PMI scaling a five-month high and GST collections rising 12.5% year-on-year to reach Rs 1.68 lakh crore in Feb.

25 detonators recovered from Rajouri village



JAMMU: Security forces recovered at least 25 detonators during an operation at a village in J&K's Rajouri district after two minor schoolgirls suffered 'explosion' injuries, officials said on Friday. "Tasveer Kouser (10) and Saima Kouser (15), both from Doongi-Brahmana in Rajouri, suffered injuries in their hands after they fiddled with some unidentified substance in Ghai village while returning from school on Tuesday afternoon," an official

said. "The duo was rushed to Govt Medical College & Associated Hospital (GMC&AH)-Rajouri, where they are under treatment in the orthopaedic ward. , and are to be operated upon because of the severe damage to their fingers," the official added. Initially, it was believed that the girls had suffered burn injuries due to bursting of crackers but later the nature of injuries pointed towards low-intensity explosion, he said. Following the incident,

Kamlesh Soni takes charge as Meja Urja Nigam's CEO



Meja: Kamlesh Soni has taken the charge as Chief Executive Officer of Meja Urja Nigam (P) Limited. With a bedazzling career traversing 36 years at NTPC Limited, Shri Kamlesh Soni brings an incalculable wealth of experience to lead MUNPL.

Prior to joining Meja Urja Nigam, he has efficiently served as the Head of Projects at Unchahar and Gadawara, showcasing his expertise in the energy sector.

Notably, his appointment as CEO, MUNPL marks his affable

home coming as he had previously held the position of GM (O&M). On the educational front, Shri Kamlesh Soni completed his B.E. in Electrical Engineering and MBA degree from the prestigious The Energy & Resources Institute - TERI School of Advanced Studies. He is also a Certified Energy Auditor licensed by the Bureau of Energy Efficiency (BEE). During his previous stints, he has served various NTPC projects including NTPC Mumbai

Headquarters, Badarpur, Ramagundam, Jhajjar, Sipat, and Gadawara in various roles. After assuming the charge, he held a comprehensive Project review meeting with senior executives. In his address to senior executives, Shri Kamlesh Soni said I am fortunate to lead the company which is poised to become the UP's largest power generator in the near future. With everyone's collaborative efforts and dedication, we shall take MUNPL to greater heights.

Joshi, Yediyurappa, and Guv meet victims of Cafe blast

BENGALURU: Union Minister Pralhad Joshi, along with Karnataka Governor Thaawarchand Gehlot and BJP leader Vijayendra Yediyurappa, met the victims of the Rameshwaram Cafe explosion at Vaidehi Hospital on Saturday.

The leaders visited the hospital to extend their support to the victims of the explosion that injured 10 people on Friday.

The teachers interacted with the injured, who were undergoing treatment.

They asked assured support for the victims of the unfortunate incident.

On Friday evening, Joshi also visited the blast site, where he spoke to the media and expressed concern over the incident, condemning the explosion.

Notably, the Union Minister also demanded the transfer of the investigation to the NIA.

Taking a dig at the Siddaramaiah-led government in the state, Joshi said that if the state government had taken the Vidhana Soudha pro-Pakistan sloganeering incident seriously earlier, then the blast incident could have been averted.

Meanwhile, a team of the



National Investigation Agency visited the explosion site in the Whitefield area.

Karnataka Deputy Chief Minister DK Shivakumar and State Home Minister Dr G Parameshwara, along with DGP Alok Mohan, also visited the Bengaluru explosion site for inspection.

Karnataka Deputy Chief Minister DK Shivakumar said on Friday that the Rameshwaram cafe blast is being investigated from all angles, adding that 7-8 teams

have been formed to probe the incident.

Shivakumar also stated that a youth came and kept a small bag, which exploded after an hour. He has also asked the people of Bengaluru not to worry.

"It was a low-intensity blast. A youth came and kept a small bag, which exploded after an hour. About 10 people received injuries. 7-8 teams have been formed to probe the incident. We are looking from all angles. I ask every

Bangalorean not to worry," he said.

A security guard working at the Rameshwaram Cafe who was present at the time of the incident said, "I was standing outside the cafe. Many customers had come to the hotel. Suddenly, there was a loud sound, and a fire broke out, causing injuries to the customers inside the hotel."

The Rameshwaram Cafe is one of the popular hangouts and is usually extremely crowded during lunch hours.

'Ye Aliyaaa'! How mining boom changed Ballari's family dynamics

BALLARI: If somebody loudly calls "Ye Aliyaaa!" (hey, son-in-law) in this colony of 1,500 families in Ballari district's mining taluk Sandur, at least 20 heads will swiftly respond with affable nod. And all those 20 will be sons-in-law who have made this speck of a village their home. This rings true in any lane of Krishnanagar, 3km from Sandur. Nearly 40% families here have daughter and



son-in-law staying with them in an extended family superstructure, a culture triggered by the mining boom and built over the past 25 years. Krishnanagar, with a population of 5,000, is agriculturally unfit

and arid and farmers with small landholdings were forced to dig the earth deeper to strike manganese and iron ore at the turn of the century. Once this small-scale mining business started gaining traction, farmers

started making requests to prospective son-in-law to live in the same village by offering them a portion of their residential land to build their own house.

Thus, a new colony started to emerge right outside Krishnanagar and extended families living in a cluster are now a common feature. Every second house has its daughter's family living alongside.

3 held in connection with fabrication of Aadhaar card at Delhi airport

NEW DELHI: Three individuals were apprehended by the Indira Gandhi International Airport Police Station on Thursday for using counterfeit Aadhaar cards to unlawfully gain access to the airport premises. The detainees have been identified as Md Istiyak, Sameer Khan, and Munish, all of whom reside in the national capital.

As per the authorities, the fabrication of the Aadhaar Card was allegedly conducted to facilitate unauthorized entry into the airport premises and to utilize



the forged identity to board a flight that was originally reserved under someone else's name. The incident was brought to light on Wednesday when a traveler, initially claiming to be Danish Abbas,

attempted to enter the terminal building at IGI Airport, Delhi, for a flight to Goa. Upon examination, his Aadhaar card, displayed on his mobile device, raised suspicion, according to officials.

"The ID shown on his phone raised some suspicion. After making the query, he revealed his actual name as Md. Istiyak and disclosed that he had edited his name in the Aadhaar card as Danish Abbas as per the name in the booked ticket," the police said. Md Istiyak, the suspect, was interrogated and apprehended during the investigation. "He admitted to fabricating the Aadhaar Card with the help of his nephew, Sameer Khan, and a friend, Munish, who runs a cyber cafe," the police said.

Light rain in Delhi-NCR; more showers expected today, says IMD



active western disturbance which will impact the region. From Friday, March 1 night onwards

NEW DELHI: Delhi and surrounding areas experienced light rain

Saturday morning, attributed to a western disturbance, resulting in a decrease in minimum temperatures. The IMD forecasted rain for both Friday and Saturday. "There is an active western disturbance which will impact the region. From Friday, March 1 night onwards there would be light weather activity with very light rain. However, major

impact is likely on Mar 2 with possibility of thunderstorm, strong winds and light to moderate rain. From Mar 3 onwards, the effect will wear off. The minimum temperature may thus rise due to cloudiness, however it will significantly drop around March 2," Kuldeep Srivastava, senior scientist at India Meteorological Department (IMD), said.

These customers hadn't bargained for a blood-splattered platter for lunch

BENGALURU: It was expected to be a packed afternoon with working professionals in the tech corridor chilling out, munching on crispy dosas and fluffy idlis. Security guard Ramesh positioned himself near the entrance of The Rameshwaram Cafe, prepared to handle the rush. But as he turned around to attend to a customer, there was an earshattering blast behind him.

"I couldn't hear anything for the next 15 minutes," Ramesh told. "The impact was such that I felt like pulling my ears apart to end the deafening sound ringing inside me. I looked around to see the place filled with thick smoke. While some people ran around, some were on the floor. I couldn't come to terms with what was happening." Ramesh was one of the four security guards on



duty at The Rameshwaram Cafe, located in Brookefield area near the busy ITPL Road. There were around 250 customers at the restaurant when the explosion took place around 12.55pm on Friday. When he learnt it was actually a bomb blast, Ramesh folded his hands and thanked God for keeping him and others alive. Shabareesh, an employee of a local firm, said, "We colleagues had planned a luncheon and were waiting outside the hotel for some others

to arrive. Suddenly, all of us were rattled by a huge sound. Soon, the entire restaurant area was covered in thick black smoke and people were struggling to come out. A few of us rushed towards the restaurant and saw small pieces of the granite flooring had chipped off and hit the glass panel and wall. The smoke made things suffocating. A few customers and staff were spotted with bleeding injuries and we rushed them to a hospital by arranging autos." Amrut, an

admin officer at a software firm nearby, said he had a miraculous escape. "I was waiting for my friends at the hotel after ordering dosa. I had just walked away from the counter when a loud noise was heard from near the coffee/tea counter and thick smoke covered the entire area. Eatables and utensils were strewn all around. We could see a small crater at the place from where the blast sound was heard. The partition wall of glass between the juice, coffee counter and the main entrance was reduced to pieces." Sachin Lamani, another guard at the hotel, said, "Despite the thick smoke, a few of us managed to enter the hotel and saw 4-5 injured people, including our staffers. A woman was bleeding from the right shoulder where glass pieces had pierced her.

Is your child having cough & respiratory issues? Blame dusty

NAGPUR: As viral infections sweep across the region leading to long queues outside paediatricians' clinics, city's dusty roads and vehicle pollution are aggravating the problem. Senior paediatrician Dr Satish Deopujari said that having cough and respiratory issues is the new reality. "We all have to learn to live with the fact that till the day you die, you will have cough. The dusty roads, construction work, smoke, pollution etc all contribute to major respiratory problems," said Dr Deopujari. Dr Rajiv Mohta, a paediatrician said, "It's not the root cause, but yes it is making problems worse for those with respiratory issues. Already the viral infections are causing cough among kids which last for quite some time, and such environmental issues make matters worse." Dr Sanjay Deshmukh, paediatrician said "The respiratory tract takes a beating when such harmful thing.

ED summons TMC MP Dev and ex-MP Mahua to Delhi next week

" He has said that he is with TMC under the leadership of Mamata Banerjee and would contest this Lok Sabha election from the same Ghatal seat"



KOLKATA/NEW DELHI: The ED summoned two Trinamool leaders - actor-MP Dev and former MP Mahua Moitra - to its Delhi offices next week. The former has been called on Feb 21 in connection with the agency's ongoing probe into the cattle-smuggling racket; the latter on Feb 19 over some

foreign currency transactions. The summons to the actor-politician, who represents the Ghatal Lok Sabha constituency in West Midnapore, barely three days after he announced that he was not quitting poli-

tics, has prompted cries from the TMC of this being another example of Centre's "vendetta politics". Sources said Moitra has sent a lawyer's letter to the agency, questioning whether it could probe the charges against her.

The timing of the summons to Dev prompted a sharp response from TMC. On Monday, at a meeting in Hooghly's Arambag - where party chief and CM Mamata Banerjee was present - Dev said he was staying back in politics, adding

that it was for Banerjee that he was doing so. Before Monday, there was buzz in political circles that Dev was unwilling to continue as MP.

Trinamool spokesperson Kunal Ghosh said the timing of the ED summons to Ghatal MP Dev - just three days after he expressed his admiration for Mamata Banerjee, while saying he would stay on in politics - was an example of BJP's vendetta politics. "Dev didn't bow his head in spite of intimidation.

He has said that he is with TMC under the leadership of Mamata Banerjee and would contest this Lok Sabha election from the same Ghatal seat.

Delhi LG Saxena demotes V-C pharma varsity



Delhi: Prof Ramesh K Goyal was implicated by a recruitment probe committee. Lieutenant governor VK Saxena removed the vice chancellor of Delhi Pharmaceutical Sciences and Research University (DPSRU) for an alleged 2017-2019 recruitment scam, officials said. A top LG secretary officer, who requested anonymity, claimed Saxena, the university's ex-officio chancellor, ordered the immediate expulsion of

professor Ramesh K Goyal as DPSRU vice-chancellor. An inquiry committee investigated the university's 2017-2019 teaching faculty recruiting procedure under Goyal and determined his involvement in the scheme. Saxena wrote in the file: "In exercise of powers under Clause 4(2) of the Delhi Pharmaceutical Sciences and Research University- Delhi Statutes, 2017, read with section 16 of the

General Clauses Act, 1897, I order that Prof. Ramesh K. Goyal, Vice Chancellor, DPSRU, be removed from the post without delay for large-scale irregularities and illegalities in the university's recruitment process. Based on various accusations, the inquiry committee found severe inconsistencies, illegalities, and partiality in DPSRU's 2017-2019 teaching faculty recruitment. Saxena noted the findings.

In April, AIIMS will allocate hostels online

Delhi: Starting on April 1, the All India Institute of Medical Sciences (AIIMS) will implement an online method for assigning hostel accommodations, eliminating the need for students and resident physicians to physically visit the hostel area to submit an application. Through an online dashboard, students will be able to monitor the availability and allocation status of hostel accommodations thanks to this method. They will be able to apply online for the same position as well. This method will be used by the hostel sec-



tor to distribute accommodations in a timely and transparent manner. Officials state that the online system will select the applicant's preferred room number at random from among the available rooms to which the applicant is entitled. The idea to implement an online system came about as a result of requests from resident physicians and

students to Prof. M. Srinivas, the director of AIIMS, to make the procedure more transparent so that they wouldn't have to physically visit the hostel area. Dr. Vinay Kumar, president of the resident doctors' association, praised the decision and said that the administration had finally complied with a long-standing request.

Revival of over 1,000 Delhi vice-principals obtains L-G approval



Delhi: Lieutenant-Governor Vinai Kumar Saxena revived 1,027 vice-principal positions in the Delhi Directorate of Education (DoE) for 2014-15 to 2019. Raj Niwas officials said the vice-principal positions needed to be revived since there was a severe shortage of people, which is crucial for school operations. An official told the L-G that 873 of these 1,027 posts were filled on ad hoc basis via promotion up to September 2018 (prior to amendment of Recruitment Rules dated October 15, 2018), while 154 posts for 2018-19 were vacant.

According to the person, the DoE is already short on vice-principals and fills these positions ad hoc

or contractually. Lieutenant-Governor Vinai Kumar Saxena revived 1,027 vice-principal positions in the Delhi Directorate of Education (DoE) for 2014-15 to 2019. Raj Niwas officials said the vice-principal positions needed to be revived since there was a severe shortage of people, which is crucial for school operations. An official told the L-G that 873 of these 1,027 posts were filled on ad hoc basis via promotion up to September 2018 (prior to amendment of Recruitment Rules dated October 15, 2018), while 154 posts for 2018-19 were vacant. According to the person, the DoE is already short on vice-principals and fills these positions ad hoc or contractually.

Punjabi Bagh overpass delayed again

Delhi: The second deadline for the Punjabi Bagh flyover between ESI Hospital and Bharat Darshan Park will be extended by the Public Works Department. Flyover construction was due to finish last month. In October last year, PWD minister Atishi visited the site and ordered officials to finish the flyover by January, but the deadline has



passed and officials say it will be ready next month. The Ring Road near Punjabi Bagh is heavily used by

Haryana Rohtak Road traffic. A PWD rep added, "We are trying to complete the main flyover, which is one section of the corridor redevelopment, by next month." The corridor renovation proposal includes a 1.6km flyover between ESI Hospital and Bharat Darshan Park and another near Moti Nagar to Punjabi Bagh West.

MCD purchases eight vacuum cleaners for the markets in Delhi

Delhi: For real-time job monitoring, the machines have built-in cameras and GPS placed on them. Eight electric vacuum cleaning and suction equipment that the Municipal Corporation of Delhi (MCD) purchased will be placed in the city's main markets to be cleaned twice a day. The additional apartments will be removed from the Civic Center, according to informed officials. They also mentioned that the devices include built-in cameras and GPS for real-time work monitoring. These vacuum-based devices,

according to Mayor Shelly Oberoi, remove trash without creating dust. Because these devices run on batteries and don't produce noise pollution, they are environmentally beneficial. They may be used to gather 800-1000 liters of rubbish every day, or four to five cycles of waste disposal per day, the speaker continued. According to an MCD official, the pilot project will begin. "Electric machines will clean all of Delhi's markets if the pilot project is successful." The markets in which these devices will be used have not yet been named.

High fluoride in Delhi groundwater

Delhi: When eaten, high water fluoride levels can cause dental fluorosis, bone damage, and skeletal fluorosis. The Delhi administration informed the National Green Tribunal (NGT) that it found elevated fluoride levels in 58 tubewells around the city after sampling 1,256 tubewells. The government informed the tribunal that it had ordered the Delhi Jal Board (DJB) to either stop supplying water from these tubewells or use it for all other purposes except drinking. On December 12, 2023, NGT instructed states and Union territories to analyze groundwater samples for arsenic and fluoride. The tribunal took suo-motu notice of



a November 30 Hindustan (Hindustan Times' sister magazine) item captioned "Arsenic found in groundwater in 25 States, fluoride in 27 States: Govt".

The Delhi government tested 1,256 tubewells for arsenic and fluoride. Arsenic was not identified in 122 samples in north, central, and west Delhi, thus testing kits will be needed in other areas. It reported that 58 of 1,256 fluoride tests

exceeded the 1mg/litre limit. With 34 samples, Bawana had the most, followed by Nangloi with 11. All DJB tubewells deliver fresh water to portions of the city. DJB usually mixes them with Yamuna and other freshwater to boost the city's water supply.

Over 1.5mg/l may discolor enamel, whereas over 5mg/l may induce bone stiffness and injury. Badarpur, Rajouri Garden, Govindpuri,

Bawana, Narela, Dichaon Kalan, Nangloi, Paprawat, Jharoda, Kakrola, Khera Khurd, Shakarpur, and Fateh Nagar had excessive fluoride levels. Water fluoride can cause dental fluorosis, bone deterioration, and skeletal fluorosis.

It can cause arthritis and tendon and ligament calcification. "The Delhi Jal Board's quality wing collects random groundwater samples from tubewells to test fluoride and arsenic. The statement stated that DJB has taken safeguards and instructed its maintenance divisions to either halt supply from such tubewells or use the water for all other purposes except drinking.

Provide anti-rabies serum at PHCs

Delhi: Anti-rabies serum must be made available at all sub-health centers, primary health centers, and urban primary health centers, per a directive from the Center to all states and Union territories. According to the National Health Mission, financial assistance would be given for the purchase of the anti-rabies serum. When there is a possibility of serious exposure following contact with a rabid animal or when an animal is thought to be rabid, anti-rabies serum is given. In severe cases, it should be administered in addition to the rabies vaccine. According to experts, the majority of primary health centers do not carry it, and each dose costs more over Rs 10,000. In a recent letter to the states and UTs, an NHM official said that rabies is a fatal viral infection and that having access to medications for both prevention and treatment is crucial to preventing the financial and psychological toll that rabies has on families.

PPP approach for Badli industrial maintenance

Delhi: The Delhi government will hire a concessionaire to redevelop and maintain Badli industrial area on a public-private partnership. Officials said the Delhi State Industrial and Infrastructure Development Corporation (DSIIDC), which maintains 29 planned industrial pockets in the capital, is hiring a consultant to identify critical gaps and suggest the best maintenance model. In recent months, Delhi government-owned DSIIDC has redeveloped and maintained regulated industrial sites. An independent engineer will maintain civic amenities and infrastructure in the Bawana industrial area, while facility management companies will maintain the Patparganj and Okhla phase-III industrial pockets and a consultant will identify critical infrastructure gaps in the Bhorganh industrial area in the capital. For Badli, officials stated a transaction advisor will examine industrial infrastructure facilities and identify crucial infrastructure gaps by knowing industrialists' unit requirements. An official said the consultant or transaction adviser will suggest an effective, economically viable, technically practicable, and implementable plan for Badli industrial area growth and management based on the assessment and understanding. A complete infrastructure assessment and development plan for vital infrastructure such as internal roads, storm water drains, parking, horticulture, and lamps would be done by the consultant, officials added. The consultant must also recommend and assist DSIIDC in implementing a Badli maintenance model. The Badli industrial area, 78 acres in northwest Delhi, includes three phases, with phase 3 opening in 1998. Officials said most basic utilities including roads and stormwater drains were in place but needed upgrading and repairs to meet service levels. Area industrial units number 373. "DSIIDC intends to develop infrastructures which got damaged in the last few years and make them fully operational," stated a source. Before the MCC, the government will implement GPS-based NH tolling. The UPA authorized toll plazas near cities, which inconvenienced locals. Toll plazas within 6-7 km of cities and factories are avoided.

Centre lends 10k street sellers

Delhi: After giving 10,000 Delhi street vendors subsidised loans, housing and urban affairs Minister Hardeep Singh Puri claimed the PM SVANidhi scheme has restored their dignity. He stated street merchants no longer need informal lending channels with "exorbitant interest rates". Puri told Delhi Lieutenant Governor V K Saxena and two central ministers that the initiative will revive street vendors' "swarozgar, sva mban and swabhimaan" at an event. He stated the initiative was launched during the COVID-19 pandemic, when street merchants were hardest hit. "While it impacted all, including those in formal jobs and agriculture sector, street vendors were the worst hit as they need to go out everyday to earn their livelihood," stated.

Editorial

World's largest stainless steel structure

Hyderabad now has the world's largest seamless stainless-steel memorial—the Telangana Martyrs Memorial, or Amara Jyoti. Dominating the landscape for miles and close to the State Secretariat, the elliptical-shaped structure has a giant, yellow flame in carbon steel atop it. The memorial has been built as a tribute to those brave people who gave up their lives over the past five decades, or so, for the statehood of Telangana. This international distinction didn't come easy. Amara Jyoti has been four years in the making. Prior to this, the conceptualisation and ironing out of the logistics took two years; hence, it necessitated altogether six years. The construction began in 2019, and it was inaugurated in June, 2023. It also took a huge amount of manpower. Over 5,000 construction labourers (approx), around 100 engineers, and 500 technicians contributed to making this memorial plan a reality. About 4,500 stainless-steel plates, weighing over a hundred tonnes, were used for the structure, along with other materials. Finally, it cost nearly Rs 180 crore. However, it was an investment eminently worth the cost and effort for the state government and the workforce, considering that it holds so much symbolic value. The steady stream of visitors that are pouring in is also appreciating this monument. The crowds are getting bigger considering it is located in the central part of the city and beside the famous Hussain Sagar Lake. The memorial is spread over a total area of 3.29 acres of land. There is a large, well-landscaped garden, and the memorial structure with its highly polished, reflective exterior stands within this green space. The built-up area of the memorial, including the garden, is about 2.88 lakh sq feet (26,800 sq metres). The artist-sculptor who developed the concept, designed the memorial, and also supervised the project from start to finish, K Venkata Ramana Reddy, explains that he already had exposure to many famous monuments, including memorials around the world in 80 countries, but, for the purpose of this project, visited many countries to study the kind of war memorials they had. "I submitted five designs, of which the one you see was approved by the Telangana state government," he reveals. The stainless-steel material (316 L) was procured from Sweden. The 4,500 sheets were assembled into approximately 450 large plates in Dubai and shipped to Hyderabad in containers. Here, onsite, these stainless-steel plates were assembled, i.e., welded together with flawless precision and laser technology, to create a smooth, seamless exterior with a mirror-like finish. Of course, the interior walls and slabs used concrete. Globetrotters may find the Amara Jyoti somewhat reminiscent of the famous Chicago Bean or Cloud Gate and the Bubble at Karamay in China. However, Ramana Reddy is quick to rebut the comparisons, though he does appreciate the Chicago Bean. As he points out, "The Chicago Bean or Cloud Gate is a public art project and not a memorial. Moreover, it is smaller in length, breadth, and width." The Bubble is widely considered a copy of the Chicago Bean design. Making Amara Jyoti was a very tough task and required painstaking attention to detail, explains Ramana Reddy, reeling off more statistics. The base of the lamp, or diya, has an elliptical shape with a major axis length of 54 metres and a minor axis length of 37 metres. From the terrace, the diya rises to a height of 26 metres and is 45 metres from ground level. The Amara Jyoti is a seven-story structure, including the cellars. The steel structure has four floors. Coming up soon are other features like a museum, convention centre, audio-video hall, cafeteria, restrooms, escalators, parking facilities, etc.

Border villages of Nelang and Jadung, near the Line of Actual Control

Though historically intimately linked, two separate events took place recently, nearly 1,000 miles away from each other. The central sector of the Indo-Tibet boundary in Uttarakhand, Chief of Defence Staff (CDS) General Anil Chauhan directed Army formations to work for the rehabilitation of the border villages of Nelang and Jadung, near the Line of Actual Control in Chamoli district.

During the 1962 Indo-China war, both villages were abandoned, and their residents were relocated to safer nearby areas.

Far away in the east, at the Tawang War Memorial in Arunachal Pradesh, the Indian Army, along with the Tawang administration and the local Monpa population, commemorated the 74th anniversary of the arrival of Maj Bob Khathing in the area. In 1951, the Manipuri Naga officer took over the administration of the border town of Tawang, south of the McMahon Line; a communiqué of the Defense PRO in Guwahati thus explained, "After the valiant Major undertook a treacherous march from the plains of Assam to Tawang, negotiating Sela and Bomdila passes during peak winters, leading a contingent of 200 Assam Rifles troops and 600 porters for a difficult maiden mission, thus materialised the formal



establishment of Indian civil administration at Tawang." The above two events are linked as the takeover of both places' administration is the result of a decision of the Himmasinghji Border Defence Committee created by the Army Headquarters on November 12, 1950.

Precise tasks were given to the young and bold officer.

The first task was to occupy Tawang. Khathing was asked to explain to the local population and Tibetan officials that he was "doing no more than is being done by the administration in other parts of Indian territory;" in 1914, Tibet had agreed to the McMahon Line, north of Tawang being the boundary. The major was ordered to "treat any Tibetan or other officials you may meet with courtesy, but nevertheless let them understand that juris-

dition in the area vests in you and not in them." He was directed to submit detailed reports about the Tibetan 'influence' in the area and the nature of taxes collected. He was further told to abolish all existing taxes and substitute them with lighter taxes to be paid to the Political Officer, representing the Indian government: "There will be no forced labour and everything needed will be duly paid for." An important task was to communicate to the local people that "none of their religious practices. The sixth point was that in case Khathing met with armed opposition, he was to cable Shillong (the governor's office) immediately, "indicating the strength and position of opposing forces." Fortunately, due to Khathing's intelligence and diplomatic skills, this would not be nec-

essary, and 74 years later, he was still considered by the Monpas as their liberator. Khathing was also asked to keep daily wireless telegraphic contact with Daulatram after crossing the Se-La pass. It is what Khathing did, and his dispatches and cables still make fascinating reading.

Let us remember the facts

On October 7, 1950, the communist troops advanced in eastern Tibet, and after smashing the ill-trained and ill-equipped Tibetan army, Chamdo, the capital of Kham Province, fell to the invaders. On November 7, Sardar Patel, the deputy prime minister, despite his poor health, sent a long letter to the prime minister about the implications of the Chinese invasion of Tibet for India's northern border. Five days later, the dying Sardar (who passed away on December 15) constituted this committee to examine the possibility of Chinese communist troops occupying the areas south of the McMahon Line or elsewhere on the Indo-Tibet border and "to consider the feasibility or advancing outposts of the Assam Rifles in order to forestall such ingress".

esides Maj Gen Himmatsinghji, deputy minister of defense (chairman), it included Lt Gen Kulwant Singh, K Zakaria, head of the Ministry of External Affairs'

historical division, SN Haksar, joint secretary also from MEA, Group Captain MS Chaturvedi from the Indian Air Force, and Waryam Singh, deputy director of the Intelligence Bureau. After discussing at great length the advisability of pushing forward a post to Tawang, it was decided to go ahead. It was also decided to send troops to Nelang (then written Nilang) and Jadung (then Jadhung), two tiny villages south of the Tsangchok-la, the pass marking the watershed in the area, in the Chamoli district.

The Role of Jairamdas Daulatram

One man was central in the setting up of Maj Khathing's expedition to Tawang; it was Jairamdas Daulatram, the governor of Assam. It is sad that his role has been more or less forgotten today. On December 10, 1950, he managed to get the concurrence of the Ministry of External Affairs headed by Nehru; a Joint Secretary concurred with the Committee, "We cannot agree to a unilateral occupation of Tawang by the communists."

The ball then started rolling, and preparations for the expedition began. Maj Khathing received detailed instructions from Nari Rustomji, the advisor to the governor, on behalf of Daulatram himself.

Ethiopia could officially recognise Somaliland's independence

Reports say that Ethiopia could officially recognise Somaliland's independence, and Mogadishu will never allow this. It wants Ethiopia to rescind the offer, and that's where Turkey comes in. The new maritime deal could help Somalia. The deal could "convince" Ethiopia to back down. After all, would Abiy Ahmed dare to take on the Turkish navy? As Turkey is a NATO member, an attack on one member is an attack on all of NATO. So Ethiopian aggression is almost out of the question, and this severely limits Abiy Ahmed's options. The maritime deal is a smart move by the Somali president. He said Somalia will start engaging in another war today, to live up to its international duty now, that may be

overblown rhetoric. But the signal is clear, he believes he has cornered Ethiopia. He is confident that the world is on Somalia's side. The ball is now in Ethiopia's court. Let's see how Abiy Ahmed responds. Somalia's President Hassan Sheikh Mohamud. Reuters File In Somalia, President Hassan Sheikh Mohamud has made a strategic play. The Somali government has approved a maritime security pact with Turkey. Ankara has been authorized to build up, train, and equip the Somali navy. Not just that—they will also defend Somalia's territorial waters. Turkish warships could be patrolling Somalia's coast, and they could be active in the Indian Ocean for the duration

of ten years. There are many reasons why Somalia selected Turkey. Somalia has been dealing with a terrorist insurgency for almost two decades. Recently, there has been a rise in piracy along the Somali coast. Also, there is chaos in the Red Sea with the Yemen-based Houthis disrupting global trade. All these are important reasons, but Somalia's primary target is different. Ethiopia is Somalia's neighbour and nemesis. The maritime deal is aimed at countering Ethiopia and stopping it from executing its port plan. Ethiopia is landlocked. But the Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed, wants it. He believes that a port is essential for Ethiopia's growth. So on January 1 of this year, Ethiopia struck a deal.

The changing face of cross-border payments

Prime Minister Narendra Modi in his recent visit to the UAE announced the extension of the service of the UPI payment system in UAE which is a significant development not only between India and the UAE, but in the West Asian region as a whole. India's relations with the West Asian region could not realise the true potential immediately after independence, owing mainly to the countries of the region being bound by their obligatory Muslim solidarity with Pakistan. This, however, has changed dramatically over the past two decades, especially after the 9/11 incident and the global war on terror. India's West Asia policy is rooted in four important pillars that include the people, energy security, trade and security. It was in 2005 that the then Prime Minister Manmohan Singh formulated the 'Look West' policy and then in 2014, PM Modi announced the need for 'Link West' along with the 'Look East' Policy. Within the region, it is UAE which has slowly emerged as a trusted ally. UAE, by its location and its stature in the region, forms a key pillar of India's West Asia policy. UAE is an integral part of all-important regional forums including the GCC, Arab League etc. It is also part of the I2U2 or the West Asia Quad comprising India, Israel, the US and the UAE. India's bilateral relations

with the UAE rest on three important pillars including trade and investments, energy and the Indian community in UAE. The landmark agreement CEPA (Comprehensive Economic Partnership) signed on February 18, 2022, laid the foundation for an exponential increase in trade and economic partnership and is an example of a special relationship between the two nations. The recent development concerning the UPI affects international banking and finance systems at their most fundamental level. This involves two elements: cross-border financial transactions and associated payments, as well as the cross-border establishment of premises. There are many international agreements signed to make the international banking system more effective. The International Banking law was also developed to stop large amounts of bank fraud. Banking law involves a wide number of private agreements among the private parties. In recent years, there has been an explosion in both types of activity and, with it, the need for international agreements as to how the business of international banking and finance should be conducted. These agreements which are signed among the sovereign countries are enforced using domestic legislation. There are three purposes. First, they

may serve to facilitate the conduct of cross-border business. In this category, one finds agreements on technical standards, standardised contracts (master agreements), codes of conduct, harmonised accounting and disclosure standards, arrangements for cross-border payment, netting and custodial services.

and a wide range of legal conventions and agreements governing financial services in general. Second, international agreements may have as one of their objectives the deliberate expansion of cross-border competition in banking and finance. The General Agreement on Trade in Services and the OECD Codes of Liberalisation are examples of agreements in this area, as are the relevant directives in European Union Legislation and the financial services clauses of the FTA and NAFTA. The third purpose of international agreements is to promote or maintain financial stability. The Basel Committee on Banking Supervision is certainly the best known of these committees, while the Euro-currency Standing Committee is certainly the oldest, having been set up in the early 1960s to monitor and assess the implications of the newly established Euro-currency markets. Finally, the Committee on Payment and Settlement Systems has in recent years helped establish.

Ukrainian resistance on the outskirts of Kyiv

In the book 'The Fathomless Caves', Kate Forsyth, the author, describes war as, "An unpredictable beast. Once unleashed, it runs like a rabid dog, ravening friends and foes alike. It can drag on for years, a slow attrition of nerve and fortitude, or be over in one brilliant flash, an extravagant configuration of flame and blood and sweat." The Russian-Ukraine War fits well into the above description. When President Putin launched 'special military operations' to 'demilitarise and denazify' Ukraine on February 24, 2022, it was universally given that the war would be over in a few days, with Russia

inflicting a crushing defeat on Ukraine. Ironically, two years later, the conflict rages on, degenerating into a state of stalemate with little change in the ground situation. Although a classic limited war, its politico-economic impact has been felt far and wide, with serious geo-strategic ramifications. Militarily, it has gone on to redefine the very nature of warfare. The Russian offensive commenced as a typical military campaign, preceded by missiles and airstrikes, followed by a large-scale ground invasion along multiple fronts. The northern thrust was launched from Belarus towards Kyiv, the southern one was

from Crimea, and the south-eastern push was from Luhansk-Donetsk towards Kharkiv. In the wake of heavy losses and stiff Ukrainian resistance on the outskirts of Kyiv, the Russian Northern thrust stalled within a month, towards the end of March. By April, the Russian Army had retreated to consolidate gains around the Luhansk and Donetsk areas. However, the Russians did succeed in capturing Mariupol in May after a prolonged siege. Having stabilised the situation, in August, the Ukrainian forces launched a limited counterattack in the south and a month later in the north-east, succeeding in

recapturing Kharkiv and Kherson by November, thus forcing the Russians to withdraw east of the Dnieper River. With winters setting in, the pace of operations had slowed down. The Ukrainians resorted to launching a number of drone strikes against the Russian bases. A period of lull was used by the belligerents to consolidate their positions and gear up for the next phase. By the end of 2022, around 8 million refugees had fled Ukraine. Both sides had suffered heavy casualties; more than half a million Russian and Ukrainian soldiers were killed or wounded, besides over 10,000 civilian fatalities.

Air India was fined Rs 1.10 crore by the DGCA for safety infractions

The aviation regulator DGCA fined Air India Rs 1.10 crore for operating Boeing 777 aircraft that were leased to the United States in breach of safety regulations. This is Air India's second penalty in a week from the regulator. A former Air India pilot filed a complaint with the regulator, claiming that the airline was operating Boeing 777 aircraft to the US without the necessary emergency oxygen supply system in place. The Directorate General of Civil Aviation (DGCA) conducted a thorough inquiry into the situation and served the airline with a show-cause notice. "Since the said operations of the leased aircraft were not in line with regulatory/ OEM (Original Equipment Manufacturer) performance limits, DGCA has initiated enforcement action and imposed a penalty of Rs 1.10 crore on Air India," according to a notification from DGCA. Air India did not immediately



respond to inquiries regarding the punishment. The announcement said that following receipt of a voluntary safety report by an airline employee accusing Air India aircraft on specific long-range terrain-critical routes of safety violations, the regulator conducted a thorough investigation. A show-cause notice was sent to Air India, according to the DGCA, since the investigation's first findings suggested the airline was not in compliance.

The press release omitted certain details. Before pursuing enforcement action, the DGCA examined the airline's answer to the show

cause notice in light of the performance limitations outlined in the documents provided by the OEM and the requirements outlined under applicable statutory provisions, according to the announcement. The pilot, who had been a B777 commander, lodged a complaint with the airline on October 29, 2023, over its policy of not having the necessary emergency oxygen supply equipment on board. According to reports at the time, the issue was that Air India was using leased B777 aircraft on flights that had a chemically manufactured oxygen system that lasted for around 12 minutes.

The government is seeking proposals to establish ACC units for battery storage under the PLI program

Delhi : The Center declared that selected bidders would be able to establish massive battery production facilities with a 10 GWh capacity and an estimated budget of Rs 3,620 crore by participating in rebidding under a PLI initiative for Advanced Chemistry Cells (ACC). Starting on Wednesday, the global tender documents can be seen online. Bids will be accepted on April 23, 2024, and the deadline is April 22, 2024. Manufacturing of technology-neutral ACC in India is encouraged by the PLI project 'National



Programme on Advanced Chemistry Cell Battery Storage'. "With this bidding process, the prospective applicants can submit their bids to set up a domestic manufacturing facility for ACC, which will help them qualify for incentives under the PLI ACC scheme," the ministry of heavy industry

said. The country's capital goods, automotive, and heavy electrical equipment industries are the three that the ministry supports in their development and expansion. Mahendra Nath Pandey, the Union Minister of Heavy Industries, stated that the ministry is fully committed to advancing Prime Minister Narendra Modi's vision of a developed and self-sufficient India. It is also supporting the expansion of India's manufacturing capabilities and exports in the automotive and automobile component sector.

Punjab National Bank Q3 Results: Tripled net profit, improved asset quality

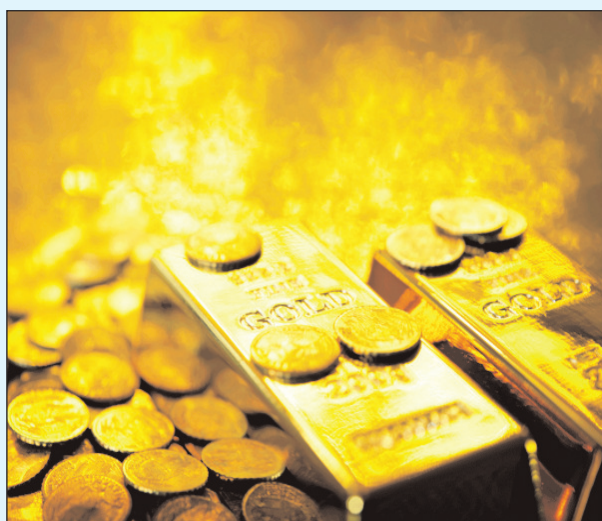
Delhi: Punjab National Bank (PNB) recorded a net profit of Rs 2,222.8 crore for the December quarter of FY 2023-24, increasing 253.49 percent from the previous year. The bank's gross NPA dropped from 9.76 percent last quarter to 6.24 percent. Net NPA for the quarter was 0.96

percent, up from 3.30 percent year-over-year. The stock rose 0.84 percent to Rs 102 on BSE at 2.50 pm. In Q3 FY24, the bank's net interest income (NII) rose 12.13 percent to Rs 10,293 crore and operating profit rose 10.75 percent to Rs 6,331 crore. PNB credit cost rose 61 bps to

1.26 percent in Q3 FY24 from 1.87 percent in Q3 FY23. As of December 23, New Delhi bank provision coverage ratio (PCR) rose 911 bps YoY to 94.28 percent. As of December 31, 2023, the Bank has 10,108 domestic branches with 12,455 ATMs and 29,768 BCs.

The Centre places a 15% import charge on gold and silver findings

Delhi: "Gold or silver findings" are little components like hooks, clasps, clasps, pins, catches, and screw backs that hold jewelry. A Central Board of Indirect Taxes and Customs announcement boosted gold, silver, and coin import duty to 15% through 5% Agriculture Infrastructure Development Cess (AIDC). The move is meant to prevent gold and silver import duty abuse. According to the notification, "gold or silver findings" denote a minor component such as a hook, clasp, clamp, pin,



catch, or screw back used to hold jewelry in place. In addition, the finance ministry raised import tariffs on precious metal-containing

used catalysts. The duty has been raised to 14.35 percent, including 10 BCD and 4.35 AIDC (Agriculture Infrastructure

Development Cess) with SWS exemption. Since gold imports have increased in the last two months, a government official told Reuters that the action intends to prevent tariff circumvention on gold and silver bars. Just click here Financial minister Nirmala Sitharaman proposed an agriculture infrastructure and development cess (AIDC) on alcohol, gold, silver, cotton, peas, apples, petrol, and diesel in the 2021-22 budget. Government imposed 2.5% AIDC on gold, silver, and dore bars.

HDFC Bank expects ROE to return to pre-merger levels in 4-5 years

Delhi: HDFC Bank's return on equity was above 17% before the merger with Housing Development Finance Corporation Ltd. (HDFC), but it dropped to 15.8% as of December-end. It expects to restore a key financial metric to pre-merger levels after 4-5 years. "We will see a period of consolidation for 4-5 years during which growth rates and some metrics will differ from what we were used to in the bank, but this is a different institution after the merger," Reuters said. "We



are focused on profitable growth and will see return on equity return to pre-merger levels in 4-5 years," the person said. The source added the economic environment and the bank's strategy deci-

sions to adapt will affect other indicators including net interest margin, deposit and loan growth.

HDFC Bank shares have fallen more than 15% since the institution released its third-

quarter FY24 earnings on January 16. The bank saw a 33% YoY increase in net profit to ₹16,372 crore and a 24% YoY increase in net interest income to ₹28,470 crore. Analysts worry about the bank's profitability and deposit growth. Retail deposits increased 2.9% QoQ while the bank's deposit base grew 1.9%. Since March 2023, management has prudently lowered the wholesale deposit base from ~17% to 16% of total deposits in December 2023.

Tata Steel reports a profit in Q3 despite losses in Europe's operations

Delhi: Despite its European business continuing to lose funds, Tata Steel managed to turn the corner in the quarter that concluded on December 31 because of improved profitability in its India operation. In comparison to a loss of ₹2,502 crore in the same quarter last year and ₹6,511 crore in the previous quarter, the company recorded a consolidated profit of ₹522 crore during the quarter. The domestic division of Tata Steel, which posted a pre-tax, depreciation, and interest profit of 8,257 crore as opposed to 5,335 crore the previous year, was the main driver of the turnaround. A loss of 2,872 crore before tax, depreciation, interest, and special items was declared by Europe in



the meantime. "The end-of-life state of several of its heavy end assets continues to cause production shortfalls for the UK business," stated Koushik Chatterjee, executive director and chief financial officer of Tata Steel.

He added that the margins of the better performing Netherlands company were also affected by the muted demand. Tata Steel's managing director and chief

executive, T.V. Narendran, insisted that the business climate remained challenging even if the company made progress during the quarter.

"Global operating environment has been complex, with economic slowdown in China and geopolitics weighing on commodity prices in general," he stated. According to him, China exported 7-8 million tonnes of steel per month during the December quarter, the most since 2015. This has hurt profitability as well as global steel pricing, he claimed. "Despite this context, Tata Steel India has delivered better margins aided by higher deliveries as well as realisations on a QoQ basis," he stated.

Payments Bank banned from selling new FASTags

● "During the audit, various complaints were received from the auditor that the bank did not cooperate with them in carrying out the audit"

Delhi: After an audit discovered that Paytm Payments Bank was not complying with the service level agreement, Indian Highways Management Company (IHMCL), NHAI's toll division, prevented the bank from issuing new FASTags. New toll plazas in the National Electronic Toll Collection, which covers the whole NH network, are also prohibited. IHMCL has also asked why Paytm Payments Bank should not be penalized for non-compliance.

However, the bank's FASTag customers will be unaffected. Paytm is a major Electronic



Tolling Tool issuer. Paytm Payments Bank ignored inquiries and requested delays. NHAI officials said other businesses are under investigation and may face similar action in the coming weeks. After the RBI froze savings bank account openings, the move was made. IHMCL said it imposed limitations after an audit after many customer complaints.

"During the audit, various complaints were received from the auditor that the bank did not cooperate with them in carrying out the audit," the agency acknowledged as "a matter of concern".

Beauty industry expanding more quickly than fashion: CEO of Myntra

Delhi: In the beauty market, where well-funded competitors like Reliance and Tata Group have been rapidly expanding, Walmart's Myntra is placing its bets. There is a noticeable rivalry in the area. Huda Beauty, a Dubai-based brand, was added to Reliance's Tira and Myntra's lineup last week. Nandita Sinha, the CEO of Myntra, projects that the personal care and beauty sector would reach \$30 billion by

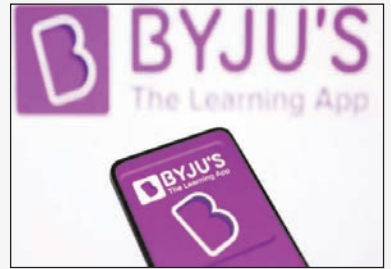
Moto Hero wants e-bikes over 4 lakh

Delhi: "The benefit with EVs is that we not only sell them in India, but also target global markets with them." The Vida electric scooter costs Rs 1.2 lakh (ex-showroom), but Gupta claimed the company will introduce cheaper models. "Vida will be mid-priced and cheap. A last-mile B2B commercial is under consideration. We consider it a promising and substantial segment." He stated Zero will be a premium, performance-oriented offering for 400cc-plus petrol motorbike buyers. "We are working on it and expect the motorcycle to be priced at around Rs 4-5 lakh." Gupta said the two-wheeler sector, which had been under pressure for years due to onerous circumstances for entry-level customers, is improving. "First, the category is underdeveloped and has great potential. As consumer confidence rises, the segment is showing green shoots. Capital expenditures by the government are also increasing revenue and employment.



In FY22, Byju's losses exceeded 8, or, up 80%

Delhi: Due to delayed MCA filings, failed edtech startup Byju's consolidated losses rose to Rs 8,245 crore in FY22. The company lost Rs 4,564 crore in FY21. In FY22, operations revenue rose to Rs 5,014 crore from Rs 2,280 crore.



The startup's auditor, BDO (MSKA & Associates), called the firm's continuous losses and disputes with lenders over a \$1.2 billion term loan B "material uncertainty" that "may cast significant doubt on the group's ability to continue as a going concern". "However... The management has undertaken various measures to improve its operating financial condition, is also in the process of securing necessary funding arrangements and exploring sale of assets as needed, and hence is confident regarding the future viability of the group," stated the auditor. According to reports, Byju's is in talks to raise \$150-300 million through a rights issue at a valuation of about \$2 billion, nearly 90% lower than its peak valuation of \$22 billion, due to a liquidity shortage. The company's FY22 losses climbed by over 80% due to rising expenses, which rose to almost Rs 13,000 crore from Rs 7,027 crore in FY21. Byju's noted that WhiteHat Jr. and Osmo's performance affected its financials. Two of the company's key acquisitions lost around Rs 3,000 crore in FY22. "These businesses were scaled down significantly

'Na merko farak padta hai': Hardik not bothered by social media chatter



NEW DELHI: Out of action since the 2023 ODI World Cup, all-rounder Hardik Pandya is gearing up for the upcoming season of the Indian Premier League, where he will be leading Mumbai Indians. Replacing five-time title winning captain Rohit Sharma, Hardik has a tough job at hand and all eyes will be on him as he takes up the mantle from one of the most successful captains in the league. Prepping for the cricketing extravaganza at the DY Patil T20 Cup, Hardik

recently opened up on personal life, pointing out he prefers remaining at home when not playing and hardly has a tough job at hand. "One thing my fans don't know about me is that I don't go out. I am a homeboy. I have hardly been out in the last three to four years; the only occasions I have stepped out is when it has been unavoidable, something happened with my friends. I like to stay at home. There was this time when I did not step out of home for 50 days. I didn't even see the

home lift. I have my home gym, home theatre. The things that I like are in my home," Hardik said on a chat show with the UK 07 rider. The 30-year-old, who prefers remaining away from the media spotlight, was asked about one of his photos in a super car that went viral on social media, to which he revealed that someone sent the car to him for a test-drive. "Main kabhi media mein comment karta nahi hu, toh maine kabhi kiya nahi, na merko farak padta hai.

'Indian players are gold in IPL': Ganguly on Rishabh Pant rejoining

NEW DELHI: Former India captain Sourav Ganguly, Director of Cricket for Delhi Capitals, shared his sentiments on Thursday in anticipation of the Indian Premier League (IPL) 2024, with star wicketkeeper Rishabh Pant rejoining the squad. Pant was absent from IPL 2023 due to sustaining multiple injuries in a tragic car accident on December 30, 2022. The 51-year-old emphasised that Pant's return is a significant morale boost for the Delhi Capitals as they approach IPL 2024. Ganguly expressed his immense joy at having Pant back in the squad. "It's a huge boost for Delhi Capitals because Indian players are gold in the IPL. Obviously, he has not played much cricket and I hope he gets back to rhythm very quickly. It's been a while since he is away from competitive cricket, almost 17-18 months. He has worked very hard to make a comeback. He is confident and wants to play for Delhi Capitals and India. I am extremely happy he is back and hope he gets through the season," Ganguly told Revsportz. The former BCCI chief additionally mentioned that Pant appears highly confident about participating in the IPL 2024 edition, bringing positive news for both DC and the Indian



national team. "I met him (Rishabh) in Bangalore recently for the inaugural game of WPL. He was there. He is getting ready and hopefully will play in IPL 2024. He looked very confident about playing in the IPL 2024 which begins from March 22. And that's seriously good news for us in Delhi and India," the former left-hand batter added. Pant has represented DC since 2016 and scored 2,838 runs in 98 matches at an average of 34.61 and a strike rate of over 147, with a century and 15 fifties to his name. The 17th season of the Indian Premier League (IPL) is scheduled to commence on March 22, featuring a South Indian derby between defending champions Chennai Super

Kings (CSK) and Royal Challengers Bangalore (RCB) at MA Chidambaram Stadium. The schedule has been announced until April 7, with the remaining fixtures yet to be declared due to the upcoming Lok Sabha polls, the dates for which are pending. Delhi Capitals will host their home matches in Vizag on March 31 and April 3 against CSK and Kolkata Knight Riders, respectively. The Arun Jaitley Stadium in Delhi will be unavailable shortly after hosting the Women's Premier League final on March 17. DC's other fixtures include a match against the Rajasthan Royals in Jaipur on March 28 and an encounter with the Mumbai Indians in Mumbai on April 7.

Shafali Verma fifty headlines DC's march to 194/5 against RCB in WPL

NEW DELHI: Opener Shafali Verma played a fluent innings, scoring a fifty to guide Delhi Capitals to a formidable total of 194 for five against Royal Challengers Bangalore (RCB) in their Women's Premier League (WPL) match in Bengaluru on Thursday. Verma (50, 31b, 3x4, 4x6) and Alice Capsey (46, 33b, 4x4, 2x6) built a solid partnership of 82 runs for the second wicket after the early loss of their skipper Meg Lanning. Marizanne Kapp (32, 16b, 2x4, 3x6) and Jess Jonassen (36 not out, 16b, 4x4, 2x6) played remarkable innings towards the end, adding 58 runs for the fifth wicket in a little over four overs. RCB had to rest all-rounder Ellyse Perry due to illness, bringing in Nadine de Klerk. Verma and Capsey, after a steady start, shifted through the gears seamlessly. Verma, dropped on two by Shreyanka Patil, powered DC's innings with a four and a six off consecutive balls against left-arm spinner Sophie Molineux.

Cristiano Ronaldo suspended for one match for obscene gesture in Saudi league game

Cristiano Ronaldo faces a one-match suspension for an alleged obscene gesture following Al Nassr's 3-2 victory over Al Shabab, as announced by the Disciplinary and Ethics Committee of the Saudi Football Federation (SAFF). Post the final whistle on Sunday, social media videos captured Ronaldo cupping his ear and repeatedly making a pumping



motion in front of his pelvic area, seemingly directed at rival Al Shabab supporters. In the background, chants of "Messi" could be heard, alluding to Ronaldo's enduring football rivalry with the

Argentine player. Following the conclusion of the match on Sunday, videos circulating on social media captured Ronaldo cupping his ear and repeatedly making a hand gesture near his pelvic area, seemingly directed towards rival Al Shabab supporters. In the background, chants of "Messi" could be heard, alluding to Ronaldo's long-time football adversary from Argentina.

More than age, criteria should be fitness and performance: Mushfiqur

NEW DELHI: Senior wicketkeeper-batter Mushfiqur Rahim stressed on the importance of blending experienced players with young talent in the T20 format, amidst criticism directed towards Bangladesh's senior cricketers. Currently representing the Bangladesh Premier League (BPL) franchise Fortune Barishal, Mushfiqur's team secured a spot in the final after a convincing six-wicket victory over Rangpur Riders in the second Qualifier. At 36, Mushfiqur stands



as one of the oldest players in the squad, alongside compatriot Mahmudullah (38) and Pakistan cricketer Shoaib Malik (42). Despite facing criticism, all three veterans have made significant contributions throughout their campaign.

Mushfiqur responded to the criticism underlining the importance of melding experience with youthful talent in team building. "Didn't you say before the tournament that Barishal is the 'team of the old'?"

Didn't you say

that T20s can't be won with experience? I think this is the wrong concept. You need experience in every format. New players will come, and the older ones will go, but they will combine well to build the team. We want to leave a legacy, and we want the likes of [Towhid] Hridoy and Tamim [Tanzid Hasan] to leave a legacy when they become senior players [for Bangladesh]. It is supposed to be smooth sailing," Mushfiqur said, as quoted from ESPNcricinfo.

Sumit Nagal goes down fighting to Lorenzo Sonego



DUBAI: Sumit Nagal went down 4-6, 7-5, 1-6 to the 48th ranked Lorenzo Sonego in the first round of the Dubai Duty Free tennis championships late on Tuesday. The 26-year-old Indian worked his way back into the match by breaking in the 12th game of the second set to level set scores. Both players left the court at the end of the

second set and Nagal took his time returning to the court. The India No.1, ranked 97 this week, appeared to have been hampered by an abdominal strain or cramps. He clutched his side a couple of times and the physio was on court later in the set. Nagal was up 40-0 in his opening service game of the deciding set in which he was

broken. Nagal, who will play the two Masters 1000 events in Indian Wells and Miami next, will see how March goes before he decides which events he'll play in the clay court season. The Indian, at 101 in the ATP live rankings, said, "For now it will be the two Masters Series events and then a 250 event on clay.

Five-goal Haaland's heroics propel Manchester City to FA Cup

NEW DELHI: Manchester City's Erling Haaland stole the spotlight with a remarkable five-goal display as the FA Cup holders thrashed Luton 6-2 in the fifth round clash on Tuesday at Kenilworth Road. Assisted by Kevin De Bruyne's trio of assists, Haaland completed his hat-trick within the first 40 minutes of the match, showcasing his clinical finishing prowess. Despite a brief resurgence from Luton, Haaland's relentless onslaught ensured City's dominance and secured their spot in the quarter-finals. Speaking on his partnership with De Bruyne, Haaland expressed gratitude, stating, "Kevin is massive. It's a pleasure playing with him. We know what we both want from each



other." Reflecting on his own form post-injury, Haaland added, "I'm getting back to my best. Finally, I'm feeling good." Manchester City manager Pep Guardiola lauded Haaland's exceptional performance, emphasizing the synergy between Haaland and De Bruyne. "Erling is on fire, and Kevin. The connection was perfect. Kevin needs players like Erling and Erling needs players

like Kevin," Guardiola remarked. Haaland's stellar performance marks his second five-goal haul for City, following his Champions League heroics against RB Leipzig in 2023. With 27 goals in all competitions this season, Haaland continues to silence his critics and inspire City's quest for silverware. The victory extends City's impressive run, with 14 wins in their

last 15 games across all competitions. As they pursue domestic and European glory, the lethal combination of Haaland and De Bruyne poses a formidable threat to their rivals. City's attention now shifts to the pivotal Premier League clash against Manchester United on Sunday, where Haaland and De Bruyne will aim to maintain their scintillating form.

Turkish Women's Cup: India go down to Kosovo to finish runners-up

KOLKATA: All that the Kosovo women's team needed to do was to aim for a draw to break the Indian hearts. But they did more than that as a 92nd minute strike from Ereleta Memeti did not just leave the six Indian players in the box hapless but also shattered the Blue Tigresses dream of clinching a first title outside the South Asian region. The 1-0 win in both teams' last round-robin match earned the Karin Anneli Andersen-coached 9 Europeans consecutive Turkish Women's Cup titles at the Gold City Sports Complex in Antalya, Turkey, on Tuesday. The runners-up finish was, however, also the Indian women's best performance at the four-team tournament. India ended their campaign with six points from three games, three points behind the champions.

Non-life insurance companies to offer price data



SC asked central govt to consult with states and implement a law that would mandate notification of standard rates for medical procedures

MUMBAI: Non-life

insurance companies have said they can help government by providing standardised rates for medical procedures. On Thursday, SC asked central govt to consult with states and implement a law that would mandate notification of standard rates for medical procedures. "The insurance industry settled Rs 80,000 crore of health insurance claims regarding bills from nearly 40,000 hospitals. This data is available if the ministry wants to bring in data transparency to curb high

charges," said Tapan Singhel, chairman of the General Insurance Council and MD & CEO of Bajaj Allianz General Insurance. According to Singhel, even if hospitals were required to disclose their schedule of charges for various procedures, it would significantly enhance transparency. "We have initiated the effort to provide cashless treatment in all hospitals..." said Singhel. He said the National Health Claim Exchange would boost transparency.

"The strong momentum of the economy is expected to continue in fourth quarter of current financial year"

NEW DELHI:

The strong momentum of the economy is expected to continue in fourth quarter of current financial year, chief economic advisor V Anantha Nageswaran said on Thursday and hoped the farm sector will stage a rebound in next quarter. "So the actual performance of the economy has continued to defy expectations and do better than what many had projected, underscoring the fact that a structural transformation of the

economy is indeed underway, both in terms of physical infrastructure and digital infrastructure as well as inclusion agenda, boosting the purchasing power of Indian households," Nageswaran told reporters after release of GDP data. The farm sector contracted 0.8% during Q3 of 2023-24 largely due to impact of patchy monsoon rains. CEA said prospects of robust rabi harvesting and expectations of fading away of El Nino and

forecast of a normal monsoon augured well for a better-than-normal kharif sowing. He said strong growth was linked to vibrant underlying demand conditions, adding economy has shown strong resilience to global vulnerabilities and there has been a decline in India's uncertainty index. Nageswaran said moderation in overall inflation and core inflation (minus food and fuel) is expected to boost consumption.

Delhi tourism to organise heritage walks at 50 places

NEW DELHI: Delhi's tourism department is organising heritage walks at 50 different locations across the capital from Saturday. These walks will continue till March 31 with the first inaugural walk scheduled at Mehrauli Archaeological Park. According to the tourism

department's website, Mehrauli Archaeological Park, which is uniquely dotted with ruins from early medieval times to the 19th century, is one of the most popular heritage sites in the city. The major attractions at Mehrauli Archaeological Park include the mosque and tomb of Jamali, a

royal tomb which is the first building in the sub-continent to use the true arch, a beautiful step well with subterranean rooms and residence of a British official (which was built out of a tomb). The site is adjacent to another historically important place, the Qutub complex.

CAPSULES

LG to govt: Give equal perks to welfare officers on contract

New Delhi: Lieutenant governor VK Saxena has directed Delhi govt to implement the judicial orders to provide the same amount of house rent and travel allowance to contractual welfare officers in the social welfare department as paid to the regular employees.

In a note to the state govt, the LG expressed displeasure that there had been recurrence of delays in handling such administrative matters by the department. He directed the department to identify and fix responsibility of the officials responsible for causing undue delay in the above matter within 15 days. He further asked the department to avoid any such delays in future and process all administrative matters with "due care and alacrity".

Taking note that Central Administrative Tribunal, Delhi High Court as well as the Supreme Court passed orders in favour of the contractual officers for extension of equal benefits, the LG said that the department exhibited a "lackadaisical and dilly-dallying attitude" in critical administrative matters.

Citing the SC's March 2023 order, Saxena said it was "unreasonable and unjustified" that the social welfare department took another eight months to process the matter. AAP govt, however, said services related matters were being handled by the LG since 2015.



Rs 798 crore for Mumbai railway infrastructure works

MUMBAI: A total of Rs 798 crore has been allocated for the capacity expansion projects that are under execution across Western Railway (WR) and Central Railway (CR) under Mumbai Urban Transport Projects in the interim budget presented by union finance minister Nirmala Sitharaman on Thursday. NHRCL has acquired 100 percent land for the project and awarded all the civil works contract for the 508 km long corridor. As per the agreement between ministry of railway and state government, cost all the projects executed under MUP are shared on 50:50 basis. After the state government contributes its share, the total amount available for MUP 2, 3 and 3A will be Rs 1596 crore.



Mumbai Railway Vikas Corporation (MRVC) has been entrusted with the task of executing majority of the projects under MUPs. MRVC's chairman and managing director SC Gupta said, "The budget allocation will further give impetus to MUP works." According to MRVC all contracts for

station improvement work of 17 stations have been awarded. Panvel Karjat new suburban corridor project work & Virar Dahanu quadrupling work is also going on as per schedule. He further said, "We have also started work on ground in Kalyan Badlapur quadrupling project :

Zepto launches subscription programme for users as competition

MUMBAI: At a time when consumers are taking to the idea of instant grocery deliveries and competition in the space is rising with deep-pocketed players Swiggy and Zomato betting big on their grocery businesses, Zepto is launching a price war with its subscription programme Zepto Pass. The pass, which will be available to most of the customers at a monthly fee of Rs 19-39 will give users access to unlimited free deliveries besides an additional discount of up to 20% on all grocery products.

For now, the benefits can be unlocked only when customers make orders worth Rs 99 and above. Co-founder and CEO Aadit Palicha claimed that the company has been able to leverage its low operating cost structure to roll out the benefits for customers. The idea is to get a larger share of the consumer's wallet and speed up adoption of quick commerce. "We are about two quarters away from being close to PAT (profit after tax) positive even with Zepto Pass because our cost structures on

the back end have reduced dramatically," Palicha told TOI. The service which had been piloted with 5% of the startup's user base prior to a broader roll out showed that consumers with Zepto Pass subscriptions spent 30% more on groceries and their monthly retention improved by 10%, the company said. "The pass is like an avenue to offer more value to customers and as a result, they are spending more with Zepto," said Palicha. The company also expects average order value

(AOV) to get a boost with the service. The level of discounts will depend on the size of shopping baskets and the company will analyse every customer's order data to offer them a customised AOV which will enable broader discounts if they are willing to match. (if their purchases total that AOV) it. "We want to become an attractive option even when compared to best discount grocers in the offline space. If we can give consumers access to better prices, 10-minute deliveries.

Drop in share of imported coal in consumption saves Rs 82 k crore forex outgo

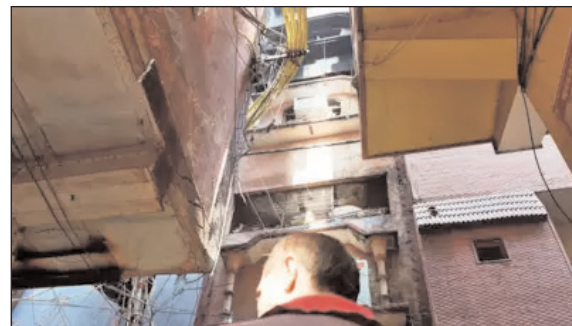
NEW DELHI: The share of imported coal in overall consumption in the country has come down to 19.3% in the April-December period of the financial year ending March 31 from 21% in the previous corresponding period, translating into Rs 82,264 crore worth of forex savings, the coal ministry said on Thursday. The decline in the consumption of imported coal is a result of rising domestic production on the back of a concerted government push garnished with a slew of reforms to clean up the system and incentives announced since 2014. The steady rise in coal production and improved availability has seen the CAGR (compounded annual growth rate) of imported coal consumption

plummeting to about 2.7% between 2014 and 2024 from 13.7% between 2004 and 2014, government data shows. The transparent auction mechanism for coal blocks without end-use restrictions has started yielding favorable outcomes. The consistent upward trajectory of coal production from captive and commercial sources over the past five years reflect CAGR of around 22.5%. In line with the government's push, cumulative coal production in 2023-24 has topped 803 million tonne (MT) as of February 6 over 717 MT recorded during the corresponding period of 2022-23, reflecting more than 12% growth during the current fiscal. Available data also shows production

from captive and commercial mines expanding 26% to more than 125 MT in the April 2023-February 26 period. The International Energy Agency's coal market report and forecast 2023 projected India's coal demand rising 3.5% annually to 1,397 million tonnes (MT) in spite of an expected trebling of solar power capacity by 2026, compared to 2021, and a target of raising the share of green power to 50% by 2030. India is the world's second-largest coal consumer as about 70% of the electricity flowing in the grid is generated burning the dry fuel. As the economy picks up pace, the power sector alone has posted a CAGR of around 7.5% from 2021-22 to 2023-24, while other sectors also exhibit.

NEW DELHI: In the last two years, there have been 800 incidents of fire in factories in Delhi, the majority of them nestled in residential houses. However, no corrective measure has been taken, indicating that the authorities have learnt no lessons despite accidents at these unauthorised factories and godowns happening on such a large scale. None of these places has a no-objection certificate from the fire department but that has not proved to be deterrent for them as they collude with other authorities and function without any hinderance. Data shared by the fire department has revealed that in 2022 and 2023, there have been around 400 fire incidents every year. Fifty-four cases of facto-

Delhi inferno: 800 factory fires recorded in city in last 2 years



ry fires were reported in Jan this year. It was the same month when four people died in a fire at a rubber-making unit in Shahdara. Even in that incident, the only exit and entry passage that existed was blocked, leading to casualties. In Dec 2019, at least 43 labourers died in a blaze in an illegal factory in north Delhi's Anaj Mandi. 17 people were killed and 30 injured after a massive fire gutted a factory in outer Delhi's Bawana industrial area in 2018. The fire department mandates fire certifi-

cates for factories, but violations are common. Officials have found that most factories operate in structures originally built for residential use, which don't meet safety standards for industrial activity. "This significantly increases the fire risk, as evidenced by past incidents," a fire official said. Delhi fire chief Atul Garg said that in most of the cases they found that there was no fire safety arrangement inside the factory. Whenever a fire breaks out in a factory in the

city, Delhi Police arrests the accused owners and files chargesheets. However, these are not deterrents and infernos continue to claim lives. In the Anaj Mandi fire, which took place in Dec 2019, the cops arrested four people — building owner Rehan, his brother Imran, Furkaan (Rehan's manager) and another man named Mohammad Suhail. In 2020, the crime branch filed the chargesheet saying that none of the owners was aware of the number of people working in the factory and had taken no precautions for their safety. In the Bawana factory fire reported on Jan 20, 2018, the police arrested two co-owners Manoj Jain and Lalit Goyal, Surjeet Goyal and Girish Rathore, their partners in another factory in Bawana and Jain's son Rinku.

Government releases 2 tranches of tax devolution

NEW DELHI: Government has authorised release of two installments of tax devolution amounting to Rs. 1.4 lakh crore on Thursday to strengthen hands of state governments and infrastructure development schemes. This release is in addition to tax devolution of an installment of Rs 71,061 crore made on February 12. With this release, states have received total of three installments of tax devolution in February, according to the finance ministry. Uttar Pradesh will receive Rs 25,495 crore, followed by Bihar which will get Rs 14,295 crore. Madhya Pradesh will receive Rs 11,157 crore and West Bengal Rs 10,692 crore. The release of the tax devolution comes ahead of the national elections likely to be held in April-May.

Projects worth Rs 48,000 crore to create 14,000 jobs in Ayodhya, Varanasi & Mathura

Lucknow

The Yogi government is set to transform the three major centers of Hindu faith, namely Ayodhya, Kashi and Mathura into prominent cities for employment in Uttar Pradesh. Through GBC 4.0, projects worth more than Rs 48,000 crores have already been initiated in the three temple cities. It is noteworthy that around 14,000 people are expected to find employment through the top 5 projects that are being started at these three places. The projects are related to setting up of tourist centers, wellness centers, and hotels, which will create jobs mainly in tourism and hospitality sectors in the three major pilgrimage sites of Hindus. It includes 372 projects worth around Rs 13,00 crores for Ayodhya. Abhinandan Lodha House is investing Rs 3,000 crores in real estate and commercial projects in Ayodhya,

creating more than 100 job opportunities, whereas PKH Ventures Ltd. is establishing a Tourist Facilitation Center with Rs 600 crores, wherein construction of a hotel with 500 rooms will take place, generating 300 jobs. Meanwhile, Pakka Limited is setting up a paper manufacturing unit in Ayodhya at the cost of Rs 550 crores, potentially creating over 600 jobs while Innovators Digital Ads Pvt. Ltd. is constructing a luxury star category hotel in the city at a cost of Rs 510 crores, providing employment for 100 people. Additionally, Crescendo Interiors is building a private industrial park at the cost of Rs 500 crores, which will create employment for more than 100 people. Similarly, Varanasi, known as the city of Lord Shiva, has witnessed the initiation of around 277 projects with a total investment of approximately Rs 19,250 crores, of

which the top 5 projects alone are expected to provide employment for more than 1500 people. The Bharat Heavy Electricals Ltd. (BHEL) is investing Rs 500 crores for the establishment of Research and Development (R&D) facilities and Fabrication/Manufacturing/Testing facilities for the company's existing and emerging business areas (Mechanical/Electrical / Electronic Products/Systems). This initiative is expected to create 225 jobs. Similarly, Roma Builders and Promoters Pvt. Ltd. is starting a mixed development project based on a 5-star resort, meditation with wellness center, fruit farms, clubhouses, and housing societies. With an investment of Rs 500 crores, this project is expected to provide employment for 300 people. Moreover, Gajadhar Technosys LLP is spending,

Yogi Govt's initiatives empower transgender community, elevating their role in state progress

Lucknow

In a significant effort to uplift all segments of society, the Yogi government is extending the benefits of various schemes, with a notable impact on the transgender community. Through these schemes, individuals from transgender community are getting employment opportunities, steering the state towards progress by engaging in new business ventures and leaving behind traditional income sources. In an event held at the Bhagidari Bhawan in Gomti Nagar, Lucknow, on Friday, prominent individuals from the transgender community discussed the same in India's first transgender literary and cultural program 2024. Transgender Identity Certificate and its benefits were also discussed. The discussion covered the process of availing benefits under the SMILE scheme by the Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment, including benefits from Garima Grih, Ayushman Plus



Card, scholarships, and more. During the program, Mahamandaleshwar Lakshmi Narayan Tripathi mentioned that the Uttar Pradesh government is doing a good job in bringing the transgender community into the mainstream. Through various schemes, they are getting employment opportunities, leaving behind traditional sources of income, and contributing to the progress of society and the country. State Minister (Independent Charge) for Social Welfare, Asim Arun, said that the Yogi government is providing equal development opportunities to every individual of the society.

In line with this, a transgender literary and cultural festival has been organized. Our effort is to ensure that the transgender community receives a respectful place in society and by coming into the mainstream, they can play their role in their own and the country's development. During the program, there was a discussion on the need and efforts to bring the transgender community into the mainstream through literature, art, and music. In addition to this, the transgender community expressed their thoughts through poetry recitation, street plays, dance dramas, ramp walks, and emotional.

CAPSULES

Major Milestone: Uttar Pradesh becomes the first state in the country to issue 5 crore Ayushman cards

Lucknow

In yet another significant milestone, Uttar Pradesh, led by Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath, has emerged as the first state in the country to issue five crore Ayushman cards. Additionally, Uttar Pradesh maintains the leading position in terms of the highest number of Ayushman cards issued compared to other states. CM Yogi emphasizes the importance of ensuring the health and well-being of every individual in Uttar Pradesh. He consistently directs officials to prioritize the issuance of Ayushman cards to those in need. As a result, today, every economically disadvantaged individual in the state can access treatment in private hospitals. Uttar Pradesh has issued 50,017,920 Ayushman cards, benefiting 74,382,304 individuals. A total of 3,716 hospitals in the state are empaneled under this scheme. Under the Ayushman Bharat Scheme, a total of 3,481,252 health claims have been filed, with 3,275,737 claims settled, representing a settlement rate of 92.48 percent in the state. More than 8.37 lakh cards issued in Ayodhya in Ayodhya, the city of Lord Shri Ram, a total of 837,700 Ayushman cards have been issued to beneficiaries thus far. 19 private hospitals and 16 government hospitals in the district are providing the benefits of this scheme. Panchayat assistants, Kotedars, and Asha workers conduct door-to-door visits to facilitate the creation of Ayushman cards for residents. Additionally, eligible beneficiaries can obtain their cards at the Gram Panchayat Bhawan.

Literacy India Hosts National Science Day Event to Empower Young Innovators

New Delhi : Literacy India, a non-profit dedicated to quality education and empowerment in underprivileged communities, celebrated National Science Day with an event that not only showcased the creativity and innovation of young innovators through robotics and IoT projects but also highlighted the organization's cumulative achievements. With the theme 'Empowering Through Science,' the event provided a platform for children to demonstrate their technical skills and creativity. 29 students from underprivileged backgrounds displayed exceptional ded-



ication and innovation, having completed intensive training that developed both their hard and soft skills. This training is crucial for their overall growth, emphasizing Literacy India's commitment to nurturing the

potential of each child. Dr. Rajneesh Wadhwa, Director - Strategic Partnerships & Development at Literacy India, emphasized the importance of the event: "Empowering innovation with empathy and collab-

oration, our initiatives strive to transform lives and unlock the potential of the underprivileged. Together, we're not merely educating; we're crafting a world brimming with opportunities and dreams." One of the many success stories is that of Dheeraj, a 13-year-old participant whose journey from visiting ISRO from visiting ISRO to developing an "Anti-Collision System" project exemplifies the transformative effect of Literacy India's programs. Along with his story, we received over 500 entries from students, which were screened extensively by experts a.

Farmers' interests are completely safe only under BJP government: Advocate Gagan Choudhary

Kaithal: BJP Kisan Morcha State Minister Advocate Gagan Chaudhary said that under the able leadership of Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Chief Minister Manohar Lal, the lotus flower will bloom for the third time in the assembly elections to be held in the country and the state. The public will work to completely wipe out the opposition in the upcoming elections. Speaking in an interview at New Grain Market Dhand, Advocate Gagan Choudhary said that India's respect is increasing across the world under the able leadership of



Prime Minister Modi. The development that did not happen in the country in decades has happened during Modi's tenure of 9 and a half years. After decades, the country has got such a Prime Minister who is taking India forward without tiredness, without stop and without leave. The world's per-

spective towards India has changed under the leadership of Modi. BJP Kisan Morcha State Minister said that laying a network of new highways and expressways in the country, construction of waterways, building a grand temple of Lord Shri Ram in Ayodhya, Divya Kashi grand Kashi Corridor, renovation of Mahakal Temple and Somnath Temple in Ujjain, the country connecting all the pilgrimage sites with highways, building new airports, opening passport offices, giving free food grains to 80 crore poor people, providing free

corona vaccine are many such works which have been done by the Modi government in just 9 and a half years. Along with becoming economically strong, India is also becoming self-reliant. BJP leader Gagan Chaudhary said that the 9 and a half years of the Central Government under the leadership of the country's successful Prime Minister Narendra Modi and the 9 and a half years of the State Government under the leadership of Chief Minister Manohar Lal have been dedicated to service, good governance.

Uttar Pradesh is transforming into 'Udyog Pradesh'

Lucknow

In a landmark achievement, Uttar Pradesh, under the leadership of Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath, has implemented investment proposals of over Rs 10 lakh crore through various industries in a single day. It's worth reflecting on the transformation Uttar Pradesh has undergone in the past seven to eight

years. Once dubbed 'Uttar Pradesh', the state has now emerged as 'Udyog Pradesh', setting new benchmarks in development across infrastructure, connectivity, power supply, law enforcement, health-care, and education. In every sector, Uttar Pradesh is making remarkable strides towards excellence. The state that once created fear in the minds of entrepreneurs has now evolved into a business-friendly state. Through comprehensive reforms in work culture at all levels, CM Yogi has achieved what once appeared impossible. After taking charge of the state, the Chief Minister initiated work in mission mode to strengthen and streamline the law and order. His strong desire to connect the youth of the state with employment opportunities has significantly paved the way for the establishment of industries on a large

scale. In addition to this, the state has introduced more than 25 sector-specific policies, a separate policy to attract Foreign Direct Investment (FDI), rapid development of expressways in the state and the establishment of a 46,000-acre land bank along these expressways. To create a better environment for industries, the Yogi government has not only brought 481 services from 41 departments under the Single Window System but has also set a new record by disposing of more than 97 per cent of over 13 lakh license applications. Not only this, more than a thousand unique reforms under the Business Reform Action Plan (BARP) have also become possible for the first time. In addition to these achievements, whether it is providing NOCs within a specified time frame for over 200 services or reducing compliance require-

Oxford ELLT Introduces its innovative English Language Testing Platform which powers its two language testing products to fuel the Higher Education aspirations of Indian students

GURUGRAM : Oxford ELLT, a leading name in English language level assessment, today announced the launch of its global brand campaign supporting its fast growing, world-class language testing products - Oxford ELLT Digital and Oxford ELLT Global. These innovative language testing products cater to the evolving needs of Indian students aspiring for Higher Education abroad, providing a secure and reliable method for assessing reading, listening, writing, and speaking skills. Accredited and recognized globally across UK, USA, Australia and Canada by 120+ universities like the University of Bristol, University of York, University of Glasgow,



University of Edinburgh, Hertfordshire University, and University of Niagara Falls, Canada. Oxford ELLT has 10 test centres in India for assessment with many more to be launched soon. Oxford ELLT's language testing products comprises reading, listening, writing, and speaking modules, emphasizing a comprehensive evaluation. To offer Indian students convenience and flexibility, post the launch of Oxford ELLT's inaugural product, it has provided support to students globally, including those from

approved test centres. This in-person testing option provides peace of mind for both candidates and universities, ensuring accurate evaluations of English language proficiency levels in a single-sitting. With a focus on accuracy and accessibility the results are available for the students in 48 hours. In both types of test, the Oxford ELLT Examiner who meets with the candidate in the speaking test will have also marked their written test, thereby being provided with a holistic view of the candidate's abilities. We know from test taker surveys that the live Examiner is deeply appreciated, with 71% of those who responded to our surveys stating.

Digantara gets additional \$2 million

Bengaluru: Space Situational Awareness (SSA) startup Digantara Wednesday announced the closure of an extended \$2 million financing to its previously raised \$10 million Series A round. The new funding saw participation from investors like Aditya Birla Ventures, the venture capital arm of the Aditya Birla Group, and the Small Industries Development Bank of India (SIDBI). "This marks the first time both these investors have ventured into the space technology sector, showing their commitment to Digantara's vision of enabling safe and sustainable space operations," the Bengaluru-headquartered company said. Digantara CEO Anirudh Sharma said the support from leading institutions indicates accelerating momentum in India's space ecosystem poised for global leadership in innovation.