

AKHAND BHARAT SANDESH

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MORNING EDITION PRAYAGRAJ

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

Parties should have flagged roll errors before polls: EC

- The poll body said that it shares electoral rolls with political parties ahead of any elections to correct any mistakes
- Some political parties did not examine the Electoral Rolls

NEW DELHI: Amid the ongoing row over special intensive revision and "vote theft" charges, the Election Commission on Saturday said that the political parties should have raised errors in the electoral rolls during the claims and objections period of past elections. The poll body said that it shares electoral rolls with political parties ahead of any elections to correct any mistakes.

"It seems that some political parties and their Booth Level Agents (BLAs) did not examine the Electoral Rolls at the appropriate time and did not point out errors, if any, to SDMs/EROS, DEOS or CEOS. Recently, some Political Parties and individuals are raising issues about errors in Electoral Rolls, including the Electoral Rolls prepared in the past,"

'Very special privilege': Jaishankar welcomes RoK FM Cho Hyun to India



NEW DELHI: External affairs minister (EAM) S Jaishankar on Saturday welcomed Republic of Korea (RoK) foreign minister Cho Hyun to India, describing it as a "very special privilege" to host an old friend as a new colleague. Congratulating Cho Hyun on his recent appointment, the EAM noted that his visit "literally a day after your National Day, and our National Day, says a lot about the value we attach to the relationship," and extended greetings on Korea's National Liberation Day. He said it marks the 10th anniversary of the Special Strategic

Flash floods

- "My brother kept touching me, asking, 'are you alive?'" Singh said. Chasoti is now rubble

CHASOTI: A two-storey wooden home crumbled in seconds. Boulders roared down the hillside, mud and water swallowed fields at

Kishtwar survivors dig through rubble, search for loved ones



Chasoti village in J&K's Kishtwar district. "It was as if mountain itself was coming

down," said 26-year-old arts student Piyra Singh, who fled into maize fields as his house

collapsed behind him. By the time silence returned, his uncle and cousin were dead, two visiting pilgrims missing, and his family in shock.

"My brother kept touching me, asking, 'are you alive?'" Singh said. Chasoti is now rubble. Flash floods following a cloudburst killed Thursday at least 60 people, injured 160, and left up to 70 unaccounted for.

Aircraft-shaped balloon with Pak airline logo found in J&K

JAMMU: An aircraft-shaped balloon with Pakistan International Airlines' logo on it was found in a forward area of border town Ramgarh in J&K's Samba district on Saturday. Green and white colour, the balloon lay on the ground, a police officer said. "BSF troops manning a forward post found it. They are investigating where it came from," the officer said.



In Delhi, PM Modi paid floral tribute to former PM Atal Bihari Vajpayee at Sadaiv Atal on his death anniversary.

GST 2.0 game changer, will lead to single tax rate': Government sources

NEW DELHI: The Goods and Services (GST) 2.0 is set to be a "game changer" subsequently leading to a single tax rate, news agency PTI reported citing government sources on Saturday. It further slammed the Congress party's "hypocrisy" for claiming credit for the reforms saying it "was not even present in the Parliament when landmark GST law was passed in 2017".

Congress leaders have



contended that the Centre was only now moving on a reform they had been advocating for years. Citing Rahul Gandhi's 2018 posts and videos calling for GST changes and a cap at 18%, the party argued that PM Modi's

reforms and lower tax burden. "This Diwali, I am going to make it a double Diwali for you... Over the past eight years, we have undertaken a major reform in GST... We are bringing next-generation GST reforms. This will reduce the tax burden across the country," he said. Following this, the Centre rolled out a draft blueprint for GST 2.0, proposing two primary slabs, 5% for essential items and 18% for most other goods.

'Shivakumar will become CM after December'

NEW DELHI: Karnataka Congress MLA Basavaraju V Shivangana on Saturday claimed that Deputy Chief Minister D K Shivakumar will become the next Chief Minister of the state after December, even as CM Siddaramaiah has reiterated his intention to serve a full five-year term.

"After December D K will become the CM...," said , MLA from Channagiri, as reported PTI. He has

made similar statements in the past suggesting that Shivakumar could assume the role in the coming days. Explosives Found Near Karnataka CM Event Venue In Bengaluru.

'Set this book on fire': Congress slams NCERT Partition module; BJP hits back

NEW DELHI: Congress and Bharatiya Janata Party on Saturday traded barbs after NCERT released new special modules on Partition, putting blame on the grand old party. Congress leader Pawan Khera refuted the claims made in the book and accused Hindu Mahasabha and Muslim League of "collaborating" for the division between India and Pakistan.

"Set this book on fire if



it does not mention all this. The truth is that Partition happened because of the collaboration between the Hindu Mahasabha and the Muslim League. If history has the biggest villain, it is the RSS. Future generations will not forgive the role it

played in spying, which it continued for 25 years at that time. And in that spying, there was collaboration with Muslims and with Jinnah," Khera said during a press conference.

"Advani ji went to Jinnah's mausoleum to

Modules

- Congress leader Pawan Khera refuted the claims made in the book

bow and give thanks. So, when institutions are being interfered with and history is being distorted, are we supposed to sit quietly? Can they erase the pages of history from 1938, 1940, 1942?" he added.

band Raju Pal was allegedly shot dead by gangster Atiq Ahmed's associates, said that the UP CM delivered justice through policies like zero tolerance, which ultimately led to the elimination of criminals such as Atiq Ahmed. "Everyone knows who murdered my husband (Raju Pal). I want to thank the chief minister for bringing me justice and hearing me when nobody else did. The CM gave justice to many other women like me in Prayagraj by bringing in policies like zero tolerance that led to the killing of criminals like Atiq Ahmed. Today, the entire state looks at the CM with trust," she had said. "Mere pati ke hatyare Atiq Ahmed ko Mukhya Mantri ne mitti mein milaane ka kaam kiya" (The chief minister has buried my husband's murderer Atiq Ahmed), she added. Hours later, Samajwadi Party expelled Pal for "indulging in anti-party activities and displaying indiscipline. "Your anti-party activities have been noted, and despite repeated cautions, you continued these actions, causing considerable damage to the party.



This comes days after Pal was shown exit gate after she praised Adityanath inside state assembly for his zero-tolerance policy against crime.

Pooja Pal, whose hus-

Rebel MLA Pooja meets CM ; was expelled by SP for 'anti-party' activities

Expelled

- Samajwadi Party expelled Pal for "indulging in anti-party activities"

NEW DELHI: Uttar Pradesh MLA Pooja Pal, who was expelled from Samajwadi Party, met chief minister Yogi Adityanath on Saturday.



This comes days after Pal was shown exit gate after she praised Adityanath inside state assembly for his zero-tolerance policy against crime.

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band Raju Pal was allegedly shot dead by gangster Atiq Ahmed's associates, said that the UP CM delivered justice through policies like zero tolerance, which ultimately led to the elimination of criminals such as Atiq Ahmed. "Everyone knows who murdered my husband (Raju Pal). I want to thank the chief minister for bringing me justice and hearing me when nobody else did. The CM gave justice to many other women like me in Prayagraj by bringing in policies like zero tolerance that led to the killing of criminals like Atiq Ahmed. Today, the entire state looks at the CM with trust," she had said. "Mere pati ke hatyare Atiq Ahmed ko Mukhya Mantri ne mitti mein milaane ka kaam

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Kashmir Press Club bungalow given to J&K Police, CM Omar tells assembly

SRINAGAR: Even as the Omar Abdullah govt has promised its revival, the Kashmir Press Club (KPC) is unlikely to be reopened at the govt building in Srinagar's Polo View market, from where it operated before being shut down in Jan 2022. The bungalow that housed KPC has been handed over to Jammu and Kashmir Police, CM Omar told the J&K assembly on Omar, however, assured that his govt was committed to providing a "suitable space" to the press club in Srinagar to enable it to function effectively. "A free independent and responsible press is the cornerstone of a vibrant democracy," he said, adding he would take concrete steps to "revive and support the press clubs in Jammu and Srinagar, providing a dedicated space for journalists". "We want that no media person should face any issues for speaking the truth," the CM told the assembly.



In a written reply to a question by PDP legislator Waheed Parra, Omar informed the assembly that the bungalow at Polo View market had been given to the media in 2018 on the verbal directions of then CM Mehbooba Mufti. Thereafter, the building was designated as Kashmir Press Club. The then govt had not issued any formal orders for this allotment, Omar said. After KPC's shutdown, govt took over the building. In 2022, an "important building of the police department", which housed the office of east Srinagar SP (city), among others, was gutted in a fire. Initially, these offices were allowed to function from the closed press club building on

a temporary basis. In 2023, the administration allotted the bungalow to J&K Police's Special Investigation Agency, the chief minister said. Parra had asked govt about the reasons for not restoring the KPC at its "allotted, authorised building". He had also asked about the measures taken by govt to get back the building from the police. Since the start of the budget session, talks of revival of KPC has gained momentum, with opposition PDP pressing govt over the issue. On March 22, Omar had said in a social media post that the press club would be revived, and "efforts being made to politicise it shall be defeated".

HC raps J&K govt over appointment of IAS officer named in arms licences scam to key post

JAMMU: The Jammu & Kashmir and Ladakh high court has expressed strong displeasure over the appointment of an IAS officer against whom CBI has sought prosecution sanction in the arms licences scam case as the commissioner/secretary of the General Administration Department (GAD).

Questioning the appointment of M Raju, whose name figures in the CBI chargesheet in the case, a division bench comprising Chief Justice Tashi Rabstan and Justice M A Chowdhary asked, "Is there dearth of honest/upright IAS officers in J&K?" The bench told



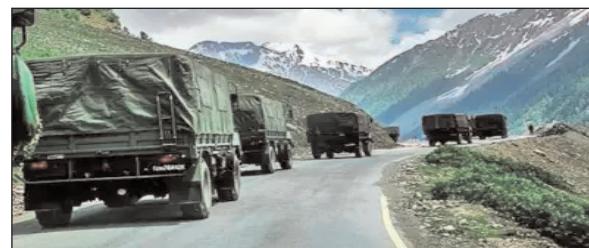
additional advocate general (AAG) Raman Sharma, who appeared for GAD, that the commissioner/secretary should be immediately removed. During the hearing, advocate Sheikh Shakeel Ahmed, representing the petitioners, submitted that GAD was deliberately sending incomplete proposals to ministry of home affairs (MHA) and department of

personnel and training (DoPT) for prosecution sanction against some high-profile bureaucrats in a bid to shield them. MHA had earlier this month pointed out deficiencies in the proposals sent by J&K administration on Dec 27, 2024, seeking prosecution sanction against three IAS officers — Yasha Mudgal, Shahid Iqbal Choudhary and

Neeraj Kumar — and had asked the UT to furnish complete documents within a week. Earlier, in a communication to the J&K chief secretary on Feb 12, MHA had said the proposals for grant of prosecution sanction against M Raju (posted as Kargil DM at the time of committing the alleged irregularities) and Prasanna Ramaswamy G (former Leh DM) might be forwarded to the ministry with the administrative approval of the Ladakh LG. Taking serious note of the delays, the bench directed the J&K administration to file an action taken report on MHA's communication dated Feb 12.

India, China hold 'positive, forward-looking' talks for border management

India, China hold 'positive, forward-looking' talks for border management; Doval & Wang to meet in India India and China hold positive talks for border management. As India and China look to reboot ties, building upon a spell of relative calm in the border areas, they held another round of diplomatic talks in a "positive and constructive" atmosphere, seeking ways to advance effective border management. The talks also prepared ground for another meeting of the Special Representatives, Ajit Doval and Wang Yi, that India will host later this year. A team led by MEA joint secretary (East Asia) Gourangalal Das, which travelled to Beijing this week for what was the 33rd meeting of the Working Mechanism for Consultation & Coordination on India-China Border Affairs



(WMCC), comprehensively reviewed the LAC situation, stressing peace and tranquillity on the border is critical for the smooth development of overall bilateral relations. China said the meeting was held with a "forward-looking approach" and both sides agreed to take "concrete and effective" measures for maintaining peace and tranquillity in the border areas. According to the Indian readout, they exchanged views on early resumption of cross-border cooperation and exchanges, including on trans-border rivers and Kailash-Mansarovar Yatra. Interestingly, the Indian readout did not

mention the resumption of direct air services, something which India had agreed to "in principle" during foreign secretary Vikram Misri's visit to Beijing in January. China is keen on resumption of direct flights, but India apparently doesn't want to rush into it. Official sources, however, said technical authorities are working to reach an updated framework for the resumption.

"The two sides explored various measures and proposals to give effect to the decisions taken during the 23rd meeting of the Special Representatives on the India-China boundary question in Beijing in

Akasa Air pilots demand DGCA audit amid training concerns

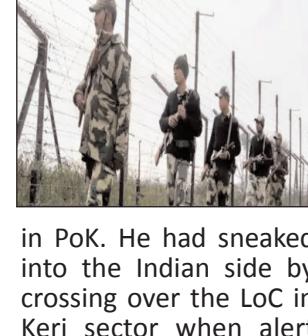
NEW DELHI: A group of Akasa Air pilots continues to express discontent over alleged training concerns and seeking a thorough DGCA audit following the regulator's decision to suspend two senior officials. Additionally, the pilots have informed the civil aviation ministry and DGCA about their plans to establish a pilots' union. The Directorate General of Civil Aviation has issued 10 showcause notices to the airline recently for various alleged irregularities. Meanwhile, the airline has not responded to queries regarding these matters. The airline previously dismissed claims



about pilot training practices and attrition as unfounded when these issues were raised by certain pilots earlier this month. On December 27, the DGCA suspended Akasa Air's directors of operations and training for six months due to training deficiencies. The pilots have noted that the suspended director of operations maintains the position of vice-president of operations.

PoK man arrested along LoC in J&K's Rajouri

JAMMU: An intruder from Pakistan-occupied Kashmir (PoK) was arrested along the Line of Control (LoC) in Jammu and Kashmir's Rajouri district Tuesday, officials said. "The man was identified as Mohammad Yaqoob, a resident of Suhana Kotli



in PoK. He had sneaked into the Indian side by crossing over the LoC in Keri sector when alert

troops arrested him. He was taken into custody for questioning," said an official. "No incriminating material was found in Yaqoob's possession. He was found intoxicated at the time of arrest," the official said. Further investigation was underway.

Lone walks out over 'UT' mention in J&K bill, CM puts onus on Centre

SRINAGAR/JAMMU: Opposition MLAs Sajad Lone walked out of the J&K assembly Tuesday objecting to the words "J&K UT" (Union Territory) in the first bill brought and passed by the Omar Abdullah-led National Conference (NC) govt, saying it endorsed the "catastrophic event" of Article 370's abrogation. People's Conference member Lone was joined by PDP MLA Waheed Parra, who argued that the bill to "normalise the Aug 5 (2019) changes by putting a stamp" on them. CM Omar asserted

that J&K was a "UT, whether we like it or not" and would remain so "until Parliament gives us back our statehood". "Therefore, let us not do politics over something like this," the chief minister said. Sometime after Lone left, the assembly witnessed chaotic scenes after leader of opposition, BJP's Sunil Sharma, demanded a response from the govt on demands for regularisation of protesting daily wagers working in the PHE department for a long time. Upset with deputy CM Surinder Choudhary's answer that BJP had failed to resolve the issue in the last decade, all saffron party MLAs walked out.

'Told me about 36 hours of continuous duty': Psychiatrist

NEW DELHI: A psychiatrist claims the RG Kar Hospital rape-murder victim consulted him for mental distress a month before her death, revealing severe work pressure and hospital irregularities. The victim had exposed issues in the procurement of medicines, leading to victimisation. The primary suspect, Sanjay Roy, received a life sentence, while the CBI continues its investigation. "Told me about 36 hours of continuous duty": Psychiatrist claims RG Kar victim suffered acute stress. A psychiatrist consultant claimed on Monday that the RG Kar hospital victim, who was raped and murdered, had consulted him for mental health issues approximately one month before her death on August 9 last year. Dr Mohit Ranadip said that the 30-year-old medical professional experienced severe mental distress due to extended working hours, unfair shift allocations, and her awareness of irregularities within the state-operated hospital. During an interview with a prominent Bengali television channel, the psychiatrist expressed his willingness to provide testimony to the CBI, which is investigating the rape-murder case. PTI quoted Dr Ranadip as saying, "She had told me about 36 hours of continuous duty, discrimination in allotment of shifts in the roster, and the acute mental pressure she was in as she had seen many irregularities in the purchase of medicines and medical equipment. I asked her if everyone was given similar shifts, she replied in the negative." The mental health specialist said the post-graduate trainee (PGT), was expected to return for additional counselling sessions, but unfortunately, this never materialised. Previously, the victim's parents and some colleagues had indicated that she faced victimisation for exposing certain irregularities in the hospital's procurement.

Minister, Shri Nand Gopal Gupta Nandi hoisted the flag at Police Line on the occasion of Independence Day

Prosperity

● The Minister congratulated all the people present in the program on Independence Day and said in his address that today is a day of pride for 140 crore Indians. 84.32. ● The sun of India's prosperity, happiness and independence rose

Akhand Bharat Sandesh



Prayagraj: Minister, Industrial Development, Export Promotion, NRI and Investment Promotion Department, Uttar Pradesh, Shri Nand Gopal Gupta Nandi ji hoisted the flag on the auspicious occasion of 79th Independence Day at Police Line, Prayagraj on Friday. Thereafter, the Minister visited the stalls of Child Development and Nutrition, Labour

Department, Jal Jeevan Mission, Skill Development, Social Welfare, Women Welfare, Basic Education Department, Sel Help Groups and other departments and got information about the products and schemes. On this occasion, the students of St. Anthony Girls Inter College, VBS Vidyalaya, DP Girls College, Jagat Taran Girls College, GGI gave captivating

presentations with welcome song, program on Operation Sindoor and patriotic songs. On this occasion, Police Commissioner Jogendra Kumar, District Magistrate Manish Kumar Verma, Additional Police Commissioner N. Kolanchi, Additional Police Commissioner Ajay Pal Sharma, Chief Development Officer Harshika Singh presented mementoes to

the Minister. On this occasion, the Minister congratulated all the people present in the program on Independence Day and said in his address that today is a day of pride for 140 crore Indians. On 15 August 1947, after a long struggle and wait, the sun of India's prosperity, happiness and independence rose and the tricolor, a symbol of our identity, self-respect and sacrifice, waved with

pride. Today is the day to express gratitude to the sons of Mother India who sacrificed their lives. The Minister saluted all the martyrs, who while sacrificing their lives had only dreamed that India regains its old glory and is established as a superpower.

The Minister said that under the leadership of the Prime Minister, our country is moving rapidly towards becoming a superpower.

The whole world is feeling the shine and brilliance of India. Today India has established itself as the fourth largest economy in the world. India is progressing by leaps and bounds in the field of defence, technology, manufacturing, industry and exports. Steps like Atmanirbhar Bharat, Make in India have given a new height to the eco-system of the country's industry. He said that the entire world community was

Additional Commissioner hoisted the flag in the Commissioner's Office



Akhand Bharat Sandesh

Commissioner said that in accordance with the intention of the government, everyone should discharge their responsibilities with full devotion and honesty and give their full contribution in taking the country and the state to the highest peak of development. On this occasion, the Additional

Commissioner also planted a tree in the Commissioner's Office premises. Officers and employees of the Commissioner's Office were present on this occasion.

On the occasion of Independence Day, Additional Commissioner Administration Mrs. Ratnapriya hoisted the flag in the presence of all the officers and employees in the Commissioner's Office on Friday.

After the flag hoisting, while addressing the officers and employees present in the program organized in Gandhi Auditorium, the Additional

Meja Energy Corporation is committed to promote national respect - Ashesh Chattopadhyay

Rally

■ Tricolor rally organized by Meja Energy Corporation under Har Ghar Tiranga Abhiyan

Akhand Bharat Sandesh

Meja. Under the Har Ghar Tiranga Abhiyan 2025 being run under the aegis of the Ministry of Power, Meja Energy Corporation organized a grand patriotic rally with the aim of increasing respect and awareness towards the national flag. The rally was flagged off by Ashesh Kumar Chattopadhyay, Chief Executive Officer of Meja Energy Corporation. On this



occasion, Avijit Chatterjee (Chief General Manager Technical Services), Pankaj Kumar Gupta (Chief General Manager Engineering), Narendra Nath Sinha (General Manager, Operations & Maintenance),

Dr. Manisha Pandey (Chief Medical Officer), Vivek Chandra (Head of Department, Human Resources), representatives of unions and associations and students of St. Joseph School located in Srijan Vihar

Township were present.

Employees of various departments, Central Industrial Security Force personnel and other participants participated in the rally with full enthusiasm. Passing through the township with the tricolor in their hands, everyone gave the message of unity, respect and love for the nation with patriotic slogans. This event is part of a nationwide call between 13 and 15 August, which includes events like Prabhat Pheri, Tiranga Rally and Selfie with Tiranga. Speaking at the event, the corporation's Chief Executive Officer Ashesh Chattopadhyay said that Meja Energy Corporation is committed to promoting patriotism, unity and respect for national symbols.

Police duty goes beyond law and order: CM Yogi

Lucknow: On the occasion of Shri Krishna Janmashtami, Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath attended a cultural programme at the Reserve Police Lines in Lucknow. Extending greetings to the police fraternity and the people of Uttar Pradesh, the CM urged police personnel to imbibe the ideals of Lord Krishna and work towards fostering peace



and harmony in society.

Calling the police the backbone of society, he said their duty extends

beyond maintaining law and order, as they also play a vital role in promoting unity and social harmony. The Chief Minister said that the incarnation of Lord Krishna in Mathura 5,000 years ago is not just a celebration, but also an enduring source of inspiration for citizens and police personnel to adopt this principle in their lives to help bring about positive change in

Foreign devotees immersed in joy at ISKCON temple on Krishna Janmotsav

Mathura. On Shri Krishna Janmashtami, Mahabishek of Thakurji started with Panchamrit at 9 pm in ISKCON temple. Devotees also did Mahabishek of Thakurji with flowers along with Panchgavya. Hundreds of devotees participated in the Mahabishek of Thakurji which started at 9 o'clock.

When the cake was cut on the occasion of Thakurji's birth anniversary, the temple premises echoed with cheers. It is worth mentioning that on the birth anniversary of Leela Purushottam Lord Krishna, devotees not only from the country but from all over the world are immersed in joy. There is excitement among foreign devotees. Foreign Krishna devotees have been busy preparing for the welcome of Aaradhy in ISKCON temple since Saturday morning. Some are preparing garlands, while others have taken the responsibility of preparing a flower basket for Thakurji.

■ Krishna devotees have been busy preparing for the welcome of Aaradhy

society. Quoting Lord Krishna's teaching "Paritranaya Sadhunam Vinashaya Cha Dushkriram," Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath said that protecting the virtuous and eliminating evil creates a positive environment in society. He added that the empowerment of righteous forces paves the way for peace, harmony, and development.

Ayodhya: One dead and two injured due to balcony collapse in Hanumangarhi premises

Ayodhya. On Saturday, one person died and two were injured in an accident in which the balcony of an ashram located near Hanumangarhi temple premises in police station Ram Janmabhoomi area collapsed. All of them were admitted to Shri Ram Hospital and from there to the medical college located in Darshan Nagar for treatment. Bholu Prasad son Asharfi, 50 years, resident of Rewa, Madhya Pradesh was seriously injured in the Hanumangarhi accident. According to doctors, Ansh has head injuries and Ramkaran has stomach injuries. Both are being treated at the local hospital. The doctor said that Ansh has a head injury and Ramkaran has an injury in his stomach.

CM gifts Mathura-Vrindavan 118 development projects worth Rs 646 crore

CM announces Rs 30,000 crore master plan for Braj region



India's role as a confluence of spirituality and modern development. He added that the world is eager to study India's spiritual heritage, which, in times of global crises, offers the path

to lasting peace and harmony. The Chief Minister announced a new master plan of Rs 30,000 crore for the holistic development of the Braj region. He said this plan will connect pilgrimage sites like Mathura, Vrindavan, Barsana, and Gokul with the memories of Dwapar Yuga. He said, "Our government is committed to respecting the sentiments of revered saints and enriching the Braj region. We are making possible the works which were once considered impossible." Citing the example of Kashi Vishwanath Dham and the grand Ram Temple in Ayodhya, he said that ten years ago, even

Lucknow: On Lord Shri Krishna's 5252nd birth anniversary, Chief Minister M. Yogi Adityanath visited Mathura on Saturday, where he inaugurated 118 projects worth 264 crore and unveiled a 230,000 crore master plan for the holistic development of the Braj region. Addressing the gathering, CM Yogi said that Mathura reflects 5,000 years of ancient history and devotion. On Shri Krishna Janmashtami, devotees from across

Editorial

The developments in naval capabilities must be measured

As India approaches its, the nation has achieved a significant milestone in strengthening its naval capabilities. In an exceptional move reflecting strategic foresight, Prime Minister Narendra Modi recently commissioned three advanced naval platforms in a single day: a destroyer, a frigate, and a submarine. However, in a fast-changing security environment in the Indo-Pacific, the developments in naval capabilities must be measured in a relative context—capabilities of arch rivals and a swiftly evolving security domain, that is. Now, five points need to be underscored in this context. The commissioning of advanced naval platforms highlights India's aspiration to establish itself as a net security provider in the Indian Ocean Region (IOR). Over the years, India's maritime security strategy has significantly evolved. The 2015 Security and Growth for All in the Region (SAGAR) vision reflects India's dedication to fostering regional cooperation in the Indo-Pacific. This vision is supported by initiatives such as the Indian Ocean Rim Association (IORA) and the Indian Ocean Island Countries (IOIC), which emphasise coastal connectivity and sustainable development. PM Modi's address at the 2018 Shangri-La Dialogue further reinforced India's strategic perspective for the Indo-Pacific. The SAGAR vision has gained traction through frameworks such as the Indo-Pacific Oceans Initiative (IPOI) and the Information Fusion Centre for the Indian Ocean Region (IFC-IOR), aiming to tackle regional security issues and counter China's expanding influence. While China's People's Liberation Army Navy (PLAN) has grown to become the world's largest by fleet size, it still lacks the operational capabilities and combat experience of the United States. India's navy, although the smallest of its armed forces, has consistently demonstrated efficiency and timely acquisitions. Compared to the Indian Air Force, which faces critical squadron shortages, the navy pragmatically acknowledges domestic limitations in engine development. It relies on foreign collaborations to fill gaps, ensuring progress. However, I'll turn to that later. To establish itself as a net security provider, the Indian Navy must sustain the momentum it has recently achieved in naval defence exports. Although this initiative began in earnest only in 2011, it gained significant traction after 2016. India has transitioned from being a cautious supplier of naval equipment, primarily targeting countries such as Mauritius, Sri Lanka, and the Philippines, to a more prominent player in defence exports. For many years, India's exports to nations such as Seychelles, the Maldives, Mauritius, and Sri Lanka were limited to refurbished ex-navy and coast guard vessels. However, this trend has undergone a remarkable transformation in recent years. Naval ships, as of 2024, account for over 61 per cent of India's total defence exports. This shift highlights India's growing capability to manufacture advanced platforms and its determination to emerge as a dependable supplier of defence equipment to neighbouring countries. This development is a critical component of India's regional and maritime strategy, especially given China's rapid ascent in modernising PLAN and expanding its influence in the Indian Ocean by providing naval assets to smaller nations. China has already established itself as the leading defence exporter to both Pakistan and Bangladesh.

It delivered two Ming-class submarines to Bangladesh in 2017, gifted a P625 frigate to Sri Lanka in 2019, and committed to exporting Yuan-class submarines to Thailand. Although the Thai deal encountered difficulties when Germany refused to supply key propulsion components.



The Union government's capital expenditure

Saariq

The Union government's capital expenditure (capex) continues to be a cause for concern. Of course, the extent of its decline has reduced somewhat—from 35 per cent at the end of the first quarter of the current financial year to 15 per cent at the end of six months. But the latest number for the April-November 2024-25 period shows that the Union government's capex was still 12 per cent lower than what it was in the same period of 2023-24. Instead of aiming for the targeted 17 per cent growth to ~11.11 trillion in capex for 2024-25, the government will have to strive hard to at least cross the figure of ~9.48 trillion reached last year. What has led to this decline? A widely held view is that the seven-phase general elections, which began on April 19 and ended on June 1 last year, caused a slowdown in capex. But if that indeed is the reason, the decline in capex in the first quarter should have been reversed in the second quarter of 2024-25. And certainly, the first two months of the third quarter should have raised the trajectory of capex growth to a higher level. There has been some improvement, but a 12 per cent decline in the April-November 2024-25 period is no comfort. Look at the slightly different trajectory seen in the Union government's revenue expenditure growth during the same period. The Budget for 2024-25 had projected a rise of over 6 per cent to ~37.1 trillion in revenue expenditure. At the end of June 2024, the growth was just about 2 per cent, but it has



been rising since then, reaching 4.2 per cent by the end of the first six months of 2024-25 and climbing even higher to 7.8 per cent during April-November 2024-25. So, if revenue expenditure has gained momentum, why has capex failed to follow suit? A close analysis of the government's capex numbers presents an interesting picture. Over 90 per cent of the Centre's total capex during 2024-25 was accounted for by just six sectors—roads, railways, defence, telecom, transfer to states and new schemes. Their share in total capex in 2023-24 was a little less at 87 per cent. But the 12 per cent decline in the first eight months of 2024-25 is primarily the result of a marked slowdown in only two of these six areas—roads and defence, which accounted for over 40 per cent of the total capex outlay for 2024-25. Capex on the construction of roads and highways fell by 16 per cent, while defence saw a decline of 15 per cent. This is serious and has worrying implications for both infrastructure and defence. The problem of

slowing expenditure in these two areas should not have been difficult to fix. Either effective monitoring of spending is lacking, or there are serious problems with project execution, reflecting the poor expenditure-absorbing capacity of these two sectors. This is borne out by a relatively good performance of the Indian Railways, which accounts for over 22 per cent of this year's capex. At ~1.68 trillion, the Indian Railways' capex is just about 1 per cent lower than its spending during April-November 2023. With regard to the transfer of special assistance as loans to states for their capex and additional central assistance for their externally aided projects, the Union government's performance was slightly better. In the April-November 2024-25 period, these transfers rose by about 5 per cent, although much lower than the budgeted increase of 41 per cent. In contrast, such transfers during the entire 2023-24 had risen sharply by about 24 per cent to ~1.15 trillion. It appears that these transfers will take a hit in the current year and for

the first time since this initiative to help states boost their capex was undertaken a couple of years ago. Significantly, this has not yet adversely impacted the states in a big way. The capex of 25 states (accounting for 95 per cent of all the states' and Union territories' total capex budget) has risen by just about 1 per cent in the April-November 2024-25 period, although states like Andhra Pradesh, Himachal Pradesh, Kerala, Mizoram, Odisha, Telangana, Uttar Pradesh, Uttarakhand, and West Bengal saw their capex fall by varying margins. Eventually, however, this will have an adverse impact on the states' capex programme and its growth-enhancing effect. There are two more sectors that account for another 13 per cent of the Centre's capital expenditure budget. But they bring out an intriguing aspect of why the government's capex has been slowing. They suffer from a peculiar problem, which has nothing to do with either the relevant sectors' expenditure-absorbing capacity or the absence of effective expenditure monitoring. The bulk of the capex under telecommunications was meant for infusing equity into state-owned Bharat Sanchar Nigam Ltd, or BSNL. Of the total capex of ~0.84 trillion, the proposed amount for BSNL's equity infusion accounted for as much as ~0.83 trillion. But the total expenditure under this head in the first eight months of 2024-25 is only 6 percent of what has been budgeted. In other words, a decision to transfer the equity amount promised to

BSNL would increase the government's capex by a significant margin. Why this money has not been transferred is puzzling. Last year, against a budgeted BSNL equity infusion of ~0.53 trillion, the actual infusion was higher at ~0.65 trillion. This year, no action on this front even after eight months is a puzzle as this failure also contributes significantly to the decline in the Centre's capex. More importantly, the Budget for 2024-25 had allocated a significant amount of ~0.66 trillion for capex on central sector schemes and projects. Of this, a large chunk, estimated at ~0.62 trillion, was earmarked for new schemes that the government would announce during the year. However, in the first eight months of the current year, only 4 percent of that total outlay has been used up, leaving ~0.63 trillion yet to be spent. It is likely that the government may not need this amount or it may have kept its powder dry to meet any new schemes that it might announce later in the year, for which such capital allocations will be useful. For the Union finance ministry, currently busy preparing the Budget for 2025-26, such a state of play with regard to slowing capital expenditure could well be an opportunity.

With tax revenue growth slowing in the last few months, the possibility of an upside earlier expected on the revenue front may be receding rapidly. Revenue expenditure is also rising at a rate higher than the budgeted 6 per cent. If the fiscal deficit target of 4.9 per cent of gross domestic product (GDP) has to be met,

Will Israel-Hamas Ceasefire Really Lead To Peace?

Suman

The right-wing parties in Israel's ruling coalition also threatened to bring down the Netanyahu government if he agreed to a ceasefire deal. Indeed, one right-wing leader, Ben Gvir, has openly admitted to successfully blocking previous attempts. Trump's pressure to agree to the ceasefire has come as a shock to right-wing Israelis, who hailed his election victory in November. In his first term, Trump moved the US embassy from Tel Aviv to Jerusalem and recognised Israel's sovereignty over the Golan Heights, a Syrian territory occupied by Israel after the 1967 war with Arabs. When Trump announced the appointment of an Evangelical Christian Mike Huckabee as his ambassador to Israel, many right-wing Israelis were thrilled, particularly those who wanted new Israeli settlements in Gaza. Huckabee is on record saying there is no such thing as the West Bank or the occupation. So, why has Trump pushed for the ceasefire? Apart from taking cred-

it for ending one of the most brutal wars in recent history, Trump may like to focus on larger issues, like relations with China and ending the Russia-Ukrainian conflict. In the Middle East, he wants Saudi Arabia to recognise Israel, which will be a huge achievement of his administration. With the continuing war in Gaza and the terrible sufferings of Palestinians at the hands of Israel, Saudis could not afford to consider having diplomatic ties with Israel. But Trump is unpredictable, which is also a reason for both Hamas and Israel to accept the ceasefire deal. Turkey, Egypt and Qatar—the host of ceasefire negotiations—pressured Hamas to accept the agreement. And while Netanyahu may have defied Biden for so long, he could not do the same to Trump and must keep him on his side. Starting on Sunday, January 19, the ceasefire will last 42 days. It will see the exchange of 33 Israeli hostages detained by Hamas and Palestinians held in Israeli prisons.

LOSING CHARM OF BOOKS AMONGST GENZ

-Dr. Bindu Aggarwal

Associate Professor, University School of Business, Chandigarh University

A tiny, grimy bookstall in the sub-urban town of Ambala cantt. Indicating a flashback call of the Indians' love through passion for reading. From the decades the stall, English Book Depot—since 1923 comparable to an ocean, has been an essential part of the life of the academics and the passionate students. Its, owner, took enchanting in preferring the ideal book to every reader, and its shelves were stack high with everything from traditional texts to current best-sellers. For years, students would flock English Book Depot, where they would spend long hours reading poetry, novels, and textbooks in search of wisdom, knowledge and comfort.

Now, the things have changed the way young generation collect the information has significantly changed as a result of the digital revolution and the emergence of social media and other online platforms such as YouTube etc. Generation Z is apparently choosing the shorter way and born into a world of AI enabled smart phones and prompt way of communication to more visualize appealing information over the literature and books. This transformation projects larger shift in the way of knowledge is valued and consumed, not just personal interest.

Books used to be a gateway to new worlds, concepts, wider horizon, and frame of reference in addition to being a source of knowledge. The deck of academics and poets who devoted their lives to reading may be found throughout Indian literature, creating works that stimulate and command future generations, students from all over Asia prefer to go to the ancient universities of Nalanda and Takshashila to study doctrine, the sciences, and Holy Scriptures. Indian writers have fascinated people all over the world with their chronicle even in the present day.

Gen Z passion for literature seems to be declining these days. Gen Z have been overhauled to adapt information in vividly tempting, pigmy bits via social media platforms such as YouTube, Facebook, Instagram, Tik-Tok, and Snapchat. These platforms place a plethora on entertainment and immediately, as long as little opportunity for the kind of slow focused, interaction that reading required. Many

Gen Z youngsters therefore contemplate reading to be "boring" or "time-consuming" in contrast to the prompt serotonin boosts they receive from glancing their feeds. Extensive reading's decline has important consequence. Reading books enhances critical thinking, empathy, and creativity-skills that are becoming too important in a society where inventiveness and polished problem solving are the norm. Gen Z may find it difficult to interrelate with meaningful content and for a polished worldview without these abilities. Additionally, as fewer individuals interrelate with the concepts and tales that have influenced human civilization, the drop in book interest may cause in a loss of cultural values and intellect heritage.

Teachers, parents, and writers must ensure with creative ways to involve Gen Z readers in order to resist this trend. This could call for developing book zones and reading competitiveness that use social media to build a feeling of community, or integrating digital media into reading habits, such as interrelated e-books etc. We can provide youngsters in disclosure the gratification of losing themselves in a good book by making reading more welcoming and absorbing.

"Books are not just about reading: they are about happening life through the eyes of others," as English Book Depot proprietor often plights. Books continue to be a authentic source of knowledge and inspiration in a world that is changing all the time. Even as we adjust to virtual world, we have to work to manage and maintain this thoughtfulness and knowledge.

The owner of English Book Depot portrait serves as a nudge of the timeless impact that books have on human life. The benefit of reading never goes out of swing, even though our approach of collecting information may.

It is imperative to ensure in mind the teachings learnt from the history as we bargain the complexity of the digital era and ensure that both Gen Z and elderly continue to enjoy books. In the dominating era of social media, where focus spans are shorten and digital content rule prominent, the excitement of books looks like to be vanish from Generation Z. In the long run, the physical pleasure of turning pages the enthrall experience of losing oneself in a statement, and the highbrow fulfillment of learning more gradually losing around.

Tulip's resignation in the UK is troublesome for Hasina. Spotlight on daughter Saima

Radhika Singh

The sins of fathers shall be visited upon the sons—this ominous pronouncement in the Bible has now come true for Tulip Siddiq, a 42-year-old minister in the British government, but with a twist. In her case, it wasn't her father's sins that visited upon her but those allegedly committed by her aunt, the deposed prime minister of Bangladesh, Sheikh Hasina Wazed. And it cost Siddiq her job. Slapped with a range of corruption charges by Bangladesh's Anti-Corruption Committee (ACC),

which forced an internal government inquiry, Siddiq has strenuously denied any wrongdoing—except that of ignorance about benefiting from dubious transactions. But she has paid the price and resigned as UK treasury minister on Tuesday, though she stressed that an independent review found she had "not breached the ministerial code". If the sins of aunts can impact nieces, then can daughters escape their mothers'? Ever since Siddiq's case hit the headlines, the spotlight has slowly but surely turned

to Sheikh Hasina's daughter, Saima Wazed, also known as Putul, who was elected regional director of the World Health Organisation's Southeast Asia branch amid considerable controversy in February 2024. An editorial in The Lancet had earlier questioned if she was fit for the job, as she only held a master's degree in psychology while rival aspirants were doctors with years of public health experience. The ACC has now initiated a probe into how she got the job: on her

own merit or her mother's intervention as prime minister. All eyes are now on Putul and whether she'll be forced to follow in her cousin's footsteps. What does it all mean for 77-year-old Sheikh Hasina, who has been sheltering in New Delhi since fleeing Dhaka on 5 August after a violent student uprising against her 15-year continuous tenure as Bangladesh's prime minister? There is no doubt that the charges being hurled at her, her family, and her friends are coloured by political prejudice from those now in power.

Spending on gaming in small towns has increased 16 times in the last five years



Delhi: According to a Visa white paper on payments, spending on online gaming increased 16 times in smaller areas between 2019 and 2024. The pattern indicates that digital consumption is becoming more and more prevalent in India's non-metropolitan regions. Spending on digital services, such as gaming, online education, and entertain-

ment, has increased ninefold and sixteen fold since 2019, respectively, among consumers in smaller towns. In smaller towns, the number of consumers spending more than Rs 2 lakh a year with a single card has increased by over four times, while in category A cities, the figure has increased by 1.4 times. This change has led to a 175% increase in total card expenditure in category C+ cities since 2019 and suggests that affluence is spreading outside of metropolitan areas. According to Niko Partners' India Market Report, the country's video game market is predicted to develop at an annual rate of 11.1%, surpassing \$1 billion in 2025 and reaching a valuation of \$1.4 billion by 2028.

Interglobe Air Transport to elevate Oman Air's presence in India

MUMBAI: Travel solutions provider Interglobe Air Transport Limited has been designated as the exclusive General Sales Agent (GSA) by Oman Air for the entire territory of India. A GSA works as a third-party sales representative for an airline in a country in a region and it handles air ticket and cargo sales, manages operations, develops strategies etc. Apart from Oman Air, Interglobe is the GSA for multiple international airlines including China Eastern, Delta, SAS, LATAM Airlines, Jetstar, the wholly-owned subsidiary of Australian carrier Qantas; Male-based



carrier Manta Air, South African Airways, Turkish Cargo and Virgin Atlantic. "The collaboration will utilise Air Transport's comprehensive network and proficiency to fortify Oman Air's presence and augment customer service across the Indian market," Interglobe stated in a press release issued this week. "Oman Air, distinguished for its exemplary products and services across the Middle East, Indian Subcontinent, Asia, and Europe, presently operates over 90 weekly flights to 10 Indian cities from its hub in Muscat. To strengthen Oman Air's Indian operations, Interglobe Air Transport will provide extensive sales and service.

Gold loans rise 50% in seven months

Delhi: Bank loans against gold jewelry rose 50.4% in the first seven months of the year. Despite single-digit growth in every other personal loan area, credit rose sharply. RBI issued sectoral deployment of bank credit. Gold loans totaled Rs 1,02,562 crore in March 2024. Growth was 56% year-over-year, up from

13% in October 2023. NBFCs' move and a preference for secured loans over unsecured ones contributed to the first-seven-month gold loan surge, bankers said. Bank loans to NBFCs fell 0.7% to Rs 1.5 lakh crore in the first seven months. Bankers also said that rising gold prices allow borrowers to repay previous loans

and get higher new ones. Analysts see rising gold loan demand as an indication of financial instability. RBI ordered banks and financial companies to review and fix their gold loan rules and procedures within three months last month. After an examination, evergreening was found to hide bad loans.

Union education minister to head TISS Society, Tata Trusts to have 1 member



MUMBAI: The Union education minister will soon be the chairman of the new Tata Institute of Social Sciences (TISS) Society. The executive council of the premier institute, which will replace the governing board, will be chaired by the vice chancellor and will have four nominees of the education minister and academic representatives from TISS. Tata Trusts, which had two senior members on the governing board, will now have only one member in the society. TISS Society will facilitate the functioning of TISS, while the executive council will have the power of management and administration. The norms are in line with

those of regulatory bodies in central universities. Last year, Centre had decided to bring all institutions that receive over 50% govt funds under its jurisdiction. TISS, a centrally

funded deemed-to-be university, has, therefore, been brought under govt's ambit. The drafting of a new memorandum of agreement (MoA) had been pending for some time. The executive council, as per the proposed MoA, will replace the governing board of the institute.

The agreement said the institute will be fully funded by govt. Earlier, the institute was managed by Tata Trusts and the governing board had a nominee of the trust as its chairperson. But, for some time, Tata Trusts has been funding only a few projects, under which there are ad hoc teaching and non-teaching positions in the institute. "Hence, the order is stayed till next date.

The pleas had sought quashing of the order passed by the special court

NEW DELHI: The Bombay high court on stayed a special court's order directing FIR against ex-Sebi chairperson Madhabi Puri Buch and five other officials for alleged stock market fraud and regulatory violations. The stay to remain in place for four weeks. A single bench of Justice Shivkumar Dige said the special court order of March 1 was passed mechanically without going into details and without attributing any specific role to the accused.

Four weeks time is given to the complainant in the case (Sapan Shrivastava) to file his affidavit in reply to the petitions," the HC said, according to news agency PTI. The high court's judgement came on petitions filed by Buch, three current whole-time SEBI directors - Ashwani Bhatia, Ananth Narayan G and Kamlesh Chandra Varshney and two BSE officials - managing director and chief executive officer Ramamurthy and its former chairman and public interest director Pramod Agarwal. The pleas had sought quashing of the order passed by the special court.

directing the Anti-Corruption Bureau (ACB) to register an FIR against them pertaining to certain allegations of fraud committed in 1994 while listing a company on the BSE. The case stems from a complaint by media reporter Sapan Shrivastava, who alleged large-scale financial fraud and regulatory violations during the 1994 listing of a company on the BSE.

Most Indians avoid internet purchasing this holiday due to delivery delays and return hassles



Delhi: FarEye's holiday shopping poll found that not everyone is ready to spend online. Nearly 60% of shoppers would avoid online shopping this holiday season due to shipping delays and return issues. The survey of 1,000 Indians found that 41% plan to shop from e-commerce merchants during the holidays, but nearly 60% do not owing to delivery delays and returns issues. Poor delivery terms are causing 63% of shoppers to leave carts, and 54% predict delays during the holidays. Powered By "Consumers are frustrated with getting their deliveries on time, every time, and don't want to pay extra for returns or faster delivery," said FarEye co-founder and COO Gautam Kumar.



Delhi: After years of declining sales and rising competition, Tupperware Brands Corp filed for bankruptcy. Tupperware, a public company, filed for Chapter 11 bankruptcy with \$500 million to \$1 billion in assets and \$1 billion to \$10 billion in liabilities. Since 2020, the cookware industry, which dominated food storage for decades, wavered in its viability. The company intended to close its only US operation and lay off over 150 workers. Tupperware filed for bankruptcy after months of negotiations with lenders about more than \$700 million in loans.

'EC covering up voter list fraud': TMC's fresh charge

NEW DELHI: Trinamool Congress (TMC) leader Saket Gokhale on countered the Commission of India (ECI) 's claims, accusing the poll body of "covering up" the alleged voter list fraud instead of accepting it. The Rajya Sabha MP claimed the ECI was attempting to brazen out the irregularities instead of accepting "their blunder on the duplicate voter ID fraud issue".

Referring to the parts of ECI's handbook for electoral registration officers, Gokhale alleged that the poll body's clarification was "false", which "contradicted their own rules and guidelines. The TMC leader, in point-by-point rebuttal to the ECI, voiced concern over duplication of Voter IDs, or EPIC. The EPIC (Electors Photo Identity Card) number

is a unique identification number assigned to every registered voter in India by the ECI. It is printed on the Voter ID card and serves as proof of identity during elections. Gokhale, in a post on X, questioned the ECI's claim that EPIC with the same numbers were issued to multiple voters due to certain states using the same alphanumeric series. Citing the poll body's handbook, the TMC leader said Functional Unique Serial Number (FUSN) are different for every assembly constituency and that it was impossible for vot-

ers in two different constituencies, even in the same state, to have the same first three letters in their EPIC. "EPIC card numbers are an alphanumeric sequence of 3 letters & 7 digits. The ECI handbook CLEARLY states that the 3 letters, known as a Functional Unique Serial Number (FUSN) are different for EVERY Assembly constituency. Therefore, it is IMPOSSIBLE for voters in 2 different assembly constituencies (even in the same state) to have the SAME first 3 letters on their EPIC.

'It is for development of all sections': Union minister Giriraj praises

NEW DELHI: Union minister Giriraj Singh on praised the Bihar Budget for 2025-26 and said it is for the development of all sections, and added that sports, college, and medical facilities will be available in all blocks.

"This budget is for the development of all sections... Sports, college, and medical facilities will be available in all blocks. In this budget, scholarships for SC/ST children have been doubled. This budget is a budget for all-around development," Singh told ANI. Bihar's government on Monday unveiled a whopping Rs 3.17 lakh crore budget for the financial year 2025-26, marking a significant 13.6 per cent increase from the previous year's Rs 2.79 lakh crore allocation. This budget, presented by deputy chief minister and finance minister Samrat Choudhary, holds special significance as it's the ruling government's last budget before the state elections later this year. The substantial hike in budget allocation is expected to bolster various sectors, including infrastructure development, social welfare, human development, and administrative purposes.

Union minister Nityanand Rai said on Monday



Household savings should recover in H1 FY25 as debt eases

Delhi: Early evidence suggests that net household financial savings, which rose to 5.3% of GDP in FY24 from 5% in FY23, will rebound substantially in the first part of FY25. An increase in net household financial savings allows government and enterprises to employ local sources for investment funding, which boosts the economy. Net financial savings peaked at 51.7% of GDP during Covid but fell to 36.1% in FY22 and 28.5% in FY23. The country's financial savings come from households, private and public corporations, and the government. Dropping personal loan liabilities has helped household net financial savings. These divisions have grown slowly due to RBI's crackdown on unsecured personal loans, gold loans, and NBFC lending. In its December 2024 bulletin, RBI reported a small increase in FY24.



household net financial savings to 5.3% of GDP, up from 5% in FY23 and 7.3% and 11.5% in FY22 and FY21. A Motilal Oswal Financial Services research forecasts that net household financial savings reached 7.3% of GDP in the first half of FY25, almost double FY24. This improvement was driven by a decline in liabilities to 4.7% of GDP from 6.9% in H1 FY24 and an increase in gross financial savings. Gross financial savings climbed to 11.6% of GDP in FY24, but higher liabilities neutralized the gains, raising net personal

financial savings to 5.3%. Household liabilities were 6.4% of GDP, a 17-year high, barely below FY07's 6.6%. Gross financial savings rose due to insurance savings, fewer currency holdings, and greater capital market investments. However, household debt rose to 41% of GDP in FY24 from 37.9% in FY23. The research estimates household debt grew to 43.5% of GDP in the first half of FY25 from 31-32%. Housing loans make up 30% of household debt, whereas non-housing debt rose to 32.3% of GDP in Q2 FY25.

Government meets 13 India AI businesses for services

Delhi: The ministry of electronics and information technology (MeitY) technical panel met with thirteen companies who bid to deliver AI compute and cloud services under the IndiaAI Mission on Monday. IndiaAI COO Kavita Bhatia led the technical panel, which included MeitY, NIC, CDAC, and two IITs. Thirteen companies were chosen from 19 bidders. Jio Platforms, Tata Communications, CtrlS Datacenters Limited, E2E Networks, Yotta Data Services, CMS Computers, Hostin Services, I2k2 Networks, Orient Technologies, Vensysco



Technologies, CloudThat Technologies, Locuz Enterprise Solutions, and NxtGen Datacenter and Cloud Technologies. Bidders had to either have operational AI services on cloud with at least 1,000 AI compute units installed or promise to do so within six months of signing an agreement with IndiaAI. The technical

panel asked organizations about their existing capacity, expected capacity in six months, and availability of compute units or GPUs for the IndiaAI Mission. Nvidia leads GPU manufacture internationally, followed by AMD and Intel, but the technical panel inquired if India will make data center servers and other equipment.

CAPSULES

Google pulls offline map app from Play Store per government requests



Delhi: Google and Apple removed MAPS.Me offline navigation app from Play and App Store. The app misrepresented India's border. To Google's nodal officer, Priyadarshi Banerjee, the Survey of India (SoI) submitted MAPS.Me a notice under Section 79(3)(b) of the IT Act, 2000, in December 2024. The software misrepresents Jammu & Kashmir and Ladakh, according to the notice. The app's Google Play Store homepage now displays "We're sorry, the requested URL was not found on this server". SoI reportedly provided notice to Google, but since the app is unavailable on Apple's App Store for Indian consumers, it's unclear if Apple was notified. The publisher accessed the letter using Lumen Database. It says: "The maps.me app on Google PlayStore portrays an Indian map with an incorrect external boundary, endangering India's sovereignty and integrity. The Survey of India (SoI) was appointed by the Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology (MeitY) in 2020 to 'disable access to incorrect maps of India.'"

Banks raise FD rates to increase deposits

Delhi: War for deposits continues. Top banks are modifying rates through special tenures, senior citizen privileges, and bulk deposit plans as the financial industry faces a liquidity constraint. IDBI Bank is the latest to raise super senior rates, while Bank of Baroda unveiled a liquid fixed deposit product. IDBI Bank announced the 'IDBI Chiranjeevi-Super Senior Citizen FD' for 80-year-olds. The initiative offers 65bps over the bank's ordinary fixed deposit rates and 15bps over senior citizen rates. An 8.05% interest rate is offered for 555 days, 7.9% for 375 days, 8% for 444 days, and 7.85% for 700 days. From January 13, 2025, the program will apply. Customers can withdraw Rs



1,000 after depositing Rs 5,000 in Bank of Baroda's liquid fixed deposits.

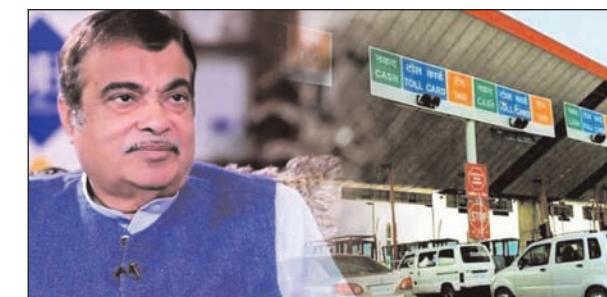
Deposits over Rs 5,000 must be multiples of Rs 1,000. Bulk deposits exceed Rs 3 crore, whereas retail deposits are below this threshold. The deposit tenure is 12-60 months, with

existing interest rates. Seniors and super seniors receive extra interest. Seniors get 0.5% for deposits up to three years and 0.6% for deposits beyond three and five years. Super seniors get 0.1% on deposits over one year.

Direct tax collection increases 20% to 21L cr

Delhi: Non-corporate tax, comprising personal income tax, outpaced corporation tax in the fiscal year up to Jan 12 by about 20% to Rs 20.6 lakh crore. The latest Central Board of Direct Taxes data estimated that refunds rose 42% to Rs 3.7 lakh crore, raising net direct tax revenues 15.9% to Rs 16.9 lakh crore. Corporation tax mop-up jumped 16.5% to Rs 9.7 lakh crore, while non-corporate tax rose 21.7% to just under Rs 10.5 lakh crore. Non-corporate tax payers include people, HUFs, enterprises, and municipal governments.

Annual, lifelong private automobile toll plans on cards

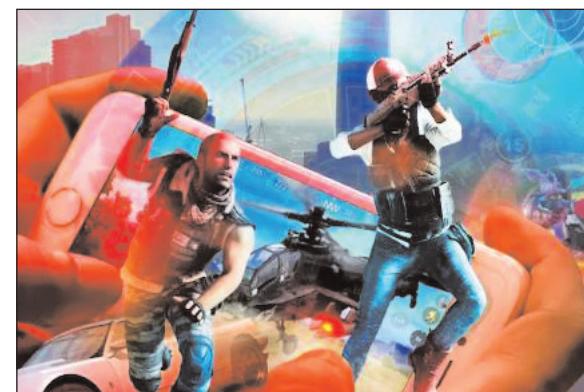


Delhi: Union road transport minister Nitin Gadkari said that the roads ministry is developing annual and 'life-time' passes for private cars to allow unlimited travel across the NH network for a single toll payment. Private cars account for 60% of NH traffic, but only 20-26% of toll income. Gadkari remarked during a 'Barrierless Tolling in India' workshop, "Private automobiles generate less money. The majority of toll revenue comes from commercial vehicles. To avoid problems, we're

exploring yearly passes. People will be relieved but we will not lose." They stated that the government is developing a plan to handle private toll operators who claim high pass user counts on certain stretches. Primus Partners and Think Infra's thinking paper, released by Gadkari, claimed that GNSS-based tolling will enhance traffic flow by eliminating delays, lowering travel time by 20-30%, and saving 8-10 minutes each toll station. The environmental benefits include reducing carbon emissions by 50 lakh tonnes and saving Rs 12,000 crore in fuel costs.

Spending on gaming in small towns has increased 16 times in the last five years

Delhi: According to a Visa white paper on payments, spending on online gaming increased 16 times in smaller areas between 2019 and 2024. The pattern indicates that digital consumption is becoming more and more prevalent in India's non-metropolitan regions. Spending on digital services, such as gaming, online education, and entertainment, has increased ninefold and sixteen fold since 2019, respectively, among consumers in smaller towns. In smaller towns, the number of consumers spending more than Rs 2 lakh a year with a single card has increased by over four times, while in category A cities, the figure has increased by 1.4 times. This change has led to a 175% increase in total card expenditure in cat-



NCLAT accepts Meta, Whatsapp appeals against CCI's Rs 213 crore dominance penalty

NCLAT accepted Meta Platforms and Whatsapp's appeals against CCI's Rs 213.14 crore market dominance penalty. After hearing Meta and CCI's initial submissions, a two-member bench of the National Company Law Appellate Tribunal (NCLAT) indicated the issue needs consideration. "The parties' submission requires attention."

egory C+ cities since 2019 and suggests that affluence is spreading outside of metropolitan areas. According to Niko

In FY25, gross direct tax collection increased by 20%



Approximately 7.68 lakh crore was collected in net corporation

tax between April 1, 2024, and January 12 of current year. As of January 12 of this fiscal year, the net amount collected from securities transaction taxes was 44,538 crore. Approximately 3.74 lakh crore in refunds were given out during that time, a 42.49% rise over the same period last year. According to the

report, gross direct tax mop-up rose 20% to 20.64 lakh crore during that time. In the current fiscal year, the government has allocated 22.07 lakh crore from direct taxes, of which 10.20 lakh crore is collected from corporate taxes and 11.87 lakh crore from personal income tax and other taxes.

Urban Co appoints Kotak, two others for 3,000-cr IPO



Delhi: Hyperlocal services company Urban Company may file draft papers for its INR 3,000 Cr IPO by March. According to insiders, the company would issue new and existing shares in its IPO. It said that the company will mostly raise primary capital. Kotak Mahindra Capital, Goldman Sachs, and Morgan Stanley will manage the process. As revealed last October, Prosus plans to double its investment in the company before its IPO. Prosus wants to fund \$30 Mn (approximately INR 252 Cr) into hyperlocal services compa-

ny Urban Company in a secondary deal, providing Bessemer Venture Partners a partial exit. A secondary sale with Bengaluru-based Dharana Capital raised INR 400 Cr (\$50 Mn) for Urban

Company last July. Urban Company employees and shareholders sold their shares. Snapdeal cofounders Rohit Bansal and Kunal Bahl's VC firm Titan Capital left the startup after the invest-

Prior to its demerger, Aditya Birla Fashion will raise \$500 million.

Delhi: By combining qualified institutional placement with preferential issuing of equity shares, Aditya Birla Fashion and Retail (ABFRL) intends to raise \$500 million. ABFRL would give \$125 million in shares to American investor Fidelity Investments and \$150 million to promoter Pilani Investment and Industries Corporation. The planned vertical demerger of the business into two distinct listed firms is preceded by the capital raise. The fund-raise is contingent upon regulatory and shareholder approval.

ment raise. By Urban Company lost INR 93 Cr before tax in FY24, down 70% from INR 312 Cr a year earlier. In FY24, operations EBITDA fell to INR 116 Cr from INR 297 Cr. Urban Company earned INR 281 Cr in Q1 of FY25.

Gold hits new record on Mideast tension as traders



Gold soared to a record high of \$2,696.78 amid Middle East tensions and favorable US economic data, reinforcing bets on Federal Reserve interest rate cuts. Investors are turning to gold for safety due to geopolitical uncertainties and mixed economic indicators. With an impending US election, gold's upward trend is likely to continue regardless of the outcome. Gold climbed to a fresh record amid ongoing tensions in the Middle East as traders also weighed US data that kept alive bets on the Federal Reserve's interest-rate cuts. Bullion touched an all-time high of \$2,696.78 as Israel said it killed Hamas leader Yahya Sinwar, the architect of the Palestinian group's attack on southern Israel that triggered a year-long war in Gaza. Investors typically seek safety in the precious metal in times of geopolitical and economic uncertainty. Data showed US retail

Adar Poonawalla is acquiring a 50% stake in Karan Johar's Dharma Production and Dharmatic Entertainment for Rs 1,000 crore, valuing the company at Rs 2000 crore, according to a report. Johar retains creative control, bolstered by financial resources to adapt to evolving market preferences. Poonawalla is making this investment privately through Serene Productions. Johar will retain the remaining stake. Adar Poonawalla, the billionaire CEO of the Serum Institute of India, is acquiring a 50% stake in Karan Johar's Dharma Production and Dharmatic Entertainment for Rs 1,000 crore. This investment values

HDFC Bank board okays HDB Financial's Rs 12,500 crore IPO



Delhi: HDFC Bank's board has cleared a Rs 12,500 crore IPO for its subsidiary, HDB Financial Services, as part of the company's plan to go public. The decision was made during a board meeting held on October 19, 2024, following previous announcements in July and Sept of this year regarding the offer.

The IPO will consist of both a fresh issue and an offer for sale by the bank. The OFS will include shares with a face value of Rs 10 each, aggregating up to Rs 10,000 crore, though this amount may be revised as permitted under applicable law.

The fresh issue will amount to Rs 2,500 crore, bringing the total IPO size to Rs 12,500 crore. The proposed IPO size makes it the largest IPO by an NBFC. Last month,

Bajaj Housing Finance had raised Rs 6,560 crore through an IPO. The proposed IPO is subject to market conditions, regulatory approvals, and other considerations. Regulatory clearances are being sought, and the company must adhere to applicable laws, including RBI's scale-based regulations for NBFCs, which require HDB to go public by Sept 2025. Despite the IPO, HDB will continue to operate as a subsidiary of HDFC Bank, in compliance with regulatory guidelines.

Life insurance and Mediclaim exemption suggested by GST panel

Delhi: An official said term life insurance premiums and senior health insurance premiums may be GST-exempt. The GoM that set the GST rate on life and health insurance exempted GST on premiums for health insurance with coverage of Rs 5 lakh for non-seniors. Officials' health insurance premiums over Rs 5 lakh would continue to attract 18% GST.

Combining Club Vistara and Air India Flying Returns to "Maharaja Club"



Delhi: Air India Flying Returns and Club Vistara will unite on November 12, 2024. CV Points, Tier Points, Tier Status, and Vouchers will be sent to the connected Flying Returns account. Flying Returns will become the Maharaja Club after this merger. Member Club Vistara account profiles will be frozen on October 15, 2024, for a smooth handover.

Profile details in Club Vistara accounts cannot be changed after this date. CV Points expiring in September and October 2024 will be extended. At migration, all CV Points, including 'Extended CV Points,' will be trans-

ferred to Flying Returns accounts and valid for at least one year, regardless of expiration date. Air India's expanded network will accept points. Member-issued or auto-generated "On-demand Voucher Generation" complimentary ticket vouchers valid after November 11, 2024, will be extended for three months.

If not issued before

November 11, 2024, "On-demand Voucher Generation" vouchers will be automatically supplied to the Flying Returns account with a nine-month fixed validity. You can Buy CV Points and Extend Voucher Validity till October 25, 2024. These features will be removed from Club Vistara accounts after this date.

AI adoption to boost data, cloud role hiring

CHENNAI

As companies navigate AI adoption, demand and salary growth for data science, data engineering, DevOps and cloud computing roles are expected to grow faster than other technology roles in FY25 compared to the previous fiscal, according to TeamLease Digital. The tech staffing and solu-

tions providers' snapshot analysis shows that a rise in AI, machine learning (ML), and automation skills has significantly increased the demand for data-related roles. While 69% of job postings for data scientists mentioned ML skills in FY24, demand for natural language processing jumped from 5% in 2024 to 19% in 2025, indicating a broad industry shift toward AI-driven solutions, the company said in a note.

The demand for AI-related roles will increase 17% in the current fiscal and about 25 per cent in FY26, Neeti Sharma, chief executive of TeamLease Digital, told. This includes roles such as data scientist, analyst and engineer.

193 companies post approximately 90,000 internship opportunities on the web

it continued. begin on December 2 in accordance with the pilot project, which is projected to cost about ₹800 crore. The article, which cited ministry sources, states that as of October 11, there were 90,849 positions listed on the PM Internship platform. By October 9, 2024, there were around 50,000 possibilities available, up from about 16,000 on October 7, 2024.

Mid, small-cap mutual funds attract 30,350 crore on strong returns

NEW DELHI: Mid-cap and small-cap mutual fund schemes have continued to attract strong investor interest, garnering nearly Rs 30,350 crore in inflows during April-Sept of the current financial year, driven by impressive returns delivered by these segments.



In comparison, the cumulative inflow into mid-cap and small-cap funds stood at Rs 32,924 crore during the same period last year, according to data from the Association of Mutual Funds in India (Amfi). The inflow trend persists despite concerns raised by market regulator Sebi over heightened inflows into small-cap and mid-cap funds, as experts believe investors will continue to favour these categories for their potential to deliver high returns. "Small caps will continue to grow at a faster rate for years to come. I expect the inflows to continue as Indians want to invest in the high-growth sectors. Small cap funds should be seen as an integral part of one's portfolio allocation and not a tactical play," Trust Mutual Fund CEO Sandeep Bagla said. Individually, mid-cap funds saw an inflow of Rs 14,756 crore and small-cap funds attracted Rs 15,586 crore in the first half of FY25. This aggregates the total inflow to Rs 30,342 crore, the data showed. The strong investor interest in mid-cap and small-cap mutual funds is driven by the potential for high returns in these segments, Tradejini COO Trivesh said.

The Modi Govt is determined to revive

the history & cultural heritage of

Kashmir and we will soon regain what

we have lost: Shah

Chandigarh: Union Home Minister and Minister of Cooperation and senior BJP leader Amit Shah, during the release of the book 'Jammu Kashmir & Ladakh Through The Ages: A Visual Narrative of Continuities and Linkages', made it clear that 'For the last 10 years, the Modi government is determined to revive the history and cultural heritage of Kashmir. At the same time, he also stressed that we will soon regain what we have lost. In this country with diverse cultures, religions, food habits and attire from Kashmir to Kanyakumari and Bengal to Gujarat, for decades, historians have created a myth that the very idea of

India's independence is dishonest. In fact, historians, especially leftist historians, have seen and written about India from a geopolitical perspective, whereas India is the only country in the world which is a geo-culture and whose borders are made up of cultures. This book titled 'Jammu Kashmir & Ladakh Through The Ages: A Visual Narrative of Continuities and Linkages' has minutely proved that the culture, languages, scripts, spiritual thoughts, arts of pilgrimage sites, commerce and trade present in every part of the country were present in Kashmir for thousands of years. Based on references of texts which are about 8 thousand years old, this book has clearly proved that Kashmir was, is and will always be an inseparable part of India.

This book, which proves with references the journey of Buddhism from Nepal to Kashi, Bihar, Kashmir and Afghanistan, tells that Kashmir was the birthplace of the principles refined after Lord Buddha and Kashmir is also the birthplace of the principles of Buddhism prevalent today. The 8-thousand-year-old history of Kashmir has been engraved in this book as if the Ganges is being contained in a vessel. For about 150 years, to please the rulers, the meaning of history was limited to Delhi's Dariba to Ballimaran and Lutyens to Gymkhana.

