

AKHAND BHARAT SANDESH

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

FIR lodged against Arvind Kejriwal over Yamuna water remarks

NEW DELHI: An FIR has been registered against Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) national convenor and former Delhi chief minister Arvind Kejriwal over his statements regarding the Yamuna river water and allegations against the Haryana government. Following a court order, hours before the Delhi elections, FIR was lodged at Shahabad Police Station in Kurukshetra, Haryana, against Kejriwal and other unidentified AAP members under various sections of the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita (BNS). Facing political attacks from BJP leaders, Kejriwal now finds himself entangled in legal trouble over his remarks on the Yamuna. The Haryana government earlier this week filed a criminal complaint against him, with Haryana Revenue and Disaster Management Minister Vipul Goel confirming that a case has been registered against Kejriwal in a Sonipat court under the Disaster Management Act. Speaking to journalists after chairing a meeting of the urban local bodies department, Goel criticised Kejriwal's remarks as "absurd and misleading." He demanded that the Election Commission take strict cognisance of such "baseless statements," accusing the former Delhi CM of engaging in "cheap politics" ahead of the elections. "The water supplied to Delhi is the same water consumed by the President, Prime Minister, and Union Ministers," Goel said, accusing Kejriwal of spreading fear among both Delhi and Haryana's citizens.

Delhi elections : 7am to 6pm- 11 hours that will matter for 5 years

NEW DELHI: The stage is set for a gripping three-way contest that will not only shape the future of the capital but also determine the political fate of its three main contenders. More than 1.5 crore eligible voters will have the chance to choose their representatives for the 70-member Delhi assembly from a pool of 699 candidates - 603 men, 95 women and a third-gender person - who have campaigned vigorously over the past two weeks. The polling booths will open at 7am and voting will continue till 6pm. The last two assembly elections were one-sided with AAP winning two huge mandates. BJP could barely manage to mark its presence in the assembly and Congress was almost decimated. In 2015, AAP romped home with 54.6% vote share and a record 67 seats with the remaining three going to BJP. The 2020 assembly elections saw AAP's vote share and seats drop only marginally to 53.6% and 62, respectively. BJP won the remaining eight seats and Congress failed to open its account yet again. The three political parties are engaged in a fierce



electoral battle once again and have spared no effort in wooing the electorate. Most of the promises made in their election manifestos have a similar ring. Delhi hits the button today Several seats are going to witness a keen contest this time. While AAP chief and former CM Arvind Kejriwal is facing a stiff challenge from BJP's Parvesh Verma and Congress's Sandeep Dikshit, both former MPs from different constituencies in different years, CM Atishi is pitted against BJP's Ramesh Bidhuri, another former MP, and Congress's Alka Lamba. As the city votes today, several contests would be closely watched, among them former deputy CM Manish Sisodia, who has shifted from Patparganj to Jangpura, where BJP's Tarvinder Singh Marwah and Congress's Farhad Suri

are his two main rivals. In Ballimaran, there is a keen contest between Congress heavyweight and former minister Haroon Yusuf and incumbent AAP minister Imran Hussain. Greater Kailash, Malviya Nagar, Gandhi Nagar, Mangolpuri, Patparganj and Matia Mahal are some of the other seats of immense consequence this time. AAP has promised a number of new welfare schemes, which, it claims, will help families make huge savings. It has showcased free electricity and water provided to frugal consumers and free travel for women in public buses as some of its schemes which, along with "good education and health", have helped each household make a monthly saving of nearly Rs 25,000. The party has also claimed t. hat a monthly honorarium of Rs 2,100.

On Delhi poll eve, PM Modi's 'jacuzzi' jibe at Kejriwal

New Delhi: Asserting that he was only into his "third term" and that BJP would remain in office for many more years to steer India to the "developed" club, PM Modi Tuesday tore into leader of opposition Rahul Gandhi, accusing him of using "the language of urban Naxals openly". "Those who declare a war on the Indian state can understand neither the Constitution nor the country's unity," Modi

said in his first response to Rahul's recent remark that his "fight was not just with BJP and RSS, but against the Indian state itself". Replying to the debate on the President's address, the PM also took exception to Rahul's remark terming Droupadi Murmu's speech unexciting. Modi threw barbs at AAP chief Arvind Kejriwal, without naming him, for his alleged opulent lifestyle - "a few

netas focus on installing jacuzzis and stylish showers in their houses" - contrasting it with his govt's welfare measures for the underprivileged. Modi's 'jacuzzi' jibe at Kejriwal, 'urban Naxal' dig at Rahul Stating that BJP would be in office for many more years, Modi said, "I often raise the bar... and it's my third term only. Many countries became developed in 20-25 years and since we have democracy, demography.

Tax treat: Deposits may get Rs 42,000-45,000 crore boost

NEW DELHI: The tax relief measures unveiled in the 2025-26 Budget are likely to increase deposit inflow in banks and several scenarios worked out by the department of financial services (DFS) estimated it to be in the range of Rs 42,000-45,000 crore, a top official said on Monday. M Nagaraju, secretary DFS, told reporters that the steps announced in the Budget are expected to improve the

banking sector's liquidity. The assumption is that senior citizens and others, who will benefit from the Budget measures, will put some of their funds in bank fixed deposits. a raft of measures and increased the income tax exemption limit to Rs 12 lakh. TDS threshold for fixed deposits interest income earned by senior citizens will go up from Rs 50,000 to Rs 1 lakh from FY26 and the Budget.

Odisha HC grants bail to thief with 'sapling plants' condition

Orissa An Orissa HC judge has granted bail to a man facing prosecution for alleged theft on the condition that he plant 200 saplings of local varieties such as mango, neem, and tamarind around his village in Jharsuguda district and maintain them for two years, reports Lalmohan Patnaik. Manas Ati had been in judicial custody since December 25 last year for allegedly stealing six electric poles in villages under Kolabira police.

Amazon's 'leaked memo' to AWS sales managers: Demote managers

NEW DELHI: Amazon's 'leaked memo' to AWS sales managers: Demote managers and ... Amazon's AWS division is enforcing stricter guidelines for its sales organization, mandating that managers oversee more direct reports and potentially reassign some leaders to individual contributor roles, according to internal documents obtained by Business Insider. The directive mandates



AWS sales managers to handle a minimum of eight direct reports, up from the previous requirement of six, as part of CEO Andy Jassy's September announcement to increase the ratio of individual contributors to managers by

15% by March's end. "I hate bureaucracy," Jassy said during a November all-hands meeting, addressing employee concerns about the reorganization. The CEO attributed the changes to Amazon's pandemic-era hiring spree, which he said "stretched" the company and led to slower decision-making. The guidelines also call for a temporary pause on new manager hiring until the team .

Google, , and others tech companies that announced layoffs in the first month

NEW DELHI:

Layoffs in the tech industry, which began in 2022, shows no signs of easing in 2025, as layoffs continue to plague companies across Silicon Valley and beyond. From tech giants like Google and Microsoft to e-commerce leaders like Amazon and social media powerhouses like Facebook, an increasing number of tech firms are reducing their workforce, suggesting a potential paradigm shift.

According to layoffs.fyi, 31 tech companies have laid off over 7,000 employees this year. This list tracks the major tech companies that have either implemented or announced plans for lay-



offs in 2025. Microsoft was first major tech company to confirm job cuts Microsoft has confirmed another round of layoffs, impacting employees across various divisions. The company stated that these reductions specifically target individuals

not meeting performance expectations. Business Insider initially reported, citing sources, that the layoffs include members of Microsoft's security division. A Microsoft spokesperson confirmed the job cuts but declined to disclose the total number of affected employ-

ees. Despite the global layoffs, Microsoft's India and South Asia head, Puneet Chandok, has assured that the company's India operations will not be affected by this latest round of job cuts.

Centre's Rs 1 lakh crore urban infra fund challenges states to think like startups

The Budget proposes an Urban Challenge Fund (UCF) of Rs 1 lakh crore to encourage states to think innovatively towards attaining sustainable urbanisation and redevelopment goals in existing cities. The grant is expected to infuse around Rs 4 lakh crore for infrastructure development, achieving saturation and implementing redevelopment projects. An allocation of Rs 10,000 crore is proposed for 2025-'26," FM Nirmala Sitharaman said in her speech. UCF would help implement proposals for 'Cities as Growth Hubs', 'Creative Redevelopment.

Dalit woman's murder in UP stirs political storm before key bypoll

LUCKNOW/AYODHYA: A 22-year-old Dalit woman was found murdered after being allegedly raped in Ayodhya, triggering a political firestorm before the February 5 bypolls in Milkipur, an assembly constituency reserved for scheduled castes in the district. The woman had been missing since Thursday night and was found dead in a canal near her village Saturday. The crime has drawn sharp political reactions, with the opposition accusing BJP-led UP govt of law and order failure. CM Yogi Adityanath, while addressing a rally in Milkipur, hit back at the opposition and hinted at possible involvement of SP members in the crime. "Remember the crime with

the Dalit daughter in Ayodhya. When the investigation goes to the bottom, the involvement of some or the other beast of SP will surely be known," he said. The woman's family reported her missing at Ayodhya police station Friday. The next morning, her body was spotted by her brother-in-law, about 500m from her home. Police said the autopsy revealed that the woman died due to shock and haemorrhage. While sexual assault has not yet been confirmed, forensic teams have collected samples for testing. Nayyar said Sunday that two suspects had been detained based on CCTV footage and informers' inputs.

JDU hails Budget, says it fulfils Bihar's long-pending demands

Vatika Times

NEW DELHI: Sanjay Jha, working president of JDU, on Sunday lashed out at those criticising schemes for Bihar in the Union Budget and said the provisions had fulfilled long-pending demands of the state, stressing that the Union govt's concern for the people of the poor state had validated CM Nitish Kumar's decision to switch from INDIA bloc to NDA before the LS polls. Responding to opposition criticism that the 'Bihar package' in the Budget was aimed at assembly elections due in Nov, Jha said this had exposed the "anti-Bihar mindset" of parties trying to make it an issue in Delhi polls: a reference to Congress and AAP. Speaking of central aid promised for western Kosi area, Jha said the region had been ravaged by floods .

Musk's DOGEs of war are bringing down storied US institutions



Washington: A 22-year-old Indian-American whiz is among half dozen young tech nerds deployed by Elon Musk in his purported effort to deflate a bloated US government amid fear and alarm in the Washington establishment that minnows, including Musk himself, will play havoc with long-established covenants. Hundreds of government officials at the Department of

Treasury, General Services Administration (GSA), Office of Personnel Management (OPM), USAID, and FBI who have been summarily fired or locked out are

gathering in front of their offices in panic as Elon's back-pack bearing "nerd army" -- or Musk's apparatchiks, according to critics -- are said to be summoning senior officials for questioning, seeking access to government systems and explanations about government programs. Among them is Akash Bobba, a graduate of UC Berkeley, whose resume includes experience in AI.

Nandi met Rambhadracharya Ji Maharaj with UP CM

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Prayagraj: Industrial Development Minister of Uttar Pradesh Nand Gopal Gupta Nandi received the blessings and company of the founder of Tulsi Peeth and the flag bearer of Sanatan culture, Padma Vibhushan decorated Param Pujya Jagadguru Shri Rambhadracharya Ji



Maharaj in the dignified presence of the Karmayogi Chief Minister of Uttar Pradesh, the most respected Shri Yogi Adityanath Ji, at the holy place of chanting, penance and meditation, Teerthraj Prayagraj. He also participated in the religious rituals there.

Mayor presents Sangam souvenir to King of Bhutan

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Prayagraj: Mayor Umesh Chandra Ganesh Kesarwani on Monday extended a warm welcome and felicitation to His Majesty King Jigme Khesar Namgyel Wangchuck of Bhutan and Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath at the Bamrauli Airport on their arrival at the sacred land of Teerthraj Prayag. On this occasion, Mayor Ganesh Kesarwani felicitated the King of Bhutan by presenting him a souvenir of Sangam. On this occasion, the King of Bhutan said that I am blessed to have come to the holy place of Prayagraj. My mind is happy with this religious place.



Divyaang Naseem Begum welcomed devotees

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Prayagraj: On Basant Panchami, Divyang Naseema Begum, honored by the Chief Minister of Uttar Pradesh for social service, served biscuits, water bottles and tea



to the devotees who came from far away to the Mahakumbh and presented an example of Ganga-Jamuni culture. Naseem Begum, a resident of Bahadurganj, Prayagraj, who cannot speak or hear, came out on the road and welcomed the devotees who came to the Mahakumbh with an open heart. Naseem Begum was honored by the Chief Minister of Uttar Pradesh Yogi Adityanath ji for her excellent work in the social sector. Rana Parveen, Zarina Begum, Irshad Ullah, Altamas Allah, Zaki Khan, Asad, Imran, etc. were present.

Muslim Rashtriya Manch serving Kumbh pilgrims

Prayagraj: On the occasion of Prayagraj Basant Panchami, devotees who came under the leadership of Farid Sabri, Eastern Uttar Pradesh Co-ordinator of Mus-



lim Rashtriya Manch, near Bahadurganj Chhota Dara were served with sweets and a bag. Waqim Ahmed, Mohammad Salman, Shakeel Salmani and others were present.

Zara Women and Child Welfare Org organized feast on Basant Panchami

Prayagraj: On the last big bath of Basant Panchami, once again the people of the Muslim community organized a feast for the devotees coming to Prayagraj! On Nakas Kohne, a feast was organized by Zara Mahila and Bal Kalyan Sanstha for the devotees coming on Basant Panchami bath, in which water bottles, tea and snacks were distributed among the people! Apart from this, water bottles were also given to the people coming and going! Nuzairah Zara, President of Zara Mahila and Bal Kalyan Sanstha, said that on January 28, many devotees had to face trouble on Moni Amavasya bath and lakhs of devotees had to spend the night on the road! People of the Muslim community had already made preparations for the service of the devotees for this Basant Panchami bath and feasts were organized at various places for the devotees coming to Kumbh! On this occasion, Zara, Uzma, Salman Ahmed, Nadeem Ali, Advocate Aamir and Arif etc. were present.

Vishwa Manav Roohani Kendra providing free services to pilgrims

Unique confluence of food, medical service and spirituality

AKHAND BHARAT SANDESH

Prayagraj: Vishwa Manav Roohani Kendra is dedicated to the service of devotees in the holy Triveni Sangam area of Mahakumbh. Free food, medical and ambulance services continued uninterrupted on the occasion of Basant Panchami. Every day thousands of devotees are getting free food here and also taking advantage of medical facilities from professional doctors. This camp remains a unique gathering of people's faith in Mahakumbhnagar. A unique confluence of food, medical service and spirituality is flowing here. Vishwa Manav Roohani Kendra, inspired by its spiritual head Sant Baljit Singh Ji, provides services every year through its charity in religious events like Shri Amarnath Yatra, Kanwar Yatra, Shaktipeeths across the

country during Navratri and Shri Ram Janmabhoomi pilgrimage. In Mahakumbh 2025, the organization has set up a huge food distribution center and free medical camp near Sector No. 21, Khak Chowk, Mahavir Marg South Pontoon (Pipa) Bridge No. 03.

Food Service: This service started on 12th January and long queues of devotees are always seen outside the Shivr to get food. More than 500 sevadars are continuously engaged in preparing and distributing food with full devotion and enthusiasm from morning to late night. **Medical Service:** A team of experienced doctors and volunteers is providing free consultation, medicines and first aid services to the devotees 24 hours a day.

Emergency Service: A multi-speciality ambulance



is available to serve the devotees 24 hours a day to provide quick medical assistance to those in need.

Saint Baljit Singh also reached the fair. On January 12, Saint Baljit Singhji, the spiritual head of Vishwa Manav Roohani Kendra, ar-

rived at the Maha Kumbh camp for the first time on the holy land of Prayag unexpectedly, inspected the camp and gave necessary instructions. He sat among the devotees, had food and gave the message to the people present to "take the

goodness from the Kumbh Mela and leave the badness behind."

Hot food served on Basant Panchami: The organization took a special initiative for the police, paramilitary forces and other administrative staff de-

played on the Maha Kumbh Nagar Basant Panchami festival. On the request of the administration, the organization distributed fresh and hot food to the employees on duty at the railway station, bus stand, parking zone and main sites. This food became a source of relief and energy for them amidst long duty and difficult conditions. The administration expressed gratitude for this cooperation of the organization and expressed gratitude for such selfless service being done by the organization.

On the path of service: Since 2005, the organization is dedicated to the service of humanity and is doing selfless service through its 255 branches all over India. This organization is continuously contributing in the field of medicine, education and social service.

Shankaracharya's ten-day 30th Peethrohan Utsav celebration begins

Hindu army will hoist flag of Sanatan all over world: Shankaracharya Adhokshajanand Devtirth
Assam cabinet minister felicitated Shankaracharya

AKHAND BHARAT SANDESH

Prayagraj: The 30th ten-day Peethadheeswar of Govardhan Math Puri Jagadguru Shankaracharya Swami Adhokshajanand Devtirth is being celebrated with great pomp at the Shankaracharya camp in Kumbhnagar. It will conclude on Madh Purnima with due rituals. Learned Acharyas, saints and politicians from various states of the country are coming to participate in the ceremony. During the ceremony, the 145th Shankaracharya of the Peeth Adhokshajanand Devtirth said that Sanatan Dharma is expanding rapidly all over the world. The day is not far when the army of religion will hoist the flag of Sanatan all over the world.

On the day of Basant Panchami, the ten-day Peetharohan Utsav ceremony began amidst Vedic chanting at the Shankaracharya camp on Harshvardhan Marg in Sector 18 of Kumbh Nagar. On this occasion, devotees offered sacrifices in the Yagyashaala and prayed for public welfare. On the day of Basant Panchami in the year 1995, in the Ardh Kumbh Mela area of Prayagraj, the Vidvat Parishad and the Sant Samaj had conferred the post of Shankaracharya of the Peeth on Swami Niranjana Devtirth, the 144th Shankaracharya of Govardhan Peeth. On the first day of the ceremony, Rudrabhishek of Lord Chandra Mauleshwar was performed. This program will continue daily. After being conferred the post of Peethadheeswar,



Shankaracharya Adhokshajanand Devtirth made a valuable contribution in the development and promotion of Sanatan culture in all the states of the country including the Northeast. He traveled to many countries of the world including Nepal, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka and gave important messages for world peace. Due to his alertness, separatism was curbed in many states including Assam and the misguided youth returned to the mainstream.

It is noteworthy that the 143rd Shankaracharya of Govardhan Math Puri, Swami Bharati Krishna Tirtha, was a wonderful scholar of Vedic mathematics. The whole world acknowledges his prowess. Similarly, the 144th Shankaracharya Swami Niranjana Devtirtha sacrificed his life to protect Sanatan Dharma. It was due to his efforts that cow protection laws were made in many states of the country. He fought from the streets to the Parliament to protect the religion. The in-charge of the Shankaracharya camp said that on the first day of ten-day celebrations, Assam's cabinet minister Jayantnal Barua came with his wife and a delegation and felicitated Shankaracharya on behalf of the people of his state. Mahant Rameshwar Das and Election Commissioner of Jammu and Kashmir PK Pole also participated in the ten-day celebrations. The Election Commissioner offered sacrifices in the Maha Yagya and prayed for happiness, peace and prosperity.

LEAD Group Builds Student Confidence with India's Biggest Student Championship

Gorkhapur: LEAD Group, India's largest School Edtechcompany, announced the winners of the National Championships 2024 at an exciting grand finale in Delhi. More than 1.9 lakh students participated in the National Championships 2024, the sixth edition of the prestigious national-level platform that attracts talented students from thousands of schools across India. This year, the National Championships by LEAD Group introduced an expanded vision for student development, focusing on NCF-aligned 21st-century skills such as Communication, Critical Thinking, Creativity, Confidence, and Coding.

Sumeet Mehta, CEO and Co-Founder, LEAD Group, said, "The National Championships are an incredible opportunity for students from India's small towns and cities to make their dreams come true on a national platform. The creativity and enthusiasm of our National Champions this year was simply electrifying! From out-of-the-box ideas that bring imagination to life, to

apps that solve real-world problems, our students showcased their skills with the confidence of accomplished keynote speakers! My heartiest congratulations to not just the winners, but to all the partici-



pants of National Championships 2024. These future leaders will make our nation very proud!"

Daksh Tiwari of Samagra Abhoday Public School expressed his happiness, "I am proud to win the Speech Champs trophy and make my school and parents proud. I'm grateful for the opportunity to showcase my talent on a national stage, and I deeply appreciate the support from LEAD Group in achieving this milestone. I'm grateful to my school and teachers for believing in me and helping me achieve this success for my state."

WEWORK INDIA MANAGEMENT LTD FILES DRHP WITH SEBI

Varanasi: WeWork India Management Limited ("WeWork India"), one of India's leading premium flexible workspace operators and the largest operator by total revenue in the past three Fiscals (source: CBRE) has filed its Draft Red Herring Prospectus ("DRHP") with market regulator Securities and Exchange Board of India ("SEBI"). The company provides flexible, high-quality workspaces to a diverse range of customers, including large enterprises, small and mid-size businesses, startups, and individuals. Its member base includes a marquee roster of Fortune 500 companies, international and domestic corporations, large enterprises, GCCs, MSMEs, and startups.

The company's initial public offering comprises an Offer for Sale (OFS) of equity shares of up to 43,753,952 equity shares. The offer for sale comprises up to

33,458,659 equity shares by Embassy Buildcon LLP ("Promoter Selling Shareholder"), and up to 10,295,293 equity shares by 1 Ariel Way Tenant Limited ("Investor Selling Shareholder"). The company will not receive any proceeds from the offer for sale. JM Financial Limited, ICICI Securities Limited, Jefferies India Private Limited, Kotak Mahindra Capital Company Limited, and 360 ONE WAM Limited are the Book Running Lead Managers to the issue. WeWork India's strength of its brand and offerings, combined with its association with the WeWork global network, has enabled it to attract and foster long-term relationships with marquee global brands, including Amazon Web Services, JP Morgan, Warner Bros. Discovery, Deutsche Telekom, and Grant Thornton. The company is the exclusive licensee of the WeWork Brand in India.

Vi launches Number Rakshak initiative at Maha Kumbh to reunite separated pilgrims

Varanasi: At every Kumbh Mela, thousands of individuals are reported lost or separated from their families. In 2013, approximately 70,000 people were reported lost during the Allahabad (now Prayagraj) Kumbh. This year has presented similar challenges, with news reports indicating that over 250 people were reported lost within the first few hours of the first day alone. As millions more are expected to gather on the most auspicious days for 'Shahi Snan' at Triveni Sangam in February, the fear of losing loved ones is a very real concern, given the risk of people becoming lost or separated in large crowd or while taking a sacred plunge. In response, India's leading telecom operator Vi, has launched the 'Vi Number Rakshak' initiative to ensure that no one feels lost, disconnected, or

gets left behind.

Speaking on the occasion, Avneesh Khosla, Chief Marketing Officer, Vi emphasized the company's people first approach, "Vi Number Rakshak highlights

the network."

While technology has revolutionized how people connect, there are still many who are not digitally savvy, especially elderly and small children, who often do not



how the simplest solutions can play a critical role in connecting people. We are not just a telecom provider, but a people-first partner, especially when it matters most. This initiative reinforces Vi's commitment to finding the right solutions and demonstrates that the connectivity goes beyond

even own a mobile phone, struggle to remember phone numbers or are not familiar with digital tools. Recognizing this reality, Vi has set up Vi Number Rakshak booth in the prominent area near Swami Ramanand Acharya Shibir Akhada.

This booth will provide pilgrims with complimen-

tary bracelets made of sacred Rudraksh and Tulsi beads engraved with the personal emergency contact numbers of their family members or companions. This initiative will enable pilgrims to have a dependable medium of reconnecting without having to rely on mobile phones or internet connectivity.

Vi Number Rakshak embodies the spirit of Vi's philosophy of "Be Someone's We". It emphasizes the importance of fostering connections and collective support for one another, demonstrated in campaigns of the same name, which highlight the loneliness epidemic affecting urban youth and senior citizens. With Vi Number Rakshak at the Maha Kumbh, the 'Be Someone We' ideology takes on the mantle of caring for public safety and well-being at the site of such a large human gathering.



Prayagraj: Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath reached the camp of Jagadguru Ramanandacharya Swami Ram Bhadracharya Ji located in Sector 6 in Mahakumbh and met him. Addressing the devotees, he described the huge form of Mahakumbh as a unique symbol of faith and Sanatan Dharma for the entire world.

Selfless work brings joy: Deva Srivastava

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Naini, Prayagraj: On the auspicious occasion of Basant Panchami, Bhandara continued throughout the day near Arail Chauraha, Cotton Mill Tiraha, Shankardhal, Sabzi

tees coming from far and wide to Maha Kumbh were given prasad. Also, Mr. Srivastava said that we all should participate enthusiastically on such occasions, the work done selflessly

prasad. On the other hand, Bhandara was also organized at Cotton Mill Tiraha. In which mainly Shyam Bahadur Srivastava, Anuj Srivastava and others were present. Similarly, near the vegetable market, the program of 'Bhandara' continued throughout the day and devotees kept coming in large numbers to enjoy it. Bhandara manager Dilip Kesarwani said that this Maha Kumbh has come after 144 years and such an opportunity will not come in our lifetime again, therefore we will provide whatever service we can to the devotees and will continue to do so in future too. In cooperation, Pandit Manish Shukla also worked hard from morning till night in distributing Prasad to the devotees. The devotees also praised those who provided such service.



Mandi, Mewalal Bagiya, Jail Chauraha. On this occasion, Deva Srivastava said that all of us social workers together organized Bhandara near Mewalal Bagiya, in which the devo-

gives a feeling of happiness. On this occasion, Shishir Tiwari, Ajay Singh, Deva Srivastava, Sanjay Vishwakarma, Ravi Shankar Sharma, Rajneesh Keshari made the devotees take

World Cancer Day Sparks Urgent Call to Action: Groundbreaking cancer care surveys launch to drive equity in Asia-Pacific

AKHAND BHARAT SANDESH

Prayagraj: In collaboration with Sam Higginbottom University of Agriculture, Technology and Sciences (SHUATS), the International Cancer Patient Coalition (ICPC) announces the launch of two crucial surveys aimed at transforming cancer care across India and the broader Asia-Pacific region. These surveys, which are now live, are designed to gather insights into the barriers and opportunities for improving cancer prevention, early detection, treatment, and survivorship care across the region.

The surveys target both healthcare professionals and the general public, gathering essential data on key challenges such as infrastructure deficits, the integration of traditional medi-

cine, and the scalability of innovations in rural areas. The responses will directly influence the agenda at the upcoming "Equity in Action: Driving Progress in Cancer Care" summit, which takes place on February 20-21, 2025.

"In the Asia-Pacific region, cancer care must be an accessible right for all. By fostering collaboration, innovation, and leveraging resources from diverse healthcare systems, we can begin to address the disparities that continue to plague our communities. Only through a collective effort can we bring equitable cancer care to every patient, regardless of their economic background or geographical location," said Prof. (Dr.) Jonathan A.

Lal, Pro-VC Academic Affairs at SHUATS and Board Member of ICPC.

The surveys provide vital data that is actively being used, in collaboration with SHUATS, to build actionable frameworks addressing inequities in cancer care faced by millions across India and the Asia-Pacific region.

"The key to addressing cancer care inequities in the Asia-Pacific lies not only in adopting the latest advancements in science and technology but also in ensuring that these innovations reach every corner of our region. Our focus must remain on building strong healthcare systems that empower patients, communities, and policymakers to work together in achieving

cancer care that is both advanced and equitable," commented Prof. (Dr.) Denis Horgan, Secretary General of ICPC and Executive Director of the European Alliance for Personalized Medicine.

The surveys cover critical topics including access to cancer treatments and diagnostics, cancer prevention program challenges, barriers to cancer care in rural and underprivileged areas, sustainability of telemedicine and public-private partnerships, training and retention of oncology professionals.

The "Equity in Action: Driving Progress in Cancer Care" summit, scheduled for February 20-21, 2025, will bring together political leaders, healthcare experts,

patient advocates, industry representatives, and researchers. In collaboration with SHUATS, the summit will focus on transforming cancer care by leveraging regional collaboration, promoting innovation, and driving sustainable public-private partnerships. By addressing disparities in cancer care across the Asia-Pacific region, the event aims to launch actionable frameworks and formal commitments to equitable care through the Asia-Pacific Declaration on Cancer Care. The data gathered from these surveys will help shape the summit's agenda and contribute to advancing policies for patient-centered innovation and regional solidarity.

All India Industry Trade Board organized huge feast in Kumbh Mela

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Prayagraj: On Basant Panchami, a huge bhandaar was organized by All India Industry Trade Board for the pilgrims of the divine and grand Maha Kumbh. District President Lalu Mittal said that the bhandaar will continue till 11th. From the morning of Basant Panchami, Maharaj Nirmal Sharan served bhandaar to the pilgrims with his own hands. A large number of businessmen contributed to the bhandaar, prominent among them were District President Ganga Par Rajendra Kesarwani Pappu Bhaiya, Senior Vice President Raman Gupta, General Secretary Ganga Par Sumit Kesarwani, District President Women Ratan Jaiswal, Shweta Mittal Meenu Gupta, many dis-



ciples and followers of Maharaj Nirmal Sharan ji. Food prasad was prepared in the camp itself like at home by the women officers. The businessmen together served the devotees with utmost service, intimacy, humility and with the spirit of "Atithi Devo Bhava". District President Lalu Mittal said that on 14th and 15th February, a meeting will be held with the National President, State President, National Executive Member, State Executive Member and traders from all over the country. Traders will be invited to Prayagraj Kumbh area along with their families. A free medical camp of doctors will be organized in the camp every day from 12:00 noon to 2:00 pm till 15th February and they will be provided free medicines.

People welcoming & serving pilgrims with zeal: Rajnikanth

AKHAND BHARAT SANDESH

Prayagraj: Bharatiya Janata Party NGO Cell State Co-ordinator Rajnikanth said that the NGO Cell will leave no stone unturned in the welcome of visitors on the occasion of Mahakumbh. It is expected from the social organizations and volunteers working in the society that we should cooperate as much as we can. The social work done in the society never goes in vain. The people of Prayag received the blessings of the devotees by offering their services in various fields. Asha Publicity Institute - Halwa arrangement by Anoop Kumar, social personality Pawan Srivastava ji. Kachori Dum Aloo. Tea arrangement by Sunita Kushwaha. Kamal Gulati Puri Sabzi, Amit Kesarwani Kachori Sabzi Buniya, Anil Dwivedi, Fruit Kachori Dum Aloo, Amrish Kant of Tea. Sawan Jaiswal of Dum Aloo, Vivek Gupta of Khichdi. Many organizations and social personalities made an effort to ensure that no one goes hungry from Prayag. Heartfelt gratitude and congratulations to all the people of Prayag who organized the Bhandara. We should leave no stone unturned in serving and welcoming the guests who have come till Mahakumbh.

AERO INDIA 2025: Setting the benchmark for future Aerospace exhibitions

INFRASTRUCTURE UPGRADES AND IMPROVED AMENITIES

AKHAND BHARAT SANDESH

Prayagraj: As Aero India 2025 prepares for take-off at Air Force Station Yelahanka, visitors, exhibitors, and delegates can look forward to a significantly enhanced experience. With key infrastructure upgrades and improved amenities, this edition promises to be bigger, smoother, and more visitor-friendly than ever before.

Enhanced Infrastructure and Traffic Management: Recognizing past challenges, extensive improvements have been made to facilitate seamless entry, movement, and connectivity and there has been close coordination between Ministry of Defence, Indian Air Force (IAF), various arms of Karnataka State Government like Bengaluru Traffic Police, BBMP, NHAI, and Namma Metro. Approach roads have been widened to optimize traffic flow around

Air Force Station Yelahanka so as to ease congestion and improve movement around the venue.

Real-time traffic monitoring is being carried out in collaboration with the Traffic Police to allow dynamic route adjustments. Ministry of Defence has hired AC Volvo shuttle buses to provide free conveyance to visitors from various city locations to Air Force Station Yelahanka to ease traffic congestion. Joint aerial surveys have been conducted to identify and address choke points, resulting in widened access roads and dedicated entry and exit routes for different categories of visitors, exhibitors, and officials thus reducing bottlenecks.

Security and Emergency Preparedness: Red drone zones have been designated and published, with countermeasures in place to tackle unauthorized

drone activity. Rapid Mobile Units will be deployed strategically to provide quick assistance and emergency support. Continuous mock drills with multiple agencies are being conducted to ensure practical and implementable contingency plans.

Exhibitor and Visitor Experience Enhancements: To enhance the experience for exhibitors and business delegates, the exhibition area has been revamped with several key upgrades:-

- Expanded and better-ventilated exhibition halls to accommodate more exhibitors and visitors comfortably.
- Improved seating and rest zones throughout the venue.
- Additional food courts and refreshment kiosks, including Indira Canteens (at parking areas).

(d) Enhanced

wayfinding and signage for easier navigation.

- Lost and found counters and ATM kiosks for visitor convenience.

- Multiple water points, medical aid posts,



and a dedicated cardiac aid post for emergencies, including medical evacuation.

Multi-Layered Security Measures: Ensuring the safety of all attendees, a

multi-layered security system is being deployed in collaboration with the Ministry of Home Affairs, Bengaluru Police, CISF, and Intelligence Agencies. Measures include:-

- Enhanced security protocols and faster access control.
- An operational Command and Control Center for real-time responses to security concerns.
- 24/7 CCTV monitoring for situational awareness.
- Dedicated screening zones for visitors, exhibitors, and VIPs.

(e) Disaster management and fire safety committees to handle emergencies.

Connectivity and Digital Infrastructure: To address past connectivity challenges, all telecom service providers are deploying temporary mobile towers and network boosters for uninterrupted communication. A dedicated Aero India 2025 mobile app has also been launched which will provide live updates, navigation assistance, and event scheduling. Secure digital communication channels have also been established for coordination among agencies. Additionally, provisions have been made to support increased electricity demands during the event while ensuring safety.

Airspace Management and Demonstrations: Aero India demonstrations and Aircraft movements are a major highlight of AERO INDIA 2025. In coordination with AAI and HAL, the IAF has structured a dedi-

cated Airspace management plan, including:-

- Temporary flight restrictions around Air Force Station Yelahanka to maintain safety during scheduled demonstrations.
- Strategic Aircraft parking and refueling plans for domestic and international participants.

Business and Innovation Support: The Aero India provides a platform for collaborations and to facilitate B2B, G2B interactions and hosting roundtable discussions to showcase technological advancements. Special focus will be given to supporting startups and MSMEs by providing them with a global platform to present indigenous innovations.

Sustainability Initiatives: Aero India 2025 is committed to sustainability and has incorporated several eco-friendly measures in its conduct like:-

- Reduced vehicle movement to minimize pollution and enhance pedestrian comfort.

- Exclusive use of more than 100 E Karts for movement of visitors in the exhibition venue.

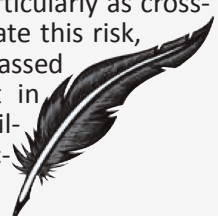
- Comprehensive waste management, including increased recycling bins, waste segregation zones, and timely disposal of waste.

Conclusion: With these multi-agency collaborations, Aero India 2025 is set to be one of the most well-coordinated and better organised editions to date. The proactive collaboration between the central and state government agencies will ensure that Aero India 2025 sets the benchmark for all future aerospace exhibitions, informed Samir Gangakhedkar, Group Captain, Public Relations Officer, Ministry of Defence Prayagraj.

Editorial

India should do more than just watch US-China chip war

The outgoing Joe Biden administration has been unusually active in recent weeks, making significant decisions with long-term implications. These include lifting certain restrictions on Ukraine and imposing stricter trade measures on China. The structural effects of these moves will become evident in 2025 and beyond. As recently as early December, the administration delivered its third major blow to China's semiconductor industry. This effort seeks to curtail China's ability to access and produce advanced chips that could support artificial intelligence for military purposes or pose risks to the United States' national security. For India, these developments are not merely a geopolitical spectacle but hold direct strategic relevance. Beyond observing this unfolding competition, New Delhi has an opportunity to assess its role in helping the US build resilience in semiconductor production and supply chains amid the intensifying "chip war." The US has maintained dominance in the semiconductor industry since Silicon Valley pioneered the technology. Over time, however, East Asian nations such as Taiwan and Japan emerged as key manufacturing hubs, incentivised by government subsidies. As Chris Miller highlights in his book *Chip Wars: The Fight for the World's Most Critical Technology*, this evolution allowed the US to establish critical business and strategic alliances in a region vulnerable to Russian influence during the Cold War. In the current Cold War-style rivalry between the US and China, these alliances remain crucial in countering Beijing's ambitions for a unipolar Asia. China, while not a leader in manufacturing advanced semiconductors, holds a commanding position in the production and supply of critical rare earth minerals, accounting for 70 per cent of global output. These minerals are essential for creating integrated circuits used in chips for civilian and military purposes. In response to US export restrictions, China has banned exports of key minerals such as gallium, germanium, and antimony, while tightening control over graphite, further complicating global supply chains. These minerals are essential components in making integrated circuits of chips, for both civilian and military applications. Despite its dominance in rare earth mining, China's position is not unassailable. First, the US is the second-largest producer of rare earth minerals globally. Second, China relies on US technology to process these minerals into complex semiconductors with game-changing capabilities. However, the Biden administration's efforts aim to prevent China from independently developing technology to control other parts of the semiconductor supply chain. While the Trump 1.0 administration adopted a hawkish stance on China, the Biden administration has taken robust measures to restrict Beijing's access to semiconductor technology. What plays in the US' favour is that China depends on foreign hardware and expertise to enhance its chip production capabilities. Indeed, this shows a fragile balance of dependencies. No conversation on chips can be complete without Taiwan. Taipei remains central to the global semiconductor industry, with its dominant chipmaker TSMC supplying a significant share of the world's semiconductors. The island's President has described this dominance as a "silicon shield," offering a degree of protection against China, which claims sovereignty over Taiwan. However, from the US perspective, Taiwan's role also creates vulnerability to supply chain disruptions, particularly as cross-strait tensions rise. To mitigate this risk, the Biden administration passed the CHIPS and Science Act in 2022, pledging nearly \$53 billion to boost US semiconductor manufacturing.



India's GST system is now a mess. Those who designed it also are confused

Last Saturday, Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman chaired a press conference following the conclusion of the 55th GST Council meeting. Through it, she inadvertently created a new term—"popcorn taxation"—and lakhs of memes. While this may seem like a trivialisation of GST, it actually lays bare how the system has now rebounded on its initial promise of bringing ease of doing business in the country. The Finance Minister's four-minute explanation on the taxation of popcorn highlighted how complex the sys-

tem has become. It shouldn't take anybody that much time to explain the applicable tax rates on a single product. Since then, GST has been ridiculed, derided, lamented about, and generally panned by laypeople and even former government officials who worked on its implementation. That is why India's Goods and Services Tax is ThePrint's Newsmaker of the Week. So, what is the issue behind GST on popcorn? You see, as per the taxman, depending on your taste preferences, popcorn can either be a namkeen (salty) or a

mithai (sweet) — forget that those two terms have never been used by anyone to refer to popcorn. Ready-to-eat popcorn, salted and spiced for taste, and sold loosely attracts a GST rate of 5 per cent. That same popcorn, if packaged and labelled, attracts a rate of 12 per cent. One wonders what happens if the vendor tears open the packet and sells loose popcorn to the customer. Perhaps the universe will explode, who knows? Things get even trickier when you talk about caramel popcorn. Those who prefer this

flavour will have to shell out 18 per cent GST, regardless of whether it is packaged or sold loose. Then some head to the movie hall and ask for salted and caramel popcorn mixed together. What happens to them? Over the week, one particular meme stood out among the lot. It was a picture of salted caramel popcorn packets with questions along the lines of: "What now, taxman?" What now, indeed. Most of the memes were at Sitharaman's expense, but she's just the face of the decisions.

Hindus Hounded In Their Own Country



Sambhal, in western Uttar Pradesh, hit the headlines in late November when a court-order ASI survey of the early 16th century Babri Masjid in the township ran into trouble with the local Muslim populace, leading to a volatile situation. Protestors rained stones upon the police, leaving around two dozen personnel injured. Five Muslim youths, including a minor, were killed, allegedly in police firing on protesters, a charge that police vehemently denied. The autopsy discounted the culpability of police as the ammunition recovered from the bodies of victims was not used by the UP Police. The police have made a counter-claim of recovering empty cartridges of Pakistani origin from the spot. They claim that a day before the survey was scheduled to begin, Zia-ur-Rehman Barq, MP, Sambhal visited the mosque and delivered a provocative speech. An FIR registered by the police names him in addition to Sohail Mahmood, the son of local MLA Iqbal Mahmood, for inciting the mob through social media posts. An anti-encroachment drive was launched by the administration. This led to interesting revelations since then, that have shifted the discourse from early 16th century to late 20th century events. These revelations are equally suggestive. The local Hindus, who are a minority in the township, insist that the mosque was built by the Mughal invader Babur in 1526 by demolishing a temple of Lord Vishnu, originally erected by Prithviraj Chauhan in the 12th century. This belief appears deeply ingrained, though H.R. Nevill,

ICS, in the district gazetteer (1911), discounts the idea, arguing that Sikander Lodi, a known iconoclast, would not have allowed a Hindu shrine to occupy the loftiest site in his temporary capital (Moradabad: A Gazetteer, p. 147). While acknowledging that Babur visited Sambhal, Nevill attributes the construction of the mosque to his general, Hindu Beg, to which Babur set up an inscription. However, the revised Gazetteer of Moradabad (1968), written by Esha Basanti Joshi, IAS (Retd), presents a different view. She states that the town of Sambhal (originally perhaps Sambhalpura) stands on a series of scattered mounds, each said to mark the site of some ancient building or settlement. The highest of these mounds is known as the Kot (fort) and indicates the ruined site of the old fort of Sambhal, which was built before the advent of Muslims in the area.

The only building left standing on the site was once a Hari Mandir (a temple of Vishnu) but was later converted into a mosque (Gazetteer of India: Uttar Pradesh—Moradabad, p. 26). She bases her account on the description of A. Fuhrer in *Monumental Antiquities and Inscriptions in the North-*

Western Provinces and Oudh (1891). Joshi informs us that Babur visited Sambhal on 2 October 1527 and stayed there for two days. Earlier, he had sent his general, Hindu Beg, to subjugate the Afghan governor of Sambhal, Qasim Sambhali, who was subsequently defeated (Gazetteer of India: Uttar Pradesh—Moradabad, p. 42). A recent WhatsApp wisecrack cuts through the Gordian knot of this debate, asking why Muslims would oppose an ASI survey unless there is something to hide from the public eye. Following the violence in Sambhal and Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath's vow that no miscreant involved would be spared, the police and local administration sprang into action. A manhunt was launched to apprehend the culprits, while simultaneous drives against encroachment and electricity pilferage were undertaken. These efforts unexpectedly revealed two temples in Muslim-majority areas that had been closed for decades. The first discovery was a Shiva/Hanuman temple in Khaggu Sari, adjoining the Deepa Sarai locality. The temple had reportedly been closed for the past 46 years. This struck a chord in the collective memory of Sambhal, as it had been abandoned following the riots of March

1978, after which the Hindus vacated the locality. Bulldozers clearing encroachments near the temple uncovered three mutilated deity images from an adjacent well. Shortly thereafter, a closed Radha-Krishna temple was discovered in the Sarai Tareen locality. At the time of writing, a third temple, referred to as the Banke Bihari Temple, has come to light in Laxmanganj, Chandausi, within Sambhal district. It appears that the Hindu community withdrew from Laxmanganj as the Muslim population grew, leaving the temple abandoned. Meanwhile, in a related development, a neglected temple of Siddheshwar Mahadev was reopened in the Madanpura area of Varanasi. The temple was founded by Ajay Sharma, President of the Sanatan Raksha Dal. Although the temple's closure was reportedly not due to any dispute, it had fallen into disuse as Hindus withdrew from the area, which experienced a significant growth in the Muslim population. In almost all these temples, with help from the administration, daily rituals and bhajans have started. However, the long-term challenge remains sustaining these activities, given the demographic shifts that had initially alienated the Hindu community from these areas. Critics often accuse the Ram Janmabhoomi Movement, which culminated in the demolition of the abandoned Babri Mosque in Ayodhya (1992), of being catastrophic for communal peace and harmony in India. This raises the question: why did Hindus feel compelled to migrate from mixed localities

in Sambhal following the 1978 riots? What exactly transpired in Sambhal on 29 March 1978? According to the statement made by S.D. Patil, the then Minister of State for Home Affairs, in the Rajya Sabha on 23 November 1978 (unstarred question no. 301), Sambhal experienced severe communal disturbances on 29 March 1978. The unrest apparently began when some members of the Muslim community objected to Holi titles conferred by the student union of the local college upon two Muslim girls. This led to violent clashes accompanied by widespread looting and arson. Police had to resort to firing in three locations to control the mob. As per the minister, 17 people lost their lives, 33 were injured, and the estimated loss was around Rs 25 lakhs.

It might be noted, provided the minister's description is authentic, that the violence was not provoked by the sprinkling of colours or water on any unwilling individual during Holi. Instead, it was sparked by a cultural act performed by the student union of the local college. Holi, after all, is a cultural festival; it is not even Vande Mataram, which used to rile former Sambhal MP Shafiqur Rahman Barq so much that he walked out of Lok Sabha when the House was dissolved on May 8, 2013. B. Rajeshwari, in *Communal Riots in India: A Chronology 1947–2003*, notes that the Sambhal riots of 1978 were attributed to a bootlegging rivalry between Hindus and Muslims, with the latter allegedly seeking to dispossess Hindus of their property (p. 8).

Why are BJP leaders not giving preference to RSS chief on temple-mosque dispute?

Recently in the winter session of Parliament, Aam Aadmi Party leader and MP Sanjay Singh had told BJP leaders that your boys will do business with Qatari Muslims, will do business with Dubai Sheikhs, and here you will talk about violence against Muslims. If we have to have darshan, we go to Kashi, we go to Ujjain to have darshan of Mahakal, we go to Ayodhya to have darshan of Lord Ram, but if they have to have darshan of God, they go to the mosque. They are running Bharat Khodo Yojana in the country. Earlier, Sarsanghchalak i.e. RSS chief Mohan Bhagwat had also targeted the BJP governments' method of finding temples in mosques and clearly said in Pune that a new issue is being raised every day. Temples cannot be found under every mosque. Ram temple was a matter of faith. You cannot raise a new controversy every day. The RSS chief said that some people want to become leaders by raising new issues. This has become a means of leadership, it has become a shortcut. Majority and minority are all equal.

Everyone is equal and everyone has got fundamental rights to pursue their religion. Even before this, in the year 2022, the Sangh chief had said why to see Shivaling in a mosque every day? There may be some centers of faith, but there cannot be a fight on every issue. Recently on December 12, the Supreme Court also ordered the lower courts that survey or any other effective order will not be passed in the existing cases. In pending cases, the courts will not pass any effective interim or final order till further notice. The Supreme Court had said that no new case will be heard, the courts will not register a new case. Survey will not be ordered. Actually, this order of the Supreme Court came after the violence in Sambhal over finding a temple in the mosque. The way the government staff in Sambhal started searching for the temple in the mosque and in the houses of Muslims, it is clear that the BJP governments are using the temple-mosque dispute to gain political advantage. And in Uttar Pradesh.

For the fundamentalist, secular is dirtiest of dirty words: Rushdie on The Satanic Verses fatwa

To stand in this house is to be reminded of what is most beautiful about religious faith: its ability to give solace and to inspire, its aspiration to these great and lovely heights, in which strength and delicacy are so perfectly conjoined. In addition, to be asked to speak here on this day, the fourth anniversary of the notorious fatwa of the late Imam Khomeini, is a particular honour. When I was an undergraduate at this college, between 1965 and 1968, the years of flower-power and student power, I would have found the notion of delivering an address in King's Chapel pretty far-out, as we used to say; and yet, such are the journeys of one's life that here I stand. I am grateful to the Chapel and the college for extending this invitation, which I take as a gesture of solidarity and support, support not merely for one individual but, much more importantly, for the high moral principles of human rights and human freedoms that the Khomeini edict seeks so brutally to attack. For just as King's Chapel may be taken as a symbol of what is best about religion, so the fatwa has become a symbol of what is worst. It feels all the more appropriate to be speaking here because it was while in my final year of reading history at Cambridge that I came across the story of the so-called satanic verses or temptation of the Prophet Muhammad, and of his rejection of that temptation. That year, I had chosen as one of my special subjects a paper on Muhammad, the rise of Islam, and the caliphate. So few students chose this option that the lectures were cancelled. The other students switched to different special subjects. However, I was anxious to continue, and Arthur Hibbert, one of the King's history dons, agreed to supervise me. So as it happened I was, I think, the only student in

Cambridge who took the paper. The next year, I'm told, it was not offered again. This is the kind of thing that almost leads one to believe in the workings of a hidden hand. The story of the 'satanic verses' can be found, among other places, in the canonical writings of the classical writer al-Tabari. He tells us that on one occasion the Prophet was given verses which seemed to accept the divinity of the three most popular pagan goddesses of Mecca, thus compromising Islam's rigid monotheism. Later he rejected these verses as being a trick of the devil saying that Satan had appeared to him in the guise of the Archangel Gabriel and spoken 'satanic verses.' Historians have long speculated about this incident, wondering if perhaps the nascent religion had been offered a sort of deal by the pagan authorities of the city, which was flirted with and then refused. I felt the story humanized the Prophet, and, therefore made him more accessible, more easily comprehensible to a modern reader, for whom the presence of doubt in a human mind, and human imperfections in a great man's personality, can only make that mind, that personality, more attractive. Indeed, according to the traditions of the Prophet, even the Archangel Gabriel was understanding about the incident, assuring him that such things had befallen all the prophets, and that he need not worry about what had happened. It seems that the Archangel Gabriel, and the God in whose name he spoke, was rather more tolerant than some of those who presently affect to speak in the name of God. Khomeini's fatwa itself may be seen as a set of modern satanic verses. In the fatwa, once again, evil takes on the guise of virtue; and the faithful are deceived. It's important to remember what the fatwa is.

AAP promises Dalit scholarships

Delhi: AAP leader Arvind Kejriwal launched an Ambedkar scholarship for Dalit students to study abroad ahead of the Delhi assembly elections. Dr. Ambedkar Samman Scholarship was a response to BJP's "insult" of Ambedkar, stated Kejriwal. The BJP claimed Kejriwal repackaged a 2019 initiative for political gain ahead of the polls. Amit Shah mocked Babasaheb Dr. Ambedkar in Parliament. At the AAP headquarters, Kejriwal said millions of Ambedkarists were devastated. The former Delhi chief minister told reporters that Ambedkar believed education was the key and won a PhD from the US despite all difficulties. The AAP head said the scholarship is a response to the BJP's disrespect to the Indian Constitution's architect. "The plan allows Delhi Dalit students to study abroad. If accepted to any such university, the Delhi government will cover



GIS mapping for PWD road dust checks

Delhi: The Public Works Department will enforce safety and dust control on building sites. Officials have sent the standard operating procedure for dust control measures to all agency wings, and chief engineers have been instructed to closely monitor project sites

their tuition, travel, and lodging "Kejriwal stated. He noted that government employee children will be eligible for the plan, but did not specify how or when the scholarships will be provided. According to an RTI response, Delhi BJP leader Harish Khurana stated the initiative for

under their command and ensure compliance with Delhi government and Delhi Pollution Control Committee guidelines. The state government recently ordered PWD to deploy 200 anti-smog weapons on 1,400 km of highways as part of its winter action plan.

foreign study of Scheduled Caste (SC) students has been underway since 2020, but the Delhi government could only grant five students Rs 25 lakh until 2023-24. Khurana also criticized Kejriwal for launching the same initiative in "fake respect" to Ambedkar.

Tigress in 'boar' well: Prey and hunter's joint survival tale

BHOPAL: Panchtantra met Jungle Book in the forests of Seoni, Madhya Pradesh, when a tigress chasing a boar fell into a well, along with the prey, in the heat of pursuit. Trapped in a battle for survival, both the hunter and hunted treaded the water together, often rubbing against each other in the closed confines. The two mostly faced away from each other. The tigress probably realised predation was pointless if it couldn't eat the kill. The boar, with nowhere to run, followed the predator's lead, even leaning on it when tired. Both were rescued by evening by forest officials with



some jungle jugaad. Thereafter, each went its own way. Fittingly, this drama played out in the forest that was the setting for Kipling's 'Jungle Book'. Mowgli's Seoni is in Pench national park, around 400km from Bhopal. Villagers of Piparia Harduli, in Jikurai forest area, were in for a shock when they made their morning walk to the well to fetch water - a tigress and a boar were looking up at them. The

tigress, exhausted from swimming, was visibly tired but remained calm. The boar would struggle from time to time just to stay afloat, trembling more from its proximity to the tigress than the cold water. Villagers alerted forest office. Kurai forest range assistant Shariq Khan got the call. A team from Pench tiger reserve, along with police, arrived on the scene and realised that there was no manual.

Class 5 and 8 no-detention policy revoked by govt.

Delhi: The Centre has eliminated the "no-detention" policy for Classes 5 and 8, allowing schools to fail kids who fail year-end exams. On December 16, the Ministry of Education published the "Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education (Amendment) Rules, 2024" gazette notification,

which stipulates that children who fail to meet promotion standards in Classes 5 or 8 in the regular examination can be held back. The Ministry stressed the necessity for corrective efforts for such students to close learning gaps in the Rules. The Right to Education Act, 2009 was revised in 2019 to eliminate the no-detention

policy, although the Rules were not notified until today. "Since the National Education Policy [NEP] was announced in 2020, we waited for the National Curriculum Framework document in 2023 before publishing the Rules," a senior Ministry official said. If detention is necessary, the pupil will be detained.

Will halt coal mining if Rs 1.4 lakh crore dues not cleared

RANCHI: In a stern warning to the Centre, Jharkhand chief minister Hemant Soren on Tuesday said his govt would take tough measures, including taking a legal recourse and forcing public sector coal units operating out of the state to shut down their mining operations, if no sincere efforts were made to clear its coal-related dues. Speaking at JMM's 53rd foundation day function in Dhanbad, Hemant said, "We have been getting step-brotherly treatment for centuries, and this has to stop now. If we take a tough step, then the whole country will plunge into darkness." "Our coal-related dues are to the tune of Rs 1.36 lakh crore. Whenever we demanded our share, the Centre said there were no outstanding dues. Even their MPs



from the state remain tight-lipped in Parliament," he alleged. Hemant also revealed that Union coal minister G Kishan Reddy had asked him during their meeting last month to slash the price of land that needed to be acquired by coal companies for mining. "He told me that

our rates are higher than other states and we must slash the rates. I refused and told him that if they were interested, they would have to acquire land at existing rates," he added. The chief minister also announced that his govt would soon be launching a massive crackdown on the

nexus of land sharks and government officials in shady land deals across the state. "All BDOs (block development officers) and COs (circle officers), who are hand-in-glove with the land sharks, will be arrested and put in jail, and would be removed from service," Soren warned.

Abujmarh has fallen, no longer a Red citadel, says surrendered top Maoist

GADCHIROLI: The once-unassailable Maoist headquarters in Abujmarh - spread across the rugged, forested hills straddling Maharashtra and Chhattisgarh - has fallen to security forces after 50 years of bloodshed. A fact conceded by Giridhar, a former commander of PLGA, during a conversation with Tuesday. "Abujmarh is no longer an impregnable Red citadel. The liberated zones have been smashed, commandos are conquering every inch of Dandakaranya



jungles. Maoist cadre base has been practically wiped out," said the guerrilla combat strategist, who surrendered in June last year and now resides at Gadchiroli police HQ with his wife Sangita. Giridhar, who once helmed seven dalams in Gadchiroli for 28

years, saw the movement decline firsthand. "There was a spark, a vision, and an ideology. But in today's world, change can only be ushered through democracy. Why should one tribal kill another - one in uniform, the other a Naxal?

11 Spl Courts Will Handle 2,000 Cases Every Day

Delhi: With an inventive proposal to have them handled by evening courts starting, traffic challans—of which a backlog of more than two crore has accumulated in the district courts—may now be more easily resolved. The courts will meet on all working days from 5-7 PM in all district courts under the name Evening Courts for Traffic Challans (ECTC). Beginning on December 20, 11 nighttime courts in Saket, Rohini, Dwarka, Karkardooma, Tis Hazari, and Patiala House will work to resolve 2,200 cases per day. With the exception of those marked as "contested challan," "sent to digital court challan," and "cognizance declined challan," all traffic challans displayed on the Delhi traffic police web-



page that are pending on or before December 31, 2021, will be handled. Direct downloads of the challan slips are available at <https://traffic.delhipolice.gov.in/eve-courtddc>. Over 9,000 challans have been downloaded since this site went live on December 16. The connection can be used, among other things, to update or modify mobile numbers in the system. "We're working to make the current system more user-friendly.

Coconut oil 'edible' to reduce taxes

Delhi: Is coconut oil taxed as a food or hair care product? After 15 years of debate, the top court ruled that coconut oil is edible and should be taxed less. Coconut oil comes in small packets, like personal care goods, but that doesn't matter. Hair care goods pay 18% GST, but edible oils pay 5%. After the 2005 CET Act amendment, coconut oil was included under Section III, "Animal or Vegetable Fats and Oils and their Cleavage Products." Prepared Edible

'Can't view every speech as defamation': Delhi court

NEW DELHI: A Delhi court dismissed Tuesday a defamation complaint filed by BJP functionary Rajeev Chandrashekhar against Congress MP Shashi Tharoor, saying if every speech was viewed as defamation then "freedom of speech and expression would be reduced to nought". The court of additional chief judicial magistrate Paras Dalal noted there is "no prima facie evidence" that the MP made any imputation against Chandrashekhar. It is noteworthy to see how interviews, words, etc., can be manipulated to mean differently with some outside context or interpretation attributed to such words, it said. Chandrashekhar accused Tharoor of defaming him by making false and derogatory statements during an interview on national television. He



alleged that Tharoor said Chandrashekhar had bribed voters in the constituency during 2024 Lok Sabha polls. The allegations were published by various news channels as well as on social media platforms, hurting his reputation and leading to his losing the Lok Sabha seat he was contesting against Tharoor, said Chandrashekhar. The court took cognisance of the criminal complaint in Sept 2024. The court noted that when read in whole, the 23-minute video seems like a civilised conversation between

two persons and provides a full context of what was asked and what was answered. It stated that a bit and piece of any answer, when presented to sensationalise with some random context by a third person, can present a completely different picture. "The same has been done in the 3.54-minute video played for viewers to be consumed as early morning breaking news. Neither the anchor nor the reporter of the video was present in the interview with the proposed accused Tharoor.

AAP modifies Mehrauli candidate after sacrilege Yadav conviction



Delhi: Aam Aadmi Party replaced Mehrauli candidate Naresh Yadav with Mahender Chaudhary for the assembly elections. The 2016 Quran desecration case resulted in a two-year sentence for Mehrauli MLA Yadav. The Punjab and Haryana High Court stayed his sentence. He said he joined AAP because of Kejriwal's honesty and received a lot. However, Delhi BJP president Virendra Sachdeva claimed that the Mehrauli candidate was moved for "financial power". Kejriwal sometimes changes candidates after giving a ticket, therefore his ticket rejection was expected "Sachdeva claimed. Delhi Congress president Devender Yadav said Naresh Yadav's court punishment showed AAP MLAs and leaders' criminal pasts, actions, and corruption. "They have only emulated their role model, Kejriwal, who was let out on conditional bail by the Supreme Court after spending several months in jail in connection with the liquor scam," he said. AAP granting seats to discards from other parties showed that Kejriwal had a "acute shortage" of clean-image lawmakers, Yadav said

Revised MFI ordinance moots 10-yr jail, 5L fine



Bengaluru: After multiple iterations, Karnataka govt has sent its ordinance to governor Thaawar Chand Gehlot, proposing severe penalties for microfinance institutions (MFIs) found guilty of coercive loan recovery practices. Under the revised draft, it will be considered a criminal offence for MFIs to use violence, intimidation or any form of coercion against borrowers or their families. The ordinance also prohibits use of external agencies to threaten or pressure borrowers into repayment and bans the frequent visi-

tation of borrowers' homes or places of work. The Karnataka Micro-Finance (Prevention of Coercive Actions) Ordinance, 2025, which has already received the cabinet's approval, has suggested up to 10 years in prison and a fine of Rs 5 lakh for MFIs involved in harassment. "It was three years (in the initial draft), now we have increased it to 10 years. This is to ensure that the heat of the law is felt (by violators)," home minister G Parameshwara announced the revision Tuesday. The ordi-

nance, which has seen eight revisions in the past few weeks, is now awaiting the governor's assent. The decision to issue the ordinance comes in the wake of rising suicides and widespread complaints about predatory loan recovery practices used by MFIs. These firms have been accused of using coercive methods which have pushed borrowers, particularly farmers, women and self-help groups, to the brink of financial ruin. "The ordinance aims to protect and provide relief to economically vulnerable groups and individuals.

China overtakes the US as India's trading partner with \$118.4 billion

Delhi: China overtook the US as India's largest trading partner after two years, according to Global Trade Research Initiative data. India's bilateral trade with China totaled \$118.4 billion in , with imports up 3.24% to \$101.7 billion and exports climbing 8.7% to \$16.67 billion. India-US trade fell somewhat. Indian exports fell 1.32% to \$77.5 billion and imports fell 20% to \$40.8 billion in FY24, totaling \$118.3 billion. India relies heavily on Chinese imports in telecommunications, pharmaceuticals, and advanced technology, therefore its economic relations with China are closely watched. According to GTRI, "India purchased \$4.2 billion in telecom and smartphone parts, 44% of overall imports in this category, demonstrating strong reliance on Chinese components. China supplied 77.7% of India's laptop and PC imports at \$3.8 billion." India uses production-linked incentive schemes (PLI), anti-dumping penalties,



Apple's first iPad Pro redesign since 2022 uses an AI-focused

Delhi: Apple introduced an artificial intelligence-focused iPad Pro and a bigger iPad Air to revitalize its tablet lineup after two years. The firm launched the first redesigned iPad Pro since 2018 at "Let Loose" online. The new model boasts a smaller body, a sharper Ultra Retina XDR screen with OLED technology, and a quicker M4 CPU for AI. The new iPad Air looks

like the previous model but has a bigger screen and M2 CPU. Apple claims the 13-inch iPad Pro is the thinnest apple device ever at 5.1 millimeters. The larger model is a quarter-pound lighter than its predecessor, while the 11-inch weighs under one. It breaks Apple's longest iPad release gap since co-founder Steve Jobs debuted it in 2010.

directives to decrease reliance. India imported \$2.2 billion in lithium-ion batteries for electric

vehicles, 75% of which came from China, Trade with Saudi Arabia was more balanced, with

NAAC looks to shift to new systems to grade colleges

Bengaluru: Under CBI scanner for alleged bribe-for-grades scam, National Assessment and Accreditation Council (NAAC) is looking to change the current accreditation system to binary system and maturity-based system with different metrics, while keeping at least 400 academicians away from campus visits in the past one year over fears of corruption. The binary system involves grading a college 'accredited or not', without A+, A++ grades. The maturity-based system is an evolving accreditation process which improves a college's rating over the previous level based on its improvement in performance. The current process – which is likely to be shelved -- involves a 70:30 metrics formula: 70% quantitative and 30% qualitative metrics. The latter consists



physical inspection of higher educational institutions by a peer-review team. The NAAC's plan to shift to the new twin systems follows recommendations from the Dr Radhakrishnan committee, which has suggested reforms in the accreditation process. Anil Sahasrabudhe, chairman of NAAC executive committee, said they will expedite the roll-out of reforms soon. "The com-

mittee has debarred offline, physical visits and will do everything online through validation of the documents. We plan to launch both binary system and multigrade system in March. Now that this (scam) has come to light, we will expedite the process, finalise recommendation of the committee, and then adopt them soon." The premier grading agency has come under the central

probe agency's lens for alleged corruption while assessing a college in Andhra Pradesh's Guntur. A NAAC source clarified, "There is no proof against these 400 teachers. We received feedback from trustworthy sources on their conduct. Since we have no evidence against them, we could not take any action. Instead, we prevented them from making any more physical visits." The peer team is randomly selected by the system. Sahasrabudhe said if there is no grading (like A+ or A++), institutions will not try to engage in unethical activities. "The committee is currently working on a maturity-based grading level," he added. The chairman said when they stopped accepting applications in the old format, they had to give colleges transition time.

A warning against bogus syllabuses and sample question papers is released by CBSE

Delhi: The Central Board of Secondary Education (CBSE) issued a warning alert informing parents and students to be wary of false information pertaining to the curriculum, study guides, and practice exams for the 2024-25 school year. The Board has issued a warning to pupils about the dangers of falling for online scams that spread false information. We've noticed that some websites and online portals are disseminating stale infor-

mation and unreliable updates about curriculum, sample question papers, CBSE resources, and activities. The alert said, "These links and news erroneously assert to offer up-to-date information for the session 2024-25. "In the interest of the public, we wish to emphasize that information from unauthorized sources can be misleading and may cause unnecessary confusion among schools, students, parents, and other stakeholders," it continued. Due to sig-

nificant discrepancies between theory and practical scores in a few courses, CBSE has recently instructed schools to assess practical exams appropriately. In a notification, the CBSE said that, based on data from prior years' results, it had used sophisticated AI techniques to identify significant disparities between theory and practical grades in specific courses among 50% or more students in about 500 CBSE-affiliated schools.

The National Critical Mineral Mission gets 16,300 crore from

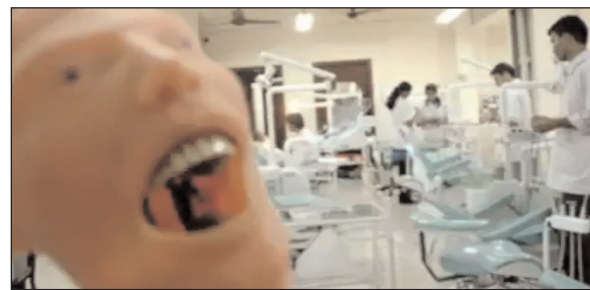
Delhi :The Union Cabinet, led by Prime Minister Narendra Modi, launched the National Critical Mineral Mission (NCMM) with a ₹16,300 crore expenditure and a projected ₹18,000 crore investment from PSUs and other businesses. "Several crucial decisions have created new scientific and technology prospects for our children, future generations, and the economy. Information and Broadcasting Minister Ashwini Vaishnaw told a Cabinet briefing that PM Modi approved the National Critical Minerals Mission today. Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman

announced NCMM's creation in the 2024-25 Union Budget on July 23, 2024. The Atmanirbhar Bharat mission seeks to assure India's crucial mineral sector self-reliance, recognizing its importance in high-tech industry, lean energy, and defence. The Mission will encompass exploration, mining, ssing, and end-of-life product recovery in the essential mineral value chain. It aims to speed up mining project approvals, incentivize exploration, and recover minerals from overburdens and tailings. The mission encourages Indian PSUs and private enterprises to buy vital mineral assets

abroad and strengthened economic ties with resource-rich nations. The plan also calls for a national stockpile of essential minerals to secure supply. The Mission will promote mineral processing parks and crucial mineral recycling. A Centre of Excellence on Critical Minerals will encourage critical mineral technology research. India has 24 critical minerals: Beryl, admium, Cobalt, Gallium, G l a u c o n i t e , Graphite, Indium, L i t h i u m , M o l y b d e n u m , Nickel, Niobium, Phosphate (without uranium), Platinum group of elements, Potash, Rare earth minerals (excluding Uranium,

New military dental care centre in Ahmednagar to benefit veterans

This facility will provide advanced oral health care to the sizeable community of army personnel serving with the town's Armoured Corps and Mechanised Infantry schools and centres. In addition, individuals from the Marathwada region will have access to health care services offered at the centre. The dental centre is of significant historical importance as one of the oldest dental units in the Indian Army. In 1942, it moved from Multan (now in present-day Pakistan) to Ahmednagar. The centre's commanding officer, Colonel Vivek Saxena, said, "This premium oral health care establishment features contemporary dental care services, including implant-based treatments and a state-of-the-art cone beam computed tomography (CBCT) machine for early oral cancer diag-



nosis." The upgraded centre will eliminate the need for patients to travel to Pune for treatment, thus saving valuable time and resources. A senior official from Maharashtra Sainik Welfare Department told , "Most patients come to Pune for advanced medical treatments. Thus, majority of them go to private hospitals. This dental facility is one of its kind and it will address all oral health complications." Subedar BS Shikare (retd) from Ahmednagar said, "People lack awareness about oral health. The authorities should focus on awareness and hold special camps

in the rural pockets of the state. The new hospital is a positive thing for the entire Marathwada region." Pune: Hundreds of military veterans, serving armed forces personnel and their dependents will benefit from the newly inaugurated Military Dental Centre in Ahmednagar. This facility will provide advanced oral health care to the sizeable community of army personnel serving with the town's Armoured Corps and Mechanised Infantry schools and centres. In addition, individuals from the Marathwada region will have access to health care services offered at the centre.

Scrap mop-up allotment of PG med seats to ineligible: HC

Bengaluru: The Karnataka high court Tuesday ordered Karnataka Examinations Authority (KEA) to scrap the PG medicine seats allotted in the mop-up round to "ineligible" candidates and make them available in the next round of counselling. National Medical Commission (NMC) and Medical Counselling Committee (MCC) should permit the candidates who were allotted all-India quota seats in the MCC-conducted third round counselling to join the allotted seats till 5pm, Feb 9, a division bench comprising Justices Anu Sivaraman and Vijayakumar A Patil said in its order on a petition filed by Dr Akshay V Thuppad and others, who were aspirants in the mop-up round conducted by the KEA. The KEA was directed not to enforce the penalty clause against the students who were wrongly permitted to participate in the mop-up round in violation of the conditions stipulated in its

brochure. The KEA was told to ensure the original documents are returned to the candidates to enable them to join the all-India quota seats at the earliest. The petitioners -- and similarly situated candidates who were eligible to participate in the mop-up round -- should be permitted to participate in the stray vacancy round where the seats that fall vacant should be made available and seats should be allotted to them on the basis of merit, the bench said. The KEA was directed to take steps to ensure fees -- paid by ineligible candidates who had joined the allotted colleges pursuant to the mop-up round -- are refunded to them at the earliest. The MCC and KEA were told to inform the candidates who had been allotted seats in the third round of all-India quota counselling but were permitted to participate in the counselling of the KEA without eligibility that they have to join the all-India quota seats .

Trump withdrawing US from sev- eral UN organizations

US President Donald Trump on Tuesday signed an executive order to withdraw US from several UN organisations, including the Human Rights Council (UNHRC), while initiating a comprehensive assessment of US financial contributions to the multinational organisation.

The White House also withdrew from the primary UN relief organisation for Palestinians (UNRWA), alongside a planned evaluation of involvement with the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO). White House staff secretary Will Scharf explained these actions were taken in response to perceived "anti-American bias" within these UN agencies. The United States, amongst 47 members elected by the General Assembly for three-year terms in the UN Human Rights Council, was set to conclude its current term on December 31, main-



taining observer status at present.

The directive issued on Tuesday appears to terminate all American engagement in council activities, encompassing both country-specific human rights assessments and investigations into particular rights violations. "More generally, the executive order calls for review of American involvement and funding in the UN in light of the wild disparities and levels of funding among different countries," Scharf said.

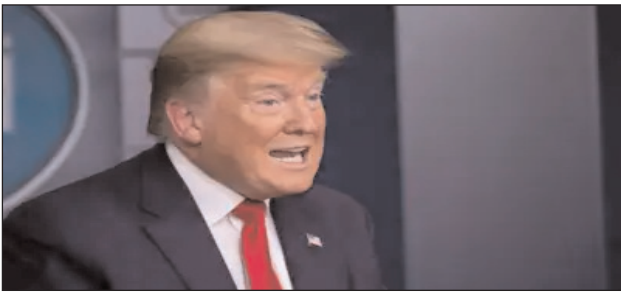
The Republican has consistently criticised Washington's substantial financial contributions to international organisations, particu-

Balaji's mother opens up on his death: 'It doesn't look normal'

Balaji, who played a key role in organising data for OpenAI's models, resigned in August, calling its practices unfair. By November, The New York Times' lawyers named him as a key figure in their copyright case against OpenAI. However, on November 26, shortly after his 26th birthday, Balaji was found dead in his San apartment. Authorities ruled his death a suicide, yet his family remains unconvinced, pushing for a deeper investigation.

Trump orders advisers to destroy Iran if it assassinates him

US President Trump on Tuesday said that he has directed his advisers to destroy Iran if it attempts to take his life. "If they did that they would be obliterated. I've left instructions if they do it, they get obliterated, there won't be anything left," Trump said to reporters while signing an executive order calling for the US government to impose maximum pressure on Tehran. For years, American authorities have been monitoring Iranian threats targeting Trump and other administration officials. In 2020, Trump authorised the elimination of Qassem



Soleimani, the commander of the Iranian Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps' Quds Force. A credible Iranian threat to Trump's safety prompted increased security measures before a July campaign rally in Pennsylvania where Trump sustained an ear wound. However, officials indicated that Iran was not believed to be involved in that

attack. In November, the Justice Department revealed they had prevented an Iranian scheme to assassinate Trump prior to the presidential election. According to the department, Iranian officials instructed Farhad Shakeri, aged 51, in September to conduct surveillance and plan Trump's assassination.

MAGA Civil War: Why Indian-Americans, the new Jews, are irking Donald Trump supporters

There's a theory out there—wild, audacious, but surprisingly hard to dismiss—that just about everything worth celebrating in Western civilization was dreamed up, built, or perfected by Jews. From splitting the atom to decoding life itself, from rewriting the

rules of music to redefining what it means to be human, Jewish brilliance turned the world into their intellectual playground. Let's take a stroll down the hall of fame: J. Robert Oppenheimer, the "father of the atomic bomb," quite literally blew the lid off 20th-

century science. Albert Einstein, the cosmic poet, bent time and space to his will. Jonas Salk saved millions from polio, and Rosalind Franklin cracked the code of life itself with her DNA discoveries. And that's just the lab coats.

Over 20,000 federal employees opt for Trump administration's severance package: Report

Over 20,000 federal employees opt for Trump administration's severance package: Report. Several federal employees have reportedly agreed to take up the Trump administration's severance package, which includes eight months' worth of salary and benefits for leaving their government positions, reports The New York Post. Approximately 20,000 federal workers have accepted the deal, comprising less than 1% of the total government staff, according to Axios' Tuesday report. "I can tell you the 20K number isn't current, the number of deferred resignations is rapidly growing, and we're expecting the largest spike 24 to 48 hours before the deadline," a



White House official told The Post. Staff members have until Thursday to opt for the proposal, with the White House aiming to decrease the federal workforce by 5% to 10%. The severance package is thought to encompass at least 2.3 million federal staff members. Should the administration achieve its target of 5% to

10% acceptance rate, it anticipates taxpayer savings of nearly \$100 billion. The standard annual departure rate for federal workers stands at roughly 6%, though it remains unclear how many package recipients had already planned to leave their positions. Elon Musk, who leads the Department of

Government Efficiency (DOGE), had previously suggested the possibility of a severance package during the final stages of the 2024 campaign and subsequent weeks. Working alongside Musk, President Trump has been eager to substantially restructure and reduce the size of the federal government. Some critics dispute the legality of these severance offers, arguing that such a significant staff reduction would require congressional approval. Public sector unions have cautioned their members against accepting the package. The American Federation of Government Employees, the largest federal union, advised its members.

IZYUM: A Russian ballistic missile strike on Tuesday killed five people including a pregnant teenager and wounded more than four dozen others in the east Ukrainian town of Izyum, officials said. President Volodymyr Zelenskyy said after the attack that it was "impossible to reconcile with this cruelty" and urged allies to pile pressure on Moscow to end its nearly three-year invasion. Oleg Synegebo, governor of the wider Kharkiv region, said 55 people had been wounded in the Russian strike, and that two young women

Ebola-hit Uganda begins vaccination trial: Who

GENEVA: Uganda on Monday started a vaccination trial for the Sudan species of the Ebola virus four days after an outbreak was confirmed, the world health organization announced.

It is the sixth time Uganda has been hit by an outbreak of the Ebola Sudan virus, for which there is no approved vaccine. Of the five other Ebola species, just one has licensed vaccines. The deadliest Ebola epidemic killed more than 11,300 people in west Africa between 2013 and 2016. The UN health agency said it had supported Ugandan health authorities in getting the trial ready in the days following the announcement that a 32-year-old male nurse had died of Ebola in Kampala. "This vaccination trial was initiated with record speed," Who chief Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus said on X. He said the trial, launched at a ceremony in Kampala by Uganda's health minister, "demonstrates the importance of investing in R&D for vaccines and treatments and outbreak response preparedness".



'Critical achievement' This trial marks how good this candidate vaccine is at preventing disease caused by the Sudan Ebola virus. Previous phase 1 and 2 trials had already been conducted to ensure the candidate vaccine's safety and ability to provoke an immune response from those receiving the jab, the Who said. A system was put in place to test candidate vaccines during a previous outbreak of the Ebola Sudan virus in Uganda in 2022, paving the way for a trial during the next outbreak, the Who added. The Who said Friday the first 2,160 doses of the candidate vaccine were already in the capital Kampala as part of the preparations for another outbreak. It said those deemed "at highest risk" were eligible to join the trial.

Pregnant teenager among five Ukrainians killed by Russian missile



were among the dead. "They were 18 and 19 years old and one of them was pregnant," he wrote on social media. An AFP journalist at the scene saw tearful women consoling each other after identifying one of the victims laid out in a body bag lined up by police. Larysa Chygrynets was at work in the local tax office

when she heard the air raid siren sound and then the missile strike seconds later. "Everything was covered in blood and the windows were smashed," the 51-year-old told AFP of the scenes in her office. She said that life in Izyum some 40 kilometres (25 miles) from the front line had been relatively calm and that residents had been returning. "Everything was calm, nothing indicated trouble. We thought everything would be fine by now. But you can see what they have done," she said.

Rice shipment from India, first for Yunus government, to arrive today

DHAKA: Bangladesh is set to receive its first consignment of rice imported from India since the formation of the new interim govt even as it looks to be drawing closer to Pakistan than to its immediate neighbour India, which stood beside Bangladesh in 1971 through shared sacrifices. Bangladesh had witnessed ships coming from Karachi twice in recent days. On Nov 13, for the first time since independence, a container-carrying ship sailing directly from Karachi had docked at Chhattogram (Chittagong). This time the ship "MV Tanais Dream", carrying 24,690 metric tonnes of parboiled rice imported from India under the open tender agreement, will arrive at Chaudhagram port at 5.30am on Thursday. This is also the first consignment



of parboiled rice imported from India under the Nov 11 agreement. The unloading of the rice will start soon after samples of the rice are collected and after physical examination, said a senior Bangladesh food ministry official. Talking to diplomatic correspondents in Dhaka recently, Indian high commissioner to Bangladesh Pranay Verma had said he was optimistic about Dhaka-Delhi relationship.

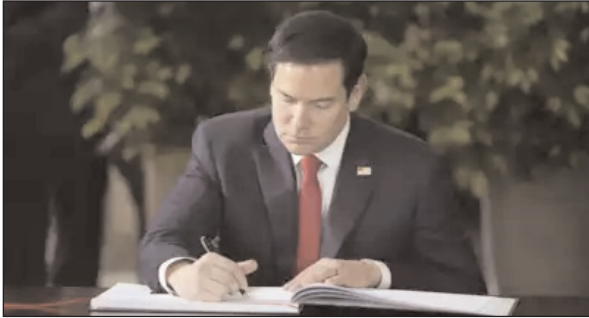
despite changes happening around. "This is how we look at the relationship.

Ramaswamy-critic Ann says H-1B workers are indentured servants

Author and Conservative commentator Ann Coulter, who once said she would not vote for Vivek Ramaswamy only because he is of Indian origin, has commented on the ongoing H-1B row and said that H1B workers can't leave a company, unlike American workers. And that's what tech like Elon Musk, Vivek Ramaswamy, Sriram Krishnan want -- she implied. "American workers can leave a company.

Rubio will face questions about deal to deport Americans and USAID turmoil

SAN JOSE: Secretary of state Marco Rubio will press the Trump administration's priority of cracking down on immigration when he meets Costa Rican President Rodrigo Chaves on Tuesday, a day after reaching an unusual agreement with El Salvador's leader to accept US deportees of any nationality, including violent American criminals. Rubio met with staffers at the US embassy in San Jose as he faces major upheaval at the US agency for international development that has left many at the aid agency and the state department uneasy and fearful for their jobs. America's top diplomat is expected to get questions later at a news conference with Chaves about the turmoil at USAID as well as the offer from Salvadoran President Nayib Bukele to accept migrant deportees of



all nationalities from the United States as well as violent American citizens imprisoned in the US. "We can send them, and he will put them in his jails," Rubio said Monday of Bukele's offer to accept migrants of all nationalities detained in the US. "And, he's also offered to do the same for dangerous criminals currently in custody and serving their sentences in the United States even though they're US citizens or legal residents." Bukele confirmed the offer in a post on X, saying El Salvador has "offered the United States of

America the opportunity to outsource part of its prison system." He said his country would accept only "convicted criminals" and would charge a fee that "would be relatively low for the US but significant for us, making our entire prison system sustainable." The state department describes El Salvador's overcrowded prisons as "harsh and dangerous." Its country information webpage says, "In many facilities, provisions for sanitation, potable water, ventilation, temperature control, and lighting are inadequate or nonexistent."

Vietnam's restrictive internet law comes into force

A new internet law in Vietnam, Decree 147, gives the government increased control over internet access and content in the name of national security and social order. It mandates tech companies to store user data, verify accounts, and remove deemed illegal content within 24 hours. Critics argue this suppresses free speech and impacts livelihoods. A new internet law that gives the Vietnamese government expanded powers over internet services and people using them is set to officially take effect Wednesday. Decree 147 expands government control over access to information on the internet for reasons of "national security" and "social order." The law requires social media platforms providing services to users in Vietnam to store user data and provide it to authorities on demand. The government issued the decree this November, and it requires organizations to take down anything the authorities consider "illegal content" within 24 hours. Decree 147 has sparked concerns, with researchers and experts tracking the country saying that the law is part of a growing crackdown on civil society. "Because the Vietnamese police treat any criticism of the Communist Party of Vietnam as a national security matter, this decree will provide them with yet another tool to suppress dissent," said Patricia Gossman, associate Asia director at Human Rights Watch. The decree requires tech giants like Facebook and TikTok among other organizations, to verify user accounts using people's phone numbers or personal identification numbers.



iPhone maker Apple is 'upset' with European Union and the reason is this Adult app

iPhone maker Apple is angry and quite angry with the European Union (EU). The reason is the Adult app -- the Hot Tub iPhone app. The newly available pornography app in the European Union (EU) has sparked a clash between Apple and regulators, with the tech giant warning that the bloc's digital rules are undermining consumer trust. AltStore PAL, an alternative app marketplace enabled by Europe's Digital Markets Act (DMA), recently launched "Hot Tub," an app described as an adult content browser. The DMA mandates that large tech companies open their services to greater competition, allowing users to download apps from third-party stores, rather than being confined to official app stores like Apple's and Google's. The DMA, which came into effect last year, has forced Apple to make significant

changes, including relaxing restrictions on its App Store within the EU. Apple has consistently opposed these regulations, arguing that they increase the risk of users being exposed to harmful content like pornography, illegal drugs, and other prohibited material. In its latest statement, Apple reiterated its concerns, stating it is "deeply concerned about the safety risks that hardcore porn apps of this type create for EU users, especially kids." Apple slams the claim that the app is Apple-approved porn app. AltStore PAL claimed on social media that Hot Tub is "the world's 1st Apple-approved porn app." Apple strongly refuted this, stating that the availability of such an app "undermines consumer trust and confidence" in its ecosystem. "Contrary to the false statements made by the marketplace developer, we certain-

ly do not approve of this app and would never offer it in our App Store," Apple said in a statement. "The truth is that we are required by the European Commission to allow it to be distributed by marketplace operators like AltStore and Epic who may not share our concerns for user safety." AltStore countered Apple's claims, arguing that the iPhone maker "continues to use safety as a pretext to protect their monopoly power and evade compliance with the DMA." Fortnite maker Epic Games slams Apple. While apps on rival marketplaces must undergo a "notarization" process by Apple, app developers are prohibited from suggesting this constitutes an endorsement. AltStore is supported by a grant from Epic Games, a long-time adversary of Apple over app distribution and in-app transaction fees.

Elon Musk's Grok AI chatbot app to become available for Android users

The chatbot developed by Elon Musk-owned artificial intelligence (AI) startup xAI, Grok, will soon be available for Android users as a stand-alone app. The app, which is not yet available for download, has been listed on the Google Play Store, where users can pre-register for it. This follows a brief beta testing period in which some users had access to the app. However, xAI has yet to announce an official release date for the Android app. xAI seems to be preparing to launch an Android version of its AI chatbot a month after releasing Grok's app for iPhones. An xAI engineer has also confirmed the



Android app in a post on social media platform X (earlier Twitter). In the post, the xAI engineer wrote: "Grok Android app is now open for testing in Australia, Canada, India, Philippines, and Saudi Arabia. Visit the Google Play Store to try it. Be among the first 1,000

users and share your feedback." Grok's Play Store listing notes that the app will be free to use, with no sign-in required to access its features. However, users who may want a personalised experience or wish to connect the AI to their X account may also have the option to sign in.

Bank of Japan ends negative rates, closing era of radical policy

TOKYO: The Bank of Japan ended eight years of negative interest rates and other remnants of its unorthodox policy on Tuesday, making a historic shift away from a focus of reflation growth with decades of massive monetary stimulus. While the move will be Japan's first

interest rate hike in 17 years, it still keeps rates stuck around zero as a fragile economic recovery forces the central bank to go slow in any further rise in borrowing costs, analysts say. The shift makes Japan the last central bank to exit negative rates and ends an era in which

policymakers around the world sought to prop up growth through cheap money and unconventional monetary tools. In a widely expected decision, the BOJ ditched a policy put in place since 2016 that applied a 0.1% charge on some excess reserves financial institutions.

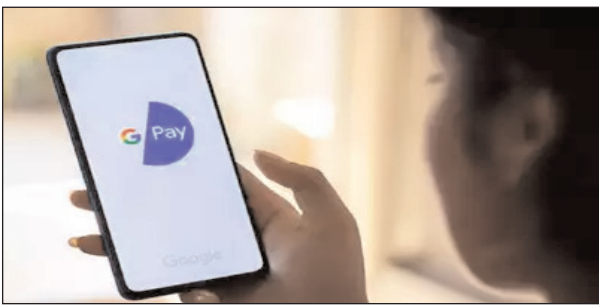
CAPSULES

HDFC Bank's home loan business head to lead Poonawalla Fincorp

MUMBAI: HDFC Bank's mortgage business head Arvind Kapil has filed papers to take charge as MD & CEO of Poonawalla Fincorp. Kapil is a 25-year veteran of HDFC Bank and was placed in charge of the legacy housing finance business of HDFC after its merger with the bank last year. "Given the sheer size of the mortgage portfolio (Rs 7.5 lakh crore) and the material importance of distribution, we believe there is key managerial personnel risk (for HDFC Bank)," said Suresh Ganapathy of Macquarie. He noted that this is the second major exit in mortgages with the head of HDFC sales Santosh Nair quitting to join Bandhan Bank last month. Poonawalla Fincorp, in a statement to stock exchanges, said that Kapil will join the company on June 24, subject to approvals. Shares of Poonawalla Fincorp rose 1.5% after the announcement. Before taking charge of the Rs 7.5-lakh-crore mortgage business at HDFC Bank, Kapil led the retail lending business at the bank, which included unsecured loan20s, auto loans, two-wheeler loans, retail working capital loans, gold loans, loans against shares, home loans, microfinance, and business loans. "Given his leadership, execution skills and business acumen, (Current MD & CEO) Abhay Bhutada has been elevated to group level and will be taking up a strategic and larger role at the Cyrus Poonawalla Group for managing its strategy, investment and finance," said Adar Poonawalla, chairman, Poonawalla Fincorp.

How to disable autopay on GPay

Google Pay (GPay) has made managing payments easier with its autopay feature, allowing users to automate recurring transactions like subscriptions, utility bills, and more. However, there may come a time when you want to stop these automatic payments—whether it's to manage expenses, cancel a subscription, or simply regain control over your finances. Cancelling autopay on GPay is a straightforward process, but knowing where to find the right settings can save you time and effort. In this guide, we'll walk



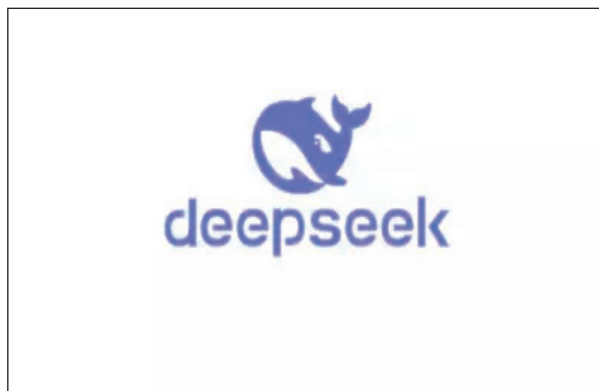
you through the steps to cancel autopay on GPay, ensuring you can stop recurring payments with ease. Here's how to do it: 1. Open the Google Pay app: Launch the Google Pay app on your device. 2. Access autopay settings: Tap on your profile picture in the top right

corner. Select "Autopay". 3. Find the subscription: You'll see a list of your active autopay subscriptions. Locate the specific subscription you want to cancel. 4. Cancel the subscription: Tap on the "Cancel Autopay" option for that particular sub-

scription. You might be asked to confirm your action. Enter your UPI PIN to authorize the cancellation. 5. Confirmation: Once the cancellation is successful, you'll receive a confirmation message. Some important things to keep in mind: Cancellation timing: The effective date of the cancellation may vary depending on the merchant. Contact the merchant: In some cases, you might need to contact the merchant directly to cancel the subscription, even after cancelling the autopay.

How to use DeepSeek on laptop and smartphone: System requirements, steps to download the software

Chinese AI model DeepSeek AI has gained rapid popularity. Its advanced capabilities and innovative approach have drawn interest from tech enthusiasts and AI developers. DeepSeek R1 is an open-source AI model licensed by the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT), making it accessible to anyone. It is currently available primarily for research purposes. Its open-source nature allows for extensive customization and allows one to freely use



DeepSeek R1 for both personal and professional projects. To use DeepSeek on your computer, you will need to follow a series of steps to install, configure, and start using the platform. **Check system require-**

ments Before you begin the installation process, ensure that your computer meets the system requirements. Since DeepSeek involves heavy data processing and potentially

AI model training, having a high-performance machine is important. Here are general requirements: Operating System: Windows 10 or later macOS 10.15 or later Linux (Ubuntu 18.04 or later) Hardware Requirements: CPU: Multi-core processor (Quad-core or higher recommended) GPU: High-performance GPU (NVIDIA with CUDA support is typically required for AI tasks) RAM: Minimum 8GB (16GB or more recommended for AI-related

How to detect hidden cameras in a hotel room using your smartphone

Traveling to new places often brings excitement, but it also comes with its challenges. One growing concern among travelers is the possibility of hidden cameras in hotel rooms, posing serious threats to privacy and safety. Reports of such invasions have become alarmingly common, making it essential for travelers to stay vigilant. While there are special-

ized gadgets designed to detect hidden cameras, many people are unaware that their smartphones can serve as powerful tools for this purpose. This article explores four effective ways to detect hidden cameras in hotel rooms using just your mobile device, ensuring a safe, private, and worry-free stay, no matter where you go. **Different ways to detect hidden cameras in a hotel room using a mobile phone** Use your smartphone's flashlight to scan suspicious areas The simplest way to spot a hidden camera is by using your phone's flashlight. Cameras, regardless of how well they are hidden, have lenses that reflect light. To check for reflective surfaces: Turn off the lights in your room. Shine your smartphone's flashlight on areas where a camera could be hidden, such as

air vents, smoke detectors, alarm clocks, or mirrors. Look for a tiny reflective glint or a lens-like surface. If you notice anything suspicious, inspect the area more closely. Detect infrared lights using your smartphone camera Most hidden cameras emit infrared (IR) light, which is invisible to the human eye but detectable by smartphone cameras. To find infrared sources: Dim or turn off the lights in the room. Open your smartphone's camera app (some phones may require switching to the front camera). Slowly pan the camera across areas where cameras are likely to be hidden. Look for small, pulsing dots or glows on the camera screen. These infrared lights indicate the presence of a hidden camera. Thoroughly inspect the area if you detect such signals.

The Jharkhand Cabinet approves new college and polytechnic projects

Delhi: The Jharkhand government has accepted several Rs 530 crore education plans for engineering institutions and polytechnics. The state has received approvals for the construction of Government Polytechnic, Chakulia, Jamshedpur, at Rs 134.18 crore,



Government Engineering College, Jamshedpur, at Rs 254.93 crore, and Government Polytechnic, Potka,

Jamshedpur, at Rs 136.13 crore. The cabinet also sanctioned Rs 42.83 crore for phase-2 of the Netarhat Tourism Project and Netarhat Residential School-like institutes in Kolhan, Santhal Pargana, and North Chotanagpur divisions. The cabinet allocated Rs 20 crore

China accuses Evergrande of \$78 billion fraud, among worst ever

China Evergrande Group's alleged \$78 billion revenue overstatement escalates the legal peril of founder Hui Kai Yan, who now stands at the center of one of the biggest financial fraud cases in history. The nation's top securities regulator said the developer's onshore unit inflated revenue by recognizing sales in advance in the two years through

2020 that led up to its default. It imposed a 4.18 billion yuan (\$581 million) fine against the unit. Evergrande's alleged fraud dwarfs that of Luckin Coffee Inc. and Enron Corp., dealing a blow to the reputation of its former auditor and the country's financial oversight. It fuels concern about how widespread such accounting issues are, just as the

new China Securities Regulatory Commission chairman is trying to tighten oversight. "The CSRC fines may serve as a warning to owners of other defaulted developers that failing to collaborate with authorities over The allegations mark the latest blow for Hui, once among Asia's richest tycoons. who oversaw a sprawling empire that spanned real

estate to electric vehicles. Evergrande was one of China's biggest developers, taking on massive debt to expand across the country as condo sales boomed. The group received a liquidation order from a Hong Kong court in January, marking the largest collapse in China's three-year real estate crisis. The CSRC's action may pave the way for more

Star Health eyes NRI business through GIFT

CHENNAI: Star Health and Allied Insurance Company will offer dollar-denominated insurance from GIFT City for NRIs. The company is launching international insurance product suite from the facility in FY25. Star Health is the first health insurance company to be granted registration to establish an International Financial Services Centre international office in GIFT City. It plans to commence operations with a branch by the end of this month, facilitating access to health insurance solutions in US dollars for the global Indian community, the company said in a statement on Monday. Noting that the facility will enable the company to significantly expand its global reach and business, it said, the company will offer NRI-focused insurance.