

Jharkhand BJP leader Sita Soren alleges assassination attempt by aide at Dhanbad hotel

The accused was identified as Devashish Manoranjan Ghosh. According to officials, Soren's assistant allegedly pointed a handgun at her following an argument.



NEW DELHI: BJP leader Sita Soren has accused her assistant of attempting to shoot her at a hotel in Jharkhand's Dhanbad district, police said on Friday. The accused was identified as Devashish Manoranjan Ghosh. According to officials, Soren's assistant allegedly pointed a handgun at her

following an argument. Soren was in Dhanbad to attend a wedding. After the event, she checked into a private hotel in the

Saraidhela area, where the alleged attack took place. Soren's bodyguard saved her life from the alleged shooter, according to the

police. "Her bodyguard pounced on Ghosh and saved Sita Soren. After getting the information, the police reached the hotel.

Ghosh was taken into custody and a country-made pistol was also recovered," Dhanbad DSP (Law & Order) Naushad Alam said. The accused, Ghosh, had been accompanying Soren and reportedly drove her car earlier that evening. Following the incident, Soren filed a formal complaint at Saraidhela police station. Police are also investigating whether there was a security lapse that allowed the incident to occur. Sita Soren is the sister-in-law of Jharkhand chief minister Hemant Soren and a former three-term JMM MLA. Soren had switched from JMM to BJP in March last year, ahead of the Lok Sabha elections. She later contested from Jamtara in the November assembly polls but lost to a JMM candidate.

CAPSULES

Amid tariff-for-tariff response from Canada, China, Mexico, India takes a cautious route in trade war

NEW DELHI: The ministry of external affairs on Friday addressed the tariff imposition threat from US President Donald Trump from April 2. The MEA said the country intended to "reduce tariff and non-tariff barriers" with the intention to "deepen India-US two-way trade". Amid stern response from Canada, China and Mexico, who have imposed reciprocal tariffs on the States and have also filed a complaint with the World Trade Organisation, India, in its cautious response said, "Our objective through the BTA is to strengthen and deepen India-US two-way trade across the goods and services sector, increase market access, reduce tariff and non-tariff barriers, and deepen supply chain integration between the two countries." Trump has repeatedly said that India is a high-tariff nation and has expressed his intentions to pull off a tit-for-tat. "And the big one will be on April 2, when reciprocal tariffs, so if India or China, or any of the countries that really...India is a very high tariff nation," he said on Friday.

Is Tesla eyeing no tariffs?
The MEA response comes in amid reports of Trump administration pushing for India's consent to eliminate tariffs on automobile imports as part of a proposed bilateral trade deal. However, India remains cautious about bringing the duties down to zero immediately, though it is open to considering potential reductions, sources told Reuters. India imposes import duties of up to 110% on vehicles, a tariff Tesla CEO Elon Musk has criticized as one of the highest globally.

TTP now among deadliest terror groups in the world

Pakistan is grappling with a severe resurgence of terrorism with its homegrown Tehrik-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) emerging as one of the deadliest terrorist organisations globally, as per the Global Terrorism Index 2025. According to the report, the four terrorist groups responsible

for the most deaths globally in 2024 were Islamic State (IS), Jamaat Nusrat Al-Islam wal Muslimeen (JNIM), Tehrik-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP), and al-Shabaab. Deaths attributed to these groups increased by 11 per cent to 4,204 deaths in 2024, or 80 per cent of deaths that were

attributed to a specific group. In 2014, these four groups were responsible for less than 40 per cent of terrorism deaths that were attributed to a group, highlighting the large global shifts in terrorism over the past decade. Islamic State (IS) and its affiliates remained the

world's deadliest terrorist group in 2024, and is active in 23 countries, one more than in 2023. Deaths attributed to the group and its affiliates declined by ten per cent, from 1,996 to 1,805 deaths. Of the major terrorist organisations, TTP was responsible for the largest increase.

India inks \$248 million deal with Russia for T-72 tank engines

NEW DELHI: India on Friday inked a \$248 million contract with Russia's state-owned Rosoboronexport (RoE) for procurement of 1,000 HP (horsepower) engines for its fleet of T-72 Tanks in "fully formed, completely knocked down and semi knocked down" conditions. "The deal also includes transfer of technology (ToT) from M/s RoE to M/s Armoured Vehicles Nigam Limited (or the Heavy Vehicles Factory) at Avadi, Chennai, for integration and subsequent licensed production of engines to boost



the 'Make in India' initiative," a defence ministry official said. "The Russian-origin T-72s are the mainstay of the Army tank fleet, which at present are fitted with a 780 HP engine. Equipping the fleet of T-72 Tanks with 1,000 HP engines will enhance the battlefield mobility and offensive capability of the Army,"

he added. Along with a fleet of 2,400 T-72 tanks, the Army has so far inducted 1,300 T-90S 'Bhishma' tanks of the 1,657 being produced by the Heavy Vehicles Factory under licence from Russia. The Army force is now also inducting 118 indigenous Arjun Mark-1A tanks, with 14 major and 57 minor "upgrades" to enhance firepower, mobility, endurance and protection, ordered for Rs 7,523 crore in Sept 2021. These 118 'improved' tanks will add to the first 124 Arjun tanks inducted

Jaishankar's security breach: MEA slams UK for 'license accorded to extremist forces'

NEW DELHI: The ministry of external affairs on Friday reacted to the recent security breach involving EAM S Jaishankar's convoy in London, acknowledging the UK's condemnation of the incident. However, it emphasised that the sincerity of this condemnation would "depend on the action taken against culprits". During the weekly press briefing, MEA spokesperson Randhir Jaiswal said India has conveyed "deep concern to the UK authorities" over the incident, stating that there is "a larger context to the



incident". "We have conveyed our deep concern to the UK authorities about the breach of security arrangements by UK-based separatist and extremist elements during the EAM's visit. There is a larger context to the

incident," Jaiswal said. "It brings out both the license accorded to such forces, as well as indifference to their intimidation, threats, and other actions aimed at impeding our legitimate diplomatic activities in the UK.

While we have noted the statement issued by the UK Foreign Office on the matter, our view of its sincerity would depend on the action taken against culprits on this and previous occasions," he added. This comes a day after Jaishankar was heckled by Khalistani extremists while leaving an event at the Chatham House think tank in London. A group of Khalistani extremists staged a protest, chanting slogans and waving flags, which escalated into a direct confrontation with the minister's convoy.

China's offer to India amid tariff stand-off with US

NEW DELHI: Chinese foreign minister Wang Yi on Friday said that the "boundary question" and specific differences between India and China must not dictate the bilateral relations between the two countries. While addressing his annual press conference in Beijing, Yi said that Indo-China relations made positive strides over the past year after the successful meeting between Prime Minister Narendra Modi and President Xi Jinping at Kazan in Russia. "As two ancient civilisations, we have enough wisdom and capability to maintain peace and tranquility in the border areas pending a fair and reasonable solution to the boundary issue," Yi



said. "We should never allow bilateral relations to be defined by the boundary question or specific differences to affect the overall picture of our bilateral ties. China believes that as the largest neighbours, both countries should be partners in each other's success," he added. The Chinese foreign minister said that the Xi and PM Modi provided strategic guidance for the improvement of ties at the Kazan meeting. After this, both sides earnestly followed

through on the important common understanding of the leaders, "strengthened exchanges and practical cooperation at all levels and achieved a series of positive outcomes", he added. This comes months after India and China completed the contentious disengagement process in Depsang and Demchok in Eastern Ladakh, bringing to an end the 54-month-old military standoff in the area, a giant step towards normalisation of bilateral tie.

'One step away from shutting down': Sanjay Nirupam on Maharashtra Congress office

NEW DELHI: Shiv Sena leader Sanjay Nirupam on Friday claimed that the state unit of Congress is going through a severe monetary crunch leading to nonpayment of rent and electricity bill of the party office. Former state president of the grand-old-party, who joined Eknath Shinde months before the assembly elections said that the incompetence of the state and the national leadership of the party led to this situation. "The Mumbai Congress is just one step away from being shut down. The current ineffective and incompetent leaders of the Mumbai Congress are to blame for this situation. The office, which operates in the premises of the Maharashtra government's PWD department, has not paid rent for several years, resulting in an out-



standing bill of 18 lakh rupees. The electricity bill has reached nearly 5 lakh rupees, and the electricity supply company eventually removed the meter and disconnected the power," Nirupam said. "This situation reflects the lack of leadership and capability among the leaders. For about 9 to 10 months, Mumbai Congress employees have not received their salaries. The party is in a silent mode with no events being organized, mainly because the leadership has completely

failed," he added. Further, taking a jibe at Rahul Gandhi, Nirupam said that leaders seldom meet party workers in the state and make a video for YouTube and leave. He blamed the Congress' alliance with Thackeray's party, Shiv Sena (UBT), for its decline. "Rahul Gandhi yesterday came to Mumbai not as a Congress leader but as a YouTuber to make a video in Dharavi. While the Mumbai Congress' condition is getting worse, their leaders are more busy making

videos," Nirupam said. "This is the result of effective leadership. In 2019, when the alliance between Shiv Sena and Congress was forming, I advised against it, warning that the Congress party would gradually weaken. Five to six years later, this prediction is coming true, with only three MLAs remaining, who rely heavily on Muslim votes. Currently, in Mumbai, Uddhav Thackeray's party is the first choice because they appear strong. The Mumbai Congress and the Congress party have become subordinate to Uddhav Thackeray's party, and the incompetence of Delhi's leaders is evident. They have accepted that they cannot stand on their own and rely on allies, leading to the party's downfall. In the coming days, the Congress party.

CISF woman head constable shoots self with service revolver at Delhi airport

NEW DELHI: A woman head constable of the Central Industrial Security Force (CISF) posted at Indira Gandhi International (IGI) Airport died by suicide on Friday in a washroom at Terminal 3 (T3) of the airport. She used her service pistol to take her own life, according to Delhi Police. A team from the Forensic Science Laboratory (FSL) visited the scene and collected evidence. However, no suicide note was found at the site. The body has been shifted to Safdarjung Hospital, where a postmortem examination is being conducted. Authorities have launched an investigation into the incident to determine the circumstances that led to the officer's death.

Gender Equality through decisive actions needed: VC KUK

Jasbir Singh Duggal Kurukshetra: On the occasion of International Women's Day, Women's Studies Research Centre, KUK, in collaboration with, Haryana State Women Commission organised a Poetry Competition in the honour of women's contribution and to celebrate their achievements, fostering awareness of women's rights, equality and empowerment on 7th March at Kurukshetra University. In the presidential address, Vice Chancellor KUK, Prof Som Nath Sachdeva said that there is a dire need to drive gender equality through bold and decisive actions. At present, women are making a significant contribution by participating actively in every field for the development of the country. The Chief Guest, Chairperson, Haryana



State Women Commission, Renu Bhatia said that women should face the challenges of life by strengthening themselves. There is a need to change the attitude towards women in society because till the time the negative thinking towards women does not end, exploitation of women will not end. Renu Bhatia called upon women to be aware of their rights and duties. She talked about men respecting women and protecting them from insult. Director, Women's Studies Research Centre, Prof. Anita Dua welcomed all the guests and presented the outline of the program. Deputy

Toyota Kirloskar Motor Introduces Hilux Black Edition - The Ultimate Blend of Boldness, Power and Sophistication

Vatika Times AMBALA/KURUKSHETRA: Toyota Kirloskar Motor (TKM) today announced the Introduction of the new Hilux Black Edition in India, to cater to the desires of the customers seeking an incredible lifestyle utility vehicle that is best suited for off-roading adventure drives on tough terrains and everyday city use. Designed to keep up with evolving customer expectations, the new Hilux Black Edition aims to deliver aggressive and sophisticated all-black theme, while retaining its legendary toughness, power and performance. At the heart of the Hilux Black Edition is a 2.8L Four-Cylinder Turbo-Diesel Engine, available with a 6-Speed Automatic Transmission (500 Nm torque). It's 4X4 drivetrain ensures a seamless off-road experience,



making it the perfect combination of performance, power, and sophistication. Toyota's world-class engineering, advanced safety features, and best-in-class comfort make the Hilux Black Edition a standout in its segment, offering segment-leading 500 Nm torque, an innovative multi-purpose vehicle (IMV) platform, and an exceptional 700mm water wading capacity. The Hilux Black Edition features all-new black-themed exterior, giving it a dominant road presence. Key design enhancements include a black-coloured front radiator grille, muscular bonnet line and 18-inch black alloy wheels with customized hub caps. The additional styling elements such as the black ORVM covers, door handles, fender garnish, and fuel lid garnish contribute to a sleek, aggressive look. The front bumper features an Under Run adding a sporty touch. Completing the modern and premium aesthetic are the sharp swept-back LED headlights and LED rear combination lamps, ensuring a distinctive lighting signature.

Body of 7 year old girl thrown into canal recovered after 7 days

Jasbir Singh Duggal Kurukshetra: The body of 7 year old Aanchal, who was thrown into a canal in Kurukshetra, was recovered after 7 days on Friday from near Sambhi in Distt. Karnal. However, Aanchal's dead body was found mutilated as stray dogs had bitten her neck and mouth while she was stuck in the debris. The body was identified by her school uniform and two broken front teeth, which matched her family's description. Aanchal's father, Lalit, had thrown her into the canal near Mijarpur bridge. A team of divers, SDRF, and police had been conducting a search operation since then. According to reports, on March 1, Lalit, a resident of Khedi Ramanagar village, had thrown his 7 year old daughter into the Narwana Branch canal near Mijarpur-Kirmach village. Initially, Lalit had claimed that he had left his daughter at a relative's house, but when the case reached the police, he confessed to throwing her into the canal. Lalit had misled his wife, Shanti, by telling her that he had left their daughter with relatives in Delhi. When Shanti went to Delhi with Lalit to pick up their daughter, Lalit abandoned her at the New Delhi bus stop.

Two IAF aircraft incidents in a day: AN-32 crash lands in Bagdogra, Jaguar goes down in Ambala

NEW DELHI: A transport aircraft of the Indian Air Force (IAF) made a crash landing at Bagdogra in West Bengal on Friday, officials confirmed. The crew of the AN-32 aircraft escaped unhurt, and efforts are underway to recover the aircraft from the site. "An accident involving an AN-32 transport aircraft at Bagdogra airport has come to light today. The aircraft is being recovered from the site. The crew of the aircraft is safe," the IAF said in a statement.

Special seminar organized at Navyug School on the eve of International Women's Day

Jasbir Singh Duggal Kurukshetra: On the eve of International Women's Day, a special seminar was organized for mothers at Navyug Senior Secondary School, Mohan Nagar, with the theme "Jagruk Nari Jagruk Samaj" (Aware Woman Aware Society). All mothers were welcomed with a tilak ceremony and a certificate of appreciation. Renowned poetess and social worker Dr. Mamta Sood was the special guest.



The seminar began with the lighting of a lamp in front of Goddess Saraswati. School Principal Dr. Devender Arora welcomed all the mothers and the special guest. Dr. Mamta Sood addressed the

mothers, saying that we should always remember six 'P's': Pooja (worship), Pranayam (breathing exercises), Pratiyogita (competition), Parampara (tradition), Prerak Prasang (inspiring stories), and Prasad (offerings). She emphasized that parents should teach their children good habits and values from an early age, making them self-reliant and responsible.

Dr. Sood advised mothers to discipline their children from a young age, saying that the attitude "he's still small, he'll learn later" is wrong. She also cautioned against scolding or physically punishing children for not understanding something, as this can make them stubborn and rebellious. Vice-Principal Riddhima said that times have changed, and

children have become more outspoken. Parents should be friends with their children, rather than being authoritarian. Principal Preeti Mishra advised parents to make their children self-reliant from childhood, allowing them to make small decisions on their own. Coordinator Ritu Chaudhary cautioned against imposing parents' expectations on children, leading to stress and hindering their natural development. School Director B.D. Gaba thanked all the mothers and the special guest, presenting them with mementos. The event was attended by Manager Vikas Gaba and senior staff members.

Canon targets chip companies opening India operations

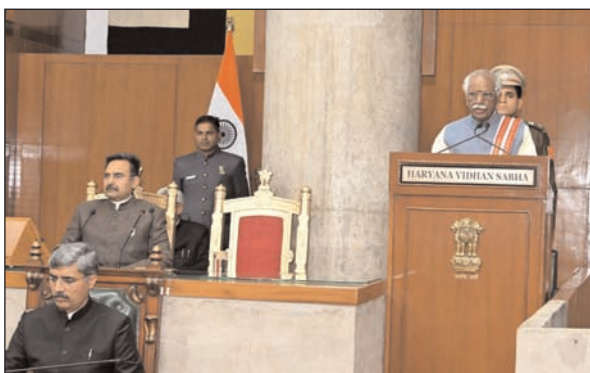
Delhi: Japanese image and optical products giant Canon India President and CEO Toshiaki Nomura feels its semiconductor lithography equipment for chip production has a bright promise in India and is in negotiations with firms putting up facilities here. Canon did not identify names but said there is huge potential since several chip manufacturers are considering India for semiconductor manufacturing. Many chipmakers are con-

sidering India as a new manufacturing location. Nomura informed us that they are discussing our product and service with all chip manufacturers. He said this is a "good opportunity for us" for the Tokyo-based business to contribute its technology, goods, and services to this Indian market area. "We install equipment to make chips using our technology and goods. We help chipmakers create strong India

facilities. Once the chip manufacturer builds the facility in India, we will install our equipment and contribute to the Indian semiconductor industry with our good product and service," Nomura stated. "In 2024, we are quite close to double-digit growth, and for coming years, I am very optimistic and confident to achieve double-digit growth year by year.

Haryana, the only state in the country where all 24 crops are procured at MSP- Governor

JAG MOHAN THAKEN Chandigarh: Haryana Governor Bandaru Dattatraya, in his address during the Budget session of the Vidhan Sabha, highlighted Haryana's unique distinction as the only state in the country where all 24 crops are procured at MSP. Governor Dattatraya reiterated the Haryana government's strong commitment to enhancing the economic well-being of farmers, ensuring agricultural profitability, and supporting their welfare. He highlighted various initiatives aimed at directly benefiting farmers and ensuring their financial security. The Governor said that over the last nine seasons, a total of Rs. 1,25,000 crore has been transferred to the bank accounts of 12 lakh farmers for the purchase of crops at Minimum



Support Price (MSP) through the e-Kharid portal. This initiative is aimed at facilitating the procurement process and providing direct financial relief to the farming community. In a significant policy move, the government has abolished the centuries-old practice of 'Abiyana', which had been in place since the British era. Recognizing the challenges posed by the delayed monsoon last year, Governor Bandaru Dattatraya pointed out that the government has

granted a bonus of Rs. 1,345 crore to farmers, offering Rs. 2,000 per acre to provide relief during the sowing season of Kharif crops. This bonus marks the first-ever instance of such financial assistance being provided during sowing. The Governor further emphasized the success of the 'PM Kisan Samman Nidhi' scheme, under which Rs. 6,563 crore has been disbursed to 20.24 lakh farmers in Haryana through 19 instalments.

Technological Innovation cornerstone of developed India: VC KUK

Jasbir Singh Duggal Kurukshetra: The Mechanical Department, UIET organised a Five-day workshop on "EV Saksham: Electric Vehicle Design and Development." During the Valedictory Ceremony of this workshop, the Chief Guest, Vice Chancellor Kurukshetra University, Prof Som Nath Sachdeva said that technological innovation is the cornerstone of developed India. The present time is of EV vehicle and the Government of India has given the mission to phase out petrol and diesel vehicles by 2030, due to which the demand of EV vehicle is increasing in the market. Prof Sachdeva added that there are about 2 thousand components in a fossil fuel vehicle, whereas there are only 20 components inside an EV vehicle. Prof Sachdeva inspected



two EV formula racing cars made by the students of UIET institute. Prof. Sachdeva congratulated UIET Institute Director Prof. Sunil Dhingra, UIET teachers and students' team and said that this effort will provide opportunities to students to learn the latest technology in the coming time. Prof. Sachdeva called upon the young students to take consistent steps towards startups so that they become job providers rather than job seekers. Prof. Sachdeva also inspected the Wolf 2.0 Adventure Car. Welcoming the chief

guest, UIET Director Prof. Sunil Dhingra said that students and teachers have been connected in UIET Institute under the Society of Automotive Engineers in which innovation is done through experimental work. On this occasion, Dr. Vishal Ahlawat presented a detailed report of the five-day workshop. EV Saksham CEO Mayank Arora, UIET Institute's Dr. Vijay Garg, Dr. Nikhil Mariwala, Dr. Sanjay Kajal, Dr. Vishal Ahlawat, Dr. Sunil Nain, Dr. Upendra Dhul, Dr. Ram Avatar, Dr. Ajay Jangda, Dr. Priyanka Jangda actively participated in the workshop.

'It doesn't work like that': Puri slams Tamil Nadu CM Stalin

NEW DELHI: Union minister Hardeep Singh Puri on Friday slammed Tamil Nadu chief minister MK Stalin over his recent remark urging couples to have more children immediately to secure greater representation of the state in Parliament amid concerns over the upcoming delimitation exercise. Puri dismissed the idea that states with higher birth rates would automatically benefit from the process, asserting that India's governance system was mature and democratic. "It doesn't work like that; those states who produce more kids will benefit more during delimitation. We are not only the world's largest democracy but also the world's most mature governance system," Puri said while interacting with women journalists on the eve of International Women's Day, according to the news agency ANI. His remarks come in response to Stalin's remark on Monday, where he urged Tamil Nadu's residents to reconsider family planning norms, citing concerns that the proposed delimitation exercise could reduce the state's political representation. Speaking at a wedding ceremony, Stalin said, "Before, we used to say don't give birth to a child immediately, no need to rush.



International Yoga festival concludes in Rishikesh

The International Yoga Festival in Rishikesh, Uttarakhand, saw global participation, concluding with recognition of yoga's benefits and various tourism initiatives announced by Satpal Maharaj. Thousands of yoga proponents participated, highlighting Rishikesh's role as a spiritual epicenter. Renowned yoga instructors were honored for their contributions. The International Yoga Festival, held from March 1 to 7 in Rishikesh, concluded on Friday. Uttarakhand tourism minister Satpal Maharaj highlighted the state's significance as the 'World Capital of Yoga and Spirituality.' He emphasised that yoga and pranayama, developed by ancient sages in this holy land, have become a gift to



humanity. "Uttarakhand is not just the gateway to the Char Dham Yatra but also the global centre for yoga and spirituality," he said. The week-long event saw participation from around 410 yoga enthusiasts, including 38 international practitioners from Spain, Canada, Israel, Germany, France, the Netherlands, Japan, Romania, Singapore, the US, Mexico, Indonesia, Argentina, and other countries. Daily yoga sessions were held along the banks of the Ganges. Maharaj also underscored the role of yoga in boosting immunity, stating that yoga and pranayama

helped people combat the Covid-19 pandemic. He noted that yoga is now widely embraced across the world as part of a healthier lifestyle. The minister also announced several initiatives to enhance tourism in Uttarakhand. Plans include developing border villages like Jadung as homestay destinations, reviving the historic Gartang Valley route, and promoting Timmarsain Mahadev, known for its natural ice Shiva Lingam, as a religious site. Additionally, pilgrims will soon be able to view Mount Kailash from Lipulekh Pass without crossing into Tibet.

Cabinet approves revised I-T bill for Parliament

Delhi: The Union Cabinet approved the new income tax bill, which will replace the six decades old I-T Act, sources said. The new bill aims to clarify tax law without adding new taxes. It will have no caveats, explanations, or extended phrases. The Cabinet, led by PM Modi, passed the New Income Tax Bill, sources said. Sources said the revised income tax measure will now be tabled in the Parliament next week and will be sent to Parliament's Standing Committee on Finance. The budget session's first leg ends Feb. 13. The session will resume on March 10 and end on



April 4. In Budget 2025-26, Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman said the new tax bill will be submitted in Parliament. In the July 2024 Budget, pledged a full revision of the Income-tax Act, 1961. The CBDT has established an internal committee to oversee the review and make the Act succinct, clear, and easy to comprehend, which

will reduce conflicts, litigations, and provide greater tax certainty to taxpayers. Also, 22 expert sub-committees have been established to study the various parts of the Income Tax Act. Four categories were open to public input: language simplification, litigation reduction, compliance reduction, and redundant/obsolete provisions.

CISF woman head constable shoots self with service revolver

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pistol to take her own life, according to Delhi Police. A team from the Forensic Science Laboratory (FSL) visited the scene and collected evidence. However, no suicide note was found at the site. The body has been

shifted to Safdarjung Hospital, where a post-mortem examination is being conducted. Authorities have launched an investigation into the incident to determine the circumstances that led to the officer's death.



Centre plans pension scheme for gig workers, employers to contribute



Delhi: The labor and employment ministry is creating a transaction-based pension strategy to improve gig workers' social security, requiring aggregators to contribute 1-2% of their yearly turnover. The effort is targeted at almost one crore platform workers across India, a govt source stated. Each gig worker will get a global account number, allowing deductions based on wage transactions across platforms. Employers will pay per bill. The insider said, "State governments are being consulted, and the plan will soon go to the cabinet."

"The effort tackles the issue of employer accountability owing to gig workers' use of numerous platforms. This policy matches the e-Shram platform, which was introduced in Aug 2021 to register unorganised sector workers. As of January 27, 30.6 crore workers have signed up for the platform, which has 12 social security plans. India had 77 lakh gig workers in 2020-21, and today has over 1 crore, says a 2022 NITI Aayog report. Currently, 47% of gig jobs are medium-skilled, 22% high-skilled, and 31% low-skilled.

India inks \$248 million deal with Russia for T-72 tank engines

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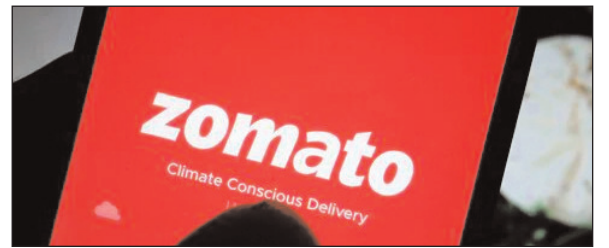
fleet of T-72 Tanks with 1,000 HP engines will enhance the battlefield mobility and offensive capability of the Army," he added. Along with a fleet of 2,400 T-72 tanks, the Army has so far

inducted 1,300 T-90S 'Bhishma' tanks of the 1,657 being produced by the Heavy Vehicles Factory under licence from Russia. The Army force is now also inducting 118 indigenous

Arjun Mark-1A tanks, with 14 major and 57 minor "upgrades" to enhance firepower, mobility, endurance and protection, ordered for Rs 7,523 crore in Sept 2021. These 118 'improved' tanks will add to the first 124 Arjun tanks inducted well over a decade ago. Then, there are the 354 indigenous light tanks for high-altitude warfare to be inducted under Project Zorawar for around Rs 17,500 crore. The need for such tanks, each weighing less than 25 tonnes with a high power-to-weight ratio as well as superior firepower and protection, has been driven home by the continuing almost four-year-long military confrontation with China in eastern Ladakh.

Zomato's renaming's impact on biz, investors

Delhi: Industry experts say Zomato Ltd's plan to create a separate identity for its parent business will let it pursue its goals without risking everything and give investors more detailed information about the company. Four years after Facebook changed to Meta Platforms Inc. and a decade after Google's parent became Alphabet Inc., Zomato announced that its board had approved the changing of its corporate identity as Eternal Ltd. The name change needs shareholder approval.



Zomato's renaming reflects a long-term growth ambition, focusing on Blinkit (rapid commerce), Hyperpure (restaurant supplies), and District (events platform), industry executives stated. Anupriya Saxena, a partner at JMJA & Associates LLP, a corporate consultancy, said, "The Zomato app and brand are unchanged, but the new company name indicates diversification and possible future expansions beyond its core food business." Experts said Zomato can now experiment with its various companies without risking one brand's impact on another, and it can also manage IP and prospective acquisitions.

India concludes massive naval combat exercise amid growing Pak maritime collusion-

NEW DELHI: India's massive three-month long naval combat exercise, with 65-70 warships, 10 submarines and over 80 aircraft and helicopters, has now ended after testing operational preparedness and honing warfighting skills in the Indian Ocean Region (IOR), amid expanding maritime collusion between China and Pakistan. The Tropex or the 'theatre level operational readiness exercise', which is conducted biennially, brought the Navy's western and eastern fleets together as well as included "substantial participation" from the Army, IAF and Coast Guard for the intense drills. "The exercise provided a valuable evaluation of the Navy's ability to



respond to multifarious challenges in a synchronised and integrated manner to defend national maritime security interests. It helped validate many concepts of operations," Navy spokesperson Captain Vivek Madhwal said on Friday. The theatre of operations for the exercise extended approximately 4,300 nautical miles from the north to the south and 5,000 nautical miles from the Strait of Hormuz in the

west to the Sunda and Lombok Straits in the east. The Navy deployed indigenous aircraft carrier INS Vikrant, the Visakhapatnam and Kolkata-class guided-missile destroyers and Kalvari-class diesel-electric submarines, among others, as well as MiG-29K fighter jets, P-8I long-range maritime patrol aircraft, MQ-9B Sea Guardian drones and MH-60R submarine-hunting helicopters for the exercise.

Air India updates its fleet of planes to operate on US-Canada routes

Delhi: Under this interim solution, the airline will install new seat covers, cushions, curtains, and carpets, all aligned with Air India's new logo. Air India has begun updating its Boeing 777s that fly to the US and Canada, while global supply chain concerns have delayed the upgrade, authori-



ties said. The airline has 13 legacy B777 aircraft operating

on these ultra-long-haul routes, and authorities claimed that all these are scheduled to be refreshed under this temporary configuration. "The cabin's heavy refresh will include basic repairs and sprucing up lavatories, cabin walls, meal tables, armrests, and galleys."

But they won't cover the IFE (in-flight entertainment) or livery change. Air India is boosting its premium services and flight times to lure more US travelers. Once the refurbishment starts, it will take around two years to bring the widebody fleet to international standards, he said.

'No comments required': Delhi HC as woman claims machine gun injuries healed by homeopathy

NEW DELHI: The Delhi High Court has dismissed a petition filed by a woman who claimed she had healed from 25 bullet injuries solely through homeopathic medicines. The woman had sought a summons against those she accused of attacking her, but the court refused to interfere with the lower courts' decisions that had earlier rejected her plea. Justice Anup J Bhambhani upheld the orders of the sessions court and the magistrate court, both of



which had refused to summon the accused named in her 2012 complaint. The high court said it found "no coherence or cogency" in her arguments. According to news agency PTI, the woman in her petition alleged

that she was attacked by individuals wielding "fully loaded revolvers and a machine gun." She claimed that she suffered multiple gunshot wounds but did not seek medical attention. Instead, she took homeopathic

medicines such as Calendula 30, Silicea 30, and Arnica 200, which she said caused the bullets to "come out" from her head, heart, and hand without any surgical intervention. Dismissing the plea on March 6, the high court stated, "Clearly, no comments are required from this court in relation to the petitioner's testimony." It also pointed out that both subordinate courts had rightly dismissed her claims, terming them "improbable and unbeliev-

able." Referring to the sessions court's observations, the high court noted that the allegations were "patently absurd and improbable." If the woman's version were to be believed, the court said, the bullets "would have been embedded deep in her vital organs, making it impossible for her to survive without multiple surgeries." The sessions court also remarked that it was "reserving its comments on her psychological state

Bihar CM remark sparks spat with opposition women lawmakers



NEW DELHI: Bihar chief minister Nitish Kumar on Friday once again indulged into a heated argument with an RJD MLC, claiming that women had no issues in the state. This came after the opposition party leader questioned the JDU government over higher education of females in the state. Urmila Thakur was voicing her dissatisfaction with education minister Sunil Kumar's response to a question she had raised in the House when the chief minister began recounting what his government had done for the female literacy in the state. Thakur highlighted the situation in her Begusarai district, where many girls are deprived of education due to the need to walk four to five kilometers to reach the nearest school. The chief minister defended his government saying, "Do you people even know what we have done for girls' education?"

Village girls hardly went to schools in Bihar until we came to power." Citing her own example, Thakur responded saying, "Sir please do not say that. I too hail from a village. I belong to an older generation, yet I did complete my schooling." Another RJD MLC Munni Devi Rajak then stepped in, and questioned the seasoned leader: "You have no idea what has been done by us for women. You may be women yourselves but what has been your contribution?" Visibly offended by this, Kumar stood up and launched a direct swipe at former CM Rabri Devi saying, "When her husband

began to sink, he installed his wife (in the CM's post)." He further attacked the RJD's reign and said, "Your party (RJD) did nothing. You people know nothing. Whatever has been done for women, it has been done by me. Now women have no problems." RJD leader Tejashwi Yadav criticised the comments and reminded Kumar that Rabri Devi was first woman CM of Bihar. "CM Nitish Kumar should remember that Rabri Devi is the first female CM of Bihar... There is nothing much to comment anything on him. His deteriorating health signals that he is no longer."

'South states need to boost productivity'

CHENNAI: Southern states can do more to improve labour productivity, gross value addition, research and skilling, said chief economic adviser V Anantha Nageswaran. Speaking at the CII South Global Linkages Summit, he said the southern states have performed well in GDP per capita, labour force participation, skilling and gross value addition in manufacturing but there is room for improvement. He said the number of persons engaged in manufacturing in south India is 33% but



output share is about 26%. "So that kind of tells you there is scope for improvement in productivity," he said, adding, while these states have basic skilled workforce, it needs to improve professional skills and 'very high order' professional skills,

especially with the global developments of high value added manufacturing and adoption of artificial intelligence. Southern states have done well in economic and social progress and should benchmark themselves against the world, not within India, he added.

Gold loans rise 50% in seven months

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

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

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

Telangana govt forms independent panel to study caste survey data

NEW DELHI: The Telangana government on Friday constituted an independent committee of prominent personalities to study the data of caste survey conducted by it. The appointment of the panel came against the backdrop of opposition BRS and BJP raising doubts over accuracy of the survey's data. Deputy Chief Minister Mallu Bhatti Vikramarka said the committee would be headed by former Supreme Court judge Justice Sudarshan Reddy. While former professor Kancha Ilaiah would act as vice chairman, Praveen Chakravarthy is its convener. Economist and activist Jean Dreze would be a special invitee to the committee, an offi-



cial release quoted him as saying. Vikramarka said the panel has been formed to analyse the survey data to ensure that any anomalies are ruled out. He requested the panel to submit a report within a month to the state government's planning department. The comprehensive house-

hold survey encompassing socio-economic, political, and educational status of citizens was taken up at the instance of Congress leader Rahul Gandhi and AICC President Mallikarjun Kharge with a noble objective, he said. The Congress government under the leadership of Chief

Minister A Revanth Reddy got the survey done with sincerity as it wanted to lay foundation for social justice in the society, he said.

The Deputy CM added that "socially conscious intellectuals in the state and the country" have been made partners with an independent status to study the data collected in the household survey with an intention to dispel any misconceptions about the survey and to rule out any inaccuracies. The BRS had alleged that the population of backward classes has declined as per the caste survey when compared with the data of an 'intensive household survey' held during the BRS regime.

FM: RBI's gold buying not to replace \$ for settlements

NEW DELHI: FM Nirmala Sitharaman on Monday clarified in the Lok Sabha that India's rising gold reserves, including those held by RBI, is not intended to replace any international currency. She responded to Congress MP Manish Tiwari's concerns about whether the global shift towards gold signalled a move away from the US dollar as a dominant settlement mechanism. Sitharaman said, "Gold is also kept in the Reserve Bank and gold is also being bought by the Reserve Bank. But



beyond that, as regards an international currency or potential currency, there is not much for me to comment at this stage." Congress MP Tiwari stated that since the US abandoned the gold standard in 1971, gold had lost its significance as a major financial asset. However, in recent years, central

banks worldwide have increased their gold holdings. From constituting only 6% of global reserves in 2006, gold now makes up about 11% in 2024. Countries like China, India, Poland, and Turkey have been among the most aggressive buyers, and domestic gold prices in India have surged as well.

Pegasus snooping row: SC adjourns hearing of case for April 22

NEW DELHI: The Supreme Court on Friday posted for hearing on April 22 a batch of pleas seeking inquiry into the allegations of the government allegedly using Israeli software Pegasus for snooping. Solicitor general Tushar Mehta, appearing for Centre, told a bench of Justices Surya Kant and N Kotishwar Singh that the matter came after a long time and urged to hear it in April. The bench then posted the case for hearing on April 22. The top court had constituted technical committee and overseeing committee, on the alleged use of Pegasus spyware to snoop on phones of politicians, activists and journalists. The apex court had appointed a committee headed by a former top court judge to look into Pegasus's snooping



allegations. The committee, headed by justice (retd) Raveendran was tasked to oversee the functioning of the technical committee and was assisted by Alok Joshi, former IPS officer and Sundeep Oberoi, chairman, sub-committee in (international organisation of standardisation/international electro-technical commission/joint technical committee). The three members of the technical committee consisted Naveen Kumar Chaudhary, professor (cyber security and digital forensics)

and dean, National Forensic Sciences University, Gandhinagar, Gujarat; Prabakaran P, professor (School of Engineering), Amrita Vishwa Vidyapeetham, Amritapuri, Kerala; and Ashwin Anil Gumaste, Institute Chair Associate Professor (Computer Science and Engineering), Indian Institute of Technology, Bombay, Maharashtra. In its report, the committee concluded that spyware was not found in the 29 mobile phones it examined, but malware was found in five mobile phones.

India one step closer to getting 26/11 accused Tahawwur Rana

Washington: New Delhi is close to having Tahawwur Rana, a former Pakistani Army doctor and 26/11 Mumbai terrorist attack accused, brought to justice after US Supreme Court Associate Justice Elena Kagan rejected his emergency application on Thursday to stay his extradition to India. Rana's attorneys immediately bumped up the application to Chief Justice John Roberts, likely the last court of appeal, with little possibility of reprieve after President Trump personally assured his extradition during Prime Minister Modi's visit to Washington DC last month and the State Department signed off on handing him over to Indian authorities. On Thursday, Rana played the religion and health card, citing possible religious persecu-



tion and torture in India on account of his Muslim faith, besides serious medical condition, to forestall the extradition, which he argued through attorneys would be a "de facto death sentence." But Justice Kagan, who serves as the Circuit Justice for the Ninth Circuit which had earlier upheld the extradition, rejected his "Emergency Application for Stay Pending Litigation of Petition for Writ of Habeas Corpus." "Application...denied by Justice Kagan," the US SC website said in a terse announcement, without elaborating.

Rana has fought the extradition for almost four years purportedly with help from the Pakistani establishment loath to give up one of their own because of the precedent it would set. But the state department has already signed off on handing him over to India, and New Delhi has already made arrangements to take him into custody and fly him back to face justice for one of the most egregious terrorist attacks on Indian soil that also claimed the lives of 26 foreign nationals, including six Americans.

Biocon's growth formula: Generics & biosimilars

BENGALURU: Biocon is betting big on new product launches in its generics and biosimilars portfolios, which are expected to fuel its expansion in the next 2-3 years. The company is leveraging the Viatrix acquisition to provide a significant boost towards an integrated biosimilars enterprise model. This integrated approach encompasses complete oversight of value-generation through development and production, alongside value-realisation through distribution and market deployment. "We have an experienced and committed team in the US which is focused strongly on biosimilars. And the fact that we are now a fully integrated biosimilars company has enabled us to position ourselves in a strong position with the payers, the PBMs (pharmacy benefit managers) and HMO (health maintenance organisation) sectors. We are India's premier biosimilars company and we are making a brand presence in the global markets. We are building Brand Biocon and getting a 20% plus market share in the US for some products is significant," said Kiran Mazumdar-Shaw, chairperson of the Biocon Group. Its subsidiary Biocon Biologics completed the acquisition of the global biosimilars business of its partner Viatrix. As a part of the transaction, Biocon Biologics issued compulsorily convertible preference shares. (CCPS) in the company valued at \$1 billion, equivalent to an equity stake of at least 12.9% on a fully diluted basis.



Nitish Kumar loses cool, again: Why Bihar CM's frequent outbursts may upend state politics



NEW DELHI: Is Nitish Kumar losing his cool way too often these days? On Friday, the Bihar chief minister lost his temper inside the state legislative council and surprised many with his choice of words to refer to former chief ministers Lalu Prasad and Rabri Devi. "Jab iske husband doob gaye to apni wife ko bana diya (When her husband began to sink, he installed his wife (in the CM's post))", Nitish said referring to Lalu Prasad's move to make Rabri Devi the chief minister after he was forced to resign from the post following an arrest warrant in a fo-

der scam case. It all started after RJD MLC Urmila Thakur, citing the example of her Begusarai district said "in many villages, girls are deprived of education as reaching the nearest school requires them to walk four to five kilometers". This irked Nitish Kumar, who lashed out at the opposition and said: "Do you people even know what we have done for girls' education? Village girls hardly went to schools in Bihar until we came to power." When Urmila objected, Nitish stepped up his attack. "The education system had collapsed during the RJD govern-

ment. It was I who revived it," the CM said. "What did the RJD government do for women? Where did women study earlier? They barely had access to primary education," he added. Then the Bihar chief minister went on to launch a frontal attack on Rabri Devi and mocked at the way she was made the chief minister by her husband Lalu Prasad. Leader of opposition Tejashwi Yadav strongly objected to the language used by Nitish Kumar for his parents and once again raised questions over Bihar chief minister's health.

Crowd management: Station directors to control ticket sale as per station capacity

NEW DELHI: Now station directors will control the sale of tickets as per station capacity and available trains, a high-level meeting chaired by railway minister Ashwini Vaishnaw decided on Friday. Besides this, there will be permanent waiting areas outside 60 busy stations and wider foot-over bridges, moves that will help in better crowd management.



Station directors, who are the overall in-charge of their stations, will be financially empowered to take on-the-spot decisions to improve facilities. The decisions come barely weeks after a stampede at the New Delhi station claimed 18 lives. Though a probe into the incident is underway, one of the probable reasons was the sale of a high number of tickets from its counters. In an official statement, the railway ministry said the high-level committee held detailed deliberations on crowd control at stations, particularly at 60 locations where footfall is exceptionally high during certain festive periods. It added that permanent outside waiting

areas will be created at these stations which "periodically face heavy crowd". Pilot projects have been started at New Delhi, Anand Vihar, Varanasi, Ayodhya and Patna stations. "With this arrangement in place, sudden crowding will be contained within the waiting area. Passengers will be allowed to go to platforms only when trains arrive there. This will decongest stations," a ministry spokesperson said. As per the decisions, there will be complete access control at these 60 stations. While passengers with confirmed tickets will be given direct access to platforms, those without a ticket or with a waiting list ticket will have to be in the waiting area. All

unauthorised entry points will also be sealed. Another major decision was to construct wider foot-over bridges (FOB). Two new designs — for 12-metre-wide (40 feet) and six-metre-wide (20 feet) standard FOBs — have been developed. These wide bridges with ramps were effective in crowd management during the Maha Kumbh. Moreover, war rooms will be developed at large stations, and officers of all departments will work in the room if there is a surge in people at the stations. The ministry has also decided to use communication equipment such as walkie-talkies, announcement systems, and calling systems.

CAPSULES

In 2024, the Indian Real Estate Sector Expects Equity Investments of Rs 74,815 Crore

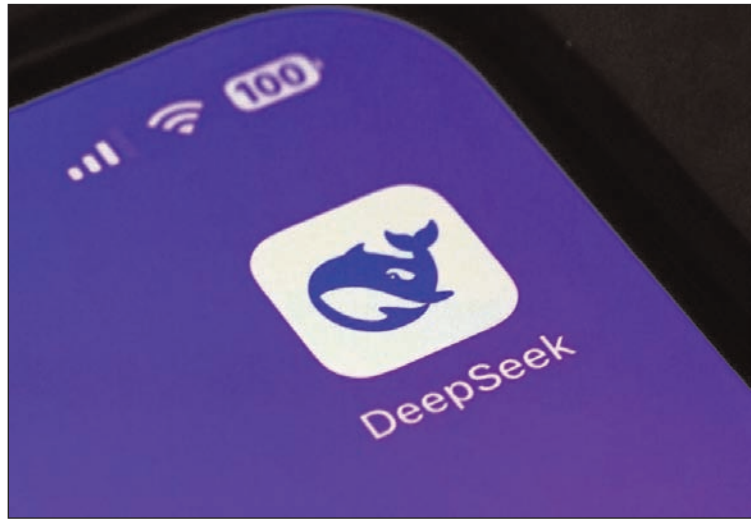
Delhi : According to a survey by CBRE South Asia, the real estate sector registered equity investments of \$8.9 billion (Rs 74,815 crore) in the first nine months of 2024, surpassing the increase of \$7.4 billion (Rs 62,210 crore) in 2023 and demonstrating a year-over-year rise of 46%. The Indian real estate market has experienced a massive boom, reaching its highest point since 2018. A significant quarterly equity investment totaling \$2.6 billion (Rs 21,857 crore) between July and September 2024 is highlighted in the report.

Mumbai, Bengaluru, and Chennai drove this expansion, contributing 66 percent of equity inflows in Q3 2024 with their respective subscriptions of \$0.96 billion (Rs 8,070 crore), \$0.40 billion (Rs 3,362 crore), and \$0.34 billion (Rs 2,858 crore). With capital inflows of \$0.31 billion (Rs 2,605 crore), \$0.27 billion (Rs 2,269 crore), and \$0.02 billion (Rs 1,681 crore), respectively, Delhi-NCR, Pune, and Hyderabad also saw a sizeable portion of investments. Domestic investors, especially construction businesses, who accounted for roughly 79% of equity inflows during the July-September quarter, were the main drivers of the increase in investment momentum.

Of the overall inflows of foreign investments, 73% came from Singapore and 22% from the US.

India's servers will host DeepSeek's AI models for security

Delhi : The Indian government said it will host Chinese startup DeepSeek's AI models on its computers to monitor security and safety. The country increased its efforts to give computers to entrepreneurs and researchers to accelerate the development of localized AI 'foundational models' or tech solutions to offset US and Chinese AI developments. IT and electronics minister Ashwini Vaishnaw said the government is buying 18,693 GPUs to provide "affordable compute" to large and growing IT enterprises and AI researchers. Foundation models are AI solutions educated on large datasets to fulfill several tasks. The models are adaptable and can be customized



for special uses. Vaishnaw noted that DeepSeek was constructed with 2,000 GPUs, therefore the Rs 10,372 crore IndiaAI mission's high-tech GPUs are enough to power India's AI quest. He dismissed concerns

about India being late in its AI quest, saying it has US assistance as a valued partner. We are punctual. Computer access is most vital. This is now accessible. We are fit. Getting the computer facility was crucial to

the goal." He added India is optimistic Nvidia will provide GPUs regularly despite US government limitations on some countries. "I'm reiterating that we are seen as a trusted country, we're seen as a country which respects IP rights, (and) we're seen as a country which understands the technological development prospects and all the points related to that." DeepSeek's recent popularity hasn't concerned the government. The good news is that DeepSeek is open source and we will soon host it on Indian servers like we did Llama. Everything open source can be hosted on our servers to ensure data privacy. He said we'll do that soon. Vaishnaw claimed preparations have begun.

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

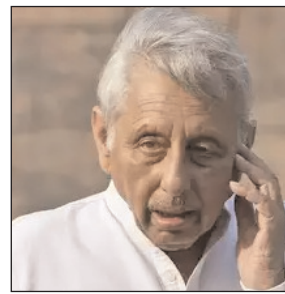
Delhi : The Union Cabinet, led by Prime Minister Narendra Modi, launched the National Critical Mineral Mission (NCMM) with a ₹16,300 crore expenditure and a projected ₹18,000 crore investment from PSUs and other businesses. "Several crucial decisions have created new scientific and technology prospects 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, 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, Glauconite, Graphite, Indium, Lithium, Molybdenum, Nickel, Niobium, Phosphate (without uranium), Platinum group of elements, Potash, Rare earth minerals (excluding Uranium,

Mani Shankar 'Aiyo': Congress' all-weather disaster man

In the annals of political faux pas, Mitt Romney's infamous '47%' comment or Hillary Clinton branding Trump supporters as 'deplorables' stand out as classic cases of plain speaking gone horribly wrong—instances where opponents easily cast them as out-of-touch elitists. But perhaps no self-goal in Indian politics has been as monumental as Mani Shankar Aiyar's 2014 'chaiwala' jibe at then-Gujarat Chief Minister Narendra Modi. Modi may well have ascended to the Prime Ministership without that gaffe, but Aiyar's ill-timed comment ensured that the crumbling edifice of UPA-2 was buried six feet under. Narendra Modi, who had always sought to play on the theme of the entitled versus the commoner, lapped up the 'chaiwala' moniker like a fish to water.



If that was not enough, Aiyar repeated history just a few years later, once again helping PM Modi secure his home turf. In 2017, as the BJP grappled with anti-incumbency, the Patel agitation, and Dalit uprisings in Gujarat, Aiyar's 'neech aadmi' remark gifted Modi the perfect opportunity to reframe the election as a question of Gujarati asmita (pride). The result? A last-minute consolidation of core voters, allowing the BJP to scrape through in a tough contest. A red-faced Congress suspended Aiyar, but the damage was already done. While that may have been

the formal break between Aiyar and the Congress, the former Union minister has continued to embarrass the party. The latest episode? A backhanded compliment to Rajiv Gandhi, where Aiyar, in his characteristic bluntness, detailed how the former Prime Minister had flunked at Cambridge and later at Imperial College, London. It provided fresh ammunition to the BJP, all too keen to puncture the image of the technocratic PM, who has been widely hailed for bringing the first wave of the IT revolution to the country. Furious Congress leaders wasted no time in denouncing Aiyar—Maharashtra's Nana Patole labelled him "mentally unstable," Harish Khare called him "frustrated," and former Rajasthan CM Ashok Gehlot dismissed him.

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.

14 gold bars strapped in belt': How Kannada actor and DGP's daughter Ranya Rao's 'golden run' ended at Bengaluru airport

Intelligence (DRI) at Kempegowda International Airport (KIA) on Monday night for allegedly smuggling gold. Ranya, who arrived from Dubai, was caught with 14kg of gold bars hidden in a belt strapped to her body, along with 800 grams of gold ornaments. She was produced before a magistrate on Tuesday and remanded to 14-day judicial custody. Officials suspect she is part of a smuggling syndicate operating through Bengaluru airport in recent months. The 32-year-old actress has acted in a handful of Kannada and Tamil films, including Maanikya (starring Sudeep), Pataki (with Ganesh), and Wagah (featuring Vikram Prabhu).

Frequent Gulf trips raised red flags According to sources, Ranya had been under DRI surveillance due to her frequent international travel, having reportedly made over 10 trips this year. "Officials became suspicious after noticing her multiple short-duration visits to the Gulf," said an officer stationed at KIA. SEE ALSO: Who is Ranya Rao? Kannada actor walked through Bengaluru airport with 14 gold bars unchecked DGP's actor daughter held at airport with 14kg gold in body belt Based on this pattern, a DRI team was dispatched to intercept her on Monday. "She looked extremely confident as she disembarked, showing no signs of nervousness. But when searched, officers were shocked to find gold bars cleverly concealed in a belt," a source said. The agency is now reviewing CCTV footage of her previous arrivals to ascertain whether she had smuggled gold on ear-

lier occasions. "In her last four trips over the past 15 days, she wore similar attire, with the belt hidden from view," the source added. Protocol loophole used to evade checks Investigators believe Ranya managed to bypass frisking by taking advantage of official protocol services meant for senior bureaucrats, including IPS officers. "A protocol officer would meet her at the terminal and escort her out, ensuring she wasn't subjected to physical screening. She would be picked up in a government vehicle, avoiding scrutiny," a source revealed. **DGP distances himself from daughter** When contacted, DGP K Ramachandra Rao distanced himself from his daughter's activities. "Ranya married Jatin Hukkeri, an architect specializing in designing pubs

Government meets 13 India AI businesses for services

Delhi: The ministry of electronics and information technology (MeitY) technical panel met with thirteen companies who bid to deliver AI compute and cloud services under the IndiaAI Mission on Monday. IndiaAI COO Kavita Bhatia led the technical panel, which included MeitY, NIC, CDAC, and two IITs. Thirteen companies were chosen from 19 bidders. Jio Platforms, Tata Communications, CtrIS Datacenters Limited, E2E Networks, Yotta Data Services, CMS Computers, Hostin Services, I2K2 Networks, Orient Technologies, Vensysco



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

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

Jio Finance is negotiating its first debt sale

Delhi: Jio Finance, a shadow lender controlled by Asia's wealthiest industrialist Mukesh Ambani, is negotiating with a number of lenders to enter the local currency debt market for the first time. It is anticipated that the business will enter

the market as early as the January-March quarter, which is normally a busy time for credit expansion in India, either by issuing bonds or loans. According to those who asked not to be named since the talks are secret, the funds will be

used to lend to industry. They said that the conditions and amount of the loan are still being worked out. The action was taken because the RBI's stricter regulations make it more difficult for shadow lenders to raise bank loans in local currency.



Google pulls offline map app from Play Store per government requests



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

Double engine govts proving to be curse for daughters: Lamba

NEW DELHI: Congress on Tuesday accused the BJP of failing to ensure women's safety, claiming that its "double engine" governments are proving to be a "curse for daughters." This criticism came after the harassment of a Union minister's daughter. The party also asserted its commitment of holding these governments accountable on women's safety. Addressing a press conference, Mahila Congress chief Alka Lamba cited crime statistics from states like Maharashtra, Gujarat, Haryana, and Rajasthan to attack the BJP government. "The BJP's 'double engine' governments in the country are proving to be a curse for daughters. A case of harassment of a Union minister's



daughter and her friends has come to light in Maharashtra. After the FIR, it was revealed that the molester was a former BJP councillor—Priyush More. His pictures are there with the chief minister of Maharashtra and other top BJP leaders," Lamba said. She further added, "If the

Union minister herself does not get justice, then she should resign from her post and fight the battle of her daughter along with many such daughters." Lamba's remarks followed the Jalgaon police arrested two more individuals and detained a minor boy in connection with the

harassment case. Earlier, one suspect, Kiran Mali, was apprehended. On Monday, two more individuals—Aniket Bhoji and Anuj Patil—were arrested, and a minor boy was detained, an official from Muktainagar police station confirmed. The incident took place on February 28 at Sant Muktai Yatra in Kothali village, Maharashtra's Jalgaon district. A total of seven individuals have been named in the FIR, filed based on the minister's complaint. Police investigations revealed that the accused allegedly misbehaved with several girls and clashed with the bodyguards accompanying them. With International Women's Day approaching on March 8, Lamba questioned.

BJP will break membership enrolment record in Maharashtra

Kolhapur: Chief minister Devendra Fadnavis on Thursday said the party will soon break all membership enrolment records. "Around 1.4 crore members have already been signed up across Maharashtra. Soon the party will achieve a target of 1.5 crore members," he said. The CM also visited the party office built in Kolhapur last year. "We have got a huge mandate and have a responsibility to fulfil the hopes of the people. Soon, we would have to constitute booth, mandal and dis-



trich level committees through our Sanghatan Parva," he said while addressing the party workers. Earlier, the CM inaugurated the country's first 13-D (dimension) theatre at the historic Panhala fort. The 13-D theatre gives an advanced immersive experience for watching movies. The CM also experienced the 13-D phenomenon by watching "Panhala gada cha Ransangram" movie based on Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj's escape from the siege of the fort in 1660. Before visiting the Panhala fort, Fadnavis inaugurated a 220-bed multispecialty.

Sadhguru visits Anant Ambani's Vantara, calls it a "Visionary approach to life"

NEW DELHI: Spiritual leader Sadhguru recently visited Vantara, the world's largest wildlife rescue and rehabilitation centre, in Jamnagar, Gujarat. He lauded the efforts of Anant Ambani and his team in creating a sanctuary unlike any other. Sharing his experience in a video on Instagram, Sadhguru praised Vantara as an "extreme display of human compassion and care," emphasising its unique approach to coexistence between humans and wildlife. View this post on Instagram A post shared by Sadhguru (@sadhguru) "I have travelled all over the world and been to every kind of zoo, but I must say there isn't



another place like Vantara—a visionary approach to life," he shared. He further highlighted the "deep understanding of the inclusive nature of Existence" embodied at Vantara, where human life is intricately connected with all living beings. Operated by a dedicated team of global experts, Vantara stands as a pioneering

initiative for wildlife conservation and rehabilitation, offering medical care and a safe haven for rescued animals. The facility, set within the sprawling Jamnagar greens, is home to a diverse range of species, each receiving specialised care. Encouraging people to visit and witness the efforts firsthand, Sadhguru extended

Man found dead near Dharamshala in Delhi

NEW DELHI: A 22-year-old man was found dead near Swarnkar Dharamshala in northeast Delhi's Kailash Colony on Friday morning, an official said. Police were alerted about an unidentified body through a call at 9:54 am at Jyoti Nagar police station. Upon receiving the infor-



KOLKATA: A Kolkata resident who flew from Delhi to Vijaywada on work on Wednesday alleged that Rs 68,300 in cash was stolen in transit from his luggage. The airline ground staff with whom he lodged a complaint said the carrier is conducting an inquiry. According to Dipak Kumar Joshi of Ghoshpara in Baguiati, he was travelling with only one bag on the IndiGo flight 6E 2263 from Delhi to Vijaywada on Wednesday. Hence, he



kept Rs 2.2 lakh in cash in the registered bag. On reaching Vijaywada, he found the bag's chain slightly open, which raised his suspicion. He then took

the bag to the IndiGo counter and opened it. Inside, notes were missing from each of the five bundles — four of Rs 500 denomination and one of Rs 200.

the site, according to police officials. Subsequently, the body was transported to GTB Hospital for postmortem examination, and authorities have registered a case. "Teams are working to establish the victim's identity and determine the cause of death.

Kolkata resident alleges Rs 68,300 stolen from luggage

All the bundles, Joshi claimed, were stamped by the bank and contained 100 notes each. "The chain was opened and notes were removed from each of the bundles. I do not know whether the theft happened in Delhi or in Vijaywada," he said. A veteran aviation security official said the theft could have happened at Delhi after the bundles were detected in X-ray of the registered luggage. "If cash has gone missing from a bag, whoever

has stolen it must have known about the money. It was not a random pilferage," the official said. A priest by profession, Joshi travelled to Bengaluru and then to Rajasthan's Mehendipur making a stop in Delhi en route to Vijaywada. "I have come to Vijaywada for a puja at the factory of a client in Delhi. Since he was delayed, he gave me the cash for use at the puja and was to be handed over in Vijaywada," said Joshi.