



Inspiration: Late. Dr. L.C. Wallia

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**Nithin Kamath said how for first time in 15 years Zerodha users have fallen**

**Vatika Times**

**Zerodha CEO Nithin Kamath** revealed that the company is experiencing its first business slowdown in 15 years. A decline in active users across major stock broking platforms signifies a broader market correction. According to National Stock Exchange (NSE) data, eight of the top 10 broking firms saw a decline in active investors in February. Kamath noted a 30% drop in trading activity due to market conditions and regulatory changes. Zerodha CEO Nithin Kamath recently stated on X (formerly Twitter) that the company is witnessing "degrowth in the business for the first time" in 15 years. His statement comes amid a decline in active users across stock broking platforms like Groww, Zerodha, and Angel One, as the Indian stock market navigates a challenging phase. According to National Stock Exchange (NSE) data, eight of the top 10 broking firms saw a decline in active investors in February. The total number of registered users across platforms fell by 1.37% to 48.97 million from 49.64 million in January. Despite this, Groww maintained its top position with a 26.57% market share, though its user base shrank by 1.68% to 13.01 million. Zerodha, the second-largest brokerage with a 16.25% share, also recorded a 1.55% drop, bringing its active users down to 7.96 million. In his post, Kamath pointed to a broader slowdown in trading activity, stating, "The markets are finally correcting. Given that markets swing.

**Vatika Times**

**NEW DELHI:** India and Mauritius upgraded their ties to an Enhanced Strategic Partnership as PM Narendra Modi held formal talks with his counterpart Navinchandra Ramgoolam, reaffirming commitment to a free, open and secure Indian Ocean and pledging full support for the security of Mauritius's Exclusive Economic Zone, including through increased deployment of ships and aircraft. Modi also advanced the vision of 'Mahasagar' (Mutual and Holistic Advancement for Security and Growth Across Regions) for the Global South, 10 years after he announced India's 'Vision Sagar' (Security and Growth for All in the Region) from the same strategically located Indian Ocean country that, he said, connects India to the wider Global South. **'Mother of democracy' India to gift Mauritius new Parliament building: PM** It shall encompass the ideas of trade for development, capacity building for sustainable growth, and mutual security for a shared future. Under this, we will extend cooperation through technology sharing, concessional loan and grants," Modi said, describing

## Sagar to Mahasagar: India upgrades Mauritius ties



Mauritius also as a special partner in the region. Modi's meeting with Ramgoolam was followed by signing of eight agreements and several announcements, including construction of a new Mauritius Parliament building by India, which Modi said would be a gift from the "mother of democracy". India had last year welcomed the UK-Mauritius agreement for Mauritius sovereignty over the Chagos archipelago, which houses a US-UK military base, and Modi reiterated India's "firm support" for Mauritius on this issue. Ramgoolam thanked Modi for his personal support and engagement with global representatives on this issue, according to a joint statement that described the two countries as natural partners. "We fully respect the sovereignty of

Mauritius with regard to Chagos. We will extend our cooperation through forums such as the Colombo Security Conclave, Indian Ocean Rim Association, and Indian Ocean Conference," Modi said in his media statement after the meeting. India also announced a rupee-denominated line of credit amounting to Rs 487 crore for undertaking the replacement of water pipelines in Mauritius. "It is the first-ever Indian rupee-based line of credit that's being extended by India to any country and, therefore, a significant development," foreign secretary Vikram Misri said. Modi laid special emphasis on defence and maritime security cooperation, calling it a key pillar of the strategic partnership and committing to fulfil all the needs of the local coast guard.

## Haryana CM Saini vows rapid development by 'triple-engine govt'

**Vatika Times**

**NEW DELHI:** With the BJP securing a sweeping victory in Haryana's civic polls on Wednesday, chief minister Nayab Singh Saini declared that the results reflect public endorsement of the government's policies and initiatives. Terming the results 'stamp of approval' by the public, the CM emphasised that the "triple-engine government" will accelerate development efforts to achieve the vision of a "developed Haryana,



developed India."

Referring to the BJP's control at the Centre, state, and local levels, Saini asserted that the "triple-engine government" would drive progress at an accelerated pace to fulfill the goal of "Viksit Haryana, Viksit Bharat." BJP candi-

dates secured decisive victories in key cities, including Ambala, Faridabad, Gurugram, Hisar, Karnal, Rohtak, Sonapat, and Panipat, defeating their nearest Congress rivals. Haryana minister Vipul Goel, addressing the assembly, said "Our mayoral candidates have won with a big majority in nine municipal corporations." He highlighted that the Faridabad mayoral candidate secured victory by the highest vote margin in the country.

## ASI can whitewash Sambhal mosque facade: High court

**PRAYAGRAJ:** Allahabad high court directed ASI on Wednesday to whitewash "flaking" portions of Sambhal Jama Masjid's outer facade and the mosque committee to reimburse the expenditure within a week.

HC said that barring the use of LED or focus lights to illuminate the periphery, there should be no extra lighting installation on the walls lest they damage the structure. Justice Rohit Ranjan Agarwal's order came on a petition filed by the mosque management

committee seeking permission to whitewash the mosque and clean the disputed premises, which a group of Hindu litigants say was built over a razed temple. The court will next hear the case on April 8. ASI filed a second supplementary affidavit Wednesday in response to a March 10 court order seeking to know whether whitewashing, extra lighting and installation of decorative lights were required outside the structure or not. Advocate SFA Naqvi, counsel for the mosque committee.

## 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 Lal Mohan Patnaik. Manas Ati had been in judicial custody since December 25 last year for allegedly stealing six electric poles in villages under Kolabira police.

## Gold smuggling case: Karnataka govt withdraws CID probe into police role

**Vatika Times**

**NEW DELHI:** The Karnataka government on Wednesday rescinded its directive for the Criminal Investigation Department (CID) to probe potential lapses and dereliction of duty by police officers at Kempegowda International Airport in connection with actress Ranya Rao's gold smuggling case. The CID investigation was initially ordered on Monday night but was later withdrawn, news agency PTI reported. According to



a revised order, additional chief secretary Gaurav Gupta is already conducting an inquiry into the possible involvement of Ranya's stepfather, K Ramachandra Rao, a senior police officer of DGP rank. Ramachandra Rao, who currently serves

as the Managing Director of the Karnataka State Police Housing and Infrastructure Development Corporation, is under scrutiny for the alleged misuse of protocol-related facilities. Gupta's inquiry aims to establish the facts surrounding his role in the case. The case gained prominence after authorities seized gold bars worth ₹12.56 crore from Ranya at Kempegowda International Airport. Subsequent searches at her residence.

## HC acquits polio-hit man of rape over flawed probe

**DEHRADUN:**

Uttarakhand HC on Wednesday acquitted a polio-affected man convicted of rape and directed the state govt to pay him Rs 5 lakh in compensation, citing flaws in the investigation. The court ruled that the man's physical condition made the charges questionable and found that the police failed to conduct a proper inquiry. Rohit, an employee at a cybercafe in Khatima, had been sentenced to 20 years in prison by a district court in Udham Singh Nagar under IPC and Pcoo Act provisions. His counsel argued that he had suffered from polio since the age of five, leaving his legs non-functional.

## 'Welcome to India': Minister Vaishnav's message for Elon

**Vatika Times**

**NEW DELHI:** Over the past few months, telecom rivals Jio and Airtel had aligned in calling for an auction to allocate spectrum for satellite services in India, fearing that an administrative allocation would allow Elon Musk's Starlink to secure airwaves at a significantly lower cost than what they previously paid through auctions. On Wednesday, Jio Platforms — Reliance Industries Ltd's digital and telecom arm — confirmed an agreement with SpaceX to offer Starlink's broadband services in India. However, the partnership remains subject to SpaceX obtaining regulatory approvals to operate in the country. As part of the deal, Jio will distribute Starlink equipment via retail stores and online platforms while also supporting customer installation and activation. The two companies will further explore synergies to



enhance each other's offerings. **Bringing high-speed internet to rural India**

The joint statement emphasised the collaboration's potential to bridge India's digital divide by leveraging Jio's extensive mobile network and Starlink's Low Earth Orbit (LEO) satellite technology to provide high-speed broadband to even the most remote parts of the country. This move comes just a day after Bharti Airtel announced a non-exclusive partnership with SpaceX to introduce Starlink's services in India. Airtel already has an existing satellite broadband venture with Eutelsat OneWeb, the second-largest LEO constellation.

## Manipur talks stuck as Kukis insist on 'separate hill state'

**Vatika Times**

**Manipur:** Following the return of a killed youth's body to his family in Manipur's Kangpokpi, authorities anticipate an end to protests and blockades in the district. However, tensions persist as the Kuki-Zo community demands a separate hill state, conflicting with the Constitutional framework. Efforts are ongoing to engage with both Meitei and Kuki-Zo communities for a resolution within Constitutional bounds. Arms and ammunition recovered during a search operation by Manipur Police and security forces in Chandel district (PTI) With the body of a youth killed in Manipur's Kuki-dominated Kangpokpi on March 8 finally handed over to his family, authorities there said Wednesday they expect protests and blockade in the district to



end soon. However, the road to lasting peace in the restive state may be a long way off. Ongoing talks between the Kuki-Zo community and Centre's interlocutor A K Mishra are unlikely to make much headway with the former sticking to its demand for a "separate hill state" after hiving off Meitei-dominated Valley areas. **Elusive Solution**

1,000 arms surrendered in Manipur after gov call The demand, which goes

against the Constitutional framework, will not be acceptable to the Centre. Govt also does not seem keen to concede to the Kuki demand for a separate administrative framework for the tribal-dominated hilly regions either, recognising that it can fuel the demand for a separate state, besides giving fillip to separatist tendencies in the strategically crucial border state. Still, efforts would be to stay engaged with both Meitei and Kuki-Zo com-

munities, while tactfully persuading the latter to settle for a solution within the four corners of the Constitution, including granting them more autonomy and preserving their unique culture, heritage and language. Sources said the district magistrate and superintendent of police of Kangpokpi had been engaging with Kuki-Zo protestors over the past few days to persuade them to accept the body of the local killed during protests on March 8, amid clashes between them and security forces. The killing had triggered further tension with Kuki-Zo protestors ordering a shutdown, apart from blocking roads and stopping the movement of vehicles. "The blockade call was given for all areas with a significant Kuki-Zo population. But its effect was seen largely in Kangpokpi.

## Congress says Manipur CM Biren Singh's resignation came 'too late'

**NEW DELHI:** The Congress on Sunday criticised the timing of Manipur chief minister N Biren Singh's resignation, arguing that his removal should have come earlier to prevent the deepening crisis in the state. Reacting to Singh's resignation, Congress leader Rahul Gandhi said, "For nearly two years, BJP's CM Biren Singh instigated division in Manipur. PM Modi allowed him to continue despite the violence, loss of life, and the destruction of the idea of India in Manipur. The resignation of CM Biren Singh shows that mounting public pressure, the SC investigation and the no-confidence motion by the Congress have forced a reckoning. But the most urgent priority is to restore peace in the state, and work to heal the wounds of the people of Manipur.

## US President Donald Trump makes a 'Big Tesla Terrorism' announcement

**Vatika Times**

**NEW DELHI:** Republican lawmakers are pushing for investigations into vandalism targeting Tesla showrooms and charging stations in the US, following President Donald Trump's suggestion that such acts could be classified as domestic terrorism. On Tuesday, March 11, US President Donald Trump publicly backed Elon Musk by buying a Tesla vehicle. During a White House event, surrounded by five Tesla cars brought for his review, Trump



was asked by a reporter if those attacking Tesla owners and dealerships should be deemed domestic terrorists. "I think he's been treated very unfairly by a tiny group of people," Trump replied. "I just want people to know he can't be punished for being a patriot — and he's a great patriot." "I will do

that, I'll do it," Trump affirmed when pressed further on the domestic terrorism label. "I'm going to stop them." He emphasized that the attackers are "damaging a great American company." Trump's display of solidarity with Elon Musk follows escalating protests at Tesla showrooms nationwide, some of which have turned destructive. The unrest stems from opposition to Musk's leadership of the Department of Government Efficiency (DOGE).

Editorial

Digital Anarchy Is Exposing Youth To Dangerous Content

Ritu Walia

In the digital age, the proliferation of content on digital platforms has reshaped societal norms, communication, and public discourse. The rapid advancement of technology, coupled with increasing internet penetration, has enabled access to a vast amount of information. However, this unregulated influx of digital content, particularly on social media, Over-The-Top (OTT) platforms, and messaging applications, presents a looming challenge for governance, ethics, and social harmony. According to recent statistics, 4.80 billion people worldwide are active on social media, with an average daily usage of 2 hours and 27 minutes. India alone is expected to reach 900 million internet users by 2025. While this connectivity has led to unprecedented levels of engagement, it has also exposed users to unregulated and sometimes harmful content, which can range from misinformation to exploitative materials. Social media platforms operate on an advertisement-driven model where algorithms prioritize high-engagement content, often without filtering the ethical consequences. The lack of regulation allows tech giants to maximise profits at the cost of public well-being, as observed in Facebook's reluctance to moderate harmful content effectively. Leaked internal reports reveal that Facebook's AI fails to detect a significant portion of disturbing content, allowing violent, extremist, and sexually explicit material to circulate freely. OTT platforms such as Netflix, Amazon Prime, and Ullu have further contributed to unregulated content consumption by bypassing traditional media censorship laws. Unlike television and cinema, which are governed by strict guidelines, OTT platforms remain largely self-regulated. This has led to an increase in content that often promotes violence, explicit sexual themes, and even pornography, impacting young viewers and shaping dangerous narratives about relationships and societal norms. The lack of accountability among social media platforms has led to the unchecked proliferation of content related to violence, pornography, misinformation, and cybercrime. The document highlights multiple studies that show how algorithms expose vulnerable communities to disturbing content disproportionately. This is particularly alarming given that children and teenagers form a large segment of digital consumers. Social media anonymity has emboldened cyberbullies, predators, and traffickers, making digital platforms a fertile ground for exploitation. Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter have been implicated in failing to remove abusive content, often allowing harassment to persist for extended periods before intervention occurs. A recent case study from India documented how WhatsApp chat groups were being used for the distribution of child pornography, exposing a critical flaw in the end-to-end encryption policies of messaging applications. Another study analysing best-selling pornography videos found that 90% contained physical aggression, and nearly 50% included verbal aggression, with women being the primary targets. The normalisation of such content desensitises audiences, leading to rising cases of gender-based violence and sexual objectification. Moreover, the Bois Locker Room scandal in India demonstrated how exposure to explicit content among teenagers fosters a rape culture mentality, with young boys casually discussing sexual violence. This indicates a deep-rooted crisis fuelled by unregulated content, which social media companies have failed to address adequately. India currently lacks a comprehensive regulatory framework for online content. While Section 67A of the IT Act (2000) prohibits sexually explicit content, enforcement remains weak due to the absence of stringent monitoring.



Kerala Congress is now left of Left. And confused

Suman Singh

The Left in Kerala is right-extreme, and Congress is the real Left," VD Satheesan, Kerala's Leader of Opposition (LoP) is known to reiterate this point ad nauseam. For sure, the Congress in Kerala has always been slightly left-of-centre compared to its national counterpart, given that it had to fight for space with the Communists. The Left and Congress have taken turns to rule Kerala in the last six decades, and taking the moral high ground involved framing debates over welfare and development. Even then, the Congress-led United Democratic Front (UDF) came to take credit for all the big-ticket development projects undertaken in the state over the years, whereas the Marxists were deemed far too inward-looking – post the spate of social reforms initiated by the EMS Namboodiripad-led first Communist government in 1957. The Left's legacy of strikes and the terror unleashed by its trade unions brought the party more bad name over the years. Nevertheless, in the wake of the controversy generated over Shashi Tharoor's praise for the Left government, it would be opportune to explore Satheesan's theory of Congress being the bona fide Left party in Kerala today. It is a fact that the Communist Party of India-Marxist (CPI-M) under Pinarayi Vijayan has been trying to course-correct the party's approach to private capital and investments with a vengeance. Meanwhile, the Congress seems to be mirroring the Left of the past lately, at least on some counts – taking impulsively



negative positions on issues as the CPI-M would do in the past. In fact, the Congress seems to have become the confused Left in Kerala. In the run-up to the 2024 Lok Sabha election, Latin Christian fisherfolk from Vizhinjam protested, demanding a halt to construction until a study on sea erosion was conducted. This stance was backed by the UDF and publicly voiced by Satheesan. The Left government took on the protest by ganging up with the Bhartiya Janata Party (BJP), realising the negative consequences such a stoppage would have. Only Shashi Tharoor from the Congress took a position that the halting of operations at that stage would be detrimental to the state's larger interests – jeopardising his own re-election. It may be remembered that when Congress veteran KV Thomas shifted allegiance to the Left after being sidelined, he stated that he was shifting in the interest of the state's development. Although the statement of Prof Thomas was taken with a pinch of salt, he clearly spelled out his backing of the Silverline semi-high speed rail project envisaged by the neo-liberal Left. The UDF had qualified its opposition to Silverline on account of flooding and envi-

ronmental concerns. Nevertheless, a statement like "Who is in such a tearing hurry" by Uma Thomas on the question of Silverline, ahead of the Thrikkakkara by-election, was used effectively by the Left for propaganda. The fact is that everybody is in a tearing hurry when it takes a whole day to travel from Thiruvananthapuram to Kasaragod by railways (and more, by road) and such a loose statement did a lot of damage to the UDF's reputation of standing for development. Even if the Congress may extend support to Silverline's revised form as proposed by 'Metroman' E Sreedharan, sections of the 'apolitical' middle-class in Kerala hold the party guilty of uprooting the project, by uprooting the yellow stones laid for the project. That a high-speed rail project is warranted for Kerala is demonstrated by the Vande Bharat trains running at full capacity in the state since its launch. The CPI-M's watering down of longstanding dogmatic positions is rooted in the understanding that the working class that voted it to power is a shrinking commodity in Kerala. The growing middle class in the post-liberalisation era does not identify with the Left's con-

spiracy theories and is impatient for development at any cost. In fact, they hold the CPI-M accountable for thwarting UDF's development initiatives. There is a possibility that the CPI-M in Kerala would have welcomed free markets sooner had Namboodiripad not prevailed over the alternate vision of MV Raghavan, leading to the Kannur strongman's expulsion in 1986. Post that phase, it was the enduring rivalry between the former Kerala Chief Minister VS Achuthanandan and Pinarayi Vijayan factions at the turn of the millennium that prevented the Left from embracing reforms sooner. Of course, the party would have needed a leader in the Stalinist mould like a Raghavan or his protégé Vijayan to steer the party according to that vision, for it to work out. If a section of the burgeoning middle class in Kerala who voted for the Congress in the past takes a shine to the CPI-M, it might spell doom for the UDF – with the BJP waiting in the wings. The 'apolitical' segment is also growing steadily, and Congress would do well to introspect whether it is in a position to harness that bloc. VD Satheesan seems to be inspired by the Trinamool Congress in West Bengal, which positioned itself leftwards of the Left to come to power. However, such a strategy may not work in Kerala, and may, in fact, backfire on Congress. One reason for the Congress adopting a blanket negative attitude to development projects mooted by the Left is that many of those who were part of the Left ecosystem in the past have joined the UDF ranks today. For

instance, the Left intelligentsia that once backed the VS Achuthanandan faction is broadly supporting the UDF now. So is the Jamaat-e-Islami, riding piggyback on the Indian Union Muslim League (IUML), much like Betaal latching on to Vikramaditya, as the story goes. As usual, Congress depends on various caste and community organisations to create a mahaul (mood), rather than working hard at engineering it. The trouble with the Left ecosystem and the Jamaat-e-Islami – which adopts a Left posture in Kerala to serve its goals – getting space in the UDF is that they try to influence policy-making and set the agendas of the front. UDF secretary CP John's statement that the Jamaat-e-Islami's political outfit, the Welfare Party, be accorded space in the front went to show the influence exerted by the religious outfit on key stakeholders. For a lone ranger like CP John, who once narrowly lost the Students Federation of India (SFI) national president's position to Sitaram Yechury in 1984, his existence in the UDF rests on securing a winnable seat, and it is no surprise that he has fallen into the trap set by the Jamaat. Else John, a Syrian Marthomite from Kunnamkulam and married to a Catholic from Bharananganam, would understand the damage UDF would face in the Christian belt of Central by forging an alliance with Jamaat-e-Islami. VD Satheesan – who fashions himself as a Nehruvian – is quite pally with the Jamaat folks, although he takes extra care to attend Jamaat.

Stalin's push against delimitation goes beyond Tamil Nadu politics

Arvind Sharma

Tamil Nadu Chief Minister MK Stalin has often, in a lighter vein, urged people in the state to have more children to counter the looming threat of reduced representation in national politics due to delimitation. Sometimes, people laugh it off; other times, it makes headlines. Regardless of Stalin's playful remarks, one thing is clear—delimitation is central to his ideology and politics, especially with the state heading for an Assembly election next year. Amid an ongoing war of words with the Union government over the New Education Policy (NEP) 2020, Stalin has opened another front with the Centre. By bundling the delimitation issue with the language war, the DMK leader is trying to position himself as the voice of the South. A North Vs South battle could play big in national politics, which is why delimitation. Newsmaker of the Week.

"Delimitation is a sword dangling over the southern states," Stalin said on 25 February, after a state cabinet meeting. Stalin is trying to build support on the issue, not just within Tamil Nadu but across opposition-ruled states. After an all-party meeting in Tamil Nadu, he wrote to the chief ministers of West Bengal, Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka, Kerala, Odisha, and Punjab, urging them to join forces against delimitation. He has invited them to a meeting in Chennai on 22 March. The concern is that the delimitation proposed for 2026 will reshape the country's power map, reducing the political might of southern states at the Centre. It's a shared concern across political parties, not just in Tamil Nadu but in other southern states that have been able to contain their populations. But with Assembly polls in 2026, political commentators see Stalin's push as a strategic move to build an advantage for himself.

Indian Muslims need freedom from ulema. A cleric can't call Shami criminal for skipping roza

Saariq

And we thought it was long bygone. But "the plague bacillus never dies or disappears for good; that it can lie dormant for years and years in furniture and linen-chests; that it bides its time in bedrooms, cellars, trunks, and bookshelves; and that perhaps the day would come when, for the bane and the enlightening of men, it would rouse up its rats again and send them forth to die in a happy city. Fatwa, the disrupter of public discourse, is back. It flourished during the Secular Raj, bullied institutions and individuals, and held the political system to ransom. Governments and parties trembled before it, doing everything in their power to appease the monster, only to be devoured of their vitality and credibility. The Age of Fatwa seems to be back. It was never truly gone just lying low and is now rearing its head again. The star cricketer Mohammad Shami is playing for his country, India. And it's Ramzan, the month of fasting for Muslims. The pious observe the fast, and even the not-so-pious do, for this rite is one of the most definitive markers of community identity, and also a tool for forcing conformism the rights of the community over the individual. The one not fasting is a black sheep, an outcast, a deviant if not an outright traitor to the community, its ethos, and identity.

And so, Shami is labelled a "sinner" and a "criminal" for consuming an energy drink during India's match with Australia in the Champions Trophy semi-final. Muslim social media has been awash with outrage, and a cleric articulated this sentiment in a video statement, using antediluvian religious terminology of curse and castigation. Such piety policing is not a one-off thing. It's a thought system, a politics, and an ideology designed to discipline the independent, the free-willed, and

the non-conformist. Earlier, the tennis ace Sania Mirza was condemned for wearing the attire prescribed for women players. She was piety-shamed for the skirts, which were said to be incompatible with "Islamic dressing". The civilised idea that religion is a personal matter seems to matter little in this discourse, which makes the individual Muslim a captive to the clergy and community both of whom can harangue and chastise the individual for the supposed infringement of "community standards". As I said, the prerogative to sit in judgement on an individual's conduct and publicly malign them is not a stray occurrence. It emanates from a deep time warp of theological authoritarianism, a kind of totalitarianism that brings every sphere of human activity, even sports, under the purview of religion, viewing every tiny action through the lens of sin and virtue. Look at the formulation: "Shariat ke katghare mein khade hain" (he is standing in the dock of Sharia).

The Muslim needs freedom from this panoptic surveillance of religious tyranny. I would definitely examine the merits of the purported religious issue if the brouhaha had actually been about religion, ritual, piety, and spirituality. It suffices to say that the Quran clearly states in Surah Baqarah (2:184-185) that those who are on a journey are exempted from fasting during Ramzan. Going by how journey and sojourn are defined in Sharia, Shami was indeed on a journey, attending to his professional duty. But the matter doesn't end with this clincher, for it's less about religion and more about power theology and the ideology of confrontation that it engenders. So, let's begin at the beginning. Cricket, Indian Muslim, and Pakistan it's a complex set. It's helluva messy, to say the least. Religious sentiment, political ideology.

Caliphate Demands Launched by Islamists in Bangladesh

Abhinav Upadhyaya

As thousands of people marched through Dhaka shouting "Khilafat, khilafat," it became clear that the only option to restore democracy would be to have an election with all political stakeholders, including the BNP, Awami League, Jatiya Party, Jamaat, and the era of Army control. After Friday prayers, the crowd ignored police roadblocks and congregated near the Baitul Mukarram Mosque. The crowd threw stones at the police, and officers had to use tear gas and sound grenades to disperse them. Hizb ut-Tahrir, an outlawed terrorist organization, had these indi-

viduals hiding out for years... everyone from the government office clerk to the university professor or student, the neighborhood mechanic, the milkman, or the priest. The previously unseen Tahrir cadre and supporters have begun to emerge in light of the recent events in Bangladesh, including the overthrow of the elected government by a mob, the hacking and lynching of hundreds of police personnel, the release from prison of dozens of hardcore Islamist terrorists and criminals, and the planting of Hizbut or Jamaat-trained students in the caretaker government

largely powerless Muhammad Yunus. They want a caliphate or khilafat imposed on Bangladesh instead of its faulty democracy. Islamic law and Sharia are also something they would like to see extended to neighboring countries, particularly India, and beyond. At Dhaka's posh Banani and Gulshan neighborhoods, where the majority of foreign diplomats reside, posters reading "Khilafat will liberate Palestine and Kashmir" were plastered throughout the streets and flyovers. All Arab nations with the exception of Yemen and Bangladesh have outright outlawed Hizb ut-Tahrir, as have China, Russia,

Pakistan, Germany, Turkey, Indonesia, Kazakhstan, the United Kingdom, and all of central Asia. The terrorist organization was established in 1953 in Jerusalem, which was then under Jordanian rule, by Taqi al-Din al-Nabhani, a Palestinian Islamic scholar originally from Haifa who had studied in Egypt and had a position as a judge in a religious court. The head of Hizb ut-Tahrir in Bangladesh is Mohiuddin Ahmed, a professor at Dhaka University and a former Leftist. He was compelled to step down from his position following the organization's 2009 ban and 2016 charges.

## Akshara International School hosts Convocation Ceremony-2025



**Jasbir Singh Duggal Kurukshetra:** Pehowa: Akshara International School Pehowa organized a colorful and grand program on the occasion of Convocation Ceremony-2025. The program was presided over by Principal Shobhe Mathew, and the students presented a colorful and cultural program. The program was attended by Zila Parishad Chairperson Kanwaljeet Kaur as the chief guest. Other dignitaries present included Prem Lata Kaahda, Chairperson Poonam Kaahda, Director Sahil Kaahda, Director Jannat Kaahda, and Managing

Director Vipin Kaahda. The program began with the lighting of the lamp and Saraswati Vandana by the third-grade students. Students from Nursery to third grade presented their performances, including a Krishna Ras Leela and patriotic songs. The students of Nursery class walked the ramp, while the third-grade students presented various programs, including social media, Jay Kisan, No Use of Plastic, Disco Dance, Taarak Mehta Ka Ooltah Chashmah, Rajasthani Culture Dance, Haryanvi Dance, Punjabi Gidda, and Nav Durga. All participating

students were awarded certificates and trophies by the chief guests. Chairperson Poonam Kaahda and Director Jannat Kaahda congratulated everyone and wished them a bright future. Zila Parishad Chairperson Kanwaljeet Kaur thanked the management and teachers of Akshara International School and said that such programs should be organized in schools to support the progress of children and help them succeed in the future. Principal Shobhe Mathew said that such events bring out the best in children's talents.

## Daughters have to move forward with full courage to achieve their goals : Neha Singh

**Jasbir Singh Duggal Kurukshetra:** Deputy Commissioner Neha Singh said that daughters should move forward with full courage to achieve their goals. They have to face every problem and difficulty coming in this path and achieve their goals. For this, daughters have to work hard, diligently and with full honesty. Deputy Commissioner Neha Singh was speaking at the sports competition organized by the Women and Child Development Department at Dronacharya Stadium on Wednesday. Earlier, Deputy Commissioner Neha Singh and District Program Officer of Women and Child Development Baljeet Kaur introduced the players and got photos taken with the daughters at the selfie point. During this, Deputy Commissioner Neha Singh felicitated Sukhwinder Kaur who came first in the discus throw event of the dis-



trict level sports competition, Balwinder Kaur Thanesar who came second, Anita Pehowa for coming third. The Deputy Commissioner felicitated the winners of 400 meter race Arju Thanesar who came first, Rajpreet Kaur Shahbad who came second, Mannu Babain who came third, Monika Ladwa who came first in 300 meter race, Manisha Thanesar who came second, Muskan Shahbad who came third, Neeraj Thanesar who came first in 100 meter race, Meenakshi Babain who came second, Rimpi Ladwa who came third, Sheetal Thanesar who came first in cycle race, Aarushi Pehowa who

came second, Radhika who came third by giving them certificates. Congratulating the winning female players, the Deputy Commissioner said that daughters should do every task with full interest and must set a goal in life. Today daughters are no less than sons in any field, therefore daughters should move forward with full courage. District Program Officer of Women and Child Development Baljeet Kaur while welcoming the guests said that the player who came first was given a prize money of Rs. 4100, the second was given Rs. 3100 and the third was given Rs. 2100.



## Now the triple engine government will bring about all round development in Thanesar : Subhash Sudha

**Jasbir Singh Duggal Kurukshetra:** Former State Minister Subhash Sudha said that now the triple engine government will bring about all round development in Thanesar city. The people of this city have created a new history by making BJP candidate Maafi Dhanda the chairperson with 32577 votes. In the 32 wards of this city, 25 councillors are from the BJP party and the rest of the councillors are also ready to join the BJP, but the decision to include these councillors in the BJP will be taken by the organization. Former State Minister Subhash Sudha was talking to journalists on the BJP's victory at Agrasen Public School on Wednesday. Congratulating and wishing all the city councillors and chairpersons for winning with a huge majority, he said that the people of Thanesar have expressed faith in BJP and will live up to that faith. In this city, people have stamped their seal on the policies of Chief Minister Naib Singh Saini, Union Minister Manohar Lal and BJP state president Mohan Lal Badauli. He said that now a small BJP government has been formed in the city, this government will work to increase the pace of development of Thanesar three times.



## BJP candidate Maafi Devi won by 32,577 votes in Thanesar Municipal Council

**Jasbir Singh Duggal Kurukshetra:** Returning Officer of Municipal Council Thanesar General Election Satender Siwach said that the counting of votes for Municipal Council Thanesar General Election 2025 was completed peacefully amid tight security arrangements. BJP candidate Maafi Devi has won the chairperson post in this Municipal Council Thanesar by 32577 votes. RO Satender Siwach was announcing the winning candidates at Agarsen Public School Sector 13 counting center on Wednesday. After this, RO Satender Siwach gave certificates to BJP candidate Maafi Devi and 30 coun-



cilors Thanesar. During this, former Minister of State Subhash Sudha, BJP leader Subhash Kalsana, BJP State Organization Secretary Rahul Rana, former Municipal Council Chairperson Uma Sudha, BJP leader Sahil Sudha, Malkit Dhanda were also present. Satender Siwach said that BJP candidate Maafi Devi has won the

chairperson post in Municipal Council Thanesar by 32577 votes. This candidate got 47828 votes out of 69350 votes. Thus, for the post of Chairperson, candidate Rajbala got 1840 votes, Rukmani Valmiki got 2868 votes, Congress candidate Sunita Kumari got 15251 votes, Ratan Kaur got 655 votes and NOTA got 908

votes. **The winners MC include:**  
- Ward 1: Gaurav Kumar  
- Ward 2: Parveen Sharma  
- Ward 3: Simran  
- Ward 4: Kamal Kishore  
- Ward 5: Sandeep Kohli  
- Ward 6: Jyoti  
- Ward 8: Satish Kumar Garg  
- Ward 9: Manak Singh  
- Ward 10: Pankaj Khanna  
- Ward 11: Sushma Mehta



- Ward 12: Rajender Kumar  
- Ward 13: Dushyant Haryal  
- Ward 14: Bakshish Kaur  
- Ward 15: Mohan Lal Arora  
- Ward 16: Gurpreet Kaur  
- Ward 17: Prem Narayan Avasthi  
- Ward 18: Anirudh Kaushik  
- Ward 19: Mukand Lal

- Ward 20: Maninder Singh  
- Ward 21: Neha Gupta  
- Ward 22: Chetan  
- Ward 23: Parmveer Singh Prince  
- Ward 24: Puja  
- Ward 25: Ashu Bala  
- Ward 26: Priya Rani  
- Ward 27: Dhanraj  
- Ward 28: Rekha  
- Ward 29: Manu Jain  
- Ward 30: Narender Kumar

- Ward 31: Kavi Raj  
**BJP candidate Megha Bansal wins in the by-election for the Chairperson Ismailabad :**  
Virender Chaudhary Returning Officer of Ismailabad Chairperson post by-election and MD Sugar Mill Virender Chaudhary said that the counting of votes for the by-election for the

Chairperson post of Ismailabad Municipality has been completed peacefully. In the by-election for the Chairperson post of this municipality, BJP candidate Megha Bansal has won by 311 votes. RO and MD Sugar Mill Virender Chaudhary said that in the by-election for the Chairperson post of Ismailabad, Megha Bansal has got 2766 votes, Ekta has got 136 votes, Deepshikha has got 2455 votes, Nisha Rani has got 432 votes, Harjeet Gotra has got 910 votes. 6841 votes have been counted in this by-election. Thus, Megha Bansal has won by 311 votes in the by-election for the Chairperson post.

## Rajdhani Foods Brings the Ultimate Holi Celebration



**Vatika Times ROHTAK:** Holi isn't just about colors-it's about food, laughter, and traditions that bring families together. Rajdhani Foods, the name synonymous with quality and taste, has taken this Holi celebration up a notch with the most unexpected and delicious collaboration of the year-bringing Bollywood maestro Karan Johar and Gen-Z

icon Ananya Panday together for a campaign that's as flavorful as the perfect Pakoda. Whether paired with Thandai after a wild round of color play or enjoyed as a family favorite snack, the right besan makes all the difference. And for generations, Rajdhani Besan has been the secret behind the perfect Pakoda. Chetan Jain, Managing Director at

Rajdhani Foods, shares his excitement, "Holi is a time for togetherness, for sharing food and laughter. With Karan Johar and Ananya Panday, we're bringing the essence of Holi to life in a way that's fun, vibrant, and absolutely delicious! This campaign is a tribute to the flavors that make our celebrations special-across time, across trends, across generations.

## Sports not only create champions but also promote peace, progress and welfare : Naib

**DILPREET WALIA Karnal:** Haryana Chief Minister Mr. Nayab Singh Saini said that sports are not just a way to win medals but also a way to win people's hearts. Sports not only create champions but also promote peace, progress and welfare. It is a powerful medium to connect the world. The Chief Minister appealed to the police personnel to adopt the spirit of sportsmanship in their daily lives and not limit it to the field. Incorporate discipline, dedication and teamwork in their duty. The Chief Minister was speaking as the chief guest



at the prize distribution ceremony organized on the occasion of the closing ceremony of the 73rd All India Police Volleyball Group 2024-25 at Madhuban Police Academy in Karnal district today. During this, he presented prizes to the winning players.

The Chief Minister said that this competition is not only a display of sports skills but also a symbol of discipline, unity and dedication of the police force. Sports are not only a means of entertainment but are also an important medium to develop discipline, teamwork,

patience and self-confidence. These not only increase physical efficiency but also strengthen the sense of discipline and mental strength. They also inspire to stand strong in adverse circumstances. Police personnel are engaged day and night in the security of the country: Chief Minister Mr Naib Singh Saini said that sports help police forces in performing their duties. 1088 players from 35 teams of different states participated in this competition, out of which 791 were men, 297 women and 65 technical officials were also included. Congratulating the winners,

Mr Naib Singh Saini said that police personnel work day and night to protect the internal security of the country and the citizens. Whether it is a matter of natural disaster, law and order or public support in emergency situations, the police stands in the front line. The police is not only performing its duties but is also leaving an indelible mark in sports. In this competition, the players have not only got an opportunity to prove their efficiency and ability, but have also got information about each other's feelings, beliefs and lifestyle. This strengthens national unity.

## Uttarakhand government's Munyari mountaineering institute to hold Basic Ski

**MUNSYARI:** The Pandit Nain Singh Surveyor Mountaineering Training Institute in Munyari, Pithoragarh under Uttarakhand government, will conduct a Basic Ski Course from 14th February 2025 to 27th February

2025. The course fee is Rs 12,000, covering boarding, food, training, and equipment. It is open to beginners and those seeking to improve their skiing skills in high-altitude Himalayan terrain. Reena Kaushal

Dharmshaktu, who became the first Indian woman to ski from the coast of Antarctica to the South Pole, will lead the training. She completed the 900-kilometre journey in 38 days. "This unique program is a blend of adventure and

learning, perfect for those looking to experience the thrill of skiing in one of the most stunning places on Earth," the institute said. Interested participants can contact the Pandit Surveyor Mountaineering Institute in Munyari for registration.

## Row over Maharashtra minister's '100% Hindu' meat initiative explained



NEW DELHI: A political row has erupted in Maharashtra over the government's new meat certification initiative. The controversy began when Maharashtra minister Nitesh Rane launched 'Malhar Certification' for Hindu meat traders to ensure "100% Hindu-owned mutton shops, free from adulteration."

Rane stated that Hindu shopkeepers selling 'jhatka' mutton would be granted this certification and urged Hindu consumers to purchase mutton exclusively from certified vendors. Soon after Rane's announcement, the opposition criticised the move, alleging it would divide society.

Also read: 'Eating halal not written in Hindu religion': Maharashtra minister Nitesh Rane proposes 'Malhar certification' Congress MLA Nana Patole condemned Rane's remarks, stating that a minister should not make such

divisive statements. "A minister cannot talk like this. It sends a message that the Chief Minister has no control over his ministers. If any minister is inciting conflict between two religions, the CM should take action," Patole told ANI. Congress leader Aslam Shaikh termed the move unconstitutional. "If this government or Nitesh Rane wants to enter the meat business, then it's good. Our Constitution gives us the freedom to do anything, eat anything, but saying that only one person will do a type of job does not align with our Constitution," he said. Nationalist Congress Party (Sharad Chandra Pawar faction) MLA Jitendra Awhad also

criticised the comments, particularly during the holy month of Ramzan. "When everything is running smoothly in the state, the BJP government tries to stoke Hindu-Muslim issues," he said. He also questioned the political motive behind the debate on illegal loudspeakers, stating, "Action should be taken where necessary, but why make it a political issue?" BJP MLA backs Rane Despite the backlash, BJP MLA Sanjay Upadhyay defended Rane's certification initiative, arguing that "Halal" meat poses health risks. "I have no issue with what people choose to eat, but if someone is being misled, it should be objected to.

## 'It is saffron policy': Tamil Nadu CM M K Stalin blasts NEP

NEW DELHI: Tamil Nadu chief minister M K Stalin on Wednesday criticized the National Education Policy (NEP), calling it a "saffron policy" and alleging that it is aimed at promoting Hindi rather than the country's overall development. "National Education Policy is not education policy; it is saffron policy. The policy is not created to develop India but to develop Hindi. We are opposing the policy as it would destroy the Tamil Nadu education system completely," Stalin said while addressing a rally at Thiruvallur. He also claimed that NEP does not recognize reservation, which he described



as social justice. "NEP denies assistance amount to SCs, STs, and Other Backward Classes," he alleged during the public meeting. Stalin further accused the central government of withholding Tamil Nadu's share of funds because the state did not adopt NEP. "We are asking for your tax share, which we paid with our efforts. What is the problem with this? Is it fair to threaten without releasing funds

for the welfare of 43 lakh schools? As we didn't accept NEP, they are refusing to release funds that belong to Tamil Nadu. We would have welcomed the scheme if it brought everyone into education. But is NEP like that? NEP has all the factors that remove people from education. This is how this policy is, and that's why we are opposing it," he said. The point of contention in the debate over NEP is its three-language formula, which Tamil Nadu fears could lead to the imposition of Hindi in the state. Stalin earlier argued that the policy gives preference to Hindi over regional languages.

## Maharashtra mantri's close aide named in Beed sarpanch murder chargesheet

Sambhajinagar : Maharashtra CID has filed a chargesheet against former Parli council chief Valmik Karad and his aides in three cases — murder of Massajog sarpanch Santosh Deshmukh on Dec 9, 2024; attempt to extort Rs 2 crore from renewable energy

firm; and assault on the firm's staffers. Karad is a close aide of NCP minister Dhananjay Munde. CID concluded that Deshmukh's murder was the result of a bigger conspiracy by Karad, who wanted "to create a reign of terror" and eliminate whoso-

ever came in way of his Rs 2 crore extortion attempt. Besides Karad, chargesheets were filed Feb 27 before a MCOCA court against Vishnu Chate, Sudarshan Ghule, Pratik Ghule, Sudhir Sangle, Mahesh Kedar, Jairam Chate and Krishna Andhale.

## Delhi-Katra e-way to take one more year to be completed: Govt

NEW DELHI: People will have to wait for at least one more year to travel non-stop from Delhi to Katra using a new expressway. The road transport and highways ministry has informed Lok Sabha that two sections of the Delhi-Amritsar-Katra Expressway in Punjab are scheduled for completion by March 2026 and two more links from the main expressway in Punjab would be ready by April 2027. The 667-km greenfield expressway is being built at a cost of Rs 40,000 crore. The National Highways Authority of India (NHAI) had bid out five out of 21 packages of the expressway in March 2021. Initially, the government had targeted to complete the entire stretch by the end of 2023 to reduce the travel time between Delhi and Katra to less than eight hours. As per the government, the entire 158 km falling in Haryana will be complete by April. Officials said the project has been delayed due to several reasons, including the non-availability of land and contractual issues in Punjab. In the case of one package (30 km) in Punjab, the NHAI has terminated the contract due to land acquisition issues. The ministry has informed Parliament that "work will be taken after resolving the land acquisition issues". The four-lane expressway starts from Kundli Manesar Palwal (KMP) near Bahadurgarh.

## How contemporary art is pushing boundaries in the modern era

Contemporary art continues to evolve, challenging traditional notions of creativity and expression. Artists worldwide are experimenting with new materials, digital platforms, and social themes to redefine the artistic landscape. Speaking about the changing dynamics, New York-based artist Ava Richardson said, "Art today is about dialogue—whether it's political, environmental, or deeply personal.

## 'Case has reached doorstep of Karnataka CM': BJP shares Ranya Rao's picture with CM Siddaramaiah

NEW DELHI: Bharatiya Janata Party leader Amit Malviya on Wednesday shared an image of Karnataka chief minister Siddaramaiah in the same frame with actress Ranya Rao who was arrested in the alleged gold smuggling case. This comes after deputy CM DK Shivakumar dismissed the reports of any political link with the case.

"The Ranya Rao gold smuggling case in Karnataka has now reached the doorstep of chief minister Siddaramaiah. This dated photo also features the current home minister, G Parmeshwara," he said. Taking a swipe at DKS, Malviya said, "Ironically, the man dismissing any political links is none other than Congress's



CM-in-waiting, DK Shivakumar." The state ministers have repeatedly denied having any links with the case. "No minister is involved, we don't know anything. It is all political gossip. Investigating officers will proceed as per the law. We have nothing to do with it," Shivakumar told reporters on Monday. Congress MLA Rizwan Arshad reiterated this claim and said, "It is being investigated by CBI, which is not under the control

of the state government but the central government. They have all the freedom to investigate, and if there is anything and anybody involved, let it come out. But we are very clear: nobody from the state government is involved in any kind of small criminal activity." Rao was arrested on March 3 by the Directorate of Revenue Intelligence (DRI) at Kempegowda International Airport (KIAD) in Bengaluru for allegedly smuggling 14.8 kilograms of gold from Dubai. The stepdaughter of DGP K Ramachandra Rao, she was produced before a special court for financial offences on March 4, where she was initially remanded to judicial custody until March 18.

## 62-year-old arrested for sexual assault on minor

New Delhi: A 62-year-old man has been arrested for allegedly repeatedly sexually assaulting a 16-year-old girl in southwest Delhi's Sarojini Nagar. The inquiry revealed that the accused had threatened to kill the minor. Police said the crime came to light after the girl's pregnancy was discovered. On Feb 6, police received information from a hospital about the admission of a minor girl who was found to be pregnant. A team from the local police station visited the hospital and spoke to the doctor. The investigating officer met the survivor, who initially claimed she was in a consensual relationship with a boy for a year. However, her statement was later found to be false. During her statement, the girl told police that she lives with her mother and brother in Sarojini Nagar. "Her mother works as a maid, and her brother works as a security guard. Her mother took her to Safdarjung Hospital for a medical checkup, where she was found to be two months pregnant. She stated that, four months ago, her neighbour lured her with requests to fetch items from the shop, then called her to his room and forcibly engaged in sexual relations with her, also threatening her,"

police said. Out of fear of the accused, the girl initially gave a false statement to doctors. A case under relevant sections of the BNS and the PoCSO Act was registered at Sarojini Nagar police station. Deputy commissioner of police (Southwest) Surendra Choudhary formed a team under SHO (Sarojini Nagar) Atul Tyagi, which apprehended the accused from his house. During inquiry, the girl told police that the accused had threatened her with dire consequences if she revealed the incident to anyone. The accused works as a security guard.

## Siddaramaiah, DK not on same page as delimitation row escalates

BENGALURU:

Karnataka CM Siddaramaiah backed his Tamil Nadu counterpart MK Stalin's campaign against the proposed population-based delimitation exercise with a call to action on Wednesday, contrasting with his deputy DK Shivakumar calling for a nuanced approach based on the party high command's "final call". A Tamil Nadu delegation met Siddaramaiah in Bengaluru and Stalin reached out to him over phone, proposing a joint action committee consisting of representatives of several states to collectively oppose the delimitation move. A statement from the CMO confirmed Karnataka's alignment with the protest against what the southern states call "an undemocratic stance" to carry out delimitation without everyone on board. Stalin requested Karnataka to nominate



a senior Congress representative to coordinate a unified strategy. A preliminary meeting is scheduled for March 22 in Chennai. The delegation led by TN forest minister K Ponmudy and Rajya Sabha member Mohammad Abdullah Ismail discussed with Siddaramaiah the need to challenge the alleged bias against southern states, the CMO said. Siddaramaiah said Congress "unequivocally condemns all actions of the Union govt that are against Karnataka's interest, weaken democracy and go against the federal prin-

ciples of the Constitution". The proposed joint action committee could have members from Kerala, Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka, West Bengal, Odisha and Punjab. DMK has been reaching out to functionaries across party lines, including NDA allies like Andhra Pradesh CM N Chandrababu Naidu. Shivakumar said DMK being Congress's ally, the party appreciated its stance. "However, as a national party, we must consult our high command and proceed based on their guidance."

## 38% of U-6 kids stunted, 17% underweight: Govt

NEW DELHI: Govt's 'Poshan Tracker' data shows that as of Feb, 8.8 crore children (0-6 years) were enrolled in Anganwadis with 8.5 crore measured on growth parameters of height and weight. Of these children, 37.7% were found to be stunted and 17.1% children were underweight. The ministry of women and child development shared this data as part of the response to a written question in Rajya Sabha on addressing the challenge of malnutrition. Citing the data from the Tracker and drawing from National Family Health Surveys 1 (1992-93) to 5 (2019-21), the WCD ministry said that the numbers show "improvement in malnutrition indicators in children across India". The minister of state for women and child development Savitri Thakur in a written reply also shared that the project-



ed population of all children up to 5 years in India for the year 2021 is 13.7 crore approximately and 16.1 crore for children in the 0-6 years age group. Of the 7.4 crore children up to 5 years enrolled in Anganwadis and registered on Poshan Tracker as of February, around 7.2 crore were measured on growth parameters of height and weight. The results show that 39% of them have been found to be stunted, 16.6% have been found to be underweight and 5.3% wasted," the minister said in

her response. As per National Family Health Survey-5 (2019-21) stunting among under 5 children was 35.5%, underweight children accounted for 32.1% and 19.3% were affected by wasting. The ministry highlights that "as compared to NFHS (sample size of approx 6.1 lakh households and survey done after every 5 or 6 years only), Poshan Tracker consistently measures approx 8.5 crore children approximately each month revealing the real time nutritional status of beneficiaries.

## Post election crackdown: CBI arrests 6 Delhi Transport officials in corruption case

NEW DELHI: In a significant post-election crackdown, the CBI has arrested six officials from the Delhi Transport Department on charges of corruption and bribery, marking the first major action in the capital after the Aam Aadmi Party's recent electoral defeat, officials said on Wednesday. The agency had been receiving multiple complaints about rampant corruption within the department, prompting an extensive surveillance operation to verify the allegations before making the arrests, they said. Following the verification process, investigators found prima facie evidence indicating corruption at various levels, leading to the officials' arrest, they added.

## Delhi set to host 21 Gun Salute Concours d'Elegance

Delhi will host the 11th edition of the 21 Gun Salute Concours d'Elegance from February 21 to 23, 2025, featuring 125 vintage cars and 50 heritage motorcycles. Highlights include rare cars like the 1939 Delahaye and cultural performances. This event cements Delhi NCR's status as a hub for vintage car enthusiasts and showcases India's automotive heritage globally. Delhi set to host 21 Gun Salute Concours d'Elegance Delhi is set to reaffirm its status as India's vintage car capital as it hosts the highly anticipated 11th edition of the 21 Gun Salute Concours d'Elegance, one of the country's most prestigious vintage and classic car showcases. The three-day extravaganza, scheduled from February 21 to 23, 2025, will take automotive enthusiasts on a historic journey.

## Pune bus rape case: Accused Dattatray Gade remanded to judicial custody till March 26

**Pune :** A Maharashtra court on Wednesday remanded Dattatray Gade, the accused in the Swargate bus rape case, to police custody until March 26. The incident took place in Pune where Gade had allegedly raped a 26-year-old woman inside a parked state transport (MSRTC) bus at the Swargate terminus in the early hours of February 25, police said.

**Arrest and investigation** Gade was arrested from a sugarcane field in Gunat village, Pune district, following an extensive manhunt involving drones and sniffer dogs. The search operation lasted two days, with villagers assisting the police.

According to officials, Gade made multiple suicide attempts while hiding but failed each time due to a broken rope. He was ultimately captured after leaving his hiding spot in search of drinking



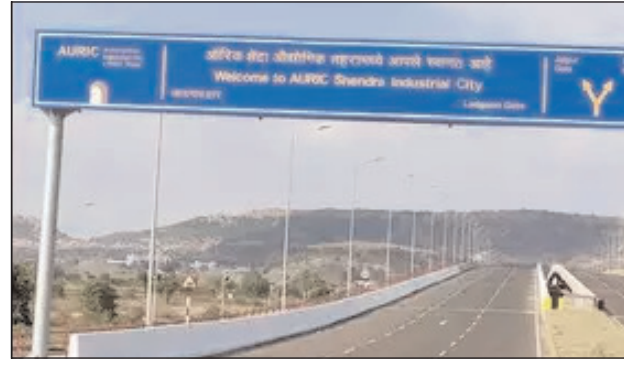
water. Upon his arrest, Gade was produced in court following a 12-day police custody. The crime branch sought his judicial custody while reserving the right to recall him for two additional days of police custody. The court granted judicial custody till March 26. Also read: Pune bus rape case: Cops to recover suspect's cell-phone, clothes & quiz him about past crimes Authorities call for inquiry into security lapses The survivor, who works as a preoperative counsellor at a hospital in Pune, was waiting at Swargate depot to catch a bus to

Phaltan when Gade approached her, pretending to be a conductor. He convinced her to board a parked Shivshahi bus, locked the doors, and allegedly raped her before fleeing. Initially too shaken to speak out, the victim later gathered the courage to report the crime with support from a friend. The case has sparked public outrage, with protests erupting at the Swargate terminus. Deputy chief minister Ajit Pawar and NCW Chairperson Vijaya Rahatkar condemned the incident, calling for swift justice.

## Industrial City's Shendra node gets separate power supply

**Chhatrapati Sambhajinagar.**

The Maharashtra Electricity Regulatory Commission (MERC), a power regulator, gave the necessary approval. The regulator is also expected to hear the multi-year tariff (MYT) petition submitted by the MITL to decide the tariff structure within the next few weeks. The development is expected to ensure a smooth and quality power supply to the thriving industrial city that witnessed Rs 60,000 crore investment. The industrial city is expected to generate direct and indirect employment for two



lakh people. A senior official said different industries in Auric would benefit immensely due to the award of the power distribution licence to the MITL. "The industries can expect power supply at competitive rates in comparison to other states. The power supply will be smoother,

helping industries carry out different operations in a seamless manner," he said. The power supply distribution network at Shendra is largely underground and can work with Supervisory Control and Data Acquisition (SCADA) systems that are used to monitor and control industrial



## Nitish, Rabri engage in war of words in council



**PATNA:** For the second time in a week, chief minister Nitish Kumar and his predecessor Rabri Devi engaged in a heated exchange in the Bihar Legislative Council on Wednesday. While Nitish said Rabri was the "CM of circumstances", the former CM accused the JD(U) leader of "insulting the women folks". Trouble began when CPI-ML member, Shashi Yadav, rose from her seat to submit before the House that she was not satisfied with the govt's reply to her question. The CM reacted by saying the govt is doing so much for women while the previous govt did nothing. This irked Rabri, who rose to intervene, asking the govt to bring the records of that period to know what was done by the previous govt. Reacting sharply to her observations, Nitish accused RJD chief Lalu Prasad of installing his wife as the CM when he was forced to step down. Rabri hit back, accusing the CM of "disrespecting" all women folk through his words, alleging no substantial work was done under his leadership before staging a walkout with opposition members in protest.

## Air India clogged lavatories: Aging aircraft, old ducts, scaling in pipes and passenger behaviour lead to stink

**NEW DELHI:** Clogged toilets are not new to Air India flights, but the legacy of the old govt-run airline has been flushed across to the new Tata Group-owned company, right in the middle of its modernisation and expansion spree.

For years, cleanup crew of Air India's long-haul flights has found in holding tanks of blocked lavatories everything from socks to hand towels, plastic bags, underwear and even small pillows given on board. Just as the Chicago-Delhi flight was forced to return to O'Hare International Airport last Wednesday when eight of its 10 lavatories were clogged, over the years, sev-



eral of the airline's Europe and US flights have been forced to divert or return after flying for hours with hundreds of bursting bowels and bladders for similar reasons. The dumping has gone on regardless of clear signage asking flyers not to throw anything in the commode as that

could "clog the toilet and cause inconvenience to you and your fellow passengers". As Air India's legacy Boeing 777s, used for North America nonstops, age, the problem is worsening as the old ducts find it increasingly difficult to suck in whatever indiscreet passengers flush away. "These

aircraft are very old. The lavatory ducts or suction pipes have got scaling due to which their available width has reduced. External particles like shawls, sheets or towels easily and immediately clog them up," said an engineer who has spent decades maintaining aircraft. Aircraft toilets use a vacuum system to remove waste into a storage tank. According to Air India's former executive director Jitender Bhargava, the airline got 21 of its 23 B777s between 2007 and 2010. The other two were inducted much later and are now used as dedicated long-haul VVIP planes operated by the Indian Air Force.

## Sena factions clash in Thane, raise slogans at Dighe memorial

**Thane:** Workers of the rival Shiv Sena factions led by deputy chief minister Eknath Shinde and Uddhav Thackeray indulged in sloganeering and heated exchange at Anand Ashram in Thane's Tembhi Naka area on Sunday evening. The clash led to traffic disruptions in the area. The residence of the late Shiv Sena leader Anand Dighe, Anand Ashram serves as the party office of Shinde's Shiv Sena. On Sunday, the Thackeray-led Shiv Sena (UBT) organised a

rally in Thane ahead of the civic elections. Despite a strong police presence, tensions escalated when senior leaders, including Vinayak Raut, Sanjay Raut, and Chandrakant Khaire, arrived at Anand Ashram to pay their respects to Dighe. The rival Sena faction members confronted each other and started sloganeering. The situation intensified when the Sena (UBT) leaders proceeded to Shakti Sthal, Dighe's memorial, where another round of slogan shouting erupted between

the two groups. Former Thane mayor Minakshi Shinde condemned the event, calling it an insult to Dighe's legacy. She defended Shiv Sena's decision to perform a 'Dudh Abhishek' (milk offering) at the memorial to "purify" the site. The political blame game took centre stage at the Sena (UBT) rally with Sanjay Raut launching a scathing attack on the Shinde faction. He accused the Prime Minister of orchestrating the split in the Shiv Sena and criticised Shinde.

## 'Stop twisting facts': DMK counters Pradhan's consent 'letter claim' amid three-language showdown

**NEW DELHI:** DMK MP Kanimozhi on Wednesday accused Union education minister Dharmendra Pradhan of "twisting facts" after Tamil Nadu government's letter of consent was for establishment of PM-SHRI schools was furnished amid the ongoing three-language controversy. Replying to Pradhan on a social media post on X, the DMK MP said that the letter provided by the education minister does not mention accepting the three-language policy or NEP in its entirety. "This letter clearly states that Tamil Nadu will accept PM SHRI schools only based on our State Government led-committee's recommendations and not on your Union Government's recommendation. Nowhere have we



mentioned accepting the three-language policy or NEP in its entirety," Kanimozhi said. "Whatever is acceptable for Tamil Nadu, we will accept—nothing more, nothing less. Stop twisting facts," she added. This came a day after Pradhan slammed DMK govt on social media and claimed that three-language controversy had been staged by TN govt to earn "brownie points and to revive DMK's political fortunes". The letter dated March 15, 2024 said, "... the state of Tamil

Nadu is very keen to sign the MoU for establishing PM-SHRI schools in the state. In this regard, a state-level committee headed by the school education secretary has been constituted. Based on the recommendations of the committee, the MoU for establishing PM-SHRI schools will be signed by the state before the beginning of the next academic year, 2024-25." "It is requested to kindly release the 3rd and the 4th instalments for the financial year 2023-24," it added.

## Under construction mosque in cemetery razed, case registered

**Kanpur:** A mosque being constructed illegally on a burial ground was razed by the district authorities in Hamirpur district. The administration obtained land details from the municipal records and after confirming that the construction was illegal, demolished

the structure. A case was registered against six identified and 250 unidentified people. A search has been initiated for the suspects.

Officials received information about the construction of a mosque at a burial ground near Chhimoli Road. SDM

Rajkumar Gupta sought land status report from regional records officer Satyam Awasthi, who verified that the property, situated in Mauja Maudha, spanning 2.09 hectares, was officially documented as a cemetery. Following the report, authori-

ties, anticipating potential unrest, conducted a late-night demolition of the incomplete structure. The operation was overseen by SDM Rajkumar Gupta, tehsildar Anubhav Chandra, CO Vinita Pahal, and Kotwali officer Umesh Kumar Singh.

## New I-T bill may be introduced in House on Tuesday

**NEW DELHI:** Finance minister Nirmala Sitharaman is likely to introduce the new income tax bill in Parliament on Tuesday, with the legislation likely to be referred to a standing committee for examination. "I hope to have it introduced in Lok Sabha in the coming week. The process is the committee gives its recommendation, it comes back, and then the government, through the Cabinet, takes a call on whether these amendments.

## 'Indians among our biggest job applicants:' Riyadh Air CEO Tony Douglas



**NEW DELHI:** Aviation industry personnel in India have made a beeline for joining Saudi Arabia's soon to be launched second national carrier Riyadh Air. The airline website's career portal has been open for two years on which pilots, cabin crew members, ground, maintenance staff and others can evince interest by submitting their details. "In the last two years, we have received 14 lakh applications from 146 nationalities of which 52% are women. India is one of the biggest

source countries for the applications. We are overwhelmed by the interest and faith in our brand despite the fact that so far we have not announced any salary structures," Riyadh Air CEO Tony Douglas said here Wednesday. The upcoming full service airline has ordered

up to 132 aircraft, Airbus A321neos and Boeing 787 Dreamliners. It is currently in talks with both Boeing and Airbus for placing orders for ultra long range wide bodies with the choice being between the B777 9X and A350-1000. It currently has one aircraft

and 500 employees, including 36 cabin crew and pilots each. "After Saudis, the second biggest nationality of employees is Indians. Ditto for the population of Singapore," he said. The airline, which is going to start operations in a few months, says India is a key market for it. "In 2024 Saudi Arabia saw 15 lakh tourists from India which was a 50% jump over previous year. Ninety-three per cent of flyers at Riyadh are point to point and just 7% are in transit.

## More than 50% of 30.68 crore e-Shram beneficiaries are women

Delhi: More than half of the 30.68 crore unorganised workers enrolled for social welfare benefits on the government's e-Shram platform are women (53.68%), Minister of State for Labour and Employment Shobha Karandlaje told the Lok Sabha. The Ministry of Labour and Employment unveiled the e-Shram—"One-Stop-Solution" to fulfill the budget announcement's aim of a one-stop solution for unorganized workers to access social security systems. The "e-Shram—"One-Stop-Solution" integrates multiple social security schemes into one portal. This allows unorganized workers registered on e-Shram to access social security systems and view their benefits. The e-Shram has integrated 13 Central Ministry/Department schemes, including PM-SVANidhi, PMSBY, PMJJBY, NFBS, MGN-REGA, PMAY-G, and Ayushman Bharat. The Ministry of Labour and Employment imple-



mented multilingual capability on the e-Shram portal utilizing Bhashini to improve accessibility. In a written reply, the minister said this upgrade allows workers to interact with e-Shram portals in 22 Indian languages, boosting accessibility and inclusivity. The Ministry launched the e-Shram mobile app to make e-Shram and related services accessible to unorganized workers. This software makes welfare schemes integrated with e-Shram more accessible and convenient in real time. The Ministry has periodic review meetings with states and the Services Centre to raise awareness.

### Gold's relevance as asset class to rise: CEA

NEW DELHI: Gold will remain relevant for investors as a portfolio diversification mechanism with a likely ascending importance as an asset class in the coming years, CEA V Anantha Nageswaran. He said that gold will remain relevant not only as a store of value, as an ornament for cultural and religious purposes, but also as an important portfolio diversification mechanism "until such a time the world is able to arrive at an international monetary system from the current international monetary non-system".

## Jefferies: India capex boom, state-level infra projects increase

Delhi: According to Jefferies, capital spending in India has increased significantly and is projected to continue in the coming months as various sectors see robust increases. Jefferies Head of Research and Managing Director Mahesh Nandurkar predicts strong capital expenditure growth in February and March. According to the government's revised budget predictions, infrastructural and industrial growth will continue. Nandurkar remarked, "These are on expected lines, but the fact that it's happening gives confidence." In January 2025, the central gov-



ernment's capital expenditure jumped 51%, demonstrating its commitment to infrastructure development. The government's concentration on trains and road projects has helped complete 83-87% of the financial year 2025 revised forecasts for these sectors. Nandurkar advised a cal-

ibrated approach. The market remains wary about private capex. "I believe private capex is already happening in cement, steel, hospital and real estate," Capital expenditure remains a priority, with state transfers climbing by 60%. This funding should advance state infrastructure projects and encourage economic growth. Key sectors have great growth potential, according to Jefferies. One was metal stocks, indicating strong sector momentum. The brokerage also noted that the Asian steel differential is 20% below its long-term average, allowing for expansion.

## Price pressure caps senior citizen health premium hikes at 10%

As medicare policy rates skyrocket for seniors over 60, Irdai has ordered insurers not to raise senior people's health premiums by more than 10% without approval. Before cancelling senior health coverage, insurers must get regulator clearance. As

healthcare prices rise, insurers are advised to standardize hospital empanelment and negotiate package rates like the government's PM Jan Arogya Yojana. Irdai reported a large increase in prices for various health insurance policies for subscribers over 60.

Premium rates depend on projected claims, administrative expenditures, and acquisition costs, the regulator said. Private insurance doesn't standardize hospitalization expenses, unlike PMJAY, which negotiates consistent package rates.

## Sebi strengthens SME IPO rules to protect investors

Delhi: Sebi has tightened SME regulation by requiring profitability and capping offer-for-sale at 20%. The measures aim to allow proven SMEs to raise public money while protecting investor interests. SME concerns have increased investor participation, prompting this shift. Sebi requires SMEs contemplating an IPO to have a minimum operational profit of 1 crore for two out of the three previous financial years. The OFS component by selling shareholders in SME IPOs is limited to 20% of the issue size. Sebi announced on March 4 that selling stockholders cannot sell more than 50% of their interests. Promoters' shares beyond the Minimum Promoter Contribution would be locked in progressively. One year



would release half of the surplus holding, while two years would release the other 50%. To guarantee uniformity, SME IPO non-institutional investor allocation would match main-board IPOs. Sebi has upped the minimum application size for SME IPO to two lots to reduce speculation. This would protect foolish investors who buy based on rising share prices, "Makarand

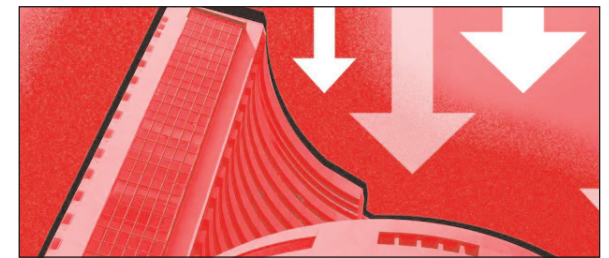
M Joshi, founder and partner of corporate compliance consultancy MMJC and Associates, said. The general corporate purpose allocation in SME IPOs is limited to 15% of the entire issue size or ₹10 crore, whichever is less. SME issues cannot use IPO proceeds to repay loans from promoters, promoter groups, or related parties, directly or indirectly.

### Manufacturing activity slows to a 14-month low in February

NEW DELHI: Activity in the country's manufacturing sector grew at its slowest pace in 14 months as production and new orders moderated but it still remained robust, a survey showed. The HSBC India Manufacturing Purchasing Managers' Index (PMI) registered a reading of 56.3 in Feb, down from 57.7 in Jan, but still indicative of further improvement in the health of the sector. The 50-point mark separates from contraction in the survey, which is compiled from responses to questionnaires sent to 400 manufacturing firms.

## Indian stocks plummet as investors worry about US tariffs

Delhi: Indian equities and the overall market fell sharply as investors worried about U.S. tariffs and the market downturn. Nifty 50 decreased 0.41% to 22,460.3, Sensex fell 0.29% to 74,115.17. The key indexes surged roughly 2% last week on bargain buying after the market sell-off erased \$1 trillion from India's market value and made large cap valuations more attractive for investors. Large cap indices are approaching a stage where moderate equity investment is warranted,



diluting the conservative posture values indicated for a while. The midcap and smallcap indexes fell 1.5% and 2%. The asset manager said valuation comfort is coming for larger markets. Mid- and smallcaps are 20.5% and 23% below their record highs, while the Nifty is 14.5% below. India's volatility

gauge rose the most since February 28 to 13.99, indicating near-term uncertainty. India is seeking a bilateral trade pact with the U.S. after President Donald Trump repeatedly criticized its high tariffs. Higher tariffs can increase inflation, slow growth in the world's largest economy, and reduce foreign

## Employment for Indian women is rising, but 89 million urban women are unemployed

Delhi: A recent report shows a 10% increase in women's employment in India's metropolitan areas, reaching 28% among working-age women in 2023-24. However, 89 million urban women were unemployed that year, more than Germany, France, the UK, and Australia combined. Analysis of how "visible gains and leadership wins mask systemic and hidden barriers" shows that deep-seated systemic barriers limit female labor participation, demonstrating the gender employment paradox. Spousal abuse, relocation after marriage, and poor transportation limit urban women's employment. Education reduces the incidence of domestic violence for employed



### NGT requests DPCC report after plea says unlawful dyeing units continue.

Delhi: The applicant, an environmental activist, told the National Green Tribunal that more illegal dyeing facilities were operating in Khyala and Meethapur village in Delhi after the authorities alerted them of their actions. The tribunal ordered the Delhi Pollution Control Committee to act and report in four weeks. In another matter related to such units, a joint committee recommended a campaign to sensitize the public about illegal industrial activity.

women, finds a private business school. The last statistics from 2019-2020 showed that 20% of highly educated urban working women and 42% of those with only primary education experienced such abuse.

## Omaxe to Upgrade 6 UP Bus Terminals for Rs 2,700 Cr

Delhi: Omaxe will modernize bus terminals with its new wholly-owned subsidiary 'BeTogether'. These initiatives attempt to improve Uttar Pradesh's public transport and add modern commercial space. These projects are estimated to generate around Rs 4,700 crore in income with a



total investment of roughly Rs 2,700 crore, Omaxe stated.

Total saleable area is 45.59 lakh sq ft, while the six projects' built-up area is 70.80 lakh sq ft. Six bus terminals were modernised with heritage-inspired design and modern infrastructure to improve passenger convenience and economic possibilities. Automatic ticketing, digi-

tal schedule displays, AC waiting lounges, comfortable seating with charging stations, escalators, lifts, and improved security are available at each terminal. Large commercial developments featuring retail, food courts, conference rooms, studio apartments, offices, and adequate parking.

## Ola's Concerns Proceed: Shops Targeted for Trade Certificate Infractions

Delhi: The brand is facing even more difficulties as a result of a new study on the showrooms built by Ola. According to a recent report, the firm has been attempting to switch from digital to traditional showrooms as its sales approach. The company had made investments in four thousand physical showrooms. It has come to light that the brand only has data for 3,400 showrooms, according to a Bloomberg investigation. Under the Motor Vehicle Act, trade certi-



cations are required in little over 100 sites. The Bloomberg investigation also explained that 95% of the establishments where the data was viewed by Bloomberg News did not have the bare minimum of certification required to exhibit cars.

On transport unregistered two-wheelers,

they are sold and test rides are provided. Constabulary in several Indian states have carried out raids, closed showrooms, seized cars, and issued show-cause orders to the company managed by Bhavish Aggarwal in response to complaints made by users and concerned authorities.

## Government to double digital banking units

Delhi: Within a year, the Union government plans to virtually double the number of digital banking units (DBU) nationwide to 200. Two sources said DBU may be able to offer more financial goods, including insurance and government financial-inclusion programs. DBUs are fixed-point business units or hubs with

minimum digital infrastructure to supply digital banking goods and services and serve existing financial products and services digitally in a convenient and cost-effective manner. Since 2022, DBUs have been expanded nationwide, notably in semi-urban, rural, and isolated locations without banking or digital services.

## European allies rally around Ukraine, to raise defence spending

**NYT** European leaders have declared an increase in military spending to bolster Ukraine with economic and military aid, aiming to deter potential invaders. The UK will provide significant financial support for air defence missiles. A peace plan involving the UK, Ukraine, France, and other nations will be drawn up and presented to the US. UK PM Keir Starmer, accompanied by Zelenskyy & other European leaders, at a summit in London. He said UK, Ukraine, France & other nations will form a 'coalition of the willing', draw up a peace plan and present it to US. European leaders emerged from a summit with President Volodymyr Zelenskyy of Ukraine and other heads of state in London on Sunday to say that the European Union had embarked on a surge in military spending. European Commission president Ursula von



der Leyen said Europe will fortify Ukraine with economic and military aid, aiming to turn the country into "a steel porcupine that is indigestible for potential invaders". Nato secretary-general Mark Rutte said several European countries had pledged to increase their military spending. Rutte insisted that US President Donald Trump was committed to Nato. The gathering took on greater urgency after Zelenskyy's heated Oval Office meeting with Trump and Vice-President JD Vance on Friday raised fears that the US would try to strong-arm Ukraine's president into making a peace deal. "We're

gathered here today because this is a once-in-a-generation moment for the security of Europe, and we all need to step up," host British PM Keir Starmer, with Zelenskyy beside him, told the assembled leaders. "Getting a good outcome for Ukraine is not just a matter of right and wrong, it's vital for the security of every nation here & many others too," he said. Starmer said the UK will use £1.6 billion (\$2 bn) in export financing to supply 5,000 air defence missiles for Ukraine. He wrapped up the summit by saying Europe had to do the heavy lifting in defending itself.

## UK pledges export financing for air defence as world leaders

**LONDON:** British Prime Minister Keir Starmer said Sunday he does not see the US as an unreliable ally but Europe must continue to provide funding for Ukraine to put it in a stronger position if peace is negotiated. Wrapping up a security summit in London with other European and world leaders, Starmer said that nobody wanted to see the breakdown in talks that happened Friday at the White House but that the US remains an important ally. "The US has been a reliable ally to the UK for many, many decades and continues to be," Starmer said. "There are



no two countries as closely aligned as our two countries." Starmer said the plan he is working on for peace in Ukraine is intended to receive US backing. The UK will use 1.6 billion pounds (USD 2 billion) in export financing to supply 5,000 air defence missiles for Ukraine, he said. And he warned that

Europe had to do the heavy lifting in defending itself. The meeting comes two days after US support for Ukraine appeared in greater jeopardy after President Donald Trump lashed out at Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy and said he wasn't grateful enough for US support.

## Germany says latest undersea cable cut a 'wake-up call'

**Germany** said on Saturday the suspected sabotage of an undersea power cable linking Finland and Estonia this week was a "wake-up call" that demanded new EU sanctions against Russia's "shadow fleet". The Estlink 2 cable that carries electricity

from Finland to Estonia was disconnected from the grid on Wednesday, just over a month after two telecommunications cables were severed in Swedish territorial waters in the Baltic. "Almost every month, ships are damaging major undersea cables in

the Baltic Sea," German foreign minister Annalena Baerbock said in a statement to the media group. "Crews are leaving anchors in the water, dragging them for kilometres along the seafloor for no apparent reason."

## Trump names XRP, Solana, and Cardano for US crypto reserve, sending markets soaring

**NYT** US President Donald Trump shook up the cryptocurrency world on Sunday, announcing that XRP (Ripple), SOL (Solana), and ADA (Cardano) would be included in a newly formed US Crypto Strategic Reserve. The move sent all three assets surging between 10% and 35% in market trading, reported Reuters. Trump revealed the decision in a social media post, tying it to his January executive order on digital assets. "I will make sure the US is the Crypto Capital of the World," he declared, adding that his directive instructed the Presidential Working Group to move forward with the reserve plan. The announcement marks a sharp policy shift from the Biden administration, which had cracked down on the crypto industry over concerns about fraud and money laundering. Trump's 2024 campaign, in contrast, won significant backing from crypto executives, and his latest move signals that he intends to deliver on his pro-crypto promises. While the news initially sparked a rally, broader cryptocurrency markets have struggled in recent weeks, with many digital assets erasing their post-election gains. Analysts believe a more sustained market boost will require either interest rate cuts from the Federal Reserve or a clearer regulatory framework from the Trump administration. Despite the excitement, details about the crypto reserve remain unclear. Some experts speculate it could be funded through the US Treasury's Exchange Stabilization Fund, which is traditionally used to manage foreign currencies. Others suggest it might involve cryptocurrencies seized in law enforcement actions. Legal scholars are divided on whether the reserve could be established without congressional approval. Meanwhile, Trump's inner circle is pressing ahead—his family has even launched its own cryptocurrency, and the first-ever White House Crypto Summit is set for Friday.

## 'Canada is not for sale!' Comedian Mike Myers defiantly claps back at Trump on SNL

**Canada** Comedian Mike Myers sent a clear message during his surprise appearance on Saturday Night Live, sporting a bold T-shirt reading "Canada is not for sale" amid US President Donald Trump's repeated quips about making Canada the 51st state. The Scarborough-born actor appeared in the show's closing scene alongside host Shane Gillis and Canadian singer-songwriter Tate McRae, his attire seemingly responding to Trump's remarks and tariff threats against Canada. A comedic jab at the White House earlier in the episode, Myers made an unexpected



cameo, portraying Elon Musk in a satirical re-enactment of the recent tense Oval Office meeting between Trump and Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy. Wielding a chainsaw, his Musk character interrupted the fictionalized exchange, adding to the episode's political humor.

As the credits rolled, Myers also mouthed "elbows up" while gesturing—a possible nod to Canadians to stand firm in the face of US pressure. Echoing a political message Myers' silent protest follows a similar stance from Ontario Premier Doug Ford, who in January donned a "Canada is not for sale" cap during a meeting with Prime Minister Justin Trudeau and provincial leaders. With Trump's rhetoric stirring debate, Myers' subtle yet pointed SNL appearance adds a touch of humor to an ongoing political conversation.

## California jackpot! Mega millions player wins \$1.22 billion

**After months of** anticipation, the Mega Millions jackpot has finally been claimed. A lucky ticket sold in California matched all six numbers on Friday night, winning an estimated \$1.22 billion—the third-largest prize in the lottery's history. The winning numbers were 3, 7, 37, 49, 55, and the gold Mega Ball 6. The identity of the winner remains a mystery, but their options are clear: take the prize as a 29-year annuity or a lump-sum cash payout of \$549.7 million. Both choices represent a life-altering windfall, and speculation is



The timing couldn't be more notable—just months after the largest Mega Millions jackpot ever, \$1.6 billion, was won in Florida. Friday's win brings Mega Millions back into the spotlight amid fierce competition with its sibling lottery, Powerball, which boasts two of the largest jackpots in US history. Meanwhile, lottery enthusiasts are gearing up for a significant change: Mega Millions ticket prices will increase from \$2 to \$5 in April. Officials promise better odds and larger payouts as a result.

already mounting about who the fortunate new billionaire might be. This win ends a record-breaking dry spell that began on September 10, with 31 consecutive drawings failing to produce a jackpot winner. The growing pot drew millions of hopeful players, despite daunting odds of 1 in 302.6 million.

## Pope didn't need any mechanical ventilation after respiratory crisis Friday

**ROME: Pope Francis** remained in stable condition and didn't need any mechanical ventilation on Sunday, the Vatican said. It was a sign that his respiratory function was improving as he continues his recovery from double pneumonia and a respiratory crisis. The 88-year-old pope did continue to receive high flow supplemental oxygen after Friday's coughing episode, which sparked fears of a new infection. Doctors again said his prognosis remained guarded, meaning he wasn't out of danger. Francis, who earlier Sunday had a visit from the Vatican No. 2 and No. 3 official, also attended Mass, rested and prayed, the Vatican said in its evening bulletin. A stable Pope Francis had a visit Sunday from the Vatican secretary of state as he continued his recovery from double pneumonia,



but again skipped his weekly noon blessing to avoid even a brief public appearance from the hospital. Instead, the Vatican distributed a message from the pope in which he thanked his doctors for their care and well-wishers for their prayers, and prayed again for peace in Ukraine and elsewhere. "From here, war appears even more absurd," Francis said in the message, which he drafted in recent days from the Gemelli hospital, the Vatican said. Francis said he was living his hospitalization as an experience of pro-

found solidarity with people who are sick and suffering everywhere. "I feel in my heart the 'blessing' that is hidden within frailty, because it is precisely in these moments that we learn even more to trust in the Lord," Francis said in the text. "At the same time, I thank God for giving me the opportunity to share in body and spirit the condition of so many sick and suffering people." Signs point to a recovery. It marked the third weekend in a row that Francis has canceled the Sunday appointment delivering the Angelus.

## From White House firestorm to UK fortune: Zelenskyy secures \$3.3 billion

**London** Just a day after a fiery confrontation with Donald Trump in the Oval Office, Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy was met with cheers, handshakes, and a \$3.3 billion loan in London. British Prime Minister Keir Starmer personally welcomed Zelenskyy outside 10 Downing Street, where he reaffirmed the UK's unwavering support for Ukraine. "That is the people of the United Kingdom coming out to demonstrate how much they support you, how much they support Ukraine," Starmer said, as onlookers applauded. "We stand with you and Ukraine for as long as it may take." The leaders then signed a \$3.3 billion agreement aimed at boosting Ukraine's military production—funds that will be repaid using revenues from frozen

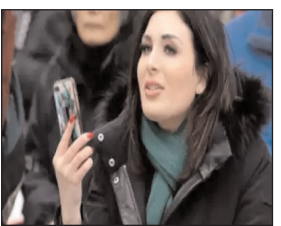


Russian assets. "This is true justice—the one who started the war must be the one to pay," Zelenskyy declared on X, thanking the UK for its continued support. From Washington fury to British diplomacy The warm reception in London stood in stark contrast to Zelenskyy's tense visit to Washington, where a heated argument erupted between him, Trump, and Vice President JD Vance inside the Oval Office. The confrontation reportedly stemmed from Trump's frustration over Zelenskyy's past appearances with

Democratic leaders and his initial reluctance to sign a joint US-Ukraine deal on rare-earth minerals. Trump accused Zelenskyy of being "disrespectful" to the US, while Vance took issue with Ukraine's continued demands for military aid. The disagreement escalated into a shouting match, after which Trump reportedly wanted Zelenskyy to leave. Despite the diplomatic fallout in Washington, Zelenskyy's London visit proved far more successful. The newly signed UK deal not only strengthens Ukraine's defense.

## Irony! Laura rants against Indians, ends up asking for donations

**Following a series of** racist and xenophobic remarks about Indians, Loomer took to social media, asking her followers to support her financially after being banned on major payment platforms like Cash App, Venmo, and PayPal. In response to an inquiry about how fans could donate, she shared a link to the donation platform Buy Me a Coffee, claiming it would help her in her ongoing battle against "Big Tech." "I'm banned on Cash App, Venmo, and PayPal because these people want to strangle me and have been subjecting me to their caste system for YEARS," Loomer wrote, venting her frustration about the bans. However, Loomer failed to realize that Buy Me a Coffee is a platform founded by two Indian tech entrepreneurs, Jijo Sunny and Joseph Sunny—whom she had just blasted in a previous rant. Buy Me a Coffee was created to allow creators to connect with their audiences and receive financial support directly. The platform's founders designed it to give creators a simple way to receive payments and interact with their fans. It seems the irony was lost on Loomer, who, while railing against Indians for allegedly undermining the US, was unknowingly promoting a platform built by them. In an amusing twist, Jijo Sunny, one of the founders of Buy Me a Coffee, took the opportunity to respond to Loomer's inadvertent promotion of the platform. With a knowing wink, he quipped, "Sometimes the best way to silence hate is by showing the world how far we've come—no matter where we're from."



## 2 scribes held for 'derogatory content' against Telangana CM



**Hyderabad** Two woman journalists, Pogadadanda Revathi and Bandi Sandhya, were arrested in Hyderabad for circulating a derogatory video about Telangana CM A Revanth Reddy. The video, involving an elderly farmer, led to a complaint from the Congress's social media cell. Their arrest sparked criticism from BRS's KT Rama Rao, questioning Congress's stance on free speech. 2 scribes held for 'derogatory content' against Telangana CM Revanth Reddy. Two woman journalists were arrested

Wednesday for allegedly circulating a video containing derogatory remarks about Telangana CM A Revanth Reddy and state govt. P o g a d a d a n d a Revathi, managing director of YouTube channel Pulse News, and reporter Bandi Sandhya were arrested by Hyderabad cybercrime police and remanded in judicial custody until March 26. Their arrests stemmed from a complaint filed on March 10 by Telangana Congress's social media cell, accusing them of spreading politically motivated content. BRS working president KT Rama Rao

criticised the arrests, questioning Congress govt's commitment to free speech. "Kya yahi hain aap ki 'Mohabbat Ki Dukaan,' Rahul Gandhi Ji?" he posted on X. The video at the centre of the case features an elderly farmer using abusive language against Congress politicians, accusing them of failing to fulfil election promises. Police are working to identify the farmer. Senior police officers said the footage was recorded on Feb 10. Before her arrest, Revathi released a video alleging the CM was attempting to silence her and that her family was being threatened.

## Govt to probe price disparity complaints against cab aggregators

**NEW DELHI:** The Central Consumer Protection Authority (CCPA) has ordered a detailed investigation into complaints of ride hailing platforms charging different fares for the same route at the same time from consumers booking cabs using iPhone or Android phones, the consumer affairs department told Rajya Sabha on Wednesday. The department said the matter has been referred to CCPA's DG (investigation) as "both the companies (Ola and Uber) have denied the charges". In response to a question in Parliament, the department said the



alleged price disparity being followed by ANI Technologies Private Ltd (Ola) and Uber India Systems Private Ltd (Uber) for cab fares displayed on Android and iOS devices for identical rides has come to its notice. "Accordingly, the CCPA issued a letter on Jan 10, 2025 seeking response from Ola and

Uber regarding alleged differential pricing. Ola and Uber have denied the charges," it said. Officials said the detailed investigation will establish whether the companies are resorting to such practices, which are against consumer interest and is unfair trade practice.



## Sony PlayStation Network back after 24-hour outage, here's what the company said



**Sony PlayStation Network** back after 24-hour outage, here's what the company said Sony's PlayStation Network (PSN) is back online after a 24-hour outage. This outage disrupted gaming services for users worldwide. The Japanese gaming major confirmed the restoration of PSN on social media platform X (earlier Twitter), stating that online features should now be accessible without issues. The outage prevented users from launching games, apps, and other network features. Sony has also apologised for the inconvenience but did not provide details about the cause of the disruption. However, the company promised that all PlayStation Plus members would automatically receive an additional five days of service for the day-long outage. In its initial post, the company said: "PSN has been restored. You should be able to access online features without any problems now. For more details: <https://status.playstation.com>. Sorry for the inconvenience!"

## Buggies for differently abled persons launched at Telangana High Court

**HYDERABAD:** To assist the differently abled persons and others visiting the Telangana High Court, the high court has launched two two electric buggies with wheelchair accessibility on Thursday. Acting Chief Justice Sujoy Paul, Justice T. Vinod

Kumar, Judge flagged off the buggies sponsored by GMR Varalakshmi Foundation in the presence of Pradeep Panicker, CEO, GMR Varalakshmi Foundation. The buggies were donated as a part of GMR's CSR initiative and will be an added advantage to

the differently abled persons and others visiting High Court premises to commute from one place to another in premises of the High Court of Telangana, said P. Sreedhar Rao, registrar (Protocol), Telangana High Court. "We urge everybody,

## IPS officer Abhilasha directed to join Andhra Pradesh

**HYDERABAD:** The Central Administrative Tribunal in Hyderabad has dealt a setback to senior IPS officer Abhilasha Bisht, refusing to grant interim relief and directing her to join the Andhra Pradesh cadre immediately. In a key ruling on Wednesday, the tribunal upheld the ministry of home affairs' directive, despite Bisht's contention that her seniority and cadre allocation were unfairly altered during the bifurcation of the state. The MHA last week had ordered two other IPS officers, Anjani Kumar and Abhishek Mohanty, along with Bisht, to report to AP, directing the Telangana govt to relieve them. The bench, consisting of judicial member Lata Baswaraj Patne and administrative member Shalini Misra, clarified



that while her petition would be heard in full at a later date, there was no justification to block the Centre's order at this stage, emphasizing that AP, like any other state, requires senior IPS officers. While issuing notices to the central govt as well as the states of AP and Telangana

asking them to answer to the contentions raised by Bisht in the plea, the bench said: "She can go and join there and in the meantime. We will hear the version of the Centre and adjudicate the issue." While Anjani Kumar and Bisht are DGP rank officers, Mohanty is of SP rank. Bisht, a 1994 batch

IPS officer, initially allotted to the West Bengal cadre, had her cadre changed to AP in 1997 after her marriage to an AP cadre officer. Despite being senior to two other officers — Sowmya Misra and Shikha Goel, who were also transferred to AP for similar spouse-related reasons — Bisht's name was moved down the seniority list during the state bifurcation. This alteration led to Sowmya being placed above Bisht, a move that she contends was based on her later date of joining the AP cadre. In her petition before the tribunal, Bisht argued that had the Pratyush Sinha Committee norms been properly applied, she would have been placed in the Telangana cadre instead of AP.

## Bitcoin marked its first weekly decline since election victory

**Bitcoin** marked its first weekly decline since Donald Trump's election victory as the Federal Reserve's cautious policy outlook tempered optimism over the president-elect's embrace of the crypto sector. The largest digital asset was down more than 7% for the seven-day period through 9:27am Monday in Singapore, the biggest such drop since September. A wider crypto market gauge, encompassing smaller tokens such as Ether and meme-crowd favorite Dogecoin, suf-

fered a sharper decline of about 10%. The Fed delivered a third straight interest-rate cut while signaling a slower pace of monetary easing next year to keep inflation in check, sending global stocks into a tailspin. The hawkish pivot also damped the speculative spirits unleashed in the crypto market by Trump's pledge of friendly regulations and his backing for a national Bitcoin stockpile. A record outflow from US exchange traded funds investing directly in Bitcoin last

week will weigh on prices in the near term, said Sean McNulty, director of trading at liquidity provider Arbelos Markets. "We should hold the \$90,000 level for Bitcoin into the year end, but if we break below that could trigger further liquidations," McNulty said adding that "meaningful downside hedging" was seen in the options market last week with large buyers. for January, February and March puts in \$75,000 to \$80,000 strikes.

## Autopsy report rules out 'terror hit' angle in Kathua deaths

**NEW DELHI:** The post-mortem reports of three youths from J&K's Kathua, who were found dead three days after they went missing, have not revealed any gunshot wound or physical assault, ruling out a "terrorist attack" angle. The trauma injuries, including to their heads, point to their death by "accidental fall from a height," said sources. Sharing this, sources in the J&K govt also told that two more minors, who went missing from the same district — they were reported by their family as missing only a couple of days ago though they have been gone since Feb 28 — had an argument with their family and possi-



bly left home to work elsewhere on daily wages. This, the sources said, has happened before with the cousins, aged 12 and 15 and both herders, staying away from their family home for days to do daily-wage jobs. The police are making enquiries with their relatives and past employers to trace them. As per the post-mortem reports of the three Kathua residents — identified as Darshan Singh, 40, Yogesh Singh, 32, and Varun Singh, 15 — whose bodies were discovered on March 8 in a gorge next to a waterfall, the cause of their death was trauma and head injury, purportedly caused by their accidentally slipping in the dark, down a rocky gorge. A backpack carried by one of them got stuck on a branch as they fell.

## Malayalam TV actor Dileep Sankar found dead in hotel room

**Malayalam TV** actor Dileep Sankar was reportedly found dead in a hotel room in Thiruvananthapuram on Sunday morning, December 29. The actor had been staying at the hotel for a couple of days for the shoots of his ongoing serial 'Panchagni'.

Hotel staff discovered his body after noticing a foul smell coming from the room. Dileep, who was known for his roles in popular TV serials, including Ammayariyathe and Panchagni, had not been seen leaving his room dur-

ing his stay. Authorities are investigating the cause of his death, although there are no signs of foul play, as per the initial reports. The actor's sudden death has shocked the entertainment industry. Dileep Sankar was well-loved by fans for his

versatile acting in both TV serials and films. He was last seen in his role as Chandrasenan in the ongoing serial. Panchagni. Recently, he gained much appreciation for his character Peter in 'Ammayariyathe'.

## Nepal royal family's old ties with Goraksh Peeth behind Yogi's poster at Kathmandu rally

**LUCKNOW:** Posters of Uttar Pradesh CM Yogi Adityanath at a rally in Kathmandu to welcome former Nepal king Gyanendra Bir Shah has created a flutter in the Himalayan country, though the ties of its erstwhile monarchy with Goraksh Peeth, headed by Yogi, is centuries old. The Shah dynasty, which ruled Nepal till monarchy was abolished in May 2008, calls itself Gorakshpanthi, or the follower of Guru



Gorakhnath. Yogi was even called by the pro-monarchy group in 2015 to address a rally in Kathmandu, where he had made a strong pitch for reinstatement of Nepal's 'Hindu nation'

status. "Nepal has 82% Hindus, and a significant number of them revere Nath sect's Guru Gorakhnath and his spiritual mentor, Guru Matseyndranath. For them, the Communist dispensation and China's growing influence has not been conducive, leading to clamour for restoration of monarchy as well as Nepal's status as a Hindu nation," said a political analyst. Pradeep Bikram Rana, who claimed to have waved

the Yogi poster at the Sunday rally, reached Gorakhpur on Tuesday. He claimed he was being persecuted by the authorities in Kathmandu, forcing him to flee. Rana admitted to idolising Yogi as a symbol of Hindu pride. "The connection between Nepal's former ruling dynasty and Goraksh Peeth is very old," says Dwarika Tiwari, who has been looking after the mutt's administration since 1972.