



Editorial

The economy through state-owned

Ritu Walia

In China, the fear of chaos that can come from within and from without is a central rationale that legitimises Xi Jinping's power grab. Image: REUTERS

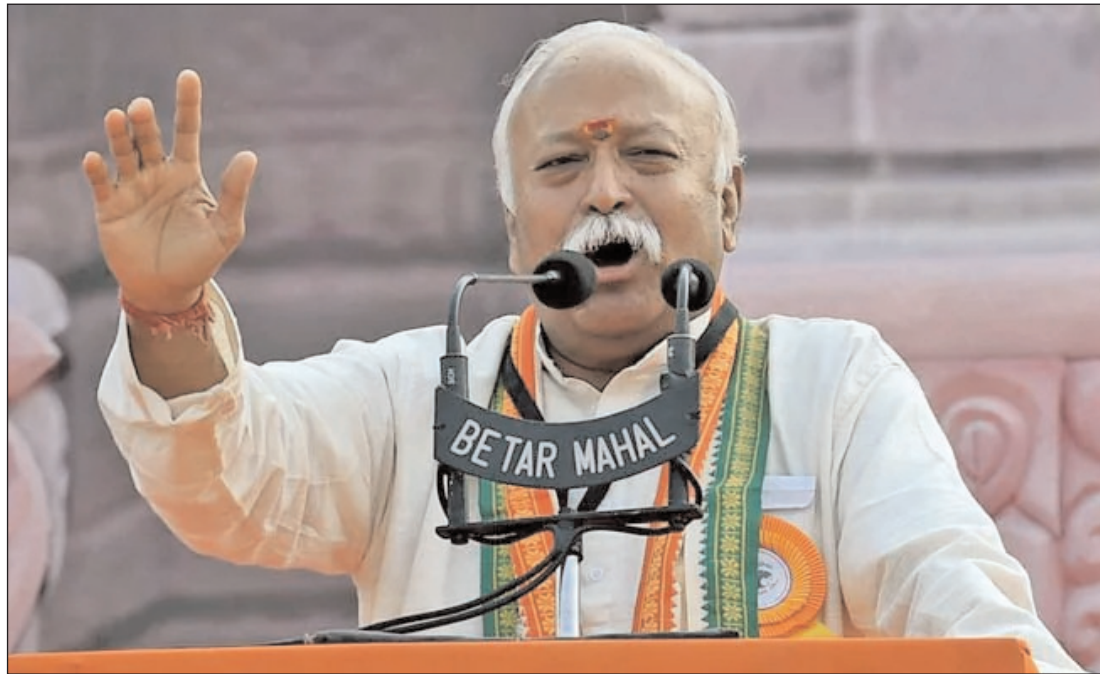
Thomas Hobbes' seminal work, Leviathan, published in 1651, posits the necessity of a powerful, centralised authority to prevent societal chaos and ensure peace and security. Hobbes had a way with words; he famously said that without an all-powerful state, whom he calls the Leviathan, life would be nasty, brutish, and short. Those powerful words have a global resonance today, giving the state across the world a free run. We saw it in Washington when more than \$3 trillion was printed in monetary easing. In Paris, monetary welfare spending is out of hand, and the Leviathan dares not withdraw the free fund, for that itself causes riots and chaos. In China, state capitalism is running wild, and in India, the state subsidises everything from fertiliser and maternity care to free food to the tune of \$10 billion a year. Everywhere, a man who wrote 350 years ago rules. In our turbulent world, Hobbes's premise of avoiding chaos is so powerful that both autocracies and democracies are utilising it to empower the state further. It is not as if he has not been proved right. In fact, rarely in contemporary history has Hobbes gone wrong. In Iraq, Libya, and Egypt, when the Leviathan was toppled, it created chaos beyond imagination, only to be replaced by the iron fist of the state. In China, the fear of chaos that can come from within and from without is a central rationale that legitimises Xi Jinping's power grab. Indeed, it's replacing the promise of prosperity as the basis of the communist party's hold over China. The fact that the Federal Reserve's policy of quantitative easing following the 2008 financial crisis and the purchase of government securities to increase the money supply were unquestioned exemplifies Hobbes' idea of the sovereign exercising control to prevent economic disorder and maintain stability. That, in the bastion of capitalism, it did not raise concerns about the erosion of financial autonomy and the distortion of free markets underlines the astonishing relevance of Hobbes. France's robust welfare state epitomises Hobbes' notion of the sovereign's responsibility to ensure the well-being of its citizens. The French government maintains an extensive social safety net, including comprehensive healthcare, unemployment benefits, and retirement pensions. During the COVID-19 pandemic, France's welfare spending surged as the government implemented measures to protect jobs and support incomes. However, this extensive welfare system can be critiqued for fostering dependency and reducing individual responsibility. The welfare-to-GDP ratio in 2023 was an astonishing 36 per cent. This is clearly unsustainable, but every time France has tried to pull back the Leviathan or cut back welfare, there have been dramatic riots. Once you create the Leviathan, clearly, there is no way back. In 2020, the French government introduced the 'Solidarity Fund', providing financial aid to businesses affected by the pandemic, and expanded unemployment benefits to cover those furloughed under the 'partial activity' scheme. These interventions, amounting to over €100 billion in expansive welfare spending, can lead to high taxation, which burdens individuals and businesses, and totally stifles entrepreneurial spirit and innovation. Additionally, the extensive welfare system creates a culture of dependency, reducing the incentive for personal initiative and self-reliance. France and its Leviathan are in a doom loop. China's model of state capitalism illustrates Hobbes' concept of the sovereign's expansive control over economic life.



Bhagwat has not spoken against the Government

Abhinav

So are they threatening those who are demanding caste census? Or those people who speak against the Modi government. Because if he was angry with the Modi government, he would not have said things with double meaning. However, the way he said everything in double meaning, there is a lot of confusion as to what he wants to say. It is not easy to play with words the way he played with them. Obviously, a person of such high status does not speak in simple and clear language, there is a lot hidden in his gestures. Be it the government, be it the opposition, be it the people spreading hatred, or be it the people spreading hatred under the guise of religions. In fact, the Sangh chief also said something which led to his statement that injustice is being done to us because of him. Victimhood mentality will not work. There is no victim. They say that I don't get a house in any colony, so I have to live in my own colony. But he also said that it is not right to take people's votes by inciting sentiments. In this way he indicated to the people what kind of people they should vote for. But at the same time he also indicated that the government's work is good. So what does this mean that on this day in 1995, the Chenav nuclear plant in Kiev in Ukraine was demolished due to safety related deficiencies? Sangh chief Mohan Bhagwat also said that we have to be cautious in elections and should not vote under anyone's influence. We have to vote for who is better. Along



with this, Sangh chief Mohan Bhagwat also praised some of the works of the government. It is clear from this that he has not spoken against the government. So are they threatening those who are demanding caste census? Or those people who speak against the Modi government. Are you indicating to stand with the government? Because even in the year 2018, he had said that "Hindu Rashtra does not mean that there is no place for Muslims there. The day this happens, Hindutva will cease to exist. Hindutva speaks to one world, one family. But if we look at the other side, in India, people of more castes and religions live together than in any other country in the world. If we look at history, we will find that people from all over the world came to India and most of them stayed here. But today, Manipur has been burning for many months due to the hatred and bitterness that is

prevalent among people of different religions in India. The leaders of the ruling party, especially the Prime Minister, are silent about this violence. Meanwhile, Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (Sangh) chief Mohan Bhagwat, expressing concern over the Manipur violence, has taught the country to live with unity and love. But the Sangh chief's statement about living in unity in the country is being interpreted in different ways. The reason for this is that apart from the Manipur violence, Mohan Bhagwat has said many other things which need to be considered at this time. In fact, the Sangh chief gave a big message of unity in the Nagpur parade on the day of Vijaydashami regarding the increasing tension between Hindus and Muslims. The way the Sangh chief said in a questioning tone, how did people living in the same country become so alien? Political people, intellectu-

als, journalists and political analysts are trying to find out the meaning of everything Mohan Bhagwat says from this question. No one is able to understand its true meaning? The simple meaning of this question of Bhagwat is that hatred towards the people of one's own country is not a good thing. But the question is arising for whom did Mohan Bhagwat say this? But before this it is important to understand that the Sangh chief also said that there should not be indiscretion and imbalance. There is a need to take our mind seriously and bind the country in the threads of unity. Because I believe that by expressing concern over the violence in Manipur, the Sangh chief has also hinted at Prime Minister Narendra Modi not speaking on Manipur. However, Sangh chief Mohan Bhagwat also said that we have to be cautious in elections and we have to accept everyone as our

own and keep everyone's influence cool. This is the call of belonging, whoever listens to it will be benefited. It will not be known what will happen to those who still do not listen. Many analysts have their own views on this statement of the Sangh chief, some are saying that he is threatening the government, some are saying that he is warning the opposition, some are saying that he is giving advice to Muslims. So some are saying that they are giving advice to Hindus. At the same time, some are saying that Mohan Bhagwat is calling extremist people, no matter which religion they belong to. At the same time, some people are also saying that this statement of Mohan Bhagwat is just politics, which is for vote bank politics under the guise of religion. Its Indian meaning is also that Mohan Bhagwat has been accused of supporting the Janata Party. Is. However, I believe that Sangh chief Mohan Bhagwat has been talking about unity in the country for the last several years. He is the first Sangh chief who went to mosques as well as madrasas and gave a big message of unity and brotherhood to the country. Before this, no Sangh chief had shown the courage to take such an initiative. In such a situation, instead of doing politics on the statement of the Sangh chief, do not come and vote for his statement. We have to vote for who is better. Along with this, Sangh chief Mohan Bhagwat also praised some of the works of the government. It is clear from this that he has not spoken against the gov-

China Blocks the Lama's Sri Lanka Visit

Suman

China has been blocking His Holiness the Dalai Lama's visits to Sri Lanka. Recently, a renowned Sri Lankan Buddhist monk revealed this in a media interview. When asked about China's view on the Dalai Lama, the most venerable Dr. Waskuduwe Mahindawansa said, "We respect him and invited him to Sri Lanka, but China did not like that. China pressed against our government as well, we don't like that. He is a Buddhist leader, he has freedom, and we have the freedom to invite." This incident wasn't an exception; China has been blocking His Holiness the Dalai Lama's visits to Sri Lanka since 2015. In fact, China has never shied away from expressing its displeasure whenever the Dalai Lama moves from one place to another or meets any person of repute. For China, the Dalai Lama, who was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize in 1989, is a 'separatist'. China has even called him 'wolf in monk's robes'. Why does a benevolent exiled leader agitate an aspiring superpower so much? The answer lies in the complex history of

Tibet and the Chinese subjugation of the same over the last 70 years Tibet lies in the confluence of Central, South and East Asia. It has a recorded history dating back to 602 AD when Namri Songsten became the first king of Tibet, uniting the central Tibetan states. There are records of conflict between China and Tibet, which was ended by the China-Tibet Peace Treaty 821 AD. The treaty famously mentions, "Tibetans shall be happy in Tibet, and Chinese shall be happy in China." After more than 700 years, China and Tibet both sustained subsequent Mongol invasions. In the latter half of the 16th century, Altan Khan, the Mongol ruler, gave the title of Dalai Lama to Sonam Gyatso, leader of the Gelugpa school of Buddhism. In return, the Dalai Lama decreed that Altan Khan be reincarnated as Kublai Khan, which gave legitimacy to his rule. This event marks the founding of modern Tibet. For the next two hundred years Chinese tried to take hold of Tibet but could not succeed, and their influence declined in the first half of the 20th century.

India has plans of buying oil

Saariq

India has plans of buying oil from Iran despite the sanctions and disapproving remarks from the West. Yet, bilateral trade between the two countries has dropped by 26% in one year. Geoeconomics informs Iranian perceptions of the bloc as a critical driver. Iran aims to secure increased volumes of oil and non-oil exports to fellow BRICS members, bypassing the dollar. Like Russia, Iran is engaged in a high-stakes battle with the West. China doesn't particularly enjoy a friendly status, either. New Delhi's balancing act, therefore, is set to be tested on many tricky issues in the near future.

including the Israel-Palestine issue. India has been an outlier in a manner. At the last UN General Assembly vote on a resolution calling for the end to Israel's occupation of Palestinian territories.

India was the only founding BRICS country to abstain, along with the newcomer Ethiopia. During the Modi-Pezeshkian bilateral, India was urged to play a more substantial role in the Middle East peace process. But what are New Delhi's realistic options? Calling for peace does not usher in peace; arm-twisting the stakeholders does. Any BRICS decision mandates unanimous agreement. In that sense, it is even trickier than the domestic coalition politics that the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) has found itself in after a decade.

What will, for example, be India's stand should Iran want a revival of its nuclear plan? India's past tussles with the West over its own nuclear programme may trigger another round of strategic unpleasantness over New Delhi's stance. India has a long-standing policy of strategic autonomy, and the complexity of its relations with the West is par for the course. The question is only of degree. The scope of India's support to its alliance partners in any overtures, real or perceived, against the West needs to be clearly defined, if

not announced. While BRICS has achieved precious little in tangible terms in the past 15 years, the symbolism of grouping may have consequences for India as ongoing conflicts stretch into the future and new challenges around them emerge. On the other hand, the internal dynamics of the expanded BRICS are going to pose another challenge. BRICS, only a little more than an ad hoc grouping with diverse challenges and interests, has miles to go to emerge as a counterforce to alliances like the G7 or the Five Eyes, where members have been able to thrash out at least a common minimum programme. All eyes have been on Iran for more than a year. Naturally, the first BRICS summit with Tehran's membership is bound to breed speculation about what the prospective new world order would look like. At home, there needs to be an examination of India's bilateral ties with a country that is seen firmly anti-West in its outlook. Iran and India are sailing in the same boat, at least momentarily: of the West's castigation. The temptation may be high on both sides to form a joint front against Western hegemony in the security space. Prime Minister Narendra Modi has held bilateral talks with the new Iranian President, Masoud Pezeshkian, with a focus on strategic cooperation in and beyond the Middle East. It can be endlessly debated without itching anywhere close to a resolution whether multi-lateral global groupings make any difference to realpolitik either domestically or internationally. The signalling, however, remains crucial. To begin with, the West is already perceiving the summit as Russia's show of strength. Headlines like 'Putin Gathers Allies' and 'Putin Hosts Global South Leaders at BRICS Summit Meant to Counterbalance Western Clout' in Western media outlets expose apprehension. A complex interplay of sectarian interests and regional dynamics shapes Iran's geopolitical strategy. It is in the

Greater significance in light of the economic woes

Radhika Singh

This assumes greater significance in light of the economic woes that China is currently facing. But at the same time, the power differential between India and China would keep the United States relevant in the Indian scheme of things, because balancing China is not a choice, it is a compulsion. Even before Galwan, the Modi government was steadily pursuing a close relationship with the West, as evident in the revival of the Quad, the signing of foundational military agreements, and recognising the concept of the 'Indo-Pacific' as a joint strategic region. For the West also, the Khalistan

issue is a plank to arm-twist India into submission – the proverbial "stick" in the "carrot and stick" approach. Yet, the reality is that India is uniquely positioned to be the lynchpin of their Indo-Pacific strategies. Only India can firmly help in balancing China, serving as an effective counterweight. India, in its own right, is an alluring partner, with strong undercurrents of trade, investment, and technological cooperation, particularly given its status as the fastest-growing major economy. Even if a condescending candidate like Kamala Harris comes to power, the US would still like to court India, because the corporate

America is too greedy to ignore the Indian market. Not to forget the promise of India as a market for large arms imports. So, all in all, relations with the West are unlikely to falter in the long run. As for the long-term potential of India-China relations, one has no hope except to be at their cautious best. Since these two ancient civilisations emerged as modern countries in the late 1940s, one constant in China's behaviour has been its propensity to dishonour agreements. This pattern began with Panchsheel in 1954 and continues to this day. There is nothing to suggest that China will behave more responsibly, especially

given its vast power asymmetry with India. So, what is the key takeaway from the Modi-Xi meeting? It is a recognition of the fact that India is deploying multiple strategies to secure its interests until it rises as a formidable great power on its own. In the game of geopolitics, you sometimes have to choose stable relations with your enemy to focus on building your own strength. As long as China allows India this space, there is scope for dialogue. But should it resort to another Galwan-like attack, India always has the option of strengthening ties with the West. This cycle will continue, as diplomacy.

## 'Naib' budget will prove to be beneficial for all sections of the state: Jagmohan Anand



**DILPREET WALIA**  
**Karnal: Karnal MLA Jagmohan Anand** said that Haryana Chief Minister Nayab Singh Saini presented his first budget as Finance Minister in the Haryana Assembly on Monday. MLA Jagmohan Anand welcomed the state budget and praised it profusely. He said that this budget will prove beneficial for the public and beneficial for every section. Not only this, it is a public welfare budget and will move forward in the direction of making a developed India-developed Haryana. MLA Jagmohan Anand said that Karnal district has also got many gifts in the budget presented for the development and progress of the state. Among these, a bus station will be built in Karnal under Public Private Partnership, which will provide more conven-

ience to the passengers and make transportation and traffic more accessible. He said that the Haryana government has also taken full care of health services in the budget so that the poor can get the best treatment facilities in government hospitals. Not only this, the Government of India has approved an investment of Rs 201.59 crore in the year 2025-26 for Advanced Life Support Ambulance and other structural improvements in district hospitals to increase the

treatment facilities during accidents and trauma. HSIIDC will provide land to ESIC New Delhi in Karnal at concessional rates to build hospitals and dispensaries. A critical care block of 50 beds will be built in every district hospital and every government medical college and the facility of blood bank will also be modernized. Karnal MLA Jagmohan Anand said that a new department named Department of Future will be created to make Haryana's future strong and a bill will be introduced in this session to solve the problem of Donkey Root. In the last 10 years, the state government has given a lot of emphasis on e-governance in Haryana, under which many departmental portals are proving beneficial for the convenience of the public under e-governance.

**Vatika Times**  
**Karnal:** Honda Motorcycle & Scooter India (HMSI) today introduced the updated OBD2B-compliant Shine 100 with enhanced styling. The new 2025 Honda Shine 100 has been priced at Rs. 68,767 (ex-showroom, Delhi). It is now available at HMSI dealerships across India. Introducing the updated Shine 100, Mr. Tsutsumu Otani, Managing Director, President & CEO, Honda Motorcycle & Scooter India, said, "We are happy to introduce the new OBD2B-compliant Shine 100 to our customers in India. Since its launch in March 2023, Shine 100 has established itself as one of the fastest-growing brands in HMSI's motorcycle portfolio. This entry-level motorcycle has been well received for its superior reliability, fuel efficiency, and overall value. With the latest update, we continue our commitment to providing environmentally responsible



and high-quality mobility solutions." Commenting on this announcement, Mr. Yogesh Mathur, Director, Sales and Marketing, Honda Motorcycle & Scooter India, said, "The Shine 100 has been a strong player in the entry-level motorcycle segment, offering exceptional quality and comfort at an affordable price. With this latest upgrade, we are further enhancing its appeal and ensuring compliance with the latest emission norms while maintaining its renowned fuel efficiency and reliability. The Shine 100 has played a key role in strengthening Honda's

presence in the entry-level commuter segment, and we are confident that this new version of Naye India ki Amazing Shine will continue to attract more customers across India." **New Shine 100: Updated Design and Engine** The new Shine 100 sports an elegant design language inspired by India's favourite Shine 125. It features refreshed graphics on the body panels along with Honda logo. Its appealing front cowl, blacked-out alloy wheels, practical aluminium grabrail, long & comfortable single-piece seat, and sleek muffler complement the smooth style of the motorcycle while enhancing convenience for everyday commuting. The Shine 100 is offered in five dynamic colour options, catering to diverse rider preferences. They are – Black with Red, Black with Blue, Black with Orange, Black with Gray, and Black with Green.

## CAPSULES

### Dr. Ashok Kumar Verma organised the 538th voluntary blood donation camp



**Jasbir Singh Duggal Kurukshetra:** Dr. Ashok Kumar Verma, a Diamond Blood Donor and recipient of the President's Police Medal and National Gold Medal, organized the 538th Voluntary Blood Donation Camp in Sector-3, Kurukshetra. The camp was attended by administrative officials, social workers, and other dignitaries, including ADC Sonu Bhat, who was the chief guest. The camp was presided over by social worker Naresh Saini, and Jasbir Singh Duggal, National President of the International Human Rights Justice Council, was the special guest. The guests encouraged the blood donors by presenting them with badges. Dr. Ashok Kumar Verma, who has donated blood 174 times and platelets 85 times, expressed his gratitude to the guests and blood donors, stating that every drop of blood is precious. He emphasized the need to guide the youth in the right direction and encourage them to contribute to society and the nation. He urged the youth to avoid substance abuse and instead donate blood to save lives.

## A vehicle involved in illegal mining was seized



**DILPREET WALIA**  
**Karnal:** According to District Mining Officer Niranjan Lal, a vehicle involved in illegal mining/transportation has been seized. According to the district mining officer Niranjan Lal, as per the instructions of Director General of Mining and Geology KM Pandurang and Deputy Commissioner Uttam Singh, the campaign against illegal mining is going on in the district. He told that yesterday, a team of HSENB staff SI Jitendra, ESI Devendra, HC Pramod

Singh and mining guard Rohtash, EASI Surendra Singh caught a truck full of sand. On checking it, the driver did not have the e-Ravana bill. It was brought to the Virati Kanta Meerut Road and parked there,

whose number is HR-45-C-1031. After which the vehicle was photographed and seized in Karnal.

## The budget presented by the state government is disappointing : Lalit Butana

**DILPREET WALIA**  
**Karnal : State Congress** Committee member and National Convener of Kisan Cell and former member of Haryana Staff Selection Commission Lalit Butana said that the people of Karnal did not get anything special in the Haryana Government's Budget 2025-26. Most of the districts of the entire state were given many gifts in the budget but Karnal remained cheated. Describing the state budget as directionless, he said that neither any new announcement



was made for the farmers nor for the youth and women. He said that since 2014 till now the deficit in the budget is continuously increasing, no announcement has been made to reduce it. The debt on Haryana is continuously increasing. He said that the people of the state had regard-

ing this budget have completely failed. There was no announcement of renovation of the general hospital in Karnal and neither was there any talk of expansion of the medical college. This budget was completely disappointing. Despite being the CM City in the past, the common man of Karnal did not get anything. In this budget, no big industrial project was announced for employment of the youth of Karnal. Karnal has been feeling cheated for the last 10 years.

## DTP team destroyed the construction done in illegal colony



**Jasbir Singh Duggal Kurukshetra:** As per the order of the Deputy Commissioner, the team of District Town Planner, with the help of District Administration, carried out demolition action in an illegal colony spread over 2.5 acres in village Bahari of Revenue Estate Kurukshetra in Kurukshetra. District Town Planner Officer Vikram Kumar said that as per the order of the Deputy Commissioner, demolition action has been carried out with the help of Administration in an illegal colony growing in about 2.5 acres in village Bahari of Revenue Estate Kurukshetra. DTP Vikram Kumar said that as per the order of the Deputy Commissioner, the team of DTP along with the police force under

the leadership of Duty Magistrate, removed an illegal construction in kutchra roads, DPC and control area in an illegal colony growing in about 2.5 acres in village Bahari of Revenue Estate Kurukshetra with the help of yellow claw. He said that the DTP department had received a case of an illegal colony being developed on about 2.5 acres of land in village Bahari of revenue estate Kurukshetra, after which the depart-

ment had issued notices to landowners and property dealers under the sections of HDR Act 1975 and ordered them to obtain necessary permission. But the landowners and property dealers neither stopped the construction being done in the illegal colonies nor obtained permission from the department. Taking action on this, the department has demolished the construction in these illegal colonies.

## BJP appoints former General Secretary Tajinder Singh Goldy as District President

**Jasbir Singh Duggal Kurukshetra:** Senior party leader and former minister Banwari Lal announced the name of the new BJP District President of the district in the presence of former State Minister Subhash Sudha at the Bharatiya Janata Party office. Former Minister Banwari Lal announced that in view of the party's policies and organizational objectives, Tajinder Singh Goldy has been appointed as the BJP District President in Kurukshetra. Former State Minister Subhash Sudha gave his best wishes to Tajinder Singh Goldy and appealed to the party workers to work under the leadership of Goldy and make united efforts to bring historic success to the



BJP in the upcoming elections. Sudha said that Goldy's organizational ability and connection with the workers will give him the ability to play an important role in the development of the party. On this occasion, Banwari Lal also discussed the objectives of the party and the upcoming challenges. He said that the main objective of

the BJP is to work for the welfare of the people, and every member of the party works with this objective. Banwari Lal said that in the coming time the party has to face many important elections, in which the leadership and organizational strength of Kurukshetra district is especially important. He appealed to the

workers to work to spread the party's policies and objectives to the people with their hard work and dedication. He said that the BJP government has always given priority to development, security, and public welfare, and in the coming times too the party will strengthen the trust of the people by following this path.

## Regional aviation gets Air India route

**Delhi:** Air India stated that it would begin using Airbus A350-900s on the Delhi-London Heathrow route on On the route, the airline will fly twice daily. The A350-900 will replace the 777-300ER and 787-8 Dreamliner on 14 of 17 weekly flights. The business claimed in a news statement that the replacement would add 336 weekly seats on the Delhi-London Heathrow route. Flying our flagship A350s and B777s with updated cabin interiors to London Heathrow is a milestone for Air India. It shows our dedication to providing a world-class travel experience and exceeding customer expectations as we upgrade our fleet, said Campbell Wilson, CEO & Managing Director, Air India. The new Airbus planes will enhance 90% of its trips to London Heathrow. Air India began flying the new Boeing 777-300ERs between Mumbai and London Heathrow in 2025.

## Opposition slams PM Modi over Manipur, BJP defends government's response

**NEW DELHI:** Opposition parties on Monday used the discussion on Manipur budget in the Rajya Sabha to criticise Prime Minister Narendra Modi for not having visited the state even once after ethnic violence broke out there in May 2023. Members from the Congress, TMC, DMK, BJD, AAP and CPI accused the prime minister for not finding the time to visit the state to "apply balm to wounds of the Manipuri people", even as he criss-crossed the country and toured multiple nations for official engagements. Countering the attack, the Treasury benches drew attention of the House to home minister Amit Shah visits to Manipur, starting with a three-day stay days into the violence, which concluded with announcement of several measures to restore order and offer succour to the violence-hit. This was fol-



lowed by his deputy Nityanand Rai camping in the state for a good three months to oversee the implementation of these measures. BJP MPs Arun Singh pointed out how in 1993, when the Congress was in power both at the Centre in Manipur, ethnic violence there had claimed 750 lives and wiped out 300 villages. He said the then Prime Minister never bothered to visit the state, nor did his home minister offer an explanation in Parliament. Shaktisinh Gohil said there was a need to rise above political considerations and assure

Manipur that its problems are the nation's problems, RJD's Manoj Kumar Jha proposed an all-party delegation's visit to Manipur. TMC's Sushmita Dev and AAP's Sanjay Singh noted that the peace committee announced by Shah for Manipur was a non-starter as its proposed members were unwilling to work with chief minister N Biren Singh. The opposition MPs said that Centre had refused to review the leadership in Manipur while it burned for two years, but suddenly decided (in December 2024) to appoint former home secretary Ajay Bhalla.

## Assembly elections: Is Nitish preparing for 'son'rise in Bihar?

**NEW DELHI:** Is Bihar chief minister Nitish Kumar, who has been a very strong critic of political dynasts, preparing ground for his son Nishant Kumar's plunge into politics? For years, dynasty politics has been one of the strongest weapons used by Nitish to attack his rival Lalu Prasad, who promoted his wife, sons and daughters in politics. But now, there are very strong indications that Nitish may lose that poll plank in the year-end assembly elections. Nishant, who has stayed away from the political glare for nearly two decades, may finally enter mainstream politics to lend a helping hand to his father, who has been under opposition fire over health issues. Here's a look at some of the recent developments that have led to these speculations... In January this year, Nitish made a public appearance with his son at a political function. At this function, Nishant made his first political remark as he sought votes for his father in the upcoming assembly elections. Nishant also high-



lighted why JD(U) needed more seats to ensure that Nitish Kumar's leadership continues for the progress and development of the state. Holi festivities at Nitish Kumar's residence this year saw Nishant participating actively and engaging with senior JD(U) leaders. Then appeared a large hoarding outside the Janata Dal (United) office in Patna featuring son Nishant alongside his father. The poster, which prominently displayed Nishant Kumar next to Nitish Kumar, read, "Bihar ki maang, sun liye Nishant, bahut bahut dhanyawaad" (Nishant, thank you very much for listening to the demands of Bihar). Clearly, more than the demand of Bihar, it is the demand of a section of JD(U) leaders who are perhaps worried over the consistent opposition attacks questioning the

health of Nitish Kumar. They believe Nishant's involvement could strengthen the party and carry forward Nitish Kumar's political legacy. Neither Nishant nor the JD(U) has made any official statement on this. However, in January, when Nishant was asked about his possible political plunge, this is what he said: "The public will decide what happens next. Let them judge who is capable." A clever statement that was not just politically correct but also open ended to ensure the chatter around his political plunge continues. Nitish Kumar's present ally - the BJP, which has used dynasty politics as one of its most potent weapons to attack the opposition, was guarded in its response to the possibility of a new 'son'rise in the state.

## Unfortunate that govt has to protect Aurangzeb's grave: CM Fadnavis

**NEW DELHI:** Maharashtra chief minister Devendra Fadnavis on Monday said it is "unfortunate" that the government has to protect Aurangzeb's grave, which is located in the Chhatrapati Sambhajnagar district. Fadnavis's remark came amid growing demand from a certain section to remove the Mughal emperor's grave. "It is unfortunate that the government has to take responsibility for the protection of Aurangzeb's grave, despite his history of persecution. However, I assure you, if any attempt is made to glorify his legacy through 'mahima mandan', it will not succeed," Fadnavis said at an event that he attended to inaugurate a temple dedicated to Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj in the Thane district and lauded the Maratha king for fighting for 'Swarajya' and the country. "We are able to worship our gods freely today because of Shivaji Maharaj's efforts. He fought for Swarajya, for God, for our country, and our religion," Fadnavis was quoted as saying by news agency PTI. Maharashtra Chief Minister Devendra Fadnavis pays tribute to Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj after inaugurating the 'Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj Temple' (Shaktipeeth) in Bhiwandi, Thane. (ANI) Earlier, BJP's Satara MP Udayanraje Bhosale, who is also the descendent of Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj, advocated for the removal of the Mughal king's tomb situated in Chhatrapati Sambhajnagar. Responding to Bhosale's request, Fadnavis clarified that despite sharing similar sentiments, actions must conform to legal procedures due to the site's protected status, which was established during the previous Congress administration. Fadnavis said, "We all also want the same thing, but you need to do it within the framework of the law, because it is a protected site. The site was put under ASI's (Archaeological Survey of India) protection during the Congress regime some years back."

## Luxon thanks PM for not mentioning NZ's Champions Trophy defeat

**NEW DELHI:** New Zealand Prime Minister Christopher Luxon made a remark related to rivalry in cricket between the two nations during a joint press conference with Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Monday, which led to laughter. Luxon mentioned New Zealand's recent cricket losses to India and thanked Modi for not bringing them up. "I really appreciate that PM Modi didn't raise New Zealand's Champions Trophy loss to India and I didn't raise our Test victories in India. Let's keep it that way and avoid a diplomatic incident," Luxon said. India won the ICC Men's Champions Trophy for the third time on March 9, defeating New Zealand by four wickets in the final at the Dubai International Stadium.



In November 2024, New Zealand had defeated India 3-0 in a Test series. This was the first time India was whitewashed in a Test series of three or more matches at home. The Indian team had only been whitewashed in a home Test series of more than one match once — by

South Africa in 1999-2000 — and never in a series of more than two Tests. The two leaders on Monday also highlighted the strong sporting connections between India and New Zealand, particularly in cricket, hockey, and other Olympic sports. They welcomed the

signing of a Memorandum of Cooperation on Sports to strengthen collaboration and engagement. They also acknowledged the upcoming "Sporting Unity" events in 2026, which will mark 100 years of sporting ties between the two countries.

## Starbucks workers expand strike across several US cities

**Starbucks** workers have extended their ongoing strike to four more cities, including New York, according to the union that represents more than 10,000 coffee shop workers. The strike stemmed from failed negotiations between Starbucks and union representatives, with disputes over wages, staffing levels, and work schedules remaining unresolved. According to news agency Reuters, the five-day strike, which began on Friday, initially impacted Starbucks locations in Los



Angeles, Chicago, and Seattle. As of Saturday, the industrial action has expanded to include New Jersey, New York, Philadelphia, and St. Louis. While the union did not specify the location of the walkout in New Jersey, it confirmed that the strike continues to disrupt operations in the newly

added cities. The union's strike spans in 10 cities, including Columbus, Denver and Pittsburgh, during the festive period, potentially affecting the company's Christmas revenue. The workers United had earlier indicated that the industrial action could extend to "hundreds of stores".

## Funding requirements increased under the US start-up visa program

For want of a better term, the International Entrepreneur Rule (IER) is often referred to as the 'start-up' visa. IER enables 'qualified' international entrepreneurs (based on prescribed criteria including funds raised, to obtain immigration 'parole' — that is to temporarily enter and stay in the US and nurture their startup, despite not having a work visa or a green card. Commonly, IER is known as the startup visa, but it is actually a permit for eligible foreign entrepreneurs to stay in the US for two and a half years with the possibility of another extension of a similar tenure. Recently, US Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) has updated the threshold amounts for the IER program and updated the supporting evidence required.



October 1, 2024, there are new changes to the investment and revenue requirements. The program has had a contentious history. Originally created at the end of the Obama Administration, IER was targeted for removal by the Trump Administration before it was launched. Due to a successful lawsuit filed by the National Venture Capital Association, it remained in force but was not seen as a viable option as the Trump administration repeatedly tried to end the program.

### Honda proposes CAFE compliant EVs and hybrids

**Delhi:** A top Honda Cars India executive said the next stage-3 of the Corporate Average Fuel Efficiency (CAFE) regulations will tighten pollution standards, therefore the company will sell hybrid and electric cars in the future years. It wants to launch three new electric vehicles by 2026-27 to align its India portfolio with its global electrification aspirations.

## Section 144 imposed, politicians call for peace after violence

**NEW DELHI:** Tension arose in central Nagpur on Monday when stones were thrown at police following some rumours, leading to injuries to four people, news agency PTI said quoting officials. Police used tear gas shells and lathi charge to disperse the crowd in Chitnis Park and Mahal areas of the city. Violence later spread to Kotwali and Ganeshpeth, officials added. Officials said that the Chitnis Park to Shukrawari Talao road belt was the most affected, where some four-wheelers were set on fire. Stones were also thrown at houses. Police are trying to control the crowds, which are believed to be in large numbers. Heavy police deployed. The situation escalated after Bajrang Dal members held a demonstration near the Chhatrapati Shivaji



Maharaj statue in Mahal, news agency PTI reported. An official said that stones were thrown at police personnel in Chitnis Park and Mahal, leading to the use of tear gas shells. A senior police official confirmed that security had been increased in sensitive areas. Quick Response Teams (QRT), Riot Control Police, and the State Reserve Police Force (SRPF) were deployed. Additional police personnel from different stations were also called in. Section 144 imposed Nagpur Police Commissioner

Ravinder Singal said that section 144 has been imposed in the area. "The situation is peaceful right now. A photo was burned following which people gathered, they made a request and we even took action in this respect. They had even come to my office to meet me. They were told that an FIR has been lodged based on the names they mentioned and action would be taken against them. This incident occurred around 8-8.30 pm. Not many vehicles have been torched. We are taking an assessment of the same.

## Chhattisgarh government's new strategies to combat Naxalism and boost development in Bastar

**NEW DELHI:** Chhattisgarh chief minister Vishnu Deo Sai on Monday apprised home minister Amit Shah about steps being taken by his govt to eliminate Naxalism in Bastar region, saying that the fight against Maoists had entered the final stages with surrenders too picking up after release of the state's new surrender and rehabilitation policy. Sources in the Chhattisgarh govt told Sai had conveyed to Shah that joint efforts of the Central and state govts had significantly weakened Naxal organisations in Bastar, and that the focus now was on finalising strategies to tackle any remaining vestiges before Bastar embraces lasting peace. The emphasis in the coming days, said sources, shall be on boosting development and economic activities, including promoting tourism in the region endowed with natural beauty and a rich cultural heritage. Sai shared with the home minister that the Chhattisgarh government's new surrender and rehabilitation policy — finalised only last week with enhanced incentives such as attractive financial compensation, educational aid and jobs for surrendered cadres and their kin — has begun to show results with 19 Naxalites, including nine carrying rewards, from Bijapur having given up violence since. The meeting between Shah and Sai also placed special emphasis on accelerating development projects in Bastar. The chief minister highlighted steps being taken by his govt to strengthen education, healthcare, roads, electricity, and water infrastructure.

## India to have 'world's longest hyperloop tube soon': Vaishnav

**NEW DELHI:** Union minister Ashwini Vaishnav announced on Sunday that the Hyperloop project at the Indian Institute of Technology (IIT) Madras will feature Asia's longest Hyperloop tube, measuring 410 metres. He also said that the project is on track to become the world's longest Hyperloop tube soon. Vaishnav, who holds the portfolios of railways, information & broadcasting, and information technology, inspected the project during his short visit to Chennai on March 15. Sharing a video of his visit, he posted on social media, "Longest Hyperloop tube in Asia (410 meters)... soon to be the world's longest Hyperloop technology is considered the fifth mode of transportation, involving high-speed pods travelling in a near-vacuum tube. By reducing air resistance, these pods can achieve speeds of over 1,000 km per hour, revolutionising future transportation."



According to Vaishnav, India is making significant strides in Hyperloop technology, with the entire testing system being developed indigenously. The electronics components for the project will be developed at Chennai's Integral Coach Factory, further strengthening India's self-reliance in advanced transportation systems. The minister also highlighted that tests conducted so far had shown promising results, bringing the country closer to realising Hyperloop transportation. In May 2022, the ministry of railways approved an allocation of Rs 8.34 crore to IIT Madras for developing and validating the technology.

### Foodgrain output set to scale new peak in 2025

**NEW DELHI:** India is poised to achieve new heights in foodgrain production in 2025, driven by favourable monsoon, though significant challenges persist in pulses and oilseeds production as the country's agricultural sector shows signs of robust recovery. The Agriculture Ministry's initial projections paint an optimistic picture, with kharif (summer) foodgrain production estimated at a record 164.7 million tonnes.

## 'Hypo(d)crisy ki koi seema nahi hai': Congress takes a jibe at PM

**NEW DELHI:** Congress party on Sunday criticised Prime Minister Narendra Modi's participation in a podcast with computer scientist Lex Fridman, pointing out his reluctance to hold press conferences whilst engaging with a US podcaster. Jairam Ramesh, Congress general secretary for communications, contested the prime minister's statement about "criticism is the soul of democracy" during the podcast. He accused PM Modi of destroying institutions meant for government accountability and targeting critics aggressively. "He who is afraid of facing the media in a



press conference has found comfort in a foreign podcaster anchored in the rightwing ecosystem," Ramesh wrote on X. The Congress leader further said: "And he has the gall to say that 'criticism is the soul of democracy' when he has systematically gutted every institution that is to hold his Government accountable and gone after critics with a vengeance that no one in recent history has matched! There is no limit to

Hypo(d)crisy." During his conversation with American computer scientist and podcaster Lex Fridman, PM Modi discussed various topics including his early life, Swami Vivekananda's influence, the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS), and international relations. PM Modi discussed his diplomatic efforts with Russian President Putin and Ukrainian president Volodymyr Zelenskyy regarding peace negotiations. He also spoke about his relationship with US President Donald Trump, noting similarities between Trump's "America First" position.

## Vodafone Group clears 11,650 crore dues raised against VIL shares

**NEW DELHI:** UK-based Vodafone Group has cleared dues of around Rs 11,650 crore or about 109 million pound that it raised against shares of Vodafone Idea, according to a regulatory filing. Vodafone Group had pledged almost

the entire stake in VIL to raise the debt. The pledge was created in favour of HSBC Corporate Trustee Company (UK) for the debt raised by Mauritius and India-based entities of Vodafone Group. "On 27 Dec 2024, HSBC

Corporate Trustee Company (UK) Limited acting as the security trustee for the lenders has released the pledges pursuant to repayment of the outstanding dues owed to the lenders by the Vodafone Promoter Shareholders.

## India's exports to Australia up 64.4 per cent: Commerce ministry data

**NEW DELHI:** India's exports to its trade agreement partner Australia rose 64.4 per cent year-on-year to USD 643.7 million in account of healthy growth in sectors such as textiles, chemicals and agricultural products, according to the commerce ministry data. However, the country's merchandise exports recorded a decline of 5.21 per cent year-on-year to USD 5.56 billion during 2024-25, the preliminary data showed. India and Australia implemented an interim trade pact -- economic cooperation and trade agreement (ECTA) -- on December 29, 2022 and are now in negotiations to widen the scope of the pact and make it a Comprehensive Economic Cooperation Agreement (CECA). On the completion of two years of ECTA, commerce and industry minister Piyush Goyal said the agreement has brought with it increased market access for Indian exporters, expanded opportunities for MSMEs and farmers, and generated several employment avenues. It has also enabled growth in exports by 14 per cent in 2023-24; notable boost in IT/ITeS, business and travel services; and port-study work and work holiday visas, he said in a post on social media platform X. "The expanding trade and investment ties between the two countries under the agreement reflect the growing business-to-business and people-to-people engagements. We are committed to building on the momentum that the Ind-Aus ECTA has generated and achieve the USD 100 billion trade target by 2030," Goyal said. In a statement, the commerce ministry said the key sectors like textiles, chemicals,



## India to step on the gas for indigenous 5th gen fighter

**NEW DELHI:** India plans to 'accelerate' the development and induction of its own ambitious fifth-generation stealth fighter jet, with a top-level committee now working to evolve a clear-cut strategy and production-cum-business model for the swing-role advanced medium combat aircraft (AMCA). The committee chaired by defence secretary Rajesh Kumar Singh, which includes IAF vice chief Air Marshal S P Dharkar, secretary (defence production) Sanjeev Kumar and top officials from DRDO and Aeronautical Development Agency (ADA), is slated to submit its report next month. This comes at a time when Pakistan is looking to acquire at least 40 J-35A stealth fifth-generation jets from China, which is now brandish-



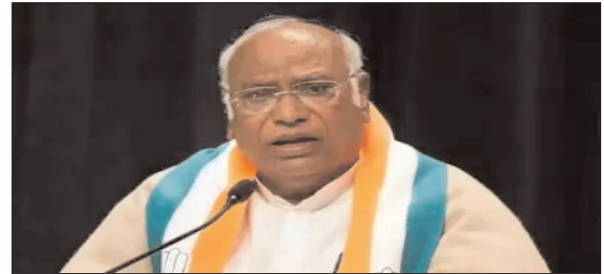
ing even sixth-generation prototypes. China has already deployed its fifth-generation Chengdu J-20 jets at its airfields facing India like Hotan and Shigatse, as reported earlier. Faced with this, coupled with the huge delay in production of the fourth-generation Tejas jets by Hindustan Aeronautics Limited (HAL), a source told TOI that the committee's aim is to "devise how best to get AMCA

from the drawing board into the air by shrinking timelines and improving efficiency, including a good workable production-cum-business model with much greater private sector participation". The committee will also consider the plan for indigenous development of a 110 kilonewton thrust-class engine to power the 25-tonne AMCA with foreign technology collab-

oration. Aero-engine majors like US General Electric, French Safran and British Rolls-Royce are in the fray for this. The new panel was formed after another defence secretary-led committee chalked out a detailed roadmap for IAF's "all-round capability enhancement" to plug existing operational gaps in a time-bound manner. The report was presented to defence minister Rajnath Singh on March 3, as was then reported. The PM-led cabinet committee on security in March last year had cleared the full-scale engineering development of five prototypes of the twin-engine AMCA at an initial cost of over Rs 15,000 crore. The AMCA, with the requisite thrust-to-weight ratio, advanced sensor fusion and stealth features.

## Kharge slams PM Modi's 'Mann Ki Baat' as 'one-sided podcast'

**NEW DELHI:** Congress President Mallikarjun Kharge has accused PM Modi's government of refusing to lower petrol and diesel prices despite a steady decline in crude oil costs. Kharge pointed out that even though global crude prices have fallen by 34% since May 2014, petrol and diesel prices in India have stayed the same, putting a strain on the common people. Taking to X on Monday, Kharge criticised the BJP-led government for "robbing the public fearlessly" and engaging in an "oil

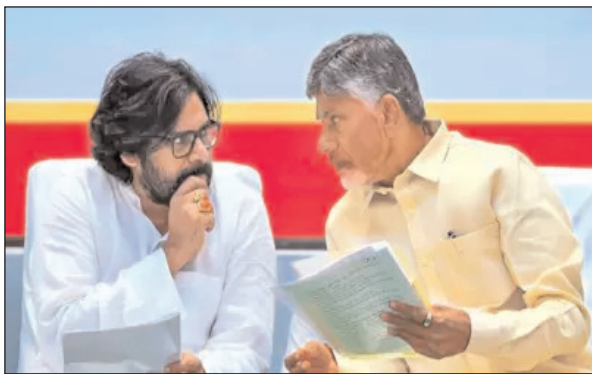


game" that fuels inflation. He questioned why fuel prices had not been reduced, pointing out that the government had collected Rs 36 lakh crore in fuel taxes over the past decade. "Modi Ji only tells his 'Mann Ki Baat' to the public through long one-sided podcasts... By engaging in the oil game, they

make us cry tears of inflation!" Kharge posted, directly targeting the PM's weekly radio programme 'Mann Ki Baat'. He further demanded to know how long the BJP would continue "collecting ransom from the public." Petroleum minister hails the passage of the Oilfields Amendment Bill.

## Amid NEP row, Naidu reiterates people should learn multiple languages

**NEW DELHI:** Andhra Pradesh chief minister N Chandrababu Naidu said on Monday that people who study in their mother tongue are excelling worldwide. He mentioned that there is a common belief that knowledge comes only through English, but he disagrees. Addressing the Assembly in Amravati, Naidu said, "Language is only for communication. Knowledge will not come with language. Only people who study in their mother tongue are excelling across the world. It is easy to learn (through the mother tongue)." He also said, "I am telling this very clearly to you... language is not for hating. Here (in Andhra Pradesh) the mother tongue is Telugu. Hindi is the national language and international language is English." Naidu said people



should learn multiple languages for work while keeping their mother tongue. He added that learning Hindi would help in communication in Delhi. Referring to people traveling to countries like Japan and Germany, he said learning those languages in India would make it easier for them when they go abroad. Earlier this month also, Naidu advocated for multilingual education, including Hindi. "...Language is only a means of communication... All of you are aware that Telugu, Kannada, Tamil and

other languages are shining globally... Knowledge is different, language is different. I'm going to promote 10 languages, including international languages, in every university. Students can study, go and work there. They need your services. Not only three languages, I will promote multi-languages. We had to promote Telugu. We should also promote English as it is an international language for livelihood. It is better to learn Hindi, so that we can mingle with people easily," Naidu had said.

## 'Turn to Lord Krishna's teachings in Gita in hard times': Tulsi

**NEW DELHI:** 'Turn to Lord Krishna's teachings in Bhagavad Gita in hard times': US spy chief Tulsi Gabbard. Newly appointed US Director of National Intelligence Tulsi Gabbard on Monday revealed the profound impact of the Bhagavad Gita on her life and career. Gabbard, who has been a long-time admirer of the ancient Hindu text, emphasised how Lord Krishna's teachings to Arjuna have been a source of strength and guidance for her, whether in the midst of war zones or facing the complex challenges of her current role. In an interview with ANI, Gabbard said: "Whether serving in war zones in different parts of the world or the challenges that we face now, it is (Lord) Krishna's teachings to Arjuna in the Bhagavad Gita that I turn to in



the best of times and the worst of times." Also read: Defence minister Rajnath Singh meets US intel chief Tulsi Gabbard, the first Hindu elected to the US Congress, has often talked about her deep connection with the Bhagavad Gita. In 2020, she urged Hindu students to explore the concepts of Bhakti Yoga and Karma Yoga as outlined in the Gita, emphasising the importance of service to society as a path to true success. Her daily practice includes meditation, yoga, and reading the Gita.

On Trump's tariff war Tulsi Gabbard, currently visiting India as part of a multi-nation trip, also emphasised the importance of direct dialogue between India and the United States on tariff issues. Speaking to ANI on the sidelines of the think-tank Observer Research Foundation's annual Raisina Dialogues in Delhi, she highlighted opportunities to strengthen economic ties between the two nations. Gabbard noted that conversations with Indian officials revealed optimism about enhancing economic relations.

## 'Chandrayaan-5 approved by govt, to be joint mission with Japan': Isro chief Narayanan

**NEW DELHI:** Chairman of Indian Space Research Organization's (Isro) V Narayana announced that the Centre has approved Chandrayaan-5 mission to the Moon. The mission will be a joint project with Japan, news agency PTI quoted Narayanan as saying. "Just three days back we got the approval for the Chandrayaan-5 mission. We will be doing it in association with Japan," the Isro chief said at an event to felicitate him for taking over as the chairman of the Bengaluru-headquartered organization, on Sunday. Narayan further revealed that Chandrayaan-5's rover will be 10 times heavier than that of Chandrayaan-3, which carried the 25-kg rover 'Pragyaan'. Chandrayaan-5 will be preceded by Chandrayaan-4, due to be launched in 2027 to bring samples collected from the Moon. The Chandrayaan mission aims at studying the lunar surface. Chandrayaan-1, successfully launched in 2008, took chemical, mineralogical and photo-geologic mapping of the Moon. The Chandrayaan-2 mission (2019) was 98 per cent success but just two per cent of the Mission could not be achieved in the final stages. However, the onboard high resolution camera on Chandrayaan-2 continues to send hundreds of images, Narayanan, also the Secretary of Department of Space, stated.



## SAD Will Attend All Party Meet to Discuss Delimitation Exercise: Bhundar

**JAG MOHAN THAKEN Chandigarh:** The Shiromani Akali Dal (SAD) will attend an All-Party meeting convened by Tamil Nadu chief minister M K Stalin on March 22 to discuss the delimitation exercise. SAD Working President Balwinder Singh Bhundar, while addressing the media here after a meeting of the party's Parliamentary Board, said, "We feel this exercise will create an imbalance in the country with States who followed the State family planning programmes being put at a disadvantage. The exercise is also against the concept of federalism with some States like Uttar Pradesh likely to witness an increase of Lok Sabha seats to 150 while there would be a marginal increase in seats of States like Punjab and Haryana". He also disclosed that the Akali delegation would also give its inputs on the new education policy which



would adversely affect regional languages. Previously on Saturday, the Punjab Chief Minister Bhagwant Singh Mann, criticizing the manner the delimitation process is being implemented in the country, had also said that unfortunately the Union government led by BJP is trying to eliminate its political opponents through this faulty execution. Interacting with the journalists the Chief Minister said that the undemocratic methodology adopted by the Union government raises suspicions about the intent of the BJP and its coterie. He said that tactically the seats of states where BJP and its allies

are weak are being reduced whereas the seats in those states where BJP's divisive agenda is blooming are being enhanced. Bhagwant Singh Mann said that all the like-minded parties will join hands against this repression of the Union government to muzzle democracy. To unite the leaders, who left the party due to one or other reasons during the past, the Shiromani Akali Dal (SAD) today gave a clarion call for unity and invited all leaders who had become estranged from the party to rejoin it by following the 'Sandesh' of Sri Akal Takht Sahib Jathedar Giani Kuldeep Singh Gargaj in letter and spirit.

## Indian-Americans concerned about India-US ties under Trump 2.0; bullish on India's trajectory

Donald Trump's economic policies, particularly his protectionist stance and focus on "reciprocal taxes", have put India-US trade relations under strain. Since returning to the White House, Trump has repeatedly criticised India's high import duties, which he has said are "unfair" to American exporters. His proposed tariffs on Indian exports could severely impact sectors like IT, pharmaceuticals, and textiles, which rely heavily on the US market. Additionally, his administration's stricter immigration policies, such as tightening H-1B visa requirements, could further affect India's tech workforce in the US, thus further straining ties. As per the IAAS report — conducted before the US presidential election results — many Indian-Americans are concerned about bilateral relations under the Trump administration. In fact, Indian-Americans rate the Joe Biden administration's record on India slightly



better than the first Trump administration. Thirty-four percent of respondents identified Biden as doing a better job, and 28 percent said Trump handled bilateral relations better during his first term. Roughly the same proportion, 26 percent, felt the presidents' performances were generally the same. In addition, respondents said bilateral relationship would have been more likely to prosper under a putative Kamala Harris administration compared to a second Trump administration. The survey also asked respondents which American political party does a better job managing US-India relations. A total of 41 percent of respondents said the

Democratic Party while 24 percent named the Republican Party. One-quarter of all respondents perceived no difference between the two parties. As the 2024 IAAS was fielded before the US election, it also asked two questions about the prospects for US-India ties under a putative Kamala Harris or second Trump administration. A total of 53 percent of respondents said US-India ties would become stronger if Harris had been elected, 15 per cent state they would get worse, and 32 percent reported they would not change. Respondents were somewhat less bullish on prospects under a second Trump presidency. Forty percent reported ties would improve.

## Shark Tank's Kevin says half of Canadians are interested in becoming 51st state

Shark Tank's Kevin O'Leary said most of the Canadians are interested in merging with the US. Shark Tank's Kevin O'Leary, a Canadian, said he is very much enthusiastic about the idea of Canada being merged with the United States and half of the Canadians are but they don't want Prime Minister Justin Trudeau to do the deal with President-elect Donald Trump. The Canadian businessman said he would go to Mar-a-Lago to talk about a US-Canada merger. "There are 41 million Canadians, basically the population of California, sitting on the world's largest amount of all resources, including the most important: energy and water. Canadians, over the holidays, the last two days, have been talking about this. They want to hear more. Obviously, there are a lot of issues, more details of what could be the beginning of an economic union. Think about the power of combining two economies erasing the border between Canada and the United States and putting all that resource up to the northern borders where China and Russia are knocking on the door. So secure that, give a common currency, figure out taxes across the board...I like this idea and at least half of the Canadians are interested," Kevin O'Leary said. But the problem is, Kevin O'Leary continued, that most of the Canadians don't trust Trudeau to carry out the negotiation with his government collapsing and hence he said he would go to Mar-a-Lago to talk to Trump about this. He said he believed that Canadians would trust him with the negotiation. The issue started as a joke at a Mar-a-Lago dinner where Justin Trudeau and his government officials joined Donald Trump. It was a courtesy visit from Trudeau after Trump said he would impose a 25 per cent tax on Canada.



## 'Fadnavis equally cruel as Aurangzeb,' says Congress leader; BJP calls remark 'insult' to Maharashtra

**NEW DELHI:** Maharashtra Congress chief Harshvardhan Sapkal called chief minister Devendra Fadnavis "equally cruel as Aurangzeb", fanning the political flame over the Mughal emperor who has of late been a centre of political feud. The BJP-led ruling Mahayuti lashed out at the state Congress chief, calling his remark an "insult to Maharashtra". Amid the raging controversy over Aurangzeb and his tomb, Sapkal on Sunday said: "Aurangzeb was a cruel ruler. Today, chief minister Devendra Fadnavis is an equally cruel ruler. He always takes support of issues related to religion but does nothing about cases like the murder of sarpanch Santosh Deshmukh."



Condemning Sapkal's statement, Pravin Darekar raised the issue in the House as soon as the day's session began and said: "Comparing the chief minister, governing the state efficiently, to Aurangzeb is a highly condemnable act and an insult to Maharashtra." Darekar also demanded that a case be filed against Sapkal and

strict action be taken to set an example. According to news agency PTI. Opposition leader Ambadas Danve expressed his disapproval of personal attacks but accused the government of having an "Aurangzeb-like mentality". Congress leader Bhai Jagtap, however, refuted the allegations, claiming that Sapkal never made such a

statement. Revenue minister Chandrashekhar Bawankule assured the state assembly that the government would seriously consider strict action against Sapkal for his "objectionable" remarks. Fadnavis said that everyone is in favour of removing Aurangzeb's tomb in Chhatrapati Sambhajnagar but legal constraints exist as the Congress government previously placed the site under the Archaeological Survey of India's protection. The matter gained attention after BJP's Satara MP Udayanraje Bhosale, who descends from Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj, advocated for the removal of the Mughal king's tomb situated in Chhatrapati Sambhajnagar.

## Prohibitory orders imposed in Manipur's amidst rising tensions

**IMPHAL** Churachandpur administration on Monday imposed prohibitory orders across the district following clashes between the Hmar and Zomi communities, a day after a Hmar tribal leader was assaulted amidst demands from the community to identify the perpetrators, police said. According to the additional district magistrate, the prohibitory orders have been imposed under Section 163 of the BNSS 2023. "Whereas reports have been received from the Superintendent of

Police, Churachandpur, indicating a serious apprehension of a breach of law and order in the district, which is likely to disturb peace and tranquillity among different communities and may lead to damage to life and public property," the order stated. To prevent further escalation, unauthorised processions or unlawful assemblies of five or more people have been banned, along with the carrying of weapons, including sticks, rods and stones, it added. Throughout the day, protesters

attempted to enforce a shutdown, urging shops to close immediately. Groups of men patrolled the streets with sticks, while clashes between the Hmar and Zomi communities led to stone pelting in multiple areas of the district headquarters. Central security forces intervened, firing gunshots in the air to disperse mobs, officials said. According to officials, general secretary Richard Hmar of Hmar Inpui, one of the apex bodies of the tribe, was attacked by a group of men inside.

## Parliamentary panel proposes minimum support price for organic crops

**NEW DELHI:** A parliamentary panel has proposed the introduction of a minimum support price (MSP) for all organic crops, in addition to the existing practice of declaring MSP for traditional crops. The standing committee on agriculture, in its report submitted to the Parliament last week, argued that the move would incentivise farmers to transition to organic farming, despite the challenges of lower yields in the initial years of conversion. "Organic farming transition will help farmers move from chemical-intensive farming to natural farming on a large-scale," said the 30-member panel, headed by Congress Lok Sabha MP Charanjit Singh Channi. Referring to the suggestion of MSP for organic produce, the panel in its previous report in December



last year recommended a legal guarantee for the procurement of crops at MSP, however, made it clear that the new suggestion should not undermine the broader MSP demand based on the Swaminathan (Committee) formula. "Instead, the legal MSP framework should be expanded to include organic produce," it said. The panel, having opposition and ruling parties' MPs from both Lok Sabha and Rajya Sabha as its members, believes that MSP for organic produce should be set higher than that for conventional crops to com-

pensate for the drop in yield and the costs associated with the shift to organic farming. It said farmers will only shift towards organic farming and diversified agriculture if they are convinced that the shift will allow for better economic prospects and benefits than the present form of agriculture. In order to determine an appropriate MSP for organic produce, the panel suggested conducting extensive large-scale research studies, saying it would examine the costs associated with transitioning to organic farming.

## Pak military court sentence 60 more civilians, including Imran's nephew

**ISLAMABAD:** Pakistan's military courts sentenced another 60 civilians on Thursday to prison terms ranging from two to 10 years for their alleged involvement in violent attacks on military installations during the nationwide protests on May 9, 2023 following the brief arrest of jailed former prime minister Imran Khan on graft charges. The latest sentences were announced just days after the same courts handed prison terms ranging from two to 10 years to 25 civilians on similar allegations. Imran's nephew Hassan Khan Niazi, who was taken into military custody in Aug 2023, was one of two people sentenced to 10 years' rigorous imprisonment. The convictions followed a Supreme Court constitution bench order that had



**Imran's nephew Hassan Khan Niazi, who was taken into military custody in Aug 2023, was one of two people sentenced to 10 years' rigorous imprisonment**

conditionally allowed military courts to pronounce verdicts on 85 under-custody civilians in cases related to the May 9 riots. "The Field General Court Martial has promulgated the punishments to the following remaining 60 culprits after examining all evidence, ensuring the provision of all legal rights to the convicts, completion of due process and the

appropriate legal proceedings," Inter-Services Public Relations, the army's media wing, said. "All convicts retain the right to appeal and other legal recourses, as guaranteed by the constitution and law." It stated. "The nation, govt, and the armed forces remain steadfast in their commitment to upholding justice and ensuring.

## Vietnam's restrictive internet law comes into force

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



## Aurangzeb remark row: BJP, SP face off over Azmi's comment

**NEW DELHI:** Mughal emperor Aurangzeb became a political flashpoint between the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) and the Samajwadi Party (SP), yet again! The controversy that began with SP leader Abu Azmi's remark hailing Aurangzeb snowballed into a massive slugfest after Azmi was suspended from the Maharashtra assembly on Wednesday for his statement. Weighing into the controversy, Uttar Pradesh chief minister Yogi Adityanath lashed out at Azmi, while SP chief Akhilesh Yadav backed his party leader and called the action an attempt to muzzle the truth. Addressing the UP assembly, Yogi Adityanath challenged Akhilesh Yadav to expel Azmi over his remark, saying: "Remove that person from (Samajwadi) party and send him to UP, we will do his treatment." Adityanath also questioned Azmi's legitima-



cy to stay in the country, saying: "The person who feels ashamed about the heritage of Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj and considers Aurangzeb his idol, does he have the right to stay in our country?" On the contrary, Akhilesh Yadav hit out at the BJP over Azmi's suspension, calling it the action against his party leader was an attempt to "silence the truth". "If suspensions start being influenced by ideology, then what will remain the difference between freedom of expression and subjugation? Whether it's our legislators or parliamentarians, their fearless wisdom is

unparalleled. If some people think that a "suspension" can silence the truth, then it is nothing but the immaturity of their negative thinking," Akhilesh Yadav wrote on X. As the controversy raged, Azmi reacted to his suspension labelling action against him "unfair" and an "injustice" to the "millions of people" he represents. "My suspension from the Maharashtra assembly for the budget session is not just an injustice to me but also to the millions of people I represent. This is an unfair action against me. I would like to ask the Maharashtra government—are there two sets of laws.

## Trump orders advisers to destroy Iran if it assassinates him

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



Soleimani, the commander of the Iranian Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps' Quds Force. A credible Iranian threat to Trump's safety prompted increased security measures before a July campaign rally in Pennsylvania where Trump sustained

an ear wound. However, officials indicated that Iran was not believed to be involved in that attack. In November, the Justice Department revealed they had prevented an Iranian scheme to assassinate Trump prior to the presidential election.

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

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

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

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

## Aga Khan: Billionaire and jet-setter spiritual leader

**Prince Karim Al-Hussaini** who, at 20, became the 49th hereditary Imam or spiritual leader of Shia Ismaili Muslims, and led the community with a blend of modernity and entrepreneurial flair, died Tuesday in Lisbon. He was 88. As founder-chairman of Aga Khan Development Network, the Aga Khan IV, as he is known, will also be remembered for endowments that helped restore the iconic Humayun's Tomb and Sunder Nursery in Delhi along with the Qutub Shah Tombs near Golconda Fort in Hyderabad, writes Mohammed Wajihuddin. The restoration of the gardens at Humayun's Tomb, in fact, was a gift on the 50th anniversary of India's Independence. The Aga Khan himself visited India in Sept 2013 to inaugurate the



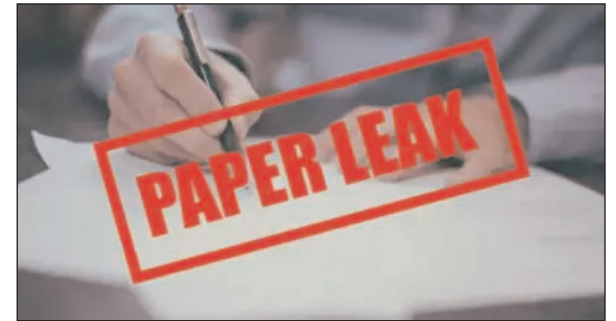
restored Tomb. Suave and soft-spoken, Prince Karim commanded respect globally for his modern outlook and interpretation of Islam as a thinking faith that teaches compassion and tolerance. Late Wednesday, Prince Karim's son Rahim Al-Hussaini was named the new Aga Khan. Unlike most Muslim spiritual

leaders who are bearded, Prince Karim was clean shaven and donned contemporary attire. The jet-setting spiritual leader was also counted among the world's wealthiest people. According to The New York Times, the Aga Khan's fortune was variously estimated at \$1 billion to \$13 billion, with a substantial family

inheritance as well as private investments in luxury hotels, airlines and racehorses. He had a global following of approximately 15 million. The projects he supported ranged from health initiatives in developing countries to upscale development on the island of Sardinia in the Mediterranean Sea. The Aga Khans have a strong connection with India. Hasan Ali Shah, the 46th Imam of the Shia Ismailis who was bestowed the title of the Aga Khan (commanding chief) after he deported immigrants for questioning after their arrival in Amritsar married the then Shah of Iran Fatehali Shah Kachar's daughter, emigrated to India in the early 1840s and settled in Mumbai (then Bombay).

## After paper leak, RRB moves to computer-based job exams

**NEW DELHI:** The railway ministry on Wednesday roped in the Railway Recruitment Board (RRB) to conduct all departmental promotion examinations through a centralised computer-based test. This comes a day after CBI arrested 26 officials of the East Central Railway for allegedly leaking papers of a departmental examination and seized Rs 1.2 crore cash during raids. "All zonal railways will make a calendar for the examination. All the examinations will be conducted on the basis of a calendar only," the



ministry said. It added RRB has been given the responsibility after considering its experience of transparent, fair and highly appreciated examinations conducted in recent years. As per the railways, since 2015, more than 7.7 crore candidates have appeared in exams through com-

puter-based tests without any paper leakage, impersonation, remote log-in and use of spy devices. It said the fair examination has been made possible due to selection of exam-conducting agencies through open tender with the criteria of 'quality and cost based selection.'

## Army jawan 'deserts' unit for job abroad



**PANCHKULA:** An Indian Army havildar has allegedly deserted his unit in Chandimandir in Haryana's Panchkula, leaving behind a hand-written note mentioning that he has got a visa and is going abroad to pursue his dream job. Non-commissioned officer unit supervisor Vinay Kumar Tiwari

filed a police complaint, stating that havildar Yaali Ansari was last seen during the morning physical training session on March 4.

When his colleagues went to look for him, they found his military I-card and a note on his bed, the complaint added. Ansari wrote in the

note he was feeling unwell for the past couple of months and had been trying to get a visa to go abroad. Ansari also wrote that he had not informed his family about his decision and had left behind his Armed Forces Personnel Provident Fund amount and salary, totalling Rs 10 lakh, added the FIR.

## Japan Airlines plane collides with parked Delta Airlines aircraft at Seattle-Tacoma

**A Japan Airlines** aircraft collided with a parked Delta Airlines plane while taxiing at Seattle-Tacoma Airport on Wednesday morning, causing damage to both planes but no injuries were reported. The incident took place at 10:17 am when the moving aircraft's wing struck the tail section of the parked Delta aircraft. Travellers at the airport shared photographs on social media platforms showing the Japan Airlines wing sliced halfway through the Delta aircraft's tail section. The airport authorities said that the incident caused minimal disruption to regular operations. "There are no injuries reported at this time. SEA is working with both airlines to safely deplane passengers and bring them to the terminal," the airport's said. The collision happened when the the aviation

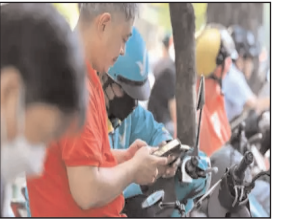


sector is facing heightened concerns in the US. A collision between a US Army helicopter and an American Airlines aircraft at Reagan National Airport claimed 67 lives just a week ago. Later, in Philadelphia, a medical transport aircraft crashed onto a crowded street and burst into flames, resulting in seven fatalities - six aboard the aircraft and one pedestrian. Adding to these incidents, the Federal Aviation Administration's Notice to Air Missions system (NOTAM), crucial for communicating

flight safety information, experienced a failure on Saturday night. Although the system was restored by Sunday, the disruption had already caused hundreds of flight delays across the network. A Japan Airlines aircraft collided with a parked Delta Airlines plane at Seattle-Tacoma Airport, causing damage but no injuries. The incident led to minimal disruption. This collision adds to recent aviation accidents, heightening concerns in the sector. The Federal Aviation Administration's NOTAM system also experienced.

## Vietnam's restrictive internet law comes into force

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



## Aurangzeb's tomb is symbol of bravery of Marathas, future generations should know about it: Sanjay Raut



**MUMBAI:** Reacting to the demands by Vishva Hindu Parishad and Bajrang Dal to remove Mughal Emperor Aurangzeb's tomb, Shiv Sena (UBT) MP Sanjay Raut said that the tomb is a symbol of the bravery of Marathas, and future generations should know about it. Sanjay Raut said, "Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj was a brave warrior and he fought to establish Swarajya. Aurangzeb's tomb is there in Maharashtra but this memorial tells about the bravery of Marathas. The next generation should know how the Marathas fought against the Mughals. They could not gain victory over the Marathas and finally tomb was built. Now, people who do not have knowledge of history are asking to remove the tomb." He further said that the agitation should be on inflation and farmers who are dying

by suicide. "When the government is being run by RSS, then what is the need to protest? Issue a notification and remove the grave. Who has stopped PM Modi and CM Devendra Fadnavis from removing the tomb? They should stop this drama of protest. Even after the death of Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj, Aurangzeb fought for 25 years but could not defeat the Marathas," he added. Earlier Nationalist Congress Party (Sharadchandra Pawar) or NCP (SP) MLA Rohit Pawar on Monday said that they are "distracting" people from real issues as the Mahayuti government has failed to address problems

being faced by farmers and youth in Maharashtra. "Now suddenly when the government is not performing, not talking sense and not addressing issues related to youth and farmers, they (Bajrang Dal and allied forces) are trying to distract people from the real issues," Pawar told ANI. Invoking the controversy sparked by controversial remarks against Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj, Pawar alleged that many Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) leaders have "spoken against" Babasaheb Ambedkar and Mahatma Phule as well. He questioned the silence of Bajrang Dal and other Sangh Parivar organisations on this.

## Gold smuggling case: Actress Ranya Rao's bail plea adjourned till March 19



**NEW DELHI:** The bail plea of Kannada actress Ranya Rao, who is currently in judicial custody over her alleged involvement in a high-profile gold smuggling case, has been adjourned to March 19. The Sessions Court, which was set to hear her petition on March 17, has directed the Directorate of Revenue Intelligence (DRI) to file its objections by the next hearing. Further proceedings will continue once the objections are submitted. Ranya Rao had earlier filed a bail application before the Special Court for Economic Offences, which was rejected due to the serious nature of the allegations against her. Following this, her legal team moved to the Sessions Court in an attempt to secure her release. The case has attracted widespread attention due to its scale and the alleged involvement of influential individuals. Background of the case

Ranya Rao was arrested on March 3, 2025, at Bengaluru's Kempegowda International Airport after DRI officials intercepted her carrying gold bars worth Rs 12.56 crore. Investigations revealed that she had travelled to Dubai 27 times since January 2025. A subsequent search at her residence led to the discovery of additional gold jewellery valued at Rs 2.06 crore and Rs 2.67 crore in cash. The case took a dramatic turn when it emerged that Ranya allegedly used a State Police Protocol Officer to bypass security checks at the airport. She is the stepdaughter of Karnataka Director General of Police (DGP)

Ramchandra Rao, raising concerns over potential police involvement. However, the DGP has distanced himself from the controversy, stating that he had no knowledge of her alleged activities and had been estranged from her since her marriage. Ranya has claimed that she was assaulted and forced to sign documents by DRI officials, allegations that have intensified the legal battle. Meanwhile, BJP MLA Basangouda Patil Yatnal has alleged the involvement of state ministers in the smuggling network, promising to expose them in the Karnataka Assembly. Adding to the complexity, the Karnataka High Court has extended its interim order preventing the DRI from taking immediate action against Ranya's husband, Jatin Vijaykumar Hukkeri, who has also been detained in connection with the case. The court has granted the DRI additional.



## Bank staff, 3 others use idle IDs to siphon Rs 12 crore from 2 accounts, held

**BENGALURU:** Karnataka police have arrested an Axis Bank relationship manager in Rajkot and three others in an interstate cybercrime and financial fraud after the four allegedly embezzled over Rs 12 crore from Bengaluru-based Dreamplug Paytech Solutions Pvt Ltd, the operator of Cred, a rewards-based credit card payment platform. The accused include relationship manager Vaibhav Pithadiya (29), a banking agent from Surat Parmar Neha Ben Vipulbhai (26), an insurance agent and Vaibhav's colleague Shailesh (29), and a commission agent from Rajkot Shubham (26). The arrests were made following a complaint by Dreamplug executive Narasimha Vasanth Sastry. The fraud came to light on Nov 12 when Dreamplug executives identified suspicious transactions in their company accounts. Investigations revealed that Rs 12.2 crore was siphoned off from two Axis Bank accounts over 14 days between Oct 29 and Nov 11. The accused gained unauthorised access to Dreamplug's accounts by manipulating key details. They submitted forged documents, including fake signatures and board resolutions, to request changes to the registered mobile number and email ID linked to the accounts. These changes, approved by Axis Bank despite discrepancies, allowed the fraudsters to intercept OTPs and initiate 37 fraudulent transactions. Dreamplug said the fraudulent activity was facilitated by requests submitted at Axis Bank branches in Ankleshwar (July 22) and Abrama in Surat (Oct 12).

## Opposition misleading Muslims on Waqf bill, no land will be taken, says BJP

**NEW DELHI:** The BJP on Monday accused the opposition parties of "misleading" the Muslim community on the Waqf bill, which is meant to make a significant overhaul in the current Waqf laws. The ruling party's remark came amid protests carried out by several Muslim organisations, led by the All India Muslim Personal Law Board (AIMPLB), to oppose the Waqf (Amendment) Bill. In the protest, which was also joined by the opposition MPs, AIMIM chief Asaduddin Owaisi warned NDA allies such



as the Telugu Desam Party (TDP), Janata Dal (United) (JDU), and Lok Janshakti Party (Ram Vilas) that Muslims will never forgive them if they supported the legislation. Congress MP Mohammad Jawed when asked to comment on the AIMPLB protest, said, "We see

how lands are being given away to selected industrialists... Now that there is a lack of lands, they want to occupy Waqf lands that belong to the poor... Was Chairman asked if the JPC worked properly? Constitution gives us the right to protest peacefully and we are

doing the same... This is a conspiracy against all Indian citizens..." Meanwhile, BJP assured that not "an inch" of waqf properties with clear titles will be taken away after the bill turns into law. Responding to concerns, BJP MP Tejasvi Surya said: "The politics of vote bank in the country has always been based on fear-mongering that has been the modus operandi of all of these so-called secular parties." "Let me assure everybody that the intent of the government in bringing

## 'Whether she is DGP's, CM's or PMs daughter, law same for all': Karnataka CM

**NEW DELHI:** Following the arrest of Kannada actress Ranya Rao in the alleged gold smuggling case, Karnataka government asserted that the law applies equally to everyone. "She is an accused for indulging in smuggling. The law will take its course, whether she is the DGP's, the CM's or the prime minister's daughter... If there is any official nexus involved in this, it will come out in the investigation," Karnataka chief minister's legal adviser AS Ponnanna said. Rao's arrest follows allegations of her



involvement in smuggling 14.8 kilograms of gold from Dubai to India. She is the stepdaughter of Karnataka's Director General of Police (DGP) K Ramachandra Rao and was detained by DRI officials at

Kempegowda International Airport (KIAD) after arriving on an Emirates flight from Dubai. Acting on a tip-off about her suspected involvement in gold smuggling, authorities had stationed a team at

the airport in anticipation of her arrival. Also read: Gold worth Rs 12.56 crore seized from actress Ranya Rao at Bengaluru Airport After her flight landed, Ranya Rao was arrested by the Directorate of Revenue Intelligence (DRI) and taken into custody. On March 4, 2025, she was presented before a special court for financial offenses, which remanded her to judicial custody until March 18. Before her transfer, she underwent a medical examination at Bowring Hospital in Bengaluru.

## At 11%, UP tops list of JEE (Advanced) candidates

**NEW DELHI:** Eleven per cent of candidates appearing for Joint Entrance Examination-Advanced (JEE-Advanced) 2024 — the gateway to 23 Indian Institutes of Technology (IITs) — will be from Uttar Pradesh. An analysis of JEE (Main) qualification data also revealed that of the 2.5 lakh candidates who qualified to take the IIT entrance, more than 54% are from just six states and nearly 73% from 10 states. Moreover, though over 75% of the registered candidates opted to take both (Jan and April) sessions of the JEE (Main), which is also an entrance test for centrally funded tech-



nical institutions and others, just around 28% of them managed to improve their results in the second sitting. JEE (Advanced) is considered one of the toughest competitive exams in India, where aspirants must first qualify among the top 2.5 lakh in the JEE (Main) and then compete for 17,000 odd

seats in IITs. Uttar Pradesh (28,300+), Maharashtra (24,500+) and Telangana (24,100+) not only continue to dominate the results, these top three states also account for more than one-third (30.7%) of the total candidates eligible for JEE (Advanced). There are 11 states which have more than 11,000.

## 'Only a hypocrite would question more funds for Sanskrit over Tamil': BJP

**NEW DELHI:** Bharatiya Janata Party on Wednesday took a swipe at Tamil Nadu chief minister MK Stalin over asking more fund for Tamil than "dead language like Sanskrit." In a post on X, BJP Tamil Nadu President K Annamalai questioned Stalin's efforts to spread Tamil beyond the state and claimed that the Tamil Nadu CM deliberately de-spiritualised Thiruvalluvar to suit his propaganda. "Thiru @mkstalin, instead of listing what you have done to propagate our Tamil language beyond the confines of our State, knowing there aren't any, you've decided to move on to the next topic. It was not our



claim; it is a reality, and the Sengol today also stands as a testament in the Parliament to our Hon PM Thiru @narendramodi avl's commitment to spreading the Tamil language and culture. His comments came after Stalin on Wednesday called out BJP's actions, urging them to make Tamil an official language, halt Hindi imposition, and allot more fund for Tamil than Sanskrit.

Stalin said, "Rather than installing Sengol in Parliament, uninstill Hindi from Union government offices in Tamil Nadu. Instead of hollow praise, make Tamil an official language on par with Hindi and allot more funds for Tamil than a dead language like Sanskrit." He added, "Stop the desperate attempts to saffronise Thiruvalluvar and declare his timeless

classic, Thirukkural, as India's National Book." Replying to Stalin's post, Annamalai said, "Only a Hypocrite would ask about the increased allocation of funds to Sanskrit over Tamil, knowing the rationality behind it very well. We are calling you a 'HYPOCRITE' because this is the allocation for the development of Sanskrit & Tamil between 2006-14. Sanskrit: Rs 675.36 Crores Tamil: Rs 75.05 Crores What were you doing back then?" He also asked the Tamil Nadu CM what he did when former home minister Thiru P Chidambaram submitted over 170 recommendations to popularise Hindi nationwide.

## Bihar traffic cop shoots dead reveller in 'self-defence'

**SASARAM:** A police officer opened fire on a group of revellers, purportedly in self-defence, killing a 32-year-old man and injuring two others in Sasaram in Bihar's Rohtas district on Friday night, reports. Police identified the victim as Rana Om Prakash Singh. His elder brother, Rana Rahul Ranjan, registered an FIR alleging that Om Prakash was shot dead for refusing to bribe the cops. The incident, according to cops, occurred after four men arrived near railway station in an inebriated state. A scuffle broke out between them and a patrolling unit. Traffic DSP Md Adil Bilal witnessed the fight and intervened. During confrontation, one of the youths reportedly fired an air gun.