

T.N. signs MoU with Omron for setting up medical devices unit

The Japanese company's investment will play a major role in improving the State's medical infrastructure, says Chief Minister Stalin



Chief Minister M.K. Stalin says Omron's proposal to invest in Tamil Nadu shows its trust and confidence in the State as an investment destination. SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

The Hindu Bureau CHENNAI

Guidance Tamil Nadu, the State government's investment promotion agency, on Tuesday signed a memorandum of understanding with Omron Healthcare, the Japanese medical equipment maker, for establishing a manufacturing unit in the State at an investment of ₹128 crore. The MoU was signed in the

presence of Chief Minister M.K. Stalin in Tokyo.

Omron is making low-frequency pain therapy equipment and body composition monitors. Mr. Stalin said Omron's proposal to invest in Tamil Nadu showed its trust and confidence in the State as an investment destination.

According to an official release, Mr. Stalin pointed out that the Tamil Nadu government attached importance to quality medical

services and Omron's investment would play a major role in improving the State's medical infrastructure.

Industries Minister T.R.B. Rajaa and senior officials were also present at the event.

Earlier in the day, Mr. Stalin visited the NEC Future Creation Hub in Tokyo.

He was informed of the use of technology to solve social issues.

Chennai Mayor launches *Seaside Stories*, a book on city's fishing community

The Hindu Bureau
CHENNAI

Mayor R. Priya on Tuesday launched *Seaside Stories*, a book on Chennai's vibrant fishing community and the hamlets, which are an intrinsic part of the city.

Deputy Mayor M. Magesh Kumar received the first copy in the presence of Akila Kannadasan, author; Shonali Muthalaly, *The Hindu MetroPlus Weekend* Editor; and members of the fishing community.

Mr. Magesh Kumar stressed the need for translating the book into regional languages, including Tamil. "*Seaside Stories* talks about Chennai's vibrant fishing community – about what is a day like, in the life of a fisherman? What are his struggles, his successes? Who are the women who hold the fort at the shore, once the catch comes in? How is a boat sculpted to life? Where can one taste seaside pizza? The compilation, brought out by *The Hindu*, has all the answers



Chennai Mayor R. Priya launching the book *Seaside Stories*. Deputy Mayor M. Magesh Kumar and other dignitaries are seen. R. RAGU

Deputy Mayor Magesh Kumar stresses the need to translate the book into regional languages

and takes readers on a journey along the coast," said Ms. Kannadasan.

The book features more than 40 stories. There are pieces on women auctioneers, fishermen surfers, catamaran-makers, master net-weavers, and men who took on mammoth sea creatures. There are also interviews with men who mend boats, women who

make dried-fish, children for whom the beach is a playground. The book also has stories on a fisherman-boxer, who trains boys from the community in the sport; a fisherman who is a self-taught bird-watcher; and on other facets including how a group of men launch a boat into the sea from the shipyard. "Chennai will not be the same without them. What we present in these pages will give you an insight into their fascinating lives," Ms. Kannadasan added.

The book will be sold online at <https://publications.thehindugroup.com/bookstore/>

Scientist team discovers new Jupiter-size exoplanet

Hemanth C.S.
BENGALURU

A new Jupiter-size exoplanet with the highest density known till this date and mass 13 times than that of Jupiter, has been discovered by an international team of scientists led by Prof. Abhijit Chakraborty at the Exoplanet Research Group of the Physical Research Laboratory (PRL), Ahmedabad.

An exoplanet is any planet beyond the solar system and the one discovered by scientists from

The exoplanet was discovered by scientists from India, Germany, the U.S. and Switzerland

India, Germany, Switzerland and the U.S. is with a density of 14 g/cm^3 .

Massive giant exoplanets are those having mass greater than four times that of Jupiter.

The ISRO said that the discovery of this massive exoplanet was made using the indigenously made

PRL Advanced Radial-velocity Abu-sky Search spectrograph at the 1.2 m telescope of PRL at its Gurushikhar Observatory in Mt. Abu by measuring the mass of the planet precisely. "What sets this discovery apart is that the planet falls into the transition mass range of massive giant planets and low-mass brown dwarfs with masses ranging from 11 to 16 times the mass of Jupiter. Only fewer than five exoplanets are currently known in this mass range so far," the ISRO said.

Universal cover

IRDAI's plans to expand risk protection levels need government backing

Last week, the chief of India's insurance sector regulator unveiled a fresh blueprint to cover a larger portion of the population against risks of adverse shocks, with an eye on insuring everyone by 2047. The lynchpin of this "UPI-like moment", being pursued by the Insurance Regulatory and Development Authority of India (IRDAI) to bridge the country's "huge protection gaps", is envisaged to be a simple, all-in-one insurance policy. This bundled 'Bima Vistaar' scheme, being worked out with life and general insurers, would provide households with expeditious monetary support in case of medical emergencies, accidents, thefts or a death in the family. With awareness about the benefits of insurance still quite low, the regulator has proposed a women-led Gram Sabha-level initiative to educate every household's female head about how such a scheme could come in handy at times of distress. A new 'Bima Sugam' platform would integrate insurance players and distributors to give customers a one-stop shop experience to begin with, and facilitate claims servicing going forward. Linking States' digital death registries to the platform, the regulator believes, could enable life insurance claims to be settled within hours or a day at the most.

A legislative reboot is also on the anvil to ease capital requirement norms and allow a slew of new players to enter the market and serve the untapped needs of niche and specialised segments. Over two decades after the entry of private players into the once moribund public sector-led industry, India's insurance penetration (the ratio of premium payments to GDP) has risen – from 2.7% in 2001-02 to 4.2% in 2021-22. In fact, there has been a slide in the metric over the past decade from 5.2% in 2009-10, with non-life policies yet to surpass the 1% mark. Given the sheer size of India's population and poor financial literacy levels, the imperative to break from the status quo is unquestionable. The IRDAI's move to rope in State governments and set up bodies similar to State-level banking committees would help formulate granular district-wise strategies for raising awareness and coverage levels. Industry players also need to look beyond the top cities and the 'Bima Vistaar' scheme could catalyse the volumes they need to get out of comfort zones. Most of all, the Centre needs to rethink the 18% GST levy on health and life insurance premia. The notion that those who can afford to buy health cover can afford to pay so much tax is untenable in a country where one health calamity can push a household below the poverty line. Ensuring continuity of leadership at IRDAI is equally critical – situations such as the nine-month vacuum at its helm before the current chairperson's tenure are simply unacceptable.

INMA Awards: *The Hindu In School* gets honourable mention

The Hindu Bureau
CHENNAI

The Hindu In School's 32-page weekender has received an honourable mention at the International News Media Association's (INMA) 2023 Global Media Awards in New York.

The weekender was in the final list under the National Brands: Best Subscription Niche Product category which recognised products that consistently engaged with subscribers. *The Hindu In School's* priority over the past year has been to make the weekender interesting to children tired of online learning.

By featuring visual essays and creative activities, it helped them cope with the transition to the offline mode. Five special issues were also brought out on various themes.

"As key contributors to the field of education, The Hindu Group always finds ways to keep children meaningfully engaged and

Weekender makes it to final list in the National Brands: Best Subscription Niche Product category

their interests thriving. Such milestones give us more encouragement, hope and the drive to meet and exceed expectations of our young audience," said Sridhar Aranala, vice-president, sales and distribution, The Hindu Group.

This year, the INMA Awards attracted 775 entries from newspapers, magazines, television and radio in 40 countries.

To subscribe to *The Hindu In School* weekender, visit www.thehindu.com/thseweekend.

From current affairs for the curious minds to the hows and whys of scientific discovery, and the lesser-known facts of history and geography that go beyond academics, every issue is carefully curated and attractively packaged.

Government drops plans to host SCO summit in Delhi, will now be in virtual format

Suhasini Haidar

NEW DELHI

In a sudden change of plans just a month before the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO) summit, the Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) announced that India will now Chair the summit in virtual format, not in-person, as planned before.

“Under India’s first-ever Chairmanship, the 22nd summit of the SCO Council of Heads of State will be held in the virtual format on July 4, 2023, chaired by Prime Minister Narendra Modi,” said an MEA press release, adding that leaders of “all SCO member states”: China, Russia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Pakistan, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan, have been invited to attend the summit via video conference. Turkmenistan is a permanent invitee, while Presidents of Iran, Belarus and

The Centre has not got confirmation from some SCO countries, including China and Pakistan

Mongolia have been invited as Observer States.

No reason was given for the change, although the original invitations to SCO leaders, including Russian President Vladimir Putin, Chinese President Xi Jinping, Pakistan PM Shehbaz Sharif and leaders of Central Asian states, had invited them to Delhi. In addition, during the SCO Foreign Minister’s meeting in Goa, an official release issued after a meeting between Minister of External Affairs S. Jaishankar and SCO Secretary-General Zhang Ming had referred to cooperation on “successfully holding the main event, specifically, the SCO summit in New Delhi.”

Diplomatic sources said the government’s decision to hold the summit via videoconference was only intimated to them just before the MEA announcement. An “urgent” letter sent by India’s SCO National Coordinator Yojna Patel dated on Monday, addressed to all member states and Mr. Ming simply said that the “Indian side hereby conveys that the SCO summit on July 4 will be held in virtual format.”

Sources told *The Hindu* that one of the reasons may have been “scheduling difficulties”, and that the government had not received final confirmations from some of the SCO leaders, including China and Pakistan.

In addition, the continuing war in Ukraine, and recent escalation of drone attacks in Kyiv and Moscow may have cast a shadow over the participation of Mr. Putin.



Cambodian King Norodom Sihamoni meeting President Droupadi Murmu and Prime Minister Narendra Modi. SUSHIL KUMAR VERMA

‘India keen to boost ties with Cambodia’

Press Trust of India
NEW DELHI

President Droupadi Murmu on Tuesday said India is keen to further elevate its defence relations with Cambodia besides increasing tourism and people-to-people contacts.

Welcoming Preah Bat Samdech Preah Boromneath Norodom Sihamoni, the King of Cambodia, at Rashtrapati Bhavan, Ms. Murmu said there is great potential for further growth in trade and investment between India and

Cambodia. She said India is keen to further elevate its defence relations with the Southeast Asian country.

Welcoming King Sihamoni on his first visit to India, she said his visit demonstrates the importance that Cambodia attaches to its ties with India as the two countries share a rich and vibrant relationship.

“We value our shared history and consider Cambodia as our civilisational sister country,” Ms. Murmu said.

Khalistan reference removed from Class XII NCERT textbook

The Hindu Bureau
NEW DELHI

The lines which refer to a plea for a separate Sikh nation referring to the creation of Khalistan have been dropped by the National Council of Educational Research and Training from the political science textbook of Class 12, officials from the NCERT said on Tuesday.

The decision was taken after receiving a representation from stakeholders, particularly after a letter from Shiromani Gurdwara Parbandhak Committee, was received by the Ministry of Education. The letter referred to withdrawing allegedly objectionable content against the Sikh community by misrepresenting Sri Anandpur Sahib Resolution. The resolution was passed in 1973 at Anandpur Sahib in Punjab by a section of Akalis (a faction involved in bringing reform in gurdwaras) who had begun to demand political autonomy for the region, by redefining the Centre-State relationship.

In this regard, a committee of experts was consti-

The decision was taken after Ministry of Education received a letter from the SGPC

tuted by the NCERT to examine the issue. After examining the issue, it recommended that two lines be dropped from seventh chapter – Regional Aspirations – of the rationalised Class 12 political science textbook.

In the NCERT textbook, Sri Anandpur Sahib Resolution, the line – ‘but it could also be interpreted as a plea for a separate Sikh nation’ has been dropped. The line preceding this – ‘The resolution was a plea for strengthening federalism,’ has been retained.

While the print versions of the rationalised books are already out and may not reflect the change, the digital soft copy of the Class 12 textbook has been uploaded on the NCERT website with appropriate changes, said Sanjay Kumar, Secretary (School Education), Ministry of Education.

35 lakh students of Class X failed or dropped out in 2021-22: Education Ministry

Government also wants to analyse which Boards perform well in NEET or secure better ranks as there may be significant variance in syllabus leading to barriers for national-level common tests

Maitri Porecha
NEW DELHI

Approximately 35 lakh students enrolled in Class 10 in 2021-2022 did not progress to Class 11, according to an analysis exercise carried out by the Ministry of Education (MoE).

Of these 35 lakh students, 27.5 lakh failed, and 7.5 lakh students did not appear for the Class 10 examinations.

While the failure rate of students in Central Boards, including the Central Board of Secondary Education (CBSE) and the Council for the Indian School Certificate Examinations (CISCE) is as low as 5%, it can be as high as 16% in State Boards.

Sanjay Kumar, Secretary (School Education), MoE, said that the significant variance in syllabus taught in different Boards, especially related to Physics,



Of the 35 lakh students who fail, only 4.5 lakh appear in exams through National Institute of Open Schooling. A.M. FARUQUI

Chemistry and Biology, creates barriers for national-level common tests, including Common University Entrance Test (CUET), Joint Entrance Examination (JEE), and the National Eligibility Cum Entrance Test (NEET).

Responding to a query from *The Hindu* on Tuesday, Mr. Kumar said that the MoE has now requested data from the National Testing Agency on students that qualify for the

NEET, and the Ministry wants to analyse students of which Boards perform well in NEET, or secure better ranks.

Of the 35 lakh students who failed or did not appear in the Class 10 exams, only 4.5 lakh students appeared in exams through National Institute of Open Schooling, and there too the failure rates ranged between 47% to 55%.

"There are a large number of students who are

slipping through cracks after Class 10 and very few of these are going for open schooling. This missing cohort can be caught for skilling them or increasing open schooling enrolments," the official said.

Analysis of State-wise data on students passing and failing in Class 10 and 12 exams by the MoE reveals that results of students studying across up to 60 State Boards in India vary considerably from one State to another.

Only 11 States contribute to 85% dropouts, or nearly 30 lakh students. They are Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, Madhya Pradesh, Gujarat, Tamil Nadu, Rajasthan, Karnataka, Assam, West Bengal, Haryana and Chhattisgarh.

The purpose of analysing results across Boards is to standardise Board exams as recommended by the National Education Policy, 2020.

Fresh excavation reveals pre-Mauryan era signs in Delhi's Purana Qila site

Sreeparna Chakrabarty
NEW DELHI

A fresh round of excavations at the site of Delhi's Purana Qila (Old Fort) have uncovered evidence of the continuous history of the city since the pre-Mauryan era. The findings include shards of Painted Gray Ware pottery which are usually dated to around 1200 BC to 600 BC.

Sources said that the site could host one of the accompanying events during the G-20 leadership summit in September. The Purana Qila, built by Sher Shah Suri and Mughal emperor Humayun, is believed by many to be the site of Indraprastha, as mentioned in the Mahabharat.

The new excavations have also found remains of a 900-year-old Vaikuntha Vishnu from the Rajput period, a terracotta plaque of Goddess Gaja Lakshmi from the Gupta period, the



ASI excavation site at Purana Qila. SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

structural remains of a 2,500-year-old terracotta ring well from the Mauryan period, and a well-defined four-room complex from the Sunga-Kushan period dating back to 2,300 years ago, besides beads, seals, copper coins and a bone needle.

Trade centre

"More than 136 coins and 35 seals have been discovered from a small excavated area, indicating the site's pivotal role as a centre for trade activities," Culture Minister G. Kishan

Reddy, who visited the excavation site on Tuesday, said. This was the third round of excavations at the site, beginning from January. Earlier excavations had been carried out in 2013-14 and 2017-18.

These efforts have revealed nine cultural levels, representing different historical periods, including pre-Mauryan, Mauryan, Sunga, Kushana, Gupta, post-Gupta, Rajput, Sultanate, and Mughal.

The Culture Minister said that the Purana Qila would soon be reopened.

Chinese mission with first civilian reaches space

Agence France-Presse
JIUQUAN

China sent three astronauts to its **Tiangong space station** on Tuesday, putting a civilian into orbit for the first time as it pursues plans to send a crewed mission to the Moon by 2030.

The world's second-largest economy has invested billions of dollars in its military-run space programme in a push to catch up with the United States and Russia.

The Shenzhou-16 crew took off atop a Long March



First step: Gui Haichao, left, Zhu Yangzhu, centre, and Jing Haipeng at the seeing-off ceremony in Gansu province on Tuesday. AFP

2F rocket from the Jiuquan Satellite Launch Centre in northwest China at 9:31 a.m. (0301 IMT). They docked at the space sta-

tion's Tianhe core module on Tuesday afternoon, more than six hours after taking off.

The launch was a "com-

plete success" and the "astronauts are in good condition", Zou Lipeng, director of the Jiuquan Satellite Launch Center said.

Leading its crew is commander Jing Haipeng on his fourth mission, as well as engineer Zhu Yangzhu and Beihang University professor Gui Haichao, the first Chinese civilian in space.

China was the third country to put humans in orbit and Tiangong is the crown jewel of its space programme, which has also landed robotic rovers on Mars and the Moon.

India's growth momentum likely to sustain in FY24: RBI

The central bank however reiterated the need for structural reforms amid slowing global growth and geopolitical tensions; India is expected to have recorded 7% growth in real GDP in 2022-23

The Hindu Bureau
MUMBAI

India's growth momentum is likely to sustain in 2023-24 in an atmosphere of easing inflationary pressures, the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) said in its Annual Report 2022-23.

The central bank noted that the economy will be supported by sound macroeconomic policies, softer commodity prices, a robust financial sector, and new growth opportunities stemming from global rea-

Optimistic outlook

The RBI expects the pace of India's growth to sustain in FY24 as inflationary pressures ease and a host of macroeconomic tailwinds support the economy

- Sound macroeconomic policies, softer commodity prices and realignment of supply chains are expected to favour growth this year



- Slowing global growth, protracted geopolitical tensions and an upsurge in financial market volatility could, however, play spoilsport

- The RBI emphasised the need for structural reforms to sustain the economy's growth momentum in the medium-term

lignment of supply chains.

However, it said that slowing global growth, protracted geopolitical ten-

sions and a possible upsurge in financial market volatility following new stress events in the global

financial system could pose downside risks to growth.

"It is important, therefore, to sustain structural reforms to improve India's medium-term growth potential," the central bank said in the report.

Amid strong global headwinds, the Indian economy is expected to have grown by 7% in real GDP in 2022-23, the RBI said. Agriculture and allied activities were resilient in FY23, with sectoral gross value added (GVA) seen posting growth of 3.3%, it said.