

DECEMBER



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MONTHLY BLEND



PM MODI INAUGURATES WORLD'S LARGEST MEDITATION CENTER: A SYMBOL OF INDIA'S RENEWED HERITAGE PRIDE

Swarved Mahamandir, the world's largest meditation centre, was launched in Varanasi by Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi. In his speech to the audience, Modi emphasised India's declaration of freedom from slavery and pride in its heritage. He discussed historical efforts to recreate cultural symbols after independence in order to overcome an inferiority attitude. Modi emphasised the shift from opposition to the reconstruction of the Somnath temple to a nationwide campaign, noting India's increased dignity. Modi toured the enormous building, which can seat 20,000 people for meditation, alongside Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath. Among the projects launched during the PM's tour were the Kanyakumari-Varanasi train, braille translations of Tamil literature, and an AI-based application, 'Bhashini,' which facilitated real-time language translation during his speech at Kashi Tamil Sangamam.



CRISIS IN TAMIL NADU: ARMED FORCES MOBILIZE FOR UNPRECEDENTED FLOOD RELIEF OPERATIONS

Due to heavy rains, the southernmost portion of Tamil Nadu, India, is experiencing significant flooding, notably in the districts of Tirunelveli and Thoothukudi. At the request of the Tamil Nadu government, the Indian Navy, Air Force, Coast Guard, and National Disaster Response Force are performing rescue and relief operations as part of Humanitarian Assistance and Disaster Relief efforts. Extreme weather conditions have been produced by unprecedented rainfall, which has been related to a cyclonic circulation in the southeast Bay of Bengal. Thoothukudi received 932mm of rain in 24 hours, which is similar to the district's whole yearly rainfall. Various disaster response teams, including those from the Indian Coast Guard and National Disaster Response Force, have been mobilised, and helicopters from the Indian Air Force and Navy have been sent for relief efforts..



SINGAPORE FACES SURGE IN COVID-19 CASES, URGES MASK-WEARING AND REINFORCES HEALTHCARE CAPACITY

Singapore saw a 75% spike in COVID-19 infections from December 3 to 9, recording 56,043 instances, a 75% increase from the prior week. In response to the increase, the Ministry of Health (MOH) aggressively urged the use of masks. JN.1, a sublineage of BA.2.86, was identified as the main variation. According to the Ministry of Health, there is no clear evidence that these mutations are more transmissible or cause serious disease. The MOH urged personal accountability as the average daily hospitalisations and ICU cases increased.

Those experiencing respiratory problems should stay at home and seek medical attention only in an emergency, according to the ministry. MOH announced plans to build a COVID-19 treatment centre at Singapore Expo Hall 10 to supplement bed space in response to the spike.



POLITICAL TURMOIL IN INDIAN PARLIAMENT: SUSPENSION OF 78 OPPOSITION MPS SPARKS CONTROVERSY

In a remarkable development, 78 Opposition Members of Parliament (MPs) were suspended from the Indian Parliament, 11 for a single day and the remaining for the full winter session for 'unruly behaviour.' This comes on the heels of 14 Opposition MPs being suspended, raising the total to 92. Protests seeking a reply from Union Home Minister Amit Shah regarding a recent security breach in Parliament led to the suspension. On December 13, two intruders entered the Lok Sabha, causing disturbances and accusations of the administration neglecting its obligations. Prime Minister Narendra Modi called for a probe into the security incident. The Opposition, particularly the Congress, criticised the mass suspensions, accusing them of violating democratic standards and referring to them as the "heights of tyranny."



SPACEX TO LAUNCH X-37B SPACEPLANE ON SEVENTH CLASSIFIED MISSION

The launch date for the US military's X-37B robotic space plane, designated USSF-52, on its seventh orbital mission has been revealed by SpaceX. The Falcon Heavy rocket is scheduled to launch from Florida on December 28. The launch, which was scheduled for December 17, was pushed back owing to inclement weather. The X-37B, a US Air Force unmanned space test aircraft, conducts classified experiments and evaluates numerous technologies in space. This will be the first time the X-37B has launched atop a Falcon Heavy, which is recognised for its reusability. The reusability and long-duration orbital flights of the spaceplane have been major characteristics, with this mission involving testing new orbital regimes and space domain awareness systems.



BUSINESS BREWS

INDIGO MAKES HISTORY AS THE FIRST INDIAN AIRLINE TO TRANSPORT 100 MILLION PASSENGERS IN A YEAR

IndiGo, India's top private airline, set a new record by becoming the country's first carrier to transport 100 million passengers in a single calendar year. In terms of passenger traffic, this achievement places IndiGo among the world's largest airlines. Pieter Elbers, the airline's CEO, attributed the achievement to customer trust and the dedication of IndiGo's workers. In the last six months, the airline has dramatically increased its global presence by adding more than 20 overseas routes. IndiGo intends to improve domestic connection even further and expand its network to cover famous locations such as Bali,

Indonesia, and Medina, Saudi Arabia. Despite recent indications of possible operational contraction in January, IndiGo has a sizable backlog of roughly 1,000 planes scheduled for delivery over the next decade.



INDIAN GOVERNMENT URGES RICE INDUSTRY TO LOWER PRICES AND COMBAT PROFITEERING

The Indian government has instructed rice industry groups to reduce domestic non-basmati rice prices to optimal levels and to prevent profiteering. This decision follows a meeting with leading rice processing sector executives to examine the domestic price scenario. Despite a robust crop, substantial supplies with the Food Corporation of India, and several limitations on rice exports, the government reported that prices have risen. Rice's yearly inflation rate has been around 12% over the past two years. Associations were encouraged to instruct their members to lower retail rice prices in order to resolve the growing disparity between the maximum retail price and the actual retail price. The move is intended to assure affordability while also reducing inflation.

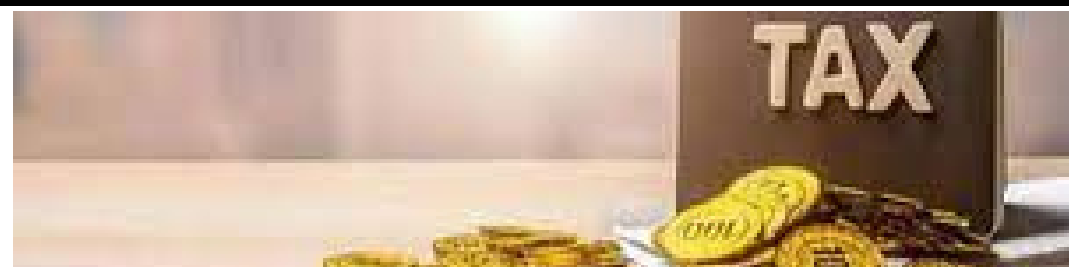


INDIA ACHIEVES STRONG TAX REVENUE GROWTH, NEARS FISCAL YEAR TARGET

The Central Government has seen a significant increase in tax collections, collecting 13.7 trillion in business and personal income taxes by December 17, a 20.66% increase over the same period previous year. A total of 6.25 trillion was collected through advance taxation, representing an almost 20% increase over the previous year. The government's direct tax collection target for this fiscal year is 18.2 trillion, and current numbers show that it is on course to fulfil it. Tax revenue growth, affected by direct and indirect tax reforms, reflects improved tax compliance and economic activity tracking.

US MARKETS INCH HIGHER AS INVESTORS AWAIT KEY ECONOMIC DATA AND FED SIGNALS

On Monday, US stock indices rose slightly as investors awaited economic data that could impact the Federal Reserve's monetary policy decisions. The Dow Jones Industrial Average increased by 0.03% to 37,315.30, the S&P 500 increased by 0.37% to 4,736.64, and the Nasdaq Composite increased by 0.37% to 14,868.43. Investors are keeping a careful eye on data such as personal consumption expenditures, revised GDP estimates, US current account data, house sales data, and first unemployment claims this week. The November personal consumption expenditures (PCE) index will be released on December 22, as will US current account data and existing home sales numbers on December 20, as well as first jobless claims and updated Q3 GDP data on December 21. The Stoxx 600 in Europe declined 0.1%, while Asian markets mainly sank, with Hong Kong's Hang Seng falling 1%, China's Shanghai Composite falling 0.4%, and Japan's Nikkei 225 falling 0.6%. After BP declared a halt to voyages across the Red Sea because to security concerns, gold and oil prices surged.



HAPPY FORGINGS LIMITED RAISES ₹303 CRORE FROM ANCHOR INVESTORS AHEAD OF IPO

Happy Forgings Limited, which plans to go public on December 19, 2023, has raised 303 crore from anchor investors. The company distributed 35,59,740 equity shares at 850 per share to 25 anchor investors, which included global names such as Fidelity International, Morgan Stanley, and Neuberger Berman, as well as Indian mutual funds and insurance companies. The monies were raised at the top of the 808-850 pricing range. With continuous sales and great profitability, the company more than doubled its revenues from 585 crore in FY21 to 1,197 crore in FY23, representing a CAGR of 43%+. The equity shares will be listed on the BSE and NSE following the IPO.

ARTISTIC AROMAS



AN OLD MOVIE THEATER.

A LIBRARY IN LONDON.

I ASK MYSELF, CAN PEOPLE BE PLACES?
FOREVER REMINDING YOU OF SOMEONE.

YOU WERE A PLACE I USED TO GO.

THE MEMORIES - SO FINE AND DELICATE THEY CAN'T BE
HELD.

THOUGH I FIND MYSELF TRYING.

THE SOUNDS ARE GHOSTS WHISPERING YOU'RE HERE

BUT YOU ARE NOWHERE TO BE FOUND.

DIDN'T I CHASE YOU AROUND THIS PARK?

DIDN'T YOU READ TO ME ON THIS BENCH?

MY HEART SOFTENING WITH YOUR EVERY START AND END.

TURPENTINE

LAUGHTER

WHISTLING TREES

ALL STILL HERE - REMINDING ME OF YOU.

THIS PLACE.

THAT YOU USED TO BE.

SUNNY PAUL



Contemporary art

The term "contemporary art" specifically refers to art created by today's living artists, who engage with a culturally diverse, technologically advancing, and multifaceted global environment. These artists, using various mediums, often reflect and comment on modern society, challenging viewers to consider art as "challenging" or "interesting" rather than solely focusing on traditional notions of quality or aesthetics. Since the early 20th century, some artists have shifted towards abstraction, as seen in the post-World War II New York art scene, where "abstract expressionism" emerged. This movement emphasized the process of creating art rather than the final product, with artists like Jackson Pollock introducing dynamic, spontaneous gestures. Contemporary artists, influenced by postmodernism, embrace "artistic pluralism," rejecting mainstream concepts and drawing from diverse sources, materials, and styles such as performance art, pop art, Minimalism, conceptual art, and video. This brief summary captures the intricate concepts and materials utilized by contemporary artists, as exemplified by works at the Getty Museum.

Contemporary artists, like their predecessors, often draw inspiration from artworks of previous eras, incorporating elements through a practice known as appropriation. For instance, John Baldessari reinterpreted a 1505 image of a stag beetle by Albrecht Dürer, using modern materials like ink-jet printing on a fiberglass panel. Baldessari's innovative approach involved juxtaposing the original image with a large steel pin sculpture, merging different mediums in a distinctly modern fashion.

During the 1960s, artists embraced video as a medium to redefine traditional notions of fine art. Video art challenged the perception of art as exclusive and expensive, seeking to provide an experience rather than a tangible possession. Some contemporary video artists aim to break away from the idea of art as a commodity, utilizing video as a tool for change and a platform for ideas. Recognizing the influence of television and the Internet, these artists aim to make art more accessible to a broader audience.



INKSIGHTS



DELHI CHIEF MINISTER ARVIND KEJRIWAL SUMMONED BY ED IN MONEY LAUNDERING CASE LINKED TO EXCISE POLICY



The Enforcement Directorate (ED) has issued a new summons to Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal in connection with a money laundering investigation involving the Delhi excise policy. Kejriwal, who is also the national convenor of the Aam Aadmi Party (AAP), is slated to be questioned on December 21. He had already been summoned on November 2, but did not show, citing the ambiguity of the notification. Allegations of a political agreement between Kejriwal, his deputy Manish Sisodia, and a BRS leader are at the heart of the case. The ED believes the accused communicated with Kejriwal about the cancelled Delhi Excise Policy 2021-22. AAP claims political motivations, tying it to the BJP's intentions for the 2024 elections. AAP leaders Manish Sisodia and Sanjay Singh have been arrested in connection with the matter.

COMMITTEE ON 'ONE NATION, ONE ELECTION' TO REVIEW PROGRESS AND POLITICAL RESPONSES

The high-level committee on "One Nation, One Election," chaired by former Indian President Ram Nath Kovind, will meet to monitor progress and debate political parties' reactions to the idea of simultaneous polls in India. The group held its first meeting in September and a second meeting in October, during which it solicited input from national, state, and registered unrecognised parties. The Law Commission of India has provided its position on the topic, and the committee may revisit it. "One Nation, One Election" advocates for simultaneous Lok Sabha and state Assembly elections throughout India, a system that was common until 1967. The purpose of the conference is to assess the developments and replies received thus far.



INDIA AND OMAN FORGE AHEAD IN BILATERAL RELATIONS: CEPA PROGRESS, JOINT VISION, AND STRATEGIC COOPERATION



During the state visit of Oman's monarch, Sultan Haitham bin Tariq, India and Oman made substantial headway in their discussions. Both countries are working on a Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement (CEPA), which would reduce import duties in industries such as textiles, electronics, and iron and steel. Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Sultan Haitham addressed economic cooperation, with an emphasis on the \$300 million third tranche release of the Oman India Joint Investment Fund. Financial technology, rupee commerce, space cooperation, green hydrogen, and renewable energy were all discussed. The leaders agreed on a shared future vision, outlining action priorities in areas such as marine cooperation, energy security, and disaster management. West Asian challenges, especially the Israel-Hamas conflict, were addressed, and agreements on countering terrorism were reached.

NITIN GADKARI OPPOSES DRIVERLESS CARS IN INDIA, CITES JOB CONCERNS AND CONDITIONS FOR TESLA

Nitin Gadkari, India's Minister of Road Transport and Highways, has aggressively opposed the implementation of autonomous automobiles in the country, citing concerns over job losses for drivers. Mr. Gadkari said, "I will never allow driverless cars to come into India because it will take away the jobs of several drivers, and I will not let that happen." While celebrating Tesla's presence into India, Gadkari emphasised that Tesla cannot manufacture vehicles in China for sale in India. The views underscore India's cautious approach to driverless vehicles, given the possible impact on transportation employment. Gadkari also emphasised the significance of hydrogen as a future fuel, as well as the government's attempts to embrace innovative technology for infrastructure enhancement.



INDIA RESPONDS TO ALLEGATIONS ON KHALISTANI ELEMENTS, ADDRESSES CONCERNS RAISED BY US AND CANADA

S Jaishankar, India's External Affairs Minister, responded to claims made by the United States and Canada about pro-Khalistani groups, saying that India is willing to discuss issues voiced by any country. Regarding Nikhil Gupta's indictment in the United States in connection with a foiled murder conspiracy to assassinate Khalistani separatist Gurbatwant Singh Pannun, Jaishankar stated that precise evidence was supplied, and India is investigating the case. He claimed willingness to address Canada's concerns over his links to the assassination of Khalistani terrorist Hardeep Singh Nijjar. Jaishankar also criticised the UN Security Council as a "old club" that is hesitant to admitting new members, emphasising the necessity for reform in order to successfully address global concerns.



BUZZ & BEANS

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