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#### E-commerce:

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#### Finance:

5 homegrown venture capital firms that are making a mark [+ Info](#)

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Country's current account deficit widens [+ Info](#)

#### Industry:

13% growth in foreign tourism arrival in February 2017 [+ Info](#)

Sports sponsorships in India grow 19.33% to hit Rs6,400 crore in 2016 [+ Info](#)

Govt readies multi-modal transport play to reduce logistics costs [+ Info](#)

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#### Infrastructure:

10 multi-modal hubs likely under transport master plan [+ Info](#)

NHA lines up massive Rs 5.35 lakh cr expenditure plan [+ Info](#)

Govt nod for 18 new airports costing Rs 30,000 cr [+ Info](#)

#### Pharma / Healthcare:

Government Aims To Make India A Global Biotech Hub By 2020 [+ Info](#)

Cabinet approves National Health Policy 2017 [+ Info](#)

#### Renewable energy:



#### “Bindi: The Indian Forehead Art”

A bindi is an auspicious mark worn by young girls and women in India. The bindi is arguably the most visually fascinating of all forms of body decoration. Hindus attach great importance to this ornamental mark on the forehead between the two eyebrows -- a spot considered a major nerve point in human body since ancient times. Also loosely known as 'tika', 'pottu', 'sindoor', 'tilak', 'tilakam', and 'kumkum', a bindi is usually a small or a big eye-catching round mark made on the forehead as adornment.

In southern India, girls choose to wear a bindi, while in other parts of India it is the prerogative of the married woman. A red dot on the forehead is an auspicious sign of marriage and guarantees the social status and sanctity of the institution of marriage. The Indian bride steps over the threshold of her husband's home, bedecked in glittering apparels and ornaments, dazzling the red bindi on her forehead that is believed to usher in prosperity, and grants her a place as the guardian of the family's welfare and progeny.

Sandal, 'aguru', 'kasturi', 'kumkum' (made of red turmeric) and 'sindoor' (made of zinc oxide and dye) make this special red dot. The red 'kumkum' between the eyebrows is said to retain energy in the human body and control the various levels of concentration. It is also the central point of the

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## Economy

#### FDI:

Govt may allow 100 per cent FDI in insurance broking to attract more funds [+ Info](#)  
 Govt is working on 'appropriate policies' for 100% FDI in airline [+ Info](#)

#### GST:

GST Council approves key Bills [+ Info](#)  
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#### Import-export:

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 Commerce ministry to make changes in export schemes after GST [+ Info](#)  
 Government may relax restrictions on organic agriculture product exports [+ Info](#)  
 Nine years after ban, govt allows export of edible oil in bulk [+ Info](#)

#### Inflation:

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## Norms & Regulations

RBI recasts norms on currency hedging for MNCs [+ Info](#)  
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## Upcoming Events

#### Fairs:

Upcoming Trade fairs in India [+ Info](#)

base of the creation itself — symbolizing auspiciousness and good fortune.

'Bindi' is derived from the Sanskrit word 'bindu' or a drop, and suggests the mystic third eye of a person. In ancient India, 'Visesakachhedya', i.e., painting the forehead with a bindi or 'tilaka' was very important. In those days, thin and tender leaves used to be cut into different shapes and pasted upon the forehead.

The present practice could be an extension of that tradition. Significantly, when an Indian woman has the misfortune of becoming a widow, she stops wearing the bindi. Also, if there is death in the family, the women folks' bindi-less face tells the community that the family is in mourning.

With changing fashion, women try out many shapes and designs. It is, at times a straight vertical line or an oval, a triangle or miniature artistry ('alpana') made with a fine-tipped stick, dusted with gold and silver powder, studded with beads and crusted with glittering stones. The advent of the sticker-bindi made of felt with glue on one side, has not only added colors, shapes and sizes to the bindi but is an ingenious easy-to-use alternative to the powder.

Today, bindi is more of a fashion statement than anything else, and the number of young performers sporting bindis is overwhelming even in the West.

***"Make your Faith larger than your Fears and your Dream bigger than your Doubts"***

- Robin Sharma, Author & Leadership speaker

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