

REGION

2

PUNJAB GOVT TRANSFORMS GOVERNMENT SCHOOLS OF PUNJAB: HARJOT SINGH BAINS



CORPORATES & INDUSTRY

5

"26TH EDITION OF BENGALURU TECH SUMMIT 2023" INAUGURATED BASED ON THEME "BREAKING BOUNDARIES"



POTPOURRI

8

NARGIS FAKHRI SAYS HER 'TATLUBAAZ' CHARACTER USES SENSUALITY TO HER ADVANTAGE



For decision on Bhai Rajoana's case, SGPC calls a meeting of Panthic representatives on Dec 2

COMMUNITY'S FIGURE BHAI RAJOANA SHOULD ABANDON IDEA OF HUNGER STRIKE: HARJINDER SINGH DHAMI

JAGMOHAN SINGH
Amritsar

After a marathon discussion on the case of Bhai Balwant Singh Rajoana in an urgent executive meeting of the Shiromani Gurdwara Parbandhak Committee (SGPC) held today, it has been decided to call a meeting of representatives of Panthic parties to consult the matter on December 2.

This special meeting of the SGPC executive was held under the leadership of its President Harjinder Singh Dhami, in which the letter sent by Bhai Balwant Singh Rajoana was discussed for about three hours. The meeting was called on 72 hours notice only on a one-point agenda.

Talking to the media after the meeting, Dhami said that in the letter sent by Rajoana, he had asked the SGPC to withdraw its mercy petition filed for him and also mentioned starting a hunger strike on December 5. He said



that this matter is very serious, on which a decision can be taken only according to the common opinion after knowing the views of the Panthic representatives. In 2012, a mercy petition was filed to the President of India by the SGPC in the case of Bhai Rajoana's death sentence, in view of the larger interests of the community in line with the Panthic sentiments. He said it would be premature for the SGPC to take any decision on this petition on its own. Therefore, the executive has decided that it is necessary to take the views of various Panthic parties, in view

of which a meeting will be held with the Panthic representatives on December 2. In this meeting, Panthic representatives from the 11-member committee formed earlier on the issue of Sikh prisoners on the directions of Akal Takht Sahib will be invited, besides some more representatives. He said that after this, the SGPC will again convene its executive meeting so that a concrete decision can be taken according to the Panthic sentiments.

The SGPC President said that in today's executive meeting, Rajoana was also appealed to withdraw his decision to go on

a hunger strike. He said that Rajoana is a community figure, who gave a firm response to the atrocities and suppression of rights in Punjab and especially of the Sikhs during the dark period. The whole community respects him and due to his contribution, he has been given the title of Zinda Shaheed (Living Martyr) by Akal Takht Sahib. The SGPC is continuously working for this warrior of the community and will stand by him like a rock in the future as well.

Dhmi criticized the Government of India over its negative approach in the case of Rajoana. He said that in 2019, the Centre government had announced the commutation of the death sentence of Bhai Balwant Singh Rajoana to life imprisonment, but it is unfortunate that the government has not implemented the decision till now. Later, the government also ignored the orders of the Supreme Court on the petition of Bhai Rajoana.

Punjab hikes state agreed price of sugarcane by Rs 11 per quintal



CHANDIGARH: Punjab Chief Minister Bhagwant Mann on Friday announced a state agreed price (SAP) hike for sugarcane by Rs 11 per quintal.

"Cane growers will get Rs 391 per quintal," he wrote on X.

"In Punjab, Rs 11 is considered a 'shagun', so I am announcing this as hike in the SAP."

Facing protests by sugarcane growers, last week, the Chief Minister assured them the government would continue to give them highest rate in the coming times. Haryana has recently enhanced sugarcane SAP to Rs 386 per quintal.

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GST collections jump 15 pc to Rs 1.68 lakh cr in Nov 2023



NEW DELHI: GST collections jumped 15 per cent to nearly Rs 1.68 lakh crore in November on increased domestic activity and festive season buying, the finance ministry said on Friday.

Goods and Services Tax (GST) mop-up was over Rs 1.45 lakh crore in November 2022.

"The gross GST revenue collected in the month of November 2023 is Rs 1,67,929 crore, out of which CGST is Rs 30,420 crore, SGST is Rs 38,226 crore, IGST is Rs 87,009 crore (including Rs 39,198 crore collected on

import of goods) and cess is Rs 12,274 crore (including Rs 1,036 crore collected on import of goods)," the ministry said in a statement. The November 2023 collections are, however, lower than Rs 1.72 lakh crore mopped up in October -- the second-highest collection ever since the GST rollout.

Revenues for November 2023 are 15 per cent higher than the GST revenues in the same month last year and the highest for any month year-on-year during 2023-24, up to November 2023, the ministry said.

J&K to bring law to criminalize social media posts on terrorism, separatism



FW DESK

Jammu and Kashmir will take a strict action against the misuse of social media to propagate content that could disrupt communal harmony or threaten the security of the region, the Director General of Police, RR Swain, said on Thursday.

This means that sharing any material on social media promoting separatism, terrorism, or communal tensions will soon be considered a criminal offense.

The decision follows an incident involving a student accused of posting offensive content on social media which triggered protests across colleges in Srinagar.

Swain emphasized that stringent action will be taken against individuals found sharing such content, utilizing a new law under Section 144 of the Code of Criminal Procedure. The police are actively investigating cases to ensure appropriate legal procedures are followed.

Swain highlighted concerns regarding messages originating from across the border, particularly from Pakistan, aiming to disrupt peace and stability in the Union Territory. He urged the public to be vigilant against anti-national elements seeking to exploit the situation for their disruptive agendas.

All 41 workers rescued from collapsed Silkyara tunnel

UTTARKASHI: Rescue workers pulled out all 41 workers trapped in Uttarakhand's Silkyara tunnel in a multi-agency rescue operation that hovered between hope and despair over almost 17 days.

Union minister V K Singh and Uttarakhand Chief Minister Pushkar Singh Dhama welcomed the workers as National Disaster Response Force men brought them out through a steel chute that lined a 60-metre escape passage.

An ambulance with the first of the 41 workers left the mouth of the tunnel around 8 pm, about an hour after a group of rat-hole mining experts dug through the last



stretch of rubble. There was hugging and cheers as the ordeal ended. Outside the tunnel some people chanted "Har Har



Mahadev" and "Bharat Mata ki Jai" Ambulances which had lined up at the tunnel ferried the workers to a community health centre where a special

41-bed ward had been set up.

Before this, the workers were given a quick medical checkup as they emerged out of the steel pipe.

A portion of the tunnel collapsed on November 12, blocking the exit for the workers who were inside.

Food, medicines and other essentials were sent to them through a six-inch pipe pushed through the rubble of the collapsed portion. ALK ALM RC.

CM Dhama said no worker was in a critical situation. But the labourers will be kept under medical observation for some time before being sent home, he said.

He said the youngest of the worker was rescued first. Relief was felt far and wide.

Punjab Farmers Conclude Protest, Submit Demands to Government

CHHAVI BHATIA
Chandigarh

The three-day farmers' protest in Punjab concluded on Tuesday as union leaders wrapped up discussions with Governor Banwari Lal Purohit, presenting a memorandum outlining their demands.

Earlier in the day, the farmer representatives engaged with state Agriculture Minister Gurmeet Singh Khuddian, deciding to schedule a meeting with Chief Minister Bhagwant Mann on December 20.

Organised under the banner of the Samyukta Kisan Morcha (SKM), the farmers presented a series of demands, encompassing issues such as establishing a minimum support price for all crops, implementing a law to guarantee crop purchases, and initiating



ing a Kisan pension of Rs 10,000 monthly for farmers aged 60 and above. Additional demands included action against those involved in the Lakhimpur Kheri incident, withdrawal of FIRs against farmers from the protests, annulment of FIRs related to stubble burning, elimination of the law mandating chip-based power meters, and re-

form in crop insurance policies. During the meeting with Khuddian, farmer leaders expressed objections to CM Mann's remarks on X (formerly Twitter), where he suggested that the people of Punjab might turn away from supporting farmers if protest activities persisted, causing inconvenience to the general public.

PM Modi speaks to rescued Uttarakhand tunnel workers



NEWDELHI: Prime Minister Narendra Modi spoke to the workers who were pulled out from Uttarakhand's Silkyara tunnel after a marathon rescue operation which lasted for 17 days and enquired about their health and well-being.

The Prime Minister also lauded the spirit of the whole team associated with this rescue operation, calling the safe evacuation of all 41 labourers trapped in the Silkyara tunnel of Uttarakhand and the success of the rescue operation as an emotional moment for the people of the country.

Praising the people involved with the rescue operation, Modi said, "Their bravery



and determination have given new life to our worker brothers. Everyone involved in this mission has set an amazing example of humanity and teamwork."

The Prime Minister wrote on X, "The success of the rescue operation of our worker brothers in Uttarakhand is going to make everyone emotional. I want to say to the comrades (workers) who were trapped in the tunnel that your courage and patience will inspire everyone. I wish you all well and good health. It is a matter of great satisfaction that after a long wait, these friends of ours will now meet their loved ones. The patience and courage that all these families have shown in this challenging time cannot be appreciated enough."

Dhmi told the Prime Minister that after being evacuated from the tunnel, all the workers have been taken directly to the hospital at Chinyalisaur where their necessary health check-ups etc. will be done.

Govt listed 18 bills for winter session of Parliament



MEENAKSHI BHATTACHARYA
New Delhi

According to the bulletin issued by the Lok Sabha Secretariat, the government has plan to bring a bill that seeks to increase the strength of the Jammu and Kashmir Assembly from 107 to 114 in a bid to provide representation to Kashmiri migrants, displaced persons from Pakistan-occupied Jammu and Kashmir and Scheduled Tribes. The government, in its meeting on November 29, listed 18 bills including two to extend provisions of the women's reservation act to Jammu and Kashmir and Puducherry and three to replace the criminal laws, during the Winter Session of Parliament beginning first week of December.

According to a bulletin issued by the Lok Sabha Secretariat, the government has also plans to bring a bill that seeks to increase the strength of the Jammu and Kashmir Assembly from 107 to 114 in a bid to provide representation to Kashmiri migrants, displaced persons from Pakistan-occupied Jammu and Kashmir and Scheduled Tribes. Apart from the Bills, the government has listed the first batch of supplementary demands for grants for the year 2023-24 for presentation, discussion and voting during the session.

India achieved emission intensity-related target 11 years ago: PM Modi at COP28

NEW DELHI: Firmly stating that climate action must be based on equality, Prime Minister Narendra Modi said on Friday that India achieved emission intensity-related targets 11 years ago.

Speaking at the inaugural session of a high-level segment of the United Nations Climate Change Conference (COP28) in Dubai, Modi said, "India aims to reduce the emissions intensity of its GDP by 45 per cent by 2030. We have decided to increase the share of non-fossil fuels to 50 per cent."

"Today, India has presented an excellent example of the balance between ecology and economy before the world. Despite India being home to 17 per cent of the world's population, its contribution to global carbon emissions is less than 4 per cent. India is one of the few economies which is on the path to meet NDC (Nationally Determined Contribution) targets.

"India is committed to the UN Framework for Climate Change process, and that is why, from this stage, I propose to host the COP33 summit in India in 2028," Modi said.

Modi, who also participated in group photo session with other world leaders at the COP28 summit, in his address in Hindi expressed gratitude for the continuous support to issues like climate justice, climate finance and green credit raised by him. Earlier, Modi was received at



the venue of the COP28 summit by UAE President Sheikh Mohammed bin Zayed Al Nahyan and United Nations Secretary-General Antonio Guterres.

During the summit, Modi met UK Foreign Secretary David Cameron and former Britain Prime Minister Tony Blair and admired their passion to work towards sustainable development. Interacting with Ethiopia Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed Ali on the sidelines of COP28, Modi wrote on X, "India values the longstanding friendship with Ethiopia, a relationship enriched by strong mutual cooperation."

The two-week United Nations Climate Change Conference opened on Thursday with a resounding call to accelerate collective climate action.

The conference is taking place in what is already known to be the hottest year ever recorded in human history, as the impacts of climate crisis wreak unprecedented havoc on human life and livelihoods

around the world. COP28 in Dubai from November 30 to December 12 is a decisive moment to act on climate commitments and prevent the worst impacts of climate change.

The UAE has the Presidency for COP28, with Sultan Al Jaber, Minister of Industry and Advanced Technology, as this year's President. This year's COP marks the conclusion of the "global stocktake", the first assessment of global progress in implementing the 2015 Paris Agreement.

The findings are stark: The world is not on track to limiting temperature rise to 1.5-degree Celsius by the end of this century.

It does recognise that countries are developing plans for a net-zero future, and the shift to clean energy is gathering speed, but it makes clear that the transition is nowhere near fast enough yet to limit warming within the current ambitions.

Death sentence to 4 criminals raped and killed 2 minor sisters in front of their mother

SATISH HANDA
Sonapat

Additional District and Session Judge Suruchi Atreja Singh of Fast Track Court in Sonapat sentenced death penalty along with fine Rs 30000 each to four criminals allegedly raped and murdered two minor sisters in front of their mother at Sonapat. The court convicted four accused in the much-discussed case of gang rape of two minor sisters in front of their mother and later killed them by forcing them to drink pesticide about two years ago. The court termed their crime as heinous and said



death penalty was appropriate for the culprits.

According to the information, the woman a widow originally hailing from Bihar, had made a complaint to the Kundli police

station in Haryana on August 9, 2021 that she was living in a rented house along with her two daughters and three sons in which four other youths from Bihar also lived on rent in a sepa-

rate room in the same premises. In her statement the woman said that she was sleeping in the room along with her 13 and 15 year old daughters on the night of August 5, 2021, whereas her sons were sleeping on the terrace when at around 12 o'clock in the night, the four youths living on rent in the adjoining room identified as Arun Pandit resident of Majgahi village of Darbhanga district of Bihar, Phool Chand resident of Masahori village, Dukhan Pandit resident of Jhakeeli and Ramsuhag resident of Bada village of Samastipur entered her room and caught her daughters in the room.

Mann, Kejriwal launch Punjab's Teerath Yatra scheme

CHANDIGARH: Punjab's Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) government has launched Mukh Mantri Teerath Yatra Scheme to facilitate the people in paying obeisance at the different religious places.

Punjab Chief Minister Bhagwant Mann, his Delhi counterpart and national convener of AAP Arvind Kejriwal on Monday together flagged off the train carrying devotees to pay obeisance at the Sikh shrine Sri Hazoor Sahib. The state government has earmarked Rs 40 crore budget for this scheme during the financial year 2023-24. The scheme will enable residents of the state who cannot travel to the major pilgrimage sites in Punjab and India due to financial and physical constraints.

The state government will facilitate their pilgrimage by



AC buses and trains. For short distance within the state, devotees can travel by buses and by trains for the longer distances across the country.

Facility of food, local travel, welcome kit and accommodation will be provided free of cost to the pilgrims during the journey. The welcome kit will consist of a bag, sheet, blanket, pillow, paste, oil, soap, shampoo, brush, umbrella and mirror etc. For the journey by train,

the pilgrimage destinations will include Sri Hazoor Sahib, Sri Patna Sahib, Varanasi, Mathura, Sri Vrindavan Dham and Ajmer Sharif. As many as 13 AC trains, each carrying 1000 devotees, will be in service during the current financial year. The destinations to be reached by AC buses include Sri Amritsar Sahib, Sri Anandpur Sahib, Sri Dandama Sahib Talwandi Sabo, Mata Vaishnu Devi, Mata Jwalaji, Mata Chintpurni ji, Mata Naina Devi ji, Sri Khatu Shyam ji and Salasar Balaji Dham ji. During the pilgrimage of these places AC accommodation and meals will be provided locally.

All residents of Punjab are eligible to avail this scheme. The pilgrims will be selected by the Deputy Commissioner of the concerned district.

Punjab govt transforms government schools of Punjab: Harjot Singh Bains

CHANDIGARH: In response to an MLA's query during the Question Hour in the Punjab Vidhan Sabha on Wednesday, Minister of School Education, Harjot Singh Bains, said that before March 16, 2022, there were over 3500 schools in the state with either no teacher or only one teacher, which has now come down to approximately 600.

Highlighting the transformative changes in school education under Chief Minister Bhagwant Singh Mann's leadership, Minister Bains assured the House that Punjab aims to become the first state where no school will lack a teacher or have only one teacher by March 31, 2024.

He reiterated the government's commitment, citing the naming of the Khatkar Kalan School after Shaheed



with Rs 290 crores already expended. He provided additional details, including the completion of 1300 km of boundary walls in 7654 schools and the construction of 10,000 new rooms. Punjab leads the country in deploying security personnel to schools, and the installation of Wi-Fi systems in all schools is projected by March 31, 2024, the minister added.

Bains announced the construction of a School of Eminence in Banga city, Shaheed Bhagat Singh Nagar, with the goal of providing quality education to all. The minister highlighted the unique uniform design for the School of Eminence students, crafted by the National Institute of Fashion Technology, Bangalore, receiving praise even from opposition leaders.

Bhagat Singh, a move unprecedented in the last 70 years. The minister reported ongoing construction in every government school in Punjab, noting that Nangaran School, part of his constituency Anandpur Sahib, now has boundary walls after seven decades.

Regarding finances, Minister Bains stressed that Rs 323 crores were allocated for constructing boundary walls,

Haryana Government launched, tackling global concern of drug addiction: Khattar



SATISH HANDA

Drug addiction among youths is a burning issue not only in Haryana but across the country and Haryana state government has decided to wipe out this evil from the state and has decided an action mode in a comprehensive manner through three multifaceted initiatives: raising public awareness, rescuing and rehabilitating youths trapped in the cycle of addiction and actively dismantling the drug supply chain in the state. This was stated by the Chief Minister Manohar Lal Khattar while speaking as chief guest sometime ago at the 11th annual function of Gyan Mansarovar of Prajapita Brahma Kumari Ishwariya Vishwavidyalaya in Panipat and also launched the Drug-Free Haryana campaign recently in the state as part of the larger Drug-Free India Campaign and also flagged off the Drug-Free Campaign Awareness Bus. Apart from laying the foundation stone of Manmohini Bhawan being built at a cost of about Rs 3 crore in Gyan Mansarovar, Khattar also inaugurated Dadi Chandramani Universal Peace Auditorium established at a cost of about Rs 3 crore in Gyan Mansarovar.

Addressing the gathering, the Chief Minister affirmed the government's strict actions against individuals involved in drug trade and anti-national activities. He said that the provision of stringent penalties for such illicit collaborations has already been made by the government. CM said, Sanskar and Meditation are key solutions to combat drug addiction. He urged parents to instill positive values in their children and encourage them to focus on devotion to God. Khattar highlighted the collaboration efforts of Sant Samaj as well as other social welfare organizations also has assured to join hands in the Anti-Drug campaign, inspiring youth to combat substance abuse.

Drug above 5 kg, Arms seized at Indo-Pak border village



JAGMOHAN SINGH Amritsar

In a joint operation of Border Security Force and Punjab Police seized consignment of drug, arms and ammunition which were smuggled from Pakistan here today at Indo-Pak border village. In an official statement issued, spokesman of Punjab police said that in a joint operation with BSF 5.240 kilogram heroin (drug) one pistol, two magazines along with 20 live cartridges were seized which were smuggled to India from Pakistan through drone. In this regard a criminal case under NDPS and Arms and Ammunition was registered at police station Lopokey. Police said that there was specific information with BSF which was shared with police about the smuggling of narcotics and arms from Pakistan through drone. In the light of information a search operation by Punjab police and BSF was carried out at border village 'Chak Allah Baksh', whereupon troops succeeded to seize drugs and arms in the agriculture field. Further investigation is underway, said police.

Akali Dal seeks CBI probe into 'sacriligious attack' on Gurdwara

CHANDIGARH: The Shiromani Akali Dal (SAD) on Friday requested Punjab Governor Banwarilal Purohit to recommend a CBI probe into the "sacriligious armed attack" on Gurdwara Akal Bunga Sahib in Sultanpur Lodhi "on the orders" of Punjab Chief Minister Bhagwant Mann on November 23, asserting it had hurt the sentiments of the Sikh sangat worldwide.

Briefing the media about the meeting with the Governor, SAD president Sukhbir Badal said "the armed attack on the peaceful sangat at 4 am when it was reciting gurbani has reminded Sikhs of a similar attack on Sri Darbar Sahib in Amritsar in 1984. Sikhs worldwide are outraged and they are now seeking justice for this heinous act".

Giving details of the case,



Badal said: "As per sources, the Chief Minister had ordered the police to remove one faction of Nihang Singhs from Gurdwara Akal Bunga Sahib to facilitate a takeover to favour his close friend and head of a rival faction of Nihang Singhs."

"It is even more despicable that the Chief Minister gave this order reportedly in an inebriated condition at night due to which the Kapurthala Police entered the gurdwara premises in the early morning in full combat uniform with assault rifles and indulged in wanton firing." He said evidence in this regard had been submitted to the Governor.

Badal said the SAD delegation, comprising Balwinder Singh Bhundur, Prem Singh Chandumajra and Daljit Singh Cheema, also apprised the Governor that the "Chief Minister had compounded his crime by forming a Special Investigating Team (SIT) to probe the incident which was headed by the same police officer who had carried out the orders of the Chief Minister."

He said: "In such circumstances only a CBI probe could lay bare the entire conspiracy and culminate in registration of a murder case as well as that for hurting religious sentiments against the Chief Minister as well as the police officers responsible for this ghastly incident."

Six fast-track courts to solve pending crime against women cases in Haryana



SATISH HANDA

Six fast-track courts will start functioning in Haryana state in five districts which would include two courts in Faridabad district and one court each in Gurugram, Panipat, Sonapat and Nuh district for the speedy trials and decision of heinous crimes against women in the state. Talking to media persons Director General Police Haryana Shatrughit Kapoor said that there is a proposal to start fast track courts in all districts across the state where more than 50 cases of crime against women are registered in the district. He said that these courts would take up cases of rape, sexual attack and dowry deaths. DGP said, judges of these courts would not deal with other criminal cases, which would help them to hear cases on day-to-day basis and complete trial speedily.

He said, the courts where the number of such crime against women is more than 100, like in Faridabad district two such courts would be established.

According to information, it is often seen that the victims turn hostile due to long legal proceedings, threats and social pressures. This initiative will help in completing trials quickly and also raise conviction rates in crimes against women and can act as a deterrent to others. Information also reveals that meanwhile, no fast-track court has been designated so far in the district courts of Kurukshetra, Panchkula, Jind, Kaithal, Narnaul, Rewari, Sirsa and Yamunanagar districts in Haryana as they have less than 50 cases of rape and dowry deaths. The Union Cabinet is learnt to have given its nod to the special fast-track courts to deliver swift justice in cases involving sexual offences.

Civil Hospital Yamuna Nagar organized Blood Donation Camp on Int'l AIDS Day

GULSHAN KUMAR Yamuna Nagar

The Newly constructed District Hospital at Yamuna Nagar organized a Blood Donation Camp on 1st December to mark the International AIDS Day. The occasion was inaugurated by MLA Yamunanagar Ghanshyam Dass Arora & Rajesh Sapra District President (BJP) graced the occasion as Guest of Honor. Inner Wheel Club Yamunanagar was instrumental in organizing the camp. And Parul Khanna was proactive in creating awareness among the Youth about essentiality of

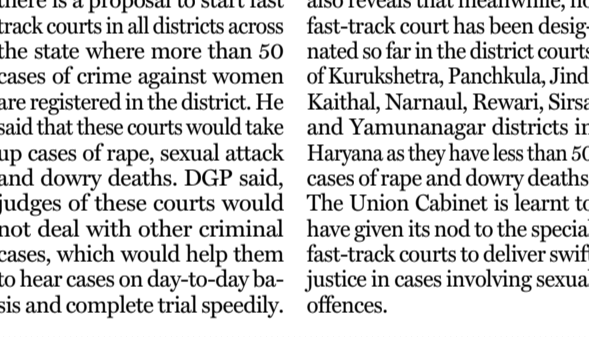


Voluntary Blood Donation especially for management of thalassemia patients. Bela Vinayak help and attitude is a boon for the thalassemia patients. The 100 crore Hospital building was inaugurated by the Hon'ble Chief Minister of Haryana 6 months back. The hospital has made many accomplishments since

Punjab Police bust inter-state arms smuggling gang backed by Jaggu Bhagwanpuria ; one held with 10 pistols

JAGMOHAN SINGH Amritsar

Commissionerate Police Amritsar claimed to have busted an Interstate arms smuggling gang backed by Gangster Jaggu Bhagwanpuria with the arrest of its one key member from the area of Maqbulpura in Amritsar city, said CP Amritsar Gurpreet Singh Bhullar here on Wednesday. In an official release, the arrested person has been identified as Jaspreet Singh alias Jassi (19), a resident of Shaheed Udham Singh Nagar, Amritsar. The arrested accused has been facing three criminal cases pertaining to snatching in different police stations of Amritsar city. The police team also recovered 10 .32 bore pistols, a backpack and a motorcycle Platina bearing registration number PB46-U-2249 from his possession.



CP Gurpreet Singh Bhullar said that acting swiftly on a secret information about illegal weapons being smuggled from Madhya Pradesh to supply them to criminal elements in the state, Police team from Maqbulpura Police Station under the supervision of ADCP CITY-3 Abhimanyu Rana launched a special operation and apprehended the accused from the Maqbulpura area when he was travelling on his motorcycle.

"During questioning, the arrested accused disclosed that he received money through 'Hawala' from his abroad based accomplice to buy arms from Madhya Pradesh," he said, while adding that Police teams are putting all efforts to unearth the whole network, identify the complete procurement and supply chain across to bust the network. Preliminary investigations have also revealed that the gang was hatching a conspiracy to target their rival gang members and commit crimes. A case FIR no. 264 dated 28-11-2023 has been registered under Section 25(8) of the Arms Act at Maqbulpura Police Station, Amritsar.

Four smugglers held with rare 'Red Sand Boa' snake

SATISH HANDA Yamunanagar

A joint team of the Wild Life Department and the police arrested four persons alleged involved in snake smuggling from Chhachhrouli in Yamunanagar district and recovered from them a 'Red Sand Boa' snake which is in much demand in India and several other countries, reportedly used in production of drugs especially to enhance sex power and cosmetics. Information reveals that such type of snakes are being sold in international markets at the price ranging up to Rs 1 crore. The teams of Wild Life Department and Chhachhrouli police recovered a 'Red Sand Boa' snake from the possession of the arrested persons.

While talking to media persons Jayvinder Nehra, Inspector of Wild Life Department Kalesar (Chhachhrouli) in Yamunanagar district said that the accused smugglers were identified as Ram Singh of Sadhaura in Yamunanagar district, Kuldeep, Mohit and Sagar all trio residents of Muzaffarnagar in Uttar Pradesh were arrested. He said that after registration of a case under Sections 9, 39, 40, 42, 43, 44, 49, 50, 51, 52, and 55 of the Wild Life Protection Act 1972, the accused were produced before the Special Environment Court at Kurukshetra, where they were sent to 14 days judicial custody. Nehra said that Ram Singh was the seller of the snake and Kuldeep, Mohit and Sagar were to buy the said snake.



tion recorded 172 instances of the illegal sand boa trade across the country. Vishal Kaushik, deputy chief wildlife warden, Panchkula division said that such type of snakes are categorized in Schedule IV of the Wildlife Protected Act 1972 have strict ban over possession and trafficking and such snakes are in high demand in the illegal markets and are sold in the global market at the rate up to Rs 1 crore each on an average. Preliminary investigation reveals that the deal for the sale of this snake was finalized at Rs 20 lakh and the financial deal was to be conducted through Hawala. Police recovered from the smugglers and their associates, including Ram Singh, a resident of Sadhaura in Yamunanagar district. The snake seized by the policemen having 838 gm weight having 32 inch length

Punjab Police bust drug smuggling racket being operated by USA based accused as two held with 6-KG Heroin

JAGMOHAN SINGH Amritsar

Punjab Police on Sunday busted a cross-border drug smuggling racket being operated by USA-based smuggler Jasmit Singh alias Lucky with the arrest of two persons after recovering 6Kg heroin from their possession.

Commissioner of Police (CP) Amritsar Gurpreet Singh Bhullar has identified the arrested drug smugglers Mohinderpal Singh of Model Town, Hoshiarpur and Sourav Sharma of Panj Pipli Chand Nagar, Hoshiarpur.

Apart from seizing heroin, Police teams have also impounded his Hyundai i20 car (PB91J5186), in which they were going to supply the heroin consignment.

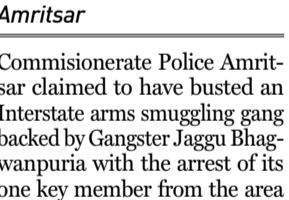
CP said that following reliable inputs that associates of Jasmit Lucky have retrieved the heroin consignment sent by Pak-based smugglers from across the border, and they are going to deliver it to someone, Police teams from CIA Staff-3 conducted a special police checking in the area of village Burj at Attari Road and arrested both the accused persons when they were waiting after receiving consignment from someone in their i20 car.

13% fall in stubble burning cases recorded in Haryana as compared to Last year: Dy Director Agriculture

SATISH HANDA Ambala

Addressing a press conference here, Deputy Director Agriculture Department Jasvinder Singh said that 13% fall in the stubble burning cases in open have been recorded this year as compared to previous year, and till 30th November 2023 state government has registered 195 cases in the state as compared to 225 cases of burning crop waste in open registered last year. He said, Rs 2.75 lakh fine has been recovered from the farmers burnt crop wastes in the open this year allegedly violated directions not to burn crop wastes in open, which not only harm environment but also harmful for the health of people as well as destroy the quality of soil of the land.

Jasvinder Singh said that the agriculture department availing the services of a private organization Delite India to bring awareness among farmers about the ill effects of burning stubble in the open and create logistical problems faced by farmers. The firm educating the farmers about use of crop wastes (Parali) in industry as well using as fuel in brick kilns and also to prepare CNG, assisting farmers to earn handsome money. According to the Union Environment Ministry report, stubble burning in Punjab and Haryana has declined by 27 per cent and 37 per cent respectively



as against last year. According to a spokesperson of the Ministry, from 83,002 fires in 2020, the count in Punjab dropped to 71,304 in 2021, 49,922 in 2022 and further to 36,663 in 2023. He said, In comparison to 2022, there was a 27 per cent reduction in farm fires in 2023. The reduction was even higher, standing at 49 per cent and 56 per cent respectively, when compared to 2021 and 2020.

The report revealed that In 2020, the farm fire count in Haryana was 4,202 which increased to 6,987 in 2021, then reduced to 3,661 in 2022 and further decreased to 2,303 in 2023. This marks a 37 per cent reduction in 2023 compared to 2022, with reductions of 67 per cent compared to 2021 and 45 per cent compared to 2020. The Ministry said, four districts in Punjab saw over 50 per cent fewer fires in 2023 as compared to 2022. Five districts showed improvements ranging from 27 per cent to 50 per cent. Similarly, three districts in Haryana recorded more than 50 per cent fewer fires in 2023 than in 2022. Five districts saw improvements of up to 37 per cent, while five others had increased fire counts in 2023. The data showed Punjab had only four days in 2023 where fires exceeded 2,000 counts, down from 16 in 2020, 14 in 2021, and 10 in 2022. Whereas, Haryana witnessed three days in 2023 where farm fires exceeded 100 counts, down from 16 in 2020, 32 in 2021, and 15 in 2022.

Rajanath lauds Indian Coast Guard for ensuring maritime security

NEWDELHI: Defence Minister Rajanath Singh on Thursday inaugurated the three-day 40th Commanders conference of the Indian Coast Guard and hailed it for ensuring the coastal security of the country. In his address, Rajanath Singh complimented ICG for ensuring maritime security by being in the vanguard in the field of search & rescue and pollution response. He called upon the ICG to continue working with dedication and professionalism towards bolstering the coastal defences and maritime capabilities of the country. The ICG, since its inception, has rendered a yeoman service to the seafarers by ensuring their safety and



security in all circumstances," he said. He stressed on the need to continue the drive against contraband and drug trafficking. The conference, aimed at addressing contemporary maritime challenges

and fortifying the country's coastal surveillance mechanisms, is being attended by senior officers of the Ministry of Defence and the ICG. During the conference, the Defence Minister was given an overview

of the ongoing development projects, operational readiness and future expansion plans of the ICG by Director General Rakesh Pal. The conference agenda encompasses a wide spectrum of

crucial topics, including enhancing maritime safety and security such as search and rescue operations, maritime pollution response, drive against contraband, drug trafficking, safety of fishermen, seafarers at sea, optimising coastal security measures, fostering inter-agency coordination, and promoting Maritime Domain Awareness, the official added. The conference is held annually, where all the officers put forth the roadmap for the future and discuss various policy and strategic issues. It aims to carve out a futuristic vision for the service and to determine the modalities to overcome the challenges efficiently, the official added.

Sonia Gandhi releases book on Kharge's life

LAUDS HIS INTEGRITY, HARDWORK, AND IDEOLOGICAL COMMITMENT

KAVITA SHARMA
New Delhi



Chairperson of the Congress Parliamentary Party, Ms Sonia Gandhi today led a galaxy of dignitaries in praising and lauding the integrity, hardwork and ideological commitment of the Congress President Mallikarjun Kharge. 'Mallikarjun Kharge - Political Engagement with Compassion, Justice and Inclusive Development', a book on the life, political journey, struggles and travails of Congress President, was launched by Ms Gandhi at Jawahar Bhawan, in New Delhi. A short film showcasing the journey of Mr Kharge was also screened. Prof Sukhadeo Thorat is the Editor of the book with Chetan Shinde as the Co-Editor. The book delves into Mr Kharge's over half a century long outstanding political journey as closely observed by his political colleagues and friends from all walks of life. The book unveils Mr Kharge's identity as a social activist deeply committed to the welfare of labourers and marginalized individuals, an institution builder in the field of education and a person profoundly driven by a vision to transform and reconstruct the caste-ridden inequities in society. Speaking on the occasion, Ms Gandhi said, fifty years is a long time in politics and Mr Kharge didn't just survive

its unpredictable course, he continued to rise higher and higher throughout his political career. "Not once did Kharge Ji compromise on his ideology, not once did he drift away from the cause of the poor, not once did he compromise on dignity and work exemplifies the values that the founders and architects of modern India espoused. Embodying the indomitable Indian spirit, he has overcome multiple adversities in his long journey". She said, "his illustrious life and work exemplifies the values that the founders and architects of modern India espoused. Embodying the indomitable Indian spirit, he has overcome multiple adversities in his long journey".

"Leading by example, he symbolises the belief that no matter who you are or where you come from, you can rise to ever greater heights in the service of the nation. That is, and will continue to be an inspiration to millions of Indians drawn to be in public service", Mrs Gandhi observed. Highlighting the role of the Congress party in building the nation, she said, "this was the party which has shaped Kharge Ji. Faced with communalism and discrimination at a tender age, he consciously chose to be secular and liberal. Faced with poverty and discrimination, he courageously embraced compassion towards all beings". Praising Mr Kharge's commitment to public service, she said, this is what drove him, consciously, to choose to work for the public good, to empower the weakest and most vulnerable sections of our society, and to free them from the shackles and hurdles he himself had known closely at first hand. "To me personally, Kharge Ji has been a wise companion and a pillar of strength. He has shared many of my burdens with stoic courage, unwavering kindness and a sharp wit", she said on a personal note.

Ladakh to have South East Asia's first Night Sky Sanctuary soon



RAJU WILLIAM Hanle (Ladakh)

Ladakh will soon have South East Asia's first Night Sky Sanctuary being set up with the help of Indian Institute of Astrophysics, Bengaluru affiliated to the Department of Science & Technology, Government of India (GoI).

This Night Sky Reserve will be located at Hanle village in Eastern Ladakh as a part of Changthang Wildlife Sanctuary. It will boost Astro-tourism in India and will be one of the world's highest-located sites for optical, infra-red, and gamma-ray telescopes. Union Minister of State (Independent Charge) Science & Technology; MoS PMO, Personnel, Public Grievances, Pensions, Atomic Energy and Space disclosed this while addressing the gathering after inaugurating the exhibition 'Ladakh's Pride' being held here. The exhibition is being held here to mark the fourth anniversary of the establishment of the Union Territory of Ladakh. Prime Minister Narendra Modi will be requested to inaugurate this first-of-its-kind venture in India, said the minister. Spread over 1,073 square kilometres, the Night Sky Reserve is located within the Changthang Wildlife Sanctuary and adjacent to the Indian Astronomical Observatory, the second-highest optical telescope in the world, of Indian Institute of Astrophysics at Hanle at an elevation of 4500 metres.

PM Modi offers prayers at Tirumala temple

NEWDELHI: Prime Minister Narendra Modi prayed at Sri Venkateswara Swamy Temple in Tirumala, Andhra Pradesh on Monday and also sought blessings of lord Venkateswara Swamy for the good health, well-being and prosperity of 140 crore Indians.



Sharing glimpses from Venkateswara Swamy Temple in Tirumala, the Prime Minister posted on X: "At the Sri Venkateswara Swamy Temple in Tirumala, prayed for the good health, well-being and

prosperity of 140 crore Indians." Modi also greeted the nation on the auspicious occasion of the Parkash Purab of Guru Nanak Dev Ji. He also shared a video clip from yesterday's Mann Ki Baat in which he had paid tributes to the Sikh Guru. The Prime Minister posted on X: "Greetings on the auspicious occasion of the Parkash Purab of Sri Guru Nanak Dev Ji. His emphasis on serving others and furthering brotherhood give strength to millions around the world. Had also paid tributes to him during #MannKiBaat yesterday."

PM Narendra Modi takes sortie on Tejas aircraft in Bengaluru

ARUN KUMAR RAO
Bengaluru

Prime Minister Narendra Modi co-piloted and undertook sortie the indigenous trainer version of light combat aircraft (LCA) Tejas. The PM was in Bengaluru visiting the Hindustan Aeronautics Limited site, during his visit to state-run Hindustan Aeronautics Limited. Modi arrived in the city earlier today and visited Defence PSU Hindustan Aeronautics Limited to review the ongoing work at its manufacturing facilities, officials said. After the flight, which took from HAL Airport lasted several minutes, Prime Minister said in a post on X, "Successfully completed a sortie on the Tejas. The experience was incredibly enriching, significantly bolstering my confidence in our country's indigenous capabilities, and leaving me with a renewed sense of pride and optimism about our national potential. Flying in Tejas today, I can say with



immense pride that due to our hard work and dedication, we are no less than anyone in the world in the field of self-reliance. Heartiest congratulations to the Indian Air Force, DRDO and HAL as well as all Indians," he added. Several countries have evinced interest in buying Tejas, a light combat aircraft, and US defence giant GE Aerospace had inked a pact with HAL to jointly produce engines for the Mk-II-Tejas during the Prime Minister's recent state visit to the US. According to sources here, Under the Narendra Modi government, an order of Rs 36,468 crore for the delivery of 83 LCA Mk 1A Tejas aircraft has been placed with Hindustan Aeronautics Limited. The delivery of these Tejas aircraft is scheduled to begin by February 2024, they said, asserting that the government has taken giant steps for increasing India's defence preparedness and indigenisation, which includes Tejas fighter aircraft. "The LCA Tejas twin-seater is a light-weight, all-weather, multi-role 4.5 generation aircraft. It is designed to support training requirements of the IAF and augment itself to the role of a fighter in case of necessity," HAL said about the LCA in which the PM flew.

BRS, Cong, BJP in a free-for-all over freebies to woo Telangana voters

NEW DELHI: It's free for all over freebies in Telangana Assembly elections with the main contenders for power vying with each other to promise the moon to the voters.

While it was Congress which made a headstart with its six guarantees, the ruling Bharat Rashtra Samithi (BRS) tried to surpass that and not to be left behind, while the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) dodged its anti-freebies policy to offer sops to the electorate. The Congress pulled out all the stops to woo various sections, especially women, youth, farmers and different caste groups. The party had started the exercise last year with farmers' declaration. Since May this year, it has come out with declarations for youth, Backward Classes, Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes, and minorities. However, it was the launch of six guarantees on September 17 which set the ball rolling. Senior Congress leader Sonia Gandhi unveiled the six guarantees at a



mega rally in Hyderabad which coincided with the Congress Working Committee (CWC) meeting. Upbeat over its victory in Karnataka, Congress drafted six guarantees on the lines of five guarantees given in the neighbouring state of Karnataka. After failing to capture power in Telangana twice despite claiming credit for carving out the state, Congress expects the six guarantees to give it a maiden victory in the country's youngest state, which goes to the polls on November 30. Financial assistance of Rs 2,500 for every woman, free bus travel for women in TSRTC buses across Telangana, and

cooking gas cylinder for Rs 500 are among the six guarantees. Under Rythu Bharosa, it promised annual financial assistance of Rs15, 000 per acre for farmers, including tenant farmers. For agriculture labourers, it promised Rs 12,000 per year. Farmers will also get Rs 500 bonus per quintal for paddy crop above the Minimum Support Price (MSP). If voted to power, Congress will give house sites and Rs 5 lakh for the homeless. It will also give 250 square yard plots to the Telangana movement fighters. Under Gruha Jyothi, all households will get 200 units of free electricity. Under Yuva Vikasam, the Congress prom-

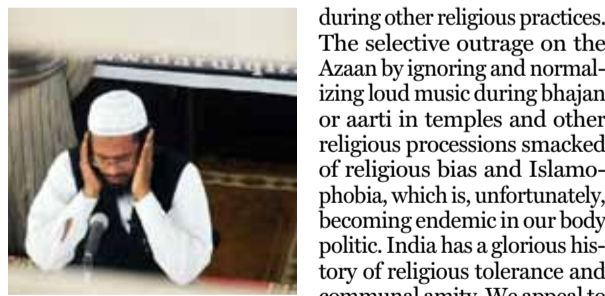
ised Vidya Bharosa Card worth Rs 5 lakh each for students and Telangana international schools in all mandals. Under Cheyutha, the party promised Rs 4, 000 monthly pension and Rs 10 lakh health insurance. Going beyond the six guarantees, Congress released its manifesto on November 17, offering a plethora of sops. Waiver of farm loans up to Rs 2 lakh, interest-free farm loans up to Rs 3 lakh, a comprehensive crop insurance scheme for all major crops, Rs 1,00,000 and 10 grams of gold as Indiramma gift to the Hindu and Rs 1,60,000 for the minority girls at the time of their marriage, financial assistance of Rs 12,000 per year to every auto-rickshaw driver and social security to unorganised workers are among the promises announced in the 42-page manifesto titled 'Abhaya Hastam'. For unemployed youth, it promised annual job calendars and filling of 2 lakh vacant posts within a specified time period.

Jamaat-e-Islami Hind welcomes Gujarat HC verdict dismissing PIL seeking ban on Azaan on loudspeakers

KAVITA SHARMA
New Delhi

The Vice President of Jamaat-e-Islami Hind, Malik Mohtashim Khan has welcomed the Gujarat High Court's dismissal of a Public Interest Litigation (PIL) seeking a ban on Azaan through loudspeakers. In a statement to the media, the JIH Vice-President said, "We welcome the judgment by the division bench of Chief Justice Sunita Agarwal and Justice Aniruddha Mayee of the Gujarat

High Court that dismissed a PIL seeking a ban on Azaan through loudspeakers. We completely concur with the views of the Hon'ble Chief Justice of the Gujarat High Court that the plea was "wholly misconceived" and it was difficult to "understand as to how the human voice making Azaan through loudspeakers could achieve the decibels to the extent of creating noise pollution causing health hazard for the public at large." Khan further added, "Jamaat feels that there was an apparent



contradiction in the complaint about noise disturbance and health hazard due to Azaan compared to the noise generated

during other religious practices. The selective outrage on the Azaan by ignoring and normalizing loud music during bhajan or aarti in temples and other religious processions smacked of religious bias and Islamophobia, which is, unfortunately, becoming endemic in our body politic. India has a glorious history of religious tolerance and communal amity. We appeal to the people of India not to fall prey to those who wish to incite hatred and misuse religion for their political agenda."

Congress will fulfill guarantees made to people of Telangana: Priyanka Gandhi

A day ahead of the crucial Telangana Assembly elections, Congress general secretary Priyanka Gandhi Vadra on Wednesday hailed the women power saying that her party will fulfill the guarantees made to the people of the state. In a post on X, Priyanka Gandhi said, "When women take a resolution, they die only after completing it. We will come to Telangana and fulfill the guarantees. We will create history by following the path of truth, honesty and righteousness with the public." She also attached over 38 seconds long video in which she is heard saying "When I was speaking to my mother Sonia Gandhi, and she asked me what do I speak in my public meetings in Telangana and I replied I speak the truth". Priyanka Gandhi in the video said that as a mother Sonia Gandhi told her that the promises made to the people must be honoured. "I told her that all the party leaders have taken a pledge to complete the guarantees made to the people in the state," she said.

Congress delegation meets Election Commission over code violation



KAVITA SHARMA
New Delhi

The Congress today sought action against the Prime Minister Narendra Modi and the union Home Minister Amit Shah over violation of the Election Code of Conduct. The party also flagged for the attention of the Election Commission the tampering of postal ballots by the District Electoral Officer in Pallaghat in Madhya Pradesh seeking immediate action against the concerned officer. The party sought preventive action in Telangana where it apprehended the ruling Bharat Rashtra Samithi circumventing the restriction on campaigning during the 'Silence Period' that began at 5 pm today. A delegation of the party comprising of senior leader and CWC member Dr Abhishek Manu Singhvi, Salman Khurshid, Gurdeep Singh Sappal, Pranav Jha, Vineet Punia and

others met the Election Commission here today. Ajay Maken and Dr. Ajoy Kumar joined the meeting virtually. Briefing reporters after the meeting, Dr Singhvi said, the delegation complained on three specific violations, one by the Prime Minister and other two by the Home Minister with video recordings without any ambiguity. The delegation told the commission that the complaint had been filed on November 24 and still no action had been taken. Dr Singhvi observed that it was a matter of the credibility of the Election Commission that it should not be seen as not taking action against the mighty and powerful. About the tampering of postal ballots in Madhya Pradesh, the Congress delegation demanded immediate action against the concerned officer. "Who will guard the guardian?" Dr Singhvi remarked.

Unemployment rate dips in India's urban areas during July-Sept



NEW DELHI: The unemployment rate in India's urban areas has declined to 6.6 per cent during the July-September quarter this year from 7.2 per cent in the same period of the previous year, according to the quarterly bulletin released by the Ministry of Statistics. The unemployment rate covers persons of age 15 years and above. In the case of male workers, the unemployment rate in urban areas was 6 per cent in July - September 2023 while for female workers the unemployment rate decreased from 9.4 per cent in July - September 2022 to 8.6 per cent in July - September 2023, figures compiled in the periodic labour force survey (PLFS) showed. Other indicators which include the Labour Force Participation Rate (LFPR) Worker Population Ratio (WPR) also reflected a decline in unemployment. LFPR, which is defined as the percentage of persons in labour force (i.e. working or seeking or available for work) in the population went up to 49.3 per cent during the period.

'Became a national party despite govt targeting us', says Kejriwal on AAP's 11th foundation day

Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal on Sunday greeted the party workers on AAP's 11th foundation day and said that despite "targeting by the government", it became a national party. Addressing a press conference, Kejriwal, who is also the national convener of the party said, "Today, on this day in 2012, AAP was formed and it became a national party in 11 years. Due to hard work by the party, it formed government in two states, and in two states its MLAs were elected and people are talking about



"All agencies of the country were put after AAP but they never found any evidence to this day," he claimed. "This is the biggest certificate of our honesty," the AAP leader said.

On the occasion, Kejriwal said that he misses party leaders Manish Sisodia, Satyendra Jain, Sanjay Singh and Vijay Nair, who are in jail in "false cases". He said that his heart is heavy, as this is the first foundation day when party leaders Sisodia, Jain, Singh and Nair are not here with us. "They have been jailed under false cases. BJP knows to make leaders of other parties bend through false cases but they don't know how to do that to AAP. It is a matter of pride for us that none of our MLAs sold themselves or broke," Kejriwal added.

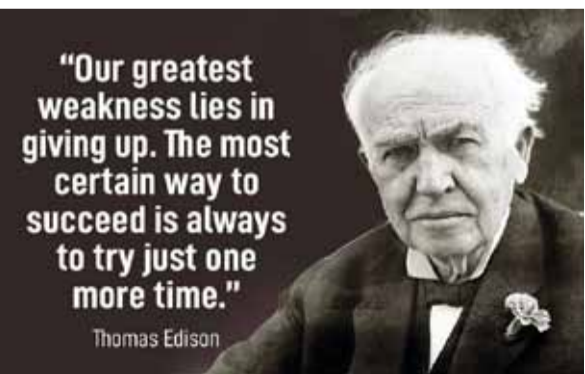


Rescue operation shines light on deeper issues

The recent rescue of 41 workers trapped for 17 days in a collapsed tunnel in Silkyara, Uttarakhand, is nothing short of a testament to human resilience and the effectiveness of India's National Disaster Management Authority. On the evening of November 28, after extensive and painstaking efforts, rescue personnel successfully evacuated the workers, marking the end of a harrowing ordeal. The rescue operation was remarkable not only for its successful outcome but also for the rapid mobilization of resources. Within a day of the tunnel collapse, officials managed to provide the trapped workers with essential supplies like oxygen and food. The subsequent deployment of an auger drill from Delhi and the meticulous efforts to navigate through the challenges posed by the unstable terrain underscore the dedication and expertise of the rescue teams. President Draupadi Murmu lauded the rescue as "one of the greatest" in history. While the praise is well-deserved, the incident also casts a spotlight on broader issues concerning worker safety and infrastructure development in India. This incident, along with the July tragedy on the Nagpur-Mumbai Samruddhi Expressway, where a crane collapse killed 20 workers, both involving Navayuga Engineering Company Ltd., raises serious questions about the safety standards in infrastructure projects. The government's response should not only involve a thorough investigation into these incidents but also a broader reassessment of safety protocols and working conditions on such sites. Moreover, the Char Dham highway project, where this incident occurred, has been a subject of concern among experts who question the geological viability of the terrain for such extensive construction. The Silkyara tunnel rescue operation should serve as a wake-up call. It highlights the need for preemptive measures to ensure the safety of workers and future users of these infrastructures. Ensuring that such heroic rescue operations are not needed in the first place requires a commitment to safe working environments and adherence to geological and environmental wisdom in infrastructure development.

LETTERBOX

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VIBODH PARTHASARATHI BELIEVES THE BILL MUST SAFEGUARD PRESS FREEDOM AND DIVERSITY IN BROADCASTING

Press freedom at a crossroads

The Broadcasting Services (Regulation) Bill released in November by the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting (MIB) is part of an arc of endeavours to regulate broadcasting in an integrated manner. The last initiative to take on this ambitious task was back in 2007, in the form of the Broadcasting Services Regulation Bill. Ten years before that, when cable and satellite broadcasting was in its infancy, the Broadcasting Bill of 1997 scripted the first effort to visualise an integrated regulatory framework for this sector. The recent third rendition of a Broadcasting Bill comes on the heels of a pre-consultation paper on 'National Broadcasting Policy' by the Telecom Regulatory Authority of India (TRAI), a document initiated following a reference from the MIB.

There appear to be three positive propositions in the current Bill, albeit each requiring crucial refinements. First, it obliges broadcasting network operators and broadcasters to maintain records of subscriber data, and subject this to periodic external audits, as is the international norm. Second, the Bill seeks to stipulate a methodology for audience measurement, and the sale of ratings data. Both mechanisms will bring the much-needed transparency in the opaque value chain of the cable and satellite television business in our country. That said, the Bill completely lacks any guardrails to shield the privacy of subscribers and audiences in such practices of data collection. Third, the provision to permit private actors in terrestrial broadcasting will encourage competition to Doordarshan, the state broadcaster, as is in many G-20 countries. Back in 2016, TRAI had initiated consultations on this. At that time, there was an opinion about terrestrial broadcasting proving viable only for large players, including those already in cable and satellite broadcasting; consequently, such a move, it could be argued, is likely to diminish the diversity of suppliers in broadcasting as a whole. This anxiety can be pacified if the



an internal body to self-certify news programming. The issue is not only of feasibility and costs but also of desirability. Since the role of an internal oversight mechanism is to maintain the accuracy of news and quality of journalism, its design is best left to individual news outlets. They could decide whether to design this along the lines of an ombudsman, as some newspapers attempted in the past, or akin to a 'Readers' Editor', as practised by few online news outlets.

On ownership and a regulator

Now, the two crucial silences in the Bill. Like the TRAI paper, the Bill is mum on issues of ownership. While the Bill is keen to stipulate a methodology for audience measurement, there is no desire to measure the extent of cross-media and vertical ownership. Both these forms of media power thwart the diversity of suppliers, and perhaps, consequently, that of viewpoints, in the marketplace of news. In fact, just last year, TRAI itself had drawn attention to extensive cross-media ownership between newspapers and news broadcasters through indirectly owned affiliates, and the need to evolve a system to capture this.

Amusingly, one such news outlet with cross-media interests was apprehensive about inroads by telecom companies into broadcasting. They rightly feel such inroads add another dimension to vertical integration, since some cable and DTH distributors also own, in a roundabout manner, news broadcasters. Both renditions of vertical integration risk the ability of the audience to access, avail, and/or afford news from a diverse range of suppliers.

The Bill is equally silent on creating an independent broadcast regulator, as hinted in TRAI's paper. This was first mooted in the 'airwaves' judgment of 1995, subsequently in

the 1997 Broadcasting Bill, and reiterated in the 2007 iteration of the Bill. Instead, this Bill plans a 'Broadcast Advisory Council' to examine viewers' grievances and violations of the Programme Code and Advertisement Code. This raises two concerns: first, the capacity of such a Council to track and address grievances, genuine or motivated, raised by over 800 million TV viewers; and second, the lack of autonomy accorded to this body, since the Bill empowers the Central government to ultimately decide on the Council's advice.

Leeway to the government

In addition, the Bill empowers the government to inspect broadcasters without intimating them in advance, and to impound their equipment, presumably including those issued to their employees.

Furthermore, violations of the Programme Code and Advertisement Code attract deleting or modifying content, in addition to existing measures such as ceasing transmissions for particular durations. Finally, the Bill grants tremendous leeway to government to curtail broadcasting and its distribution in "public interest", a term that is distressingly left undefined. All these intrusive mechanisms augment the vulnerabilities of professional news suppliers to external pressure groups. This should worry those who will deliberate over legislating the Bill, irrespective of which benches they occupy in Parliament. As the latest extension of the arc of endeavours to devise an integrated regulatory framework for broadcasting, this Bill must not lose the opportunity to protect press freedom and diversity. To do so, it has to will its way to incorporate some startling omissions, review its intrusive commissions, and fine-tune potentially positive provisions.

Vibodh Parthasarathi teaches media policy at the Centre for Culture, Media and Governance, Jamia Millia Islamia, New Delhi. Views are personal.



MAMIDALA JAGADESH KUMAR EXPLAINS WHY EFFECTIVE INDUSTRY-ACADEMIA COLLABORATION NEEDS A DIVERSE, MULTI-FACETED STRATEGY

Overcoming barriers to industry-academia partnerships

It is well known that collaborations between industry and academia can be mutually beneficial. However, most Indian higher education institutions (HEIs) have not focused on such collaborations or on intellectual property (IP) and technology transfers. While universities conduct and encourage basic research, many of them do not capitalise on the same research by commercialising their IP; they miss out on likely gains from patents, licensing, or start-up companies. Determining and managing impediments to collaborations between industry and academia requires a multi-pronged approach.

The hurdles

First, HEIs and industry can only collaborate if they evolve shared goals. HEIs predominantly seek to educate students and conduct research. They often focus on creating theoretical knowledge. On the other hand, industries are profit-driven and pursue practical applications of knowledge to enhance productivity and innovation. They may require a clear articulation of the applicability of academic research. An industrial company might be sceptical about funding a research project if it believes that the outcomes do not translate into prompt saleable applications. But HEIs may feel uneasy about the short-term focus of industrial projects. To resolve these issues, the two parties must engage in an open dialogue, develop a flexible attitude, and find common ground where theoretical knowledge and practical applications can coexist.

Second, there are cultural differences between how HEIs and industrial partners ap-



proach the issue of collaboration. Let us say an HEI is collaborating with an industrial partner (a renewable energy company) on a research project associated with sustainable energy. When researchers at the HEI scrutinise the data furnished by the company, they may find that it needs more academic rigour and theoretical profundity. Consequently, they might suppose that the data is of restricted use for publishing in a prestigious academic journal.

Conversely, the company will focus more on practical outcomes. It may not have the time or expertise to have theoretical discussions since its immediate concern is to implement solutions in the real world by improving processes or by devising new products. So, both sides must find a middle path to bridge this cultural gap. HEI researchers could refine their findings into practical recommendations that the industrial partner can understand and implement, while the industrial partner could provide more context to the data.

Third, Indian HEIs must establish good

communication channels with the industry. If a research team from a university is partnering with a pharmaceutical company, it needs to be acquainted with the industry's regulatory processes. Training programmes could be implemented so that researchers and industry professionals get familiar with the other's language and expectations.

Fourth, Indian HEIs must focus on building trust. Let us suppose a university and a tech company are collaborating to develop a new software application. A professor may be an expert in developing algorithms, but the industrial partner may want solutions that can be implemented in real-world products. Both parties can work out a mutually agreeable IP arrangement to address this. Such an arrangement will also help alleviate certain fears. For instance, the university might agree to fast-track the development of a prototype software application that the company can use and refine for commercial purposes. But the industrial partner may fear that the university researchers will publish the research results without considering the commercial implications of their research. To overcome this, the university and the industrial partner can sign non-disclosure agreements to ensure that sensitive information shared during collaboration remains confidential. Both parties can also agree on which results may be earmarked for academic publications and which may be kept confidential or jointly published. Clear agreements ensure transparency and help build trust.

Types of collaborations

Colleges or universities with minimal

research facilities can focus on short-term collaborations with local manufacturing companies facing technical problems in their production line that need a quick resolution. A team of students and faculty members from a college can provide a tangible solution that benefits the industry and brings returns to the college.

On the other hand, universities with good research facilities and faculty expertise can partner with an industry for long-term research collaborations that aim to develop cutting-edge technologies. The additional benefit of such long-term collaborations is that students can work as interns on research projects. They will then learn to handle deadlines, navigate failures, and collaborate with colleagues in the industry.

HEIs and industries should, therefore, work on developing a symbiotic relationship. Industries in specific domains should collaborate with research groups across different universities in the same domain to keep themselves abreast of new research developments. All this will become easier if government funding agencies announce suitable research grants and call for joint project proposals from HEIs and industry partners. There should also be critical annual reviews by a team of experts appointed by the funding agency to examine the deliverables promised by the stakeholders.

Mamidala Jagadesh Kumar is Chairman, University Grants Commission, and the 12th Vice-Chancellor of Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi

BOOKS: REVIEW

New book digs deep into role of AI in shaping our future

In "The Coming Wave," authors Mustafa Suleyman and Michael Bhaskar delve into the profound impact of Artificial Intelligence on the future of humanity. This 300-page book is not just a theoretical exploration but a pressing warning about the rapid evolution of AI and its potential to reshape every aspect of our lives.

Suleyman, a notable figure in the AI industry as the founder of DeepMind and a subsequent startup, brings an insider's perspective to the narrative. The book, while touching upon advances in biotech, primarily focuses on the burgeoning capabilities and decreasing costs of AI technologies. Suleyman's central thesis is alarming yet straightforward: the real danger lies not in AI achieving sentience but in becoming more efficient and accessible.

One of the book's most striking arguments is the democratization of power through AI, leading to

potential chaos through deepfakes, engineered pathogens, and sophisticated cyber warfare. Suleyman emphasizes the urgency of these developments, arguing that the window for regulating AI is rapidly closing.

"The Coming Wave" is compelling in its call for containment, yet Suleyman's policy recommendations are ambitious, if not daunting. He advocates for global collaboration on AI standards, public involvement in AI development, and significant taxation on corporations benefiting from AI at the expense of human intellectual capital. These solutions, while challenging, are presented as necessary steps to harness AI's potential without succumbing to its perils.

Suleyman's vision is grounded in realism, acknowledging the challenges in implementing these policies swiftly. The book avoids the trap of techno-optimism, recognizing that while technological breakthroughs are inevitable, hu-

manity must be prepared to adapt. "The Coming Wave" is a captivating read, offering a concise yet profound analysis of AI's rapid evolution. It serves as both a cautionary tale and a roadmap for navigating the AI-dominated future. Whether Suleyman's predictions come to pass or not, his book is an essential read for anyone interested in understanding and shaping the role of AI in our world.

Continuing the review, "The Coming Wave" also delves into the societal and ethical implications of AI. Suleyman and Bhaskar explore



The Coming Wave: Technology, Power, and the 21st Century's Greatest Dilemma
By Mustafa Suleyman & Michael Bhaskar
Crown; 352 pages; Rs 799

how AI could exacerbate existing inequalities and challenge democratic institutions. They argue that unchecked AI development could lead to a concentration of power in the hands of a few tech giants, undermining democratic processes and widening the gap between the haves and have-nots. This perspective is particularly relevant in today's world, where technology increasingly influences political, social, and economic landscapes.

The book is not all doom and gloom, however. Suleyman and Bhaskar also discuss the potential benefits of AI, such as its ability to solve complex global challenges, including climate change and healthcare. They emphasize that if harnessed responsibly, AI could be a force for good, driving innovation and efficiency in various

sectors. The authors advocate for a balanced approach to AI, one that harnesses its positive potential while mitigating its risks.

In the final chapters, "The Coming Wave" offers a glimpse into the future, speculating on how AI might evolve and the ways societies might adapt to these changes. The authors suggest that as AI becomes more integrated into our daily lives, we will need to rethink our relationship with technology. They call for a new social contract, one that ensures the benefits of AI are shared equitably and that protects individuals' rights in an increasingly digital world.

In conclusion, "The Coming Wave" is a thought-provoking and timely book that provides a comprehensive overview of the challenges and opportunities presented by AI. It is a must-read for policymakers, tech professionals, and anyone interested in the future of technology and society. Suleyman and Bhaskar have crafted a compelling narrative that is both informative and accessible, making complex topics understandable to a broad audience.

Indian Economy to End Fiscal Year with 6.7 pc Growth: Economists

NEW DELHI: The Indian economy is estimated to grow at a 6.7 per cent to 7 per cent rate in the financial year ending March 31, 2024, several economists said.

Their projections have increased after the country blew past growth estimates for the July-September quarter.

The country's economy expanded 7.6 per cent in the July-September quarter, trouncing estimates of a 6.8 per cent rise, data released on Thursday showed.

Stronger-than-expected growth in the first half of the year, along with continued government spending and some revival in private investment has prompted economists to raise their growth forecast to higher than the government's estimate of 6.5 per cent.

"With 7.7 per cent real GDP growth in the first half of 2023-24, the overall growth for full fiscal



year would be around 7 per cent... though there are chances that it may cross the 7 per cent mark," said Saumya Kanti Ghosh, chief economist at State Bank of India. He had an earlier forecast growth at 6.7 per cent.

The government stuck to its 6.5 per cent growth forecast for the year, but chief economic advisor V. Anantha Nageswaran said he was "more comfortable with an upside to this projection than before".

Citigroup revised its growth forecast for the financial year upwards by 50 basis points to 6.7 per cent citing a pick-up in investment activity.

Gross fixed capital formation, an indicator of investment, rose 11 per cent in the July-September quarter.

"This reaffirms our view of sustained investment recovery," the Wall Street Bank's chief India economist Samiran Chakraborty said in a note.

Union Cabinet approves for Rs 1,261 crore scheme to provide drones to 15,000 women SHGs for 2 years

NEW DELHI : The Union Cabinet has approved a central scheme for providing drones to 15,000 women Self Help Groups (SHGs), with an outlay of Rs 1,261 crore for two years beginning 2024-25 fiscal year.

A decision in this regard was taken at the Cabinet meeting chaired by Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Tuesday, Information and Broadcasting Minister Anurag Thakur told reporters on Wednesday.

"The scheme aims to provide drones to 15,000 selected women SHGs during the period 2024-25 to 2025-2026 for providing rental services to farmers for agriculture purpose," Thakur said.

The approved initiatives under the scheme will provide sustainable business and livelihood support to 15,000 SHGs and they would be able to earn additional income of at least Rs 1,00,000 per annum, an official release said.

Gold has potential to re-sync global economic order and India can be the fulcrum in global economic corridor : MD, SBI

FW DESK
New Delhi

"Today we have a more nuanced understanding of gold and the multi-faceted potential of gold to re-sync the global economic order. We have also seen how India can be the fulcrum in setting up global economic corridor," said Alok Kumar Choudhary, Managing Director, State Bank of India (SBI) at the 15th International Gold Economic Forum organised by ASSOCHAM.

"India's rich culture and traditions has a deep-rooted affinity for gold that transcends economic worth, it is a symbol of prosperity, tradition and auspices making it an integral part of social-economic landscape. Gold has played a crucial role in India's economic history, while the gold standard might not be in place anymore, several banks including the RBI continue to hold gold reserves as a staple component of their overall reserves," he added.

"In an interconnected world, economic ties transcend borders and gold's role as common accepted asset can foster a sense of



stability and potentially contribute to a more integrated, co-operative global economic system. Banks as critical stakeholders in the financial ecosystem play an important role in formalising gold to ensure the integrity of the financial system," he added.

Addressing the gathering, Dr. C. Rangarajan, Former Chairman - Economic Advisory Council to the Prime Minister of India & Former Governor - RBI said, "Gold has been a tangible asset since ancient times, in all cultures and across all periods of history. While held as reserve by central banks, it no longer plays the role

of intermediary in circulation. As the second largest consumer of gold, India accounts for one-fourth of the global demand. India's import of gold was 394 tons in 2000 and 774 tons in 2022 or 135 million USD. In 2022-23, gold imports accounted for 52.2% of the current account deficit. The current level of import duty on gold is reasonable and is among the lowest among commodities."

Somasundaram PR Regional CEO India World gold council, said "Gold is a very good diversifier, it de-risks your portfolio and enables you to take more risk in other financial asset classes. India, as a gold consumer, can also be proud to have HUID technology through which every piece of jewellery hallmarked can be traced to its origins, which is aspirational in other markets.

Suvanker Sen Co-Chairman, National council on commodity markets ASSOCHAM, said "Consumer behaviour over the years in India has proven that in gold we trust. The various initiatives undertaken by all stakeholders has achieved a lot but a lot more

can be done. The growth of the country is closely linked with the rise of gold as an asset. The 25,000 tons of gold that is embedded in our economy is one major driver of our growth."

Mrugank Paranjpe, Chairman, National council on commodity markets ASSOCHAM, in his address said, "Gold always glitters in every aspects of the commodities market in India. It is the best hedge and has proven to be the best way of creating value."

S C Aggarwal Senior Member Managing Committee ASSOCHAM, said "Gold has multiple usage, as an ornament, it is a status symbol and an investment as well. India needs around 800 tons of gold every year necessitating imports which increases our fiscal deficit."

Arvind Kumar Former Senior Economic Advisor, Govt. of India addressing the gathering at the forum said, "Gold is both an item of consumption and investment. Demand is driven by jewellery fabrication as well as gold bars for investment. It is a misconception that the import of gold impacts exchange rates."

Focus on Infrastructure Empowering Indian Economy: Union Minister

NEW DELHI: Union Minister for Commerce & Industry Piyush Goyal said that India's focus on infrastructure is empowering the economy and giving it a fillip.

Addressing the Inaugural session of third India Debt Capital Market Summit 2023 - Onwards & Upwards', Goyal said that massive investments both from the government and from the private sector, directed towards infrastructure is boosting the infrastructural capabilities of the country.

He said competitive source of financing is attracting investments from those who are looking for greater safety. Goyal added that the stock market is also hitting a 4 trillion mark for the first time and India being amongst the top five global markets has huge opportunities.

The union minister pointed out that the country is the fifth largest economy in the world and the fastest growing economy at 7.6 per cent, this quarter.

"A resilient debt capital market will be the catalyst for innovation, entrepreneurship and infrastructure develop-



ment," he said. He noted that massive urbanization will happen over the next few decades even as Tier 2 cities are also going to become metropolitan cities. Rural Areas incomes are rising, raising spending power across the country. "Futuristic sectors like AI, semiconductors, electric vehicles, will be powering our future. Green and sustainable energy will be the way forward and the capital markets and debt markets are playing their role in our energy transition to a low carbon economy," the minister added.

Goyal said that India has been able to increase exports of goods and services, almost 55 per cent from 500 billion in 2021 to 776 billion last year. He said that with two conflicts going on around the world and there is a prospect of recession in the developed economies.

Federal Bank Announces Strategic Collaboration with NeML for Enhanced eProcurement and eAuction Integration

FW DESK
New Delhi

Federal Bank is pleased to announce a pivotal collaboration with NCDEX e Markets Limited (NeML) to fortify the integration of eProcurement and eAuction systems. NeML, a wholly owned subsidiary of National Commodity & Derivatives Exchange Limited (NCDEX), holds a commanding market share in transparent price discovery across more than 90 commodities.

This strategic alliance is set to facilitate an advanced eProcurement solution, streamlining the processes for Central and State Government organizations. Under this initiative, farmers can seamlessly list crop details on NeML's platform, and the government will subsequently purchase them at the approved Minimum Support Price (MSP). The integration of Federal Bank's Host-to-Host with NeML's eProcurement platform ensures a seamless and efficient payment processing system for these critical government transactions. In addition, NeML's eAuction



solution brings significant benefits to the Government of India by providing a robust price-discovery mechanism for various commodities. The key advantages of this system include nationwide participation, improved price discovery, and safeguarding against possible cartel formations, ensuring a fair chance for participants to enhance their bid value as per market scenarios.

Salient Features of the Collaborative Endeavor: End-to-end digital execution of payments and collections. A plug-and-play solution tailored for government clients. Simplified one-time documentation process with clients. Automated reconciliation of each remittance within NeML's web portal. Customizable payment advice to each beneficiary against the

payment. No additional charges or costs involved.

Delegates Signing the Memorandum of Understanding (MOU): Mr. Indraneel Pandit (Senior Vice President & Zonal Business Head Federal Bank, CIB West), Mr. Vikas Muly (Deputy Vice President - I & Head - GIB West), Mr. Sagar Deshpande (Senior Manager & Circle Business Head, GIB) and Mr. Dhawal Shah (Chief Operating Officer, NeML), Mr. Anand Ganapathy (Assistant Vice President - Special Projects, NeML).

This collaborative effort underscores Federal Bank's unwavering commitment to innovation and transparency in financial services, aligning seamlessly with NeML's stringent governance and compliance standards.

India Shining in Economic Parameters

SATISH SINGH

According to the data released by the National Statistical Office (NSO) on November 30, the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) grew at the rate of 7.6 percent in the second quarter of the current financial year, while the GDP growth rate in the same period of the last financial year was 6.3 percent. This growth rate is more than the Monetary Policy Committee's estimate of 6.5 percent. Even in the first quarter of the financial year 2023-24, the GDP growth rate was 7.8 percent. It is noteworthy that in the September quarter, real GDP was Rs.41.75 lakh crore, while nominal GDP was Rs.74.66 lakh crore.

In the last 5 years i.e., in the financial year 2018-19, GDP grew at the rate of 6.80 percent, while in the financial year 2019-20 it was 3.70 percent, in the financial year 2020-21 it was 6.60 percent, in the financial year 2021-22 it was 8.70 percent and in the financial year 2022-23, GDP growth was recorded at the rate of 7.2 percent.

The GDP growth rate in the June quarter of FY 2023 was 13.1 percent, while it was 6.3 percent in the September quarter, 4.4 percent in the December quarter and 6.1 percent in the March quarter. The growth rate in Gross Value Added (GVA) in the September quarter of the current financial year was 7.4 percent, whereas it was expected to grow at the rate of 6.8 percent. In the first quarter it had grown at the rate of 7.8 percent, whereas in the same period last year it had grown at the rate of 5.4 percent. GVA



reflects economic activities related to the supply of products, while GDP reflects economic activities related to demand.

Urban consumption, manufacturing and government expenditure have contributed significantly to the growth of GDP. The growth rate in the manufacturing sector was 13.9 percent, while the growth rate in the construction sector was 13.3 percent. At the same time, the growth rate of mining sector was 10 percent, while the growth rate of electricity-water sector was 0.1 percent, defence sector was 7.6 percent, finance and property sector were 6 percent and business and transportation sector was 4.3 percent. However, the agriculture sector grew at just 1.2 percent in the second quarter of FY24.

The infrastructure or core sector grew at the rate of 12.1 percent in the month of October, whereas this sector had grown at the rate of 0.7 percent in the last financial year. In the month of October, except fertilizer, all other sectors have registered a growth, while in the month of September, an average growth of 9.2 percent was recorded in the sectors of coal, crude oil, steel, cement, refinery, natural gas and electricity. The production growth rate of 8

major sectors during April to October was 8.6 percent, which was 8.4 percent a year ago.

According to the Governor of Reserve Bank of India, Shri Shaktikanta Das, the GDP growth rate may also see a rise in the next quarter, because the inflation in the month of October was 4.87 percent, which was 5.02 percent in the month of September and 6.83 percent in the month of August and all the sectors of the economy are improving. Key economy related parameters also remain strong.

India's fiscal deficit in October stood at Rs.8.03 trillion, 45 percent of the full-year budget estimate of Rs.17.86 trillion. In the same period last year, this deficit was 45.6 percent of the budget estimate for the financial year 2022-23. Thus, a reduction of 0.06 percent has been recorded in the fiscal deficit. Fiscal deficit refers to the difference between expenditure and revenue.

According to the data released by NSO, the urban unemployment rate remained stable at 6.6 percent in the September quarter of the current financial year. The unemployment rate among men increased to 6 percent in the September quarter from 5.9 percent in the June quarter, while the unem-

ployment rate among women declined to 8.6 percent in the September quarter from 9.1 percent in the June quarter.

Women's participation in the labour force was 20.4 percent in the March quarter of 2022, which increased to 20.9 percent in the June quarter, 21.7 percent in the September quarter, 22.3 percent in the December quarter and 22.7 percent in the March quarter of 2023. It was 23.2 percent in the June quarter of 2023 and 24.0 percent in the September quarter.

The unemployment rate among youth above 15 years of age has been the lowest in the last 5 years. At the same time, the unemployment rate among youth aged 15 to 29 years was 17.6 percent in the June quarter, which came down to 17.3 percent in the September quarter. It may be noted that after the high unemployment rate of 12.6 percent recorded in the June quarter of 2022, there is a continuous decline in the unemployment rate in urban areas.

The unemployment rate in the urban sector was 8.2 percent in the March quarter of 2022, which declined to 7.6 percent in the June quarter, 7.2 percent in the September quarter, 7.2 percent in the December quarter, 6.8 percent in the March quarter of 2023, 6.6 percent in the June quarter and 6.6 percent in the September quarter.

Standard & Poor's Global (S&P Global) has increased the GDP growth forecast for the financial year 2023-24 from 6 percent to 6.4 percent. According to the agency, the reason for this is the strengthening of economic standards in the domestic market. However, S&P Global has reduced its GDP growth forecast for fiscal year

2024-25 to 6.4 percent from 6.9 percent. The agency feels that economic activity in India may weaken in the second half of fiscal year 2024.

According to S&P Global, apart from India, the economies of Indonesia, Malaysia and Philippines are also growing strongly, while China's economy, which is ranked second in the world, is expected to grow at the rate of 4.6 percent in the financial year 2024.

It is clear from the increase in both GDP and GVA that the demand and supply of various products remains strong, due to which all economic activities are also gaining momentum. Reduction in fiscal deficit indicates that revenue collection exceeds expenditure, which is an indicator of a strong economy. Core sectors remain strong. The stable unemployment rate indicates that our economy is strong and has completely emerged from the ill effects of the Corona pandemic. The increase in participation of half the population in the labour force speaks of a positive change in the country.

Due to the continued strength of the Indian economy, S&P Global has increased the GDP growth forecast for the financial year 2023-24 from 6 percent to 6.4 percent, while the GDP of China, the world's second largest economy is estimated to grow at a rate of 4.6 percent in FY24, which is much lower than India's GDP growth rate estimate. Today, when many countries of the world are struggling with the negative effects of global recession, India's growth rate is continuously mounting.

Satish Singh, Ahmedabad based Senior Columnist, Views are personal

Capital outlay of top 18 states to increase by 18-20% in FY24 : CRISIL Ratings

NEW DELHI: The capital outlay of India's top 18 states has increased by 18-20 per cent this fiscal as against about 14 per cent in fiscal 2023, said CRISIL Ratings Ltd in a report.

According to CRISIL Ratings, the 18 states account for about 90 per cent of the aggregate gross state domestic product of all states.

The states studied by CRISIL Ratings are: Maharashtra, Gujarat, Karnataka, Tamil Nadu, Uttar Pradesh, Telangana, Rajasthan, West Bengal, Madhya Pradesh, Andhra Pradesh, Kerala, Odisha, Punjab, Bihar, Chhat-



tisgarh, Haryana, Jharkhand and Goa.

The increase in spending will be supported by healthy goods and services tax (GST) collection, stable and upfront devolution from the central government (share in central taxes, or SICT), and allocation of Rs 1.3 lakh crore (Rs 1 lakh crore budgeted last fiscal) in the form of interest-free

loans to all the states for capital expenditure (capex). This fiscal, states have budgeted a strong approximately 43 per cent increase.

In their capital outlays from fiscal 2023 levels. If actual spending continues at past averages of 82-85% of the budgeted outlay, it would translate to 18-20 per cent growth this fiscal, said Anuj Sethi, Senior Director, CRISIL Ratings Here, we expect elections in some states, funding support from the Centre in the form of advance payment of SICT, and strong GST collection to provide the impetus.

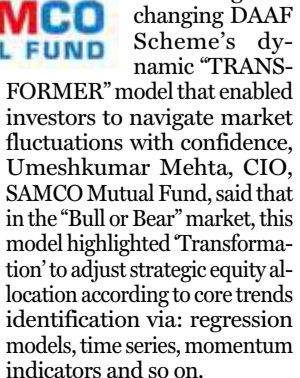
SAMCO Mutual Fund Launching DAAF in "TRANSFORMER" model

DOMINICK RODRIGUES
Mumbai

Samco Mutual Fund announced the launch of its 'Dynamic Asset Allocation Fund' (DAAF) offering unmatched investment stability and growth potential. The NFO opens December 7 and closes on December 21, 2023. Viraj Gandhi, CEO, SAMCO Mutual Fund, told media here recently that understanding the mindset of investors seeking to invest in the hybrid category was important as investors today sought FD-plus returns, limited risk and Return of Capital in unforeseen events.

He said that the DAAF has been designed to provide investors an unparalleled blend of stability, growth potential and downside protection in today's dynamic market environment. "This is India's first DAAF

that follows the momentum model with capability to move to debt entirely in tough times, and has focus on reducing volatility and drawdowns while optimizing returns," he said, adding that this fund will redefine investment experiences and set new benchmarks in the industry. Describing SAMCO Mutual Fund as a "predominantly equity-dominant fund" which featured the game-changing DAAF Scheme's dynamic "TRANSFORMER" model that enabled investors to navigate market fluctuations with confidence, Umeshkumar Mehta, CIO, SAMCO Mutual Fund, said that in the "Bull or Bear" market, this model highlighted "Transformation" to adjust strategic equity allocation according to core trends identification via: regression models, time series, momentum indicators and so on.



MODIFI targets \$4.5 bn in SME Cross Border Finance in 5 years

NEW DELHI: Fintech firm MODIFI has set an aim to increase its small and medium-sized enterprises (SME) cross border finance book to USD 4.5 billion in next five years, from USD 2 billion currently, co-founder and CEO Nelson Holzner told to media.

Confident to triple the business in next five years, he further said, "Obviously situations like Covid-19 can derail plans but we would like to triple the business to USD 4.5 billion." The Amsterdam headquartered fintech provides digital financing options to SMEs for cross-border payments. Through the platform, SME exporters can get instant finance from the fintech against their invoices and the buyer can experience the "Buy Now Pay Later" model wherein they have the option to pay back the fintech within 30-120 days.

INTERNATIONAL

Inflation, high interest rates & war may drag Global Economic Growth to 2.7% in 2024: OECD

NEW DELHI: Despite the global economy being resilient this year it is likely to slow down next year because of wars, still-elevated inflation and continued high interest rates.

The Paris-based Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development estimated on Wednesday that international growth would slow to 2.7% in 2024 from an expected 2.9% pace this year. That would amount to the slowest calendar-year growth since the pandemic year of 2020. Regardless of the gloomier outlook, the organization is "projecting that recessions will be avoided almost everywhere," OECD Secretary-General Mathias Cormann said at a news conference. However, he added, there are risks that inflation will stay persistently high and that the Israel-Hamas conflict and Russia's war in Ukraine could affect prices for commodities, such as oil or grain.

One of the significant aspects in the slowdown is that the OECD expects the world's two biggest economies, the United States and China, to decelerate next year. The U.S. economy is forecast to expand just 1.5% in 2024, from 2.4% in 2023, as the



Federal Reserve's interest rate increases — 11 of them since March 2022 — continue to restrain growth. The Fed's higher rates have made borrowing far more expensive for consumers and businesses and, in the process, have helped slow inflation from its four-decade peak in 2022. The OECD foresees U.S. inflation dropping from 3.9% this year to 2.8% in 2024 and 2.2% in 2025, just above the Fed's 2% target level.

For now, the American economy looks strong: The Commerce Department reported Wednesday that U.S. economic growth came in at a brisk 5.2% annual pace from July through

September, helped by strong consumer spending and an uptick in private investment.

The Chinese economy, beset by a destructive real estate crisis, rising unemployment and slowing exports, is expected to expand 4.7% in 2024, down from 5.2% this year. China's "consumption growth will likely remain subdued due to increased precautionary savings, gloomier prospects for employment and heightened uncertainty," the OECD said.

Also likely to contribute to a global slowdown are the 20 countries in the European Union that share the euro currency. They have been hurt by

heightened interest rates and by the jump in energy prices that followed Russia's invasion of Ukraine. The OECD expects the collective growth of the eurozone to amount to 0.9% next year — weak but still an improvement over a predicted 0.6% growth in 2023.

"A key takeaway today is the stronger outlook for the U.S., which we've revised up for 2024, but a weaker outlook for Europe, which we've revised down," OECD chief economist Clare Lombardelli told reporters. She pointed to the impact on Europe from the spike in energy prices last year after Russia cut off most of its natural gas to the continent. That sent costs soaring for households and businesses, driving a cost-of-living crisis and hurting factories in places like Germany.

The world economy has endured one shock after another since early 2020 — the eruption of COVID-19, a resurgence of inflation as the rebound from the pandemic showed unexpected strength, the war in Ukraine and painfully high borrowing rates as central banks acted aggressively to combat the acceleration of consumer prices.

India backs UNGA resolution demanding Israel to withdraw from Golan Heights



India has backed a UN General Assembly (UNGA) resolution demanding that Israel withdraw from the occupied Golan Heights, a territory the Jewish nation captured from Syria in the Six-Day War of 1967.

India was among the 91 countries that voted on Tuesday for the resolution that declared Israel's occupation of the territory a "stumbling block" to a "just, comprehensive and lasting peace in the region".

New Delhi's vote for the resolution reaffirmed its support for the Arab cause in the conflicts involving Israel, after having abstained — likely for the time — on a resolution backed by Palestine.

It cited its failure to condemn the massacre inflicted on Israel by Hamas on

October 7 as the reason for abstaining.

The Golan Heights resolution on Tuesday co-sponsored by Bangladesh, demanded that "Israel withdraw from all the occupied Syrian Golan to the line of 4 June 1967" before the start of the Six-Day War during which Israel captured the Golan Heights as well as Gaza.

It rejected Israel's de facto annexation of the Golan Heights and the imposition of its laws.

The members of the European Union, several other European countries and Japan were among the nations that abstained.

The US and its allies, Britain, Australia, Canada and Israel, as well as a few Pacific Island states, voted against it.

15% of US population is now foreign-born: Study



WASHINGTON: The total foreign-born population in the US, legal and illegal, was 49.5 million in October 2023, — a record 4.5 million increase since President Joe Biden took office in 2021, a study by a Washington-based think tank found.

At 15 per cent, the immigrant or foreign-born share of the US population is also the highest ever recorded in American history, the Center for Immigration Studies said, citing an October 2023 survey by the Census Bureau.

As a debate rages in the country over the ongoing border crisis, the study showed that the 4.5 million increase is larger than the individual populations of 25 US states.

The foreign-born population has grown on average by 137,000 a month since Biden took office, compared to 42,000 a month during Donald Trump's presidency before Covid-19 hit, and 68,000 a month during Barack Obama's two terms.

Based on the think tank's prior estimates of illegal immigrants, more than half of the 4.5 million increase in the foreign-born population since January 2021 is likely due to illegal immigration.

From January 2021 to October 2023, there have been roughly eight million "encounters" at US borders, according to Customs and Border Protection.

Court records and other information on the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) websites indicate that

about 2.6 million (possibly 2.7 million) inadmissible aliens have been released into the country since the start of the Biden administration.

While a large share of the recent foreign-born growth is attributed to illegal immigration, legal immigrants still account for three-fourths of the total foreign-born population.

A significant number of new illegal immigrants, and perhaps a majority before the current border surge, were admitted legally on a temporary visa or under the visa waiver program and then did not leave the country when the time limit expired, the study said.

The Department of Homeland Security for FY 2022 showed 850, 000 foreign visitors overstayed their authorized stay in that year.

The largest percentage increases since January 2021 were for immigrants from South America (up 28 per cent); Central America (up 25 per cent); Sub-Saharan Africa (up 21 per cent); the Caribbean (up 20 per cent); and the Middle East (up 14 per cent).

Immigrants from all of Latin America increased by 2.9 million since January 2021, accounting for 63 per cent of the total increase in the foreign-born. The foreign-born in Census Bureau data included all persons who were not US citizens at birth, mainly naturalised citizens, lawful permanent residents, long-term temporary visitors, and illegal immigrants.

Freshworks Appoints Mika Yamamoto as Chief Customer and Marketing Officer



SAN MATEO: Freshworks Inc. today announced the appointment of Mika Yamamoto as the company's Chief Customer and Marketing Officer. She will be responsible for leading the company's global marketing and customer experience teams. Yamamoto comes to Freshworks from F5 (NASDAQ: FFIV) where she most recently served as the Executive Vice President and the Chief Marketing and Customer Engagement Officer, and led the company's data, marketing, digital transformation, and customer experience efforts across all products, segments, channels, and geographies.

"Mika's combined CMO and CXO roles have given her a unique perspective that has ultimately led to innovative, measurable changes for employees, customers, and prospects," said Dennis Woodside, President at Freshworks. "She has a long-standing track record of leading global and diverse customer experience teams and delivering exceptional go-to-market results at large public technology companies with multi-domain businesses serving customers big and small. Her know-how and desire to build and scale a large enduring company makes her a great addition to our Freshworks leadership team."

Indian-origin man among 12 arrested in Canada auto theft ring bust

TORONTO: A 25-year-old Indian-origin man is among 12 people who have been arrested in connection with an auto theft and insurance fraud ring in and around the Greater Toronto Area, police said.

The Peel Regional Police said on Wednesday that nine stolen vehicles, valued at over \$1.2 million, were seized and more than 81 charges were laid in the investigation, called Project Memphis.

Rahul Bedi from Mississauga was charged for committing fraud worth \$5, 000 and trafficking stolen goods, and along with other accused, he attempted to defraud multiple financial and insurance



institutions.

"Project Memphis was a complex and multi-faceted investigation that required incredible investigative efforts," said Nishan Duraiappahm,

Chief, Peel Regional Police.

"The success of this investigation was a testament to effective collaboration and the shared goal of disrupting criminality of all kind."

"Coil on Module" enables ultra-thin electronic data page for Turkish passports with exceptional document durability and protection against forgery

ARUN KUMAR RAO
Munich (Germany)

Türkiye has issued nearly five million next-generation electronic passports with contactless Coil on Module (CoM CL) solution from Infineon Technologies AG, a company press statement said. The passport includes a polycarbonate (PC) data page with an integrated security chip, which is embedded in a contactless module based on the reliable CoM technology. The data page contains sensitive personal data of the holder.

Due to the security-critical nature of this information, official travel documents must be designed to highest security standards in order to provide reliable protection against tampering and fraud. Infineon's contactless CoM solution not



only increases the robustness of the ePassport, but also enables enhanced security.

Statement said, "At Infineon, we are delighted to continue our role as a trusted partner to Türkiye by consistently integrating our security components into the new government identity eDocuments," said Maurizio Skerlj, Vice President Authentication & Identity Solutions at Infineon's Connected Secure Systems Division. "Enabled by embedded Infineon components, the new eDatapage is

only 630 µm thick, making it one of the thinnest in the world. We are very proud of this attractive and reliable product that represents the next level of document security and design." Coil on Module technology for enhanced security and reliability Innovative Coil on Module contactless packaging technology is designed for highly robust and flexible contactless government ID and passport documents. These travel documents require appropriate security and robustness over their lifetime, which is typically up to ten years. This packaging solution is based on inductive coupling technology, which uses a radio frequency link to wirelessly connect the module to the antenna embedded in the document, similar to the link between a card and a contactless card reader.

Fluence Named An Official UN Global Compact Signatory Member

Fluence's participation as a signatory member of the UN Global Compact is well ahead of the 2024-2025 expected timeline outlined in the Company's 2022 Sustainability Report

ARLINGTON: Fluence Energy, a leading global provider of energy storage products and services, and optimization software for renewables and storage, announced today that Fluence has been accepted as an official United Nations Global Compact signatory member, well ahead of the 2024-2025 timeline outlined in Fluence's 2022 Sustainability Report. The UN Global Compact is the world's largest corporate sustainability initiative, calling on companies to align their operations and strategies with the Ten Principles of the UN Global Compact in the areas of human rights, labor, environment, and anti-corruption.



By becoming a signatory, Fluence reinforces its commitment to these principles and the broader goals of sustainable development and aims to strengthen its transparency through accountability.

"Being accepted as a signatory member is an important step on our sustainability journey of building a strong ESG program through structured frameworks, data, and active engagement," said Fluence Director of ESG and Sustainability Mike Herod. "Fluence has joined more than 17,000 companies and organizations around the world that have signed the UN Global Compact and are committed to responsible corporate citizenship and sustainability. We are excited to collaborate

with like-minded companies, non-governmental organizations, and other stakeholders through the Global Compact network to exchange best practices and drive positive change."

As a signatory, Fluence will complete an annual Communication on Progress submission, demonstrating progress in working towards the Ten Principles of the Global Compact. Fluence's commitment to the UN Global Compact includes supporting and respecting the protection of internationally proclaimed human rights and ensuring that Fluence is not complicit in human rights abuses. The Ten Principles of the Global Compact are derived from the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the International Labor Organization's Declaration on Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work, both of which

accord with Fluence's values. EMEA Senior Leadership convening with dozens of law enforcement professionals to discuss best practices and explore opportunities to streamline and modernize the handling of digital data from time of extraction to prosecution; Center-floor exhibition booth space with demonstrations, including an interactive "Solve Suite" where law enforcement could attempt to solve a crime using Cellebrite's powerful digital intelligence solution, Pathfinder; A range of Cellebrite panel presentations around the role of AI in investigations, data extraction, results of Cellebrite's 2024 Industry Trends Survey and our latest innovation: Smart Search which leverages public data to inform investigations, device triage to uncover the strongest evidence.

UK-India Business Council conference highlights investment opportunities 'India at 2047'

FW DESK
Mumbai

The Consumer Story' highlights investment opportunities and the link between consumer empowerment and India's economic prosperity in the run up to 2047

UK India Business Council (UKIBC) hosted an 'India by 2047' Consumer Conference on Wednesday, November 29 in Mumbai to bring together Indian and UK business, government and academia to examine India's growth story and how, as we approach India at 100 in 2047, rising prosperity will substantially change consumption and investment patterns in India.

The event, which heard from distinguished speakers: His Majesty's Trade Commissioner for South Asia, Harjinder Kang; Chairman and Managing Director, Raymond Ltd, Gautam Hari Singhania; CEO - Lifestyle Business, Raymond Ltd, Sunil Kataria; Group CEO, UKIBC, Richard McCallum, and UK and Indian businesses invested in India, underlined the enormous opportunities coming from India's rising middle class and growing purchasing power. UK



businesses highlighted their ongoing commitment to supporting India's growth going forward and partnering with Indian business to the benefit of both countries.

Experts identified the innovative ways that businesses are supporting the expanding demand across multiple segments of consumer-driven opportunities. The conference further highlighted the imperative for companies to align their strategies with consumer-centric approaches to drive innovation.

Held one week after the Indian economy passed the USD 4 trillion mark — making India the fifth country to pass the mark —

experts shared futuristic insights on the exciting, transformative consumer trends happening in the country, including the mass rollout and benefits of new technologies, rising purchase power, and spending habits, to identify the role that business can play to supercharge such trends and spur economic growth. As the Indian economy continues to grow at around 7 percent yoy and forecast to continue at such pace in coming decades, speakers highlighted the impact on incomes per capita, which are expected to top USD 10,000 by 2047, and the rising demand for more and new products as

a result. An impactful industry panel featuring speakers from UKIBC, Mahindra, Pearson, Niva Bupa, HSBC India and PwC India was also held on "Trends and Prospects: Consumers in India" to discuss a range of changing trends and patterns of consumer preferences and purchasing choice in India, the impact of digital penetration and innovative technological tools on consumer interactions, business opportunities and consumer-focused products and solutions.

The development and utilization of new technologies in India emerged as a clear theme in India's success in recent years, with Indian and UK businesses committed to expanding on collaborative R&D, innovation, technology, and manufacture and rollout of new technologies to support consumers. Currently, around 700 million people in India are using the internet regularly and expected to rise to 900 million by 2025. The UK and India are both leaders in digital payments and fintech innovations.

Richard McCallum, Group CEO, UKIBC, delivering the welcome address, said: "The revolu-

tion in digitisation has played an incredible role in unlocking latent demand across India — enabling consumer purchases at the click of a button. Together, our countries and the businesses within them are collaborating, partnering, and learning from each other to further this transformation. UKIBC convenes business and government to help address this growing demand and foster ever greater, deeper partnerships that support consumers across the country and India's USD 5 trillion ambition."

Gautam Hari Singhania, CMD, Raymond, during the conversation stated that: "India as a consumer market is booming with opportunity. The Indian consumer today is well exposed to global trends and the rapid proliferation of brands in smaller markets, be it through traditional retail as well as e-commerce is spurring growth. It is exciting to see the expansion in categories and new segments within the fashion and lifestyle which reflect the soaring aspirations of new age India. As a traditional homegrown brand with 98 year lineage it's heartening to see this consumer evolution."

After marrying Pakistani man Anju back in India to visit her previous husband

JAGMOHAN SINGH
Amritsar

Indian woman Anju Thomas alias Fatima the 34-year-old Indian mother of two children, had travelled to Pakistan to marry her social media friend in July, returned to India through Attari/Wagah border here today.

Anju alias Fatima mother of two children, had traveled to a remote village in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province of Pakistan to marry her Facebook (social media) love Nasrullah and had even left her children behind in India.

Earlier Nov 29, at Pakistani side, she was accompanied by her Pakistani husband Nasrullah accompanied her to the Wagah border to see her off.

On reaching India at Attari border from Pakistan, was not allowed to interact with the media as she straightway went to Airport to catch a flight for Delhi.

At Shri Guru Ramdas International Airport, she was spotted wearing BURKA (Cladding) intercepted by the media, and



said, "I am here in India to meet my Indian family. I came back to India as per my own will, since there was no any kind of pressure on me either to stay in Pakistan or to go India."

Anju, had travelled to Pakistan in July with a visa, converted to Islam from Christianity, changed her name to Fatima after getting married to Nasrullah, who met her on Facebook (social media) four years ago.

However, Anju's Indian husband Arvind had said that she left home on the pretext of going to Jaipur but later the family came to know that she was in Pakistan.

NARGIS FAKHRI

says her 'TatluBaaz' character uses sensuality to her advantage



MUMBAI: Actress Nargis Fakhri, who is known for 'Rockstar', 'Madras Cafe', 'Dishoom' and other films, has shared that her character in the streaming show 'TatluBaaz' uses her sensuality to her advantage. The series, which marks her webseries debut, follows the story of Bulbul Tyagi (played by Dheeraj Dhooper), India's most notorious scamster and con-artist.

The plot thickens when Bulbul crosses paths with the attractive but not-so-simple Isabelle Tripathi (Nargis Fakhri) and Disha (Divya Agarwal), leading to their involvement in the biggest scandal of all time. Expressing her enthusiasm for her webseries debut, Nargis Fakhri quipped, "The story is incredibly thrilling, and my character, Isabelle, is unlike any role I've played before, and she is cunning and uses her sensuality and adds spice to the show. I can't wait for the audience to experience the show." Excited about his OTT debut, Dheeraj Dhooper said, "I was thrilled when offered this role, a complete departure from the characters I portrayed on television. The challenges of multiple disguise looks made it extremely exciting and satisfying. I can't wait for my fans to experience this fun con drama with unexpected twists and turns. I'm confident they'll be craving more at the end of the show, perhaps a hint for 'TatluBaaz 2.'"

Documentary 'Kanpur Files' provides a strong base to secure Justice for 1984 Sikh Genocide Victims across India

KULBIR SINGH KALSI Chandigarh

A documentary titled "Kanpur Files", created by production house Global Middas Capital (GMC), in association with Global Middas Foundation (GMF), is based on the real life events of 127 Sikhs Massacred in Kanpur, Uttar Pradesh in 1984. The genocide was carried out across different states in the country after the assassination of the then Prime Minister of India Mrs. Indira Gandhi. 1 hour & 25 minutes long Documentary would be launched on GMF & SADDA KHIRDA PUNJAB YouTube channel.



Where do the victims stand in terms of getting legal justice for the killings, loot, compensation for damaging personal properties & businesses, inhuman acts of shame against women, girls & children? What have been the key issues and struggle faced by the victims and their families? What are the challenges being faced by the Sikhs in securing justice for the victims for almost 40 years? What all these families from Uttar Pradesh's Kan-

pur district went through during 1984 Sikh genocide has been showcased in the documentary. The objective of the documentary is to put before the world facts for the 1st time based on True Facts, Evidences, Legal Trials details, Loopholes & Hurdles in conducting Investigation, Mob Lynching & Instigation of Genocide by targeting specific Community Worldwide to see & Sardar Kuldip Singh Bhogal, President of the All India Riot Victims Relief Committee, 1984 and his team in this documentary. Jasdeep Kaur has written & Directed the Documentary.

Punjab CM inaugurates Guldasta 2023 organised by Punjab Police and PFTAA



JALANDHAR: Punjab Chief Minister Bhagwant Singh Mann on Thursday inaugurated the first of its kind cultural event Guldasta 2023 organized by Punjab Police in collaboration with Punjabi Film and TV Actors Association (PFTAA) for the welfare of the families of the cops. Addressing the gathering, the Chief Minister said that this path breaking initiative in the state aimed at the welfare of families of the cops of the Punjab Police. He said that the heroes of the Punjab Police discharge their duty efficaciously

Randeep Hooda, Lin Laishram drop wedding clicks; say 'We are one'

MUMBAI: Bollywood actor Randeep Hooda and Lin Laishram have shared their official wedding pictures, leaving the fans in awe of their traditional nuptial ceremony. The lovebirds had tied the nuptial knot in Imphal on Wednesday. They got married in a traditional Meitei ceremony in the presence of family members and a few friends. The couple took their wedding vows in the Shannapung resort. Randeep took to the social media and shared the clicks from his dreamy wedding with Lin. The 'Sarbjit' actor wore a plain white kurta, dhoti and a matching shawl wrapped around himself. He also



wore a white and golden pagdi on his head. On the other hand, Lin looked like a princess in a traditional Manipuri Potloi dress, which is a cylindrical skirt made up of thick fabric and bamboo. It had red satin cloth adorned on it with heavy embellished work on it. She opted for a black and golden embellished blouse, and completed the wedding look with traditional gold jewellery.

Every year 2.2 lakh new patients develop chronic kidney failure in country

JAGMOHAN SINGH Amritsar

"Every year 2.2 lakh new patients develop chronic kidney failure in the country. It is also the 6th fastest growing cause of death, which may become the 5th leading cause by 2040."



Addressing a press conference at Ivy Hospital Amritsar on Thursday, Dr Avinash Srivastava, director urology & renal transplant said that high blood pressure, diabetes, benign prostatic hyperplasia (BPH), untreated kidney stones and urinary tract infection (UTI)

are the main reasons of kidney failure in India. Dr Paras Saini, consultant urology & renal transplant said that the prevalence of this disease has almost doubled over the past decade, and is expected to increase further due to rise in risk factors such as hypertension, diabetes, obesity, stress, and unhealthy eating habits. Dr. HK Imran Hussain nephrologist, said that to prevent oneself from kidney diseases, one must reduce salt intake to lower blood pressure and avoid drinking alcohol and smoking. Meanwhile IVY Group of Hospitals has performed 1200 successful kidney transplants so far. IVY is performing all types of living donor transplants, including high risk transplants, pediatric transplant swap cases, ABO incompatible transplants (non-blood group specific) and redo transplants.

Unauthorized Drone Flights, Even for Weddings Photography, May Put You Behind the Bars



KULBIR SINGH KALSI Chandigarh

In a significant development, the Indian government has cracked down on the unauthorized operation of drones, including those used for photography and blogging. It has been clarified that every drone, regardless of its size or purpose, must obtain official permission before taking to the skies. This recent move comes in response to growing national security and public safety concerns.

Bulgarian folk dance artists pay tribute to the World War Heroes at village Sultanwind

PRABHJOT GILL AMRITSAR

The dance troupe from Bulgaria led by Alex Alexandrov and his 12 members team under 'Folkpalitra Bulgaria', on a tour to Amritsar, on Wednesday visited Sultarwind village to pay homage to the Sikh martyrs of World War I, who lost their lives fighting for the British. The delegation visited the historic plaque installed by the British, in the middle of the village, which honours the sacrifice and attempts to preserve their legacy. They saluted the plaque in turn garlanded it, paying rich tributes to the martyrs. The plaque, of which even the locals were unaware, was



brought to light by the Sikh historian Sardar Bhupinder Singh Holland. A society named Vishav Yudh I and II Shaheed Welfare Society came into existence after that and also organised today's visit with a perspective of cultural exchange between the Bulgarians and Punjabis. The Bulgarian delegation was briefed about the significance of the plaque, the village from where 135 soldiers went to the first World War. Seven soldiers were martyred in the first war and one was martyred in World War II.

Sundays are for picnics at Olive Cafe & Bar!

Make your Sunday delicious with Olive Café & Bar's Sunday Picnic Brunch

KULBIR SINGH KALSI Chandigarh

A unique initiative, Olive's Picnic Brunch started from November 26. Olive's Picnic Brunch is made of all things lovely and fun! We're packing picnic baskets for every table, with goodie bags for kids, a read for your Sunday catch-ups, board with fresh fruits and flowers, and more.



Enjoy our picnic table brunch with delicious food and yummy cocktails. Groove to live music and catch up with family and friends. Chandigarh, December 1, 2023 (Kulbir Singh Kalsi): Here is what you have been waiting for! The wait is finally over! Olive Cafe & Bar, Sector 26, Chandigarh; has announced

the launch of Olive's Sunday Picnic Brunch. The unique initiative which is a first in tricity's hospitality circuit is a delightful, leisurely tradition that combines the pleasures of outdoor dining with the comfort of a mid-morning feast. The setting will be reminiscent of picnics in the Mediterranean with chequered table cloths, picnic baskets with goodies for every table, a delicious spread with live cooking and food counters, free flowing cocktails & spirits, and live music to set the mood. Your picnic baskets will have your name on it and will also have fresh flowers and fruits and goodies to keep the kids occupied. Spend a leisurely afternoon reading your morning paper that's been packed in the picnic basket along with other surprises. The Sunday Picnic Brunch menu offers quite a spread. The brunch has a lot of live stations of brunchy dishes including Eggs to order, Waffle and Pancake station. Enjoy Breakfast Sandwiches and Sourdough Toasts with choicest toppings. The live grills have an array of meats, fish and veg options. Pizzas are our staples and are cooked in front of you. The menu has Olive staples like Salads, Small Plates, Mezze, Pasta and Desserts along with new soon-to-be favourites.

Who next after Rohit and Virat

SUNIL THAPLIYAL New Delhi



Indian cricket is all set to move ahead after losing the ODI World Cup cricket final. The team management is eyeing the upcoming T-20 World Cup to be held in the West Indies and USA next year, and speculation on the future of both Rohit and Virat is in the air. Though it is to be considered that Rohit and Virat have been serving the national team for over a decade and have achieved several milestones for the country, it would be a tough task for the selectors to ignore their calibre, contribution, and achievements, especially in the ICC events, be it the T-20 World Cup or ODI World Cup. Their success in the red and white ball is unparalleled, and Team India needs their experience specifically for the next two and three years until the young players nurture more to take the responsibility onto their shoulders, as Rohit and Virat did after the retirement of Sachin, Dravid, Ganguly, Sehwag, and Laxman. This ODI World Cup has shown their might. Still, our team heavily depends on them. While Virat's highest run streaked with a total run of 765, Rohit followed with 597 runs, far ahead of

any other Indian batter. And aside from this World Cup, their performances were tested and trusted earlier, be it the 2015 ODI World Cup, the 2019 ODI World Cup, or even 2023; these two were the biggest run-getters for India. Now the question is: who will replace them? It was Virat who performed better for Team India in the T-20 World Cup held in 2022. And Rohit is still one of the best white-ball players. Rohit made 45 centuries in all three formats and 18,237 runs, while Virat made 77 centuries and 25,582 runs in all three formats. Both Virat and Rohit had contributed a lot and were the backbone of Team India. They have seen the highs and lows of Team India for over a decade, but apart from emotion, this is a bitter truth: every great player has to hang their boots so that the next generation can take it up. Rohit is now 36 years old, and Virat is 35. Though they both look fit and are at their peak, they can still play for the next two years easily, but here the BCCI is looking for future prospects. No doubt both Virat and Rohit should be a part of the Champion Trophy, which is scheduled to happen in Pakistan in 2025, but beyond that, there is the least possibility that these two greats will be part of the next ODI World Cup anymore. But as the saying goes, age is just a number, so if they wish to continue to play beyond the 2025 championship, then if they are fit and performing better, then there must be equal opportunity for them to be selected for Team India; they should not be excluded just because of their age.

Qatar beat India; FIFA world cup qualification race narrows

SUNIL THAPLIYAL New Delhi

Qatar thrashed India 3-0 in a FIFA World Cup qualifier at the Kalinga Stadium in Bhubaneswar on Tuesday, giving India a reality check on their 2026 World Cup campaign. India was on a high after beating Kuwait in their first match. Qatar hosted the last FIFA World Cup and was considered to be a strong team in Group A. In such a situation, it was not easy for the Indian team to win this match. However, the Indian team can still qualify for the 2026 FIFA World Cup.



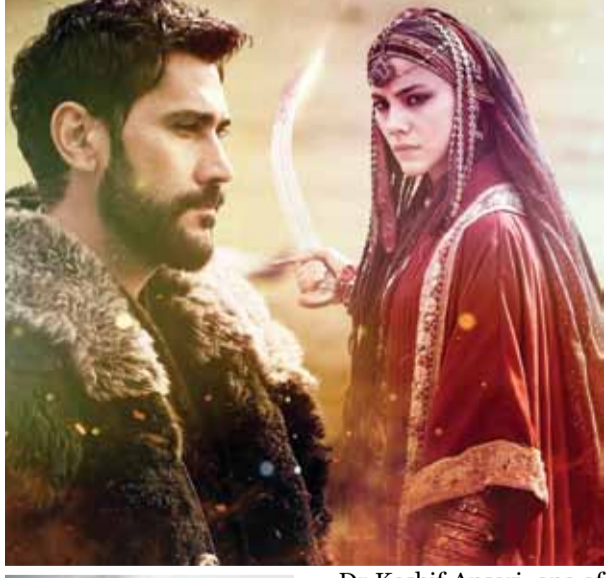
Although the Indian team has never reached the third round of FIFA World Cup qualifying, it would be a historic record if they make it this time. Apart from Qatar, Kuwait and Afghanistan are also in Group A. The Indian team defeated Kuwait 1-0 in their first match. The Indian team's first match in this group will be against Afghanistan on 31 March next year and they must win this match to keep their hopes of qualifying for the World Cup alive. Apart from that, there are 1-1 matches to be played against the other three teams in the group, after which the ranking of the group will be determined. After the completion of all matches,

the top two teams from this group will secure their place at the 2027 AFC Asian Cup with the third round of FIFA World Cup qualifying. Either Qatar beats Kuwait in the last game of their group. If that does not happen, it could come down to goal difference again. The problem of goal difference can arise if India and Kuwait have the same number of points. If Kuwait has lost both their matches against Afghanistan and Qatar, India simply have to win the match against Afghanistan. In this scenario, the 2 best teams from the group of 4 qualify for the next round. If the Blue Tigers had also won this game in this situation, they would have come closer to qualifying for the next round of the World Cup qualifiers. But that did not happen.

Turkish Sensation 'Selahaddin Eyyubi' to Hit Indian Screens in January with Stellar Cast

FW DESK New Delhi

Much-awaited Turkish series Selahaddin Eyyubi series is finally set to release in India in January. The dubbed Hindi version promises a visual and narrative spectacle that will captivate the Indian audience. Leading the charge is Turkish actor Uur Güne, renowned for his charismatic performances in "Ertugul," who takes on the pivotal role of the warrior king. The Turkish magnum opus which is also likely to star famous Pakistani actors Fawad Khan, Adnan Siddiqui and Humayun Saeed in coming episodes, is set to redefine historical storytelling for audiences across the subcontinent. The series, shot on an expansive set in Turkey spanning 200 acres, offers a meticulously crafted journey through time, complete with mosques, bazaars, palaces, and houses. Selahaddin Eyyubi, a collaborative masterpiece between Turkish production house Akli Films and US-based Ansari and Shah Films, will be presented to a diverse Indian audience in a dubbed version in Hindi. This strategic move ensures



Dr Kashif Ansari, one of the producers, while shedding light on the series' potential, expressed, "The way [Dirili] Ertugul aired everywhere internationally, this series will also go places. It is a gripping historical saga that transcends borders." He further said, "Selahaddin is an inspiration for each one of us specially in these current times when humanity has taken a backseat and the world is polarised more than ever. The king offers hope with his values of justice, kindness and compassion." accessibility for a broader spectrum of viewers eager to delve into the historical saga of the legendary king.