

REGION **2**



PEOPLE WHO ARE BORN WITH SILVER SPOONS CAN NEVER UNDERSTAND THE HARDSHIPS OF THE COMMON PEOPLE: BHAGWANT MANN

40th annual commemoration of June 1984 Ghallughara will be observed at Qaumi level: Harjinder Singh Dhami

JAGMOHAN SINGH
Amritsar

Every Sikh should observe the Martyrdom Week from June 1 to June 6 on the occasion of 40th annual commemoration of the June 1984 Ghallughara (massacre) following the direction of Sri Akal Takht Sahib and to protest against the non-punishment of the perpetrators of the Sikh genocide, the Sikh men should wear black turbans and the Sikh women should take black dupattas.

Expressing these words, the Shiromani Gurdwara Parbandhak Committee

(SGPC) President Harjinder Singh Dhami said that in June 1984, the marks of the military attack on Sachkhand Sri Harmandir Sahib, Sri Akal Takht Sahib and about 37 more Gurdwaras by the then Congress Government of India, can never be erased from the Sikh psyche and every year the Sikh community remembers the June 1984 military attack as third Ghallughara.

He said that the then Congress government attacked the holy Sikh shrines and martyred thousands of devotees who had congregated



on the martyrdom of Sri Guru Arjan Dev, by launching brutal attacks with tanks, guns and bullets. The suffering of this cruel action of killing humanity by the government will always rise from the Sikh minds.

The SGPC President said that the abuse of govern-

ment machinery by the then Congress government in this oppression against the Sikhs is a black mark on democracy and the Constitution of India. He said that the government should have apologized for this heinous act, but the story of injustice with the Sikhs is continuing. Even today, justice is not being done in the cases of Sikh prisoners. Even after serving more than three decades of punishment, Sikhs are not being released, which is a great injustice to the Sikh community and a serious violation of human rights.

CORPORATES & INDUSTRY **5**



BHARAT ELECTRONICS LIMITED (BEL) ACHIEVES IMPRESSIVE 34 PER CENT GROWTH IN PAT FOR FY 2023-24

POTPOURRI **8**



NIMIRAT KAUR REFLECTS ON TWO DECADES IN INDUSTRY

India Ratings and Research Forecasts GDP Growth at 6.7% for Q4 FY24

NEW DELHI: India Ratings and Research (Ind-Ra), a leading domestic credit rating agency, has projected the country's GDP growth rate for the fourth quarter (January-March 2024) of the previous fiscal year 2023-24 at 6.7 per cent.

For the full 2023-24 financial year, Ind-Ra anticipates the GDP growth to range between 6.9 to 7 per cent, according to Sunil Kumar Sinha, Principal Economist, Ind-Ra, as reported by PTI.

The government is scheduled to release the official GDP figures for Q4 FY24 and provisional estimates for FY24 on May 31st. In the preceding three quarters, India's economy exhibited robust expansion, clocking 8.2 per cent in Q1, 8.1 per cent in Q2, and a surprising 8.4 per cent in Q3 of FY24.

Sinha attributed the high growth rates in Q1 and Q2 to the low base effect from the previous year. However, he noted the divergence between GDP and GVA (Gross Value Added) growth in Q3, with the former accelerating to 8.4 per cent while the latter stood at 6.5 per cent. This wedge, Sinha explained, stemmed from higher tax collections during the quarter, a phenomenon unlikely to recur in Q4.

"When we analyse the data, then what is visible is the wedge between the GVA and GDP. A large impetus to Q3 GDP has come from higher tax collection, but this phenomenon is unlikely to be repeated in the fourth quarter,"



Sinha stated.

The wedge between the GDP and GVA is unlikely to be repeated in the fourth quarter," he added.

For the current fiscal year 2024-25, Ind-Ra projects the GDP growth at 7.1 per cent, with the services sector expected to maintain its momentum, led by construction and electricity. However, mining and industrial output may lag behind. Sinha highlighted that a potential revival in rural demand, contingent on the IMD's forecast of an above-normal monsoon, could support broad-based consumption growth. The Reserve Bank of India (RBI), in its April monetary policy review, had pegged the GDP growth for FY24 at 7 per cent.

Meanwhile, the Finance Ministry's recent monthly economic review cited resilient growth, robust economic activity indicators, price stability, and steady external sector performance as factors underpinning India's promising economic trajectory amid global uncertainties.

International organisations and the RBI have issued positive assessments of India's growth outlook for the current financial year, reinforcing the nation's status as the fastest-growing major economy globally.

"Vatican-like status to Amritsar" should be issue for LS polls for candidates



JAGMOHAN SINGH
Amritsar

'Lok-Raj' Punjab has called for an autonomous "Vatican City like Status to Amritsar," for "deserving respect" for Sri Guru Granth Sahib, international security to 'Harimandar-Akal Takht Sahib,' and as per wish of Sikh Gurus "unhindered access" of every devotee from all over the world to the "Highest Temporal Seat for whole Humanity." Making this demand an "election issue", Lok Sabha candidates have been urged to clarify their position on the demand for «Vatican status to Amritsar» during elections. President of 'Lok-Raj' Punjab, Dr. Manjit Singh Randhawa, in a joint statement along with «Culture and Heritage Conservation Initiative» and «Guru-Adab Morcha Sirhind», has also questioned the logic of ruling regime, behind fixing election date in Punjab coinciding with 40th anniversary of tragic Operation Blue Star, even during 7-phase election schedule. Why no remorse has been expressed till date, over unforgettable 'Blue Star' tragedy, planned brutal genocide and alienation of Sikh community, by the leaderships of various parties, who remained in power, during long period of four decades?

Corruption, drugs, gangs and resource mafia has destroyed Punjab: PM Modi



PATIALA: Blaming "corrupt Congress and AAP" as "two sides of the same coin", Prime Minister Narendra Modi said on Thursday that rampant corruption, flourishing drug industry, and dampened industrial prospects have destroyed the much famous spirit of Punjab.

"Today, resource mafia, drug mafia, and shooter gangs rule the roost in Punjab. The state government is debt-ridden, and its CM is only CM on paper. Corrupt Congress and AAP are two sides of the same coin that are aiming to plunder Punjab and deprive it of any development," said PM Modi while addressing an election rally in Patiala - his first in the state during the ongoing Lok Sabha elections.

BJP's Patiala candidate Preet Kaur, Faridkot candidate Hans Raj Hans, Sangrur candidate Arvind Khanna, Bathinda candidate Parmpal Kaur, party's state chief Sunil Jakhar were also present on

the occasion as the Prime Minister, who donned a Sikh turban, began his address by paying rich tributes to the land of Guru Tegh Bahadur.

Slamming the Congress party, PM Modi said the party kept people away from the Kartarpur Sahib for 70 years.

"Congress did the partition of the country in such a way that for 70 years, we had to use binoculars to get a glimpse of Guru Tegh Sahib. In 1971, when the Bangladesh war was fought, more than 90,000 Pakistani soldiers surrendered. Had I been there at that time, I would have taken Kartarpur Sahib from Pakistan and then released their soldiers. I have tried my best and today, the Kartarpur Sahib corridor is open for the devotees," he said.

Saying that his government has always been inspired by Sikh traditions, the PM credited the BJP for commemorating the 'Veer Bal Divas', bringing Sikhs back from war zone Afghanistan, and retrieving the Holy Guru Granth Sahib.

RBI Predicts 7.5% Growth for India in April-June Quarter

NEW DELHI: According to the Reserve Bank of India's (RBI) May 2024 Bulletin, India's economy is likely to sustain its strong growth trajectory, with projections indicating a 7.5 per cent expansion in the first quarter of the current fiscal year 2024-25.

This bullish outlook is underpinned by rising aggregate demand and a resurgence in non-food spending in rural areas, signalling a broadening of the economic recovery.

The RBI's analysis, based on the Economic Activity Index (EAI) - a composite measure derived from 27 high-frequency indicators - suggests that economic activity rebounded in April 2024, supporting the 7.5 per cent growth estimate



for the April-June quarter.

The Indian economy has demonstrated remarkable resilience amid global supply chain disruptions caused by geopolitical tensions.

High-frequency indicators corroborate the sustained momentum in domestic demand



conditions during April 2024.

Toll collections rose 8.6 per cent year-on-year, while automobile sales surged 25.4 per cent, driven by robust growth in the two-wheeler and three-wheeler segments, with passenger vehicles recording their highest-ever monthly sales.

Rahul assured to scrap Agniveer scheme & waive farmer debts if Cong comes to power

PARVESH HANDA
Sonipat (Haryana)

Former Congress President Rahul Gandhi during poll promotion rallies in support of Congress candidates Sonipat, Rao Daan Singh contesting polls for Bhiwani-Mahendergarh and Varun Mulla in Panchkula said that Prime Minister Narendra Modi has lost his reputation allegedly the government was being run by billionaire Gautam Adani and Ambani. Pointing out at Modi government Rahul said that loans



of value worth Rs 16 lakh crore taken by as many as 22 millionaires have been waived, whereas on the other hand loans against farmers have not been waived by their government. He said, after coming to power Congress

government will constitute a 'Maafi Commission' to prepare a list of all families below poverty line burdened under loans and waive off immediately.

Addressing his election rallies in Haryana, Con-

gress leader Rahul Gandhi launched a scathing attack on Prime Minister Narendra Modi promised to scrap the Agniveer Scheme for recruitment to Armed forces besides to waive farmers' debt if voted to power. Addressing the Agniveer Scheme, Rahul Gandhi said that Mr. Modi had for the first time converted India's soldiers into labourers and created two kinds of martyrs, one will be those who will get the martyr's status, pension and all facilities and the others, the sons of poor families will not get this.

Indian Companies Explore Agriculture Opportunities in Africa

NEWDELHI: With several African nations like Kenya, Uganda, Botswana, and Cote d'Ivoire looking to diversify foreign investment in agriculture beyond China, India is pushing to secure economic and diplomatic ties in the sector.

During a recent delegation visit to Uganda and Kenya led by India's Ministry of External Affairs and Agriculture Ministry, the two African nations offered to lease land to Indian agricultural businesses.

About 35 Indian company representatives attended, including from DCM Shriram, Bharat Biogas Energy, and others.

"The Kenyan government has agreed to lease land with a condition that 20 per cent of revenue should be paid as an export tax," an official stated. "Uganda agreed to provide a minimum of 100 acres to each investor", reported businessline.

The driving factor appears to be a need for agricultural development to boost food security and economic growth. Key opportunities exist in



cultivating crops like rice, wheat, millets, livestock, bio-gas and fertilisers.

"Both countries want the world's best seed varieties in maize, paddy, millets and horticulture crops to improve domestic production. Indian investors can put money here with guaranteed returns," an industry source said.

Animal husbandry is also promising given abundant cattle feed. The two sides could collaborate on developing local hybrid bovine species as well.

While some Indian delegates explored immediate export-import prospects, the focus was on facilitating long-term agricultural investments between India and the African nations over the coming months.

More younger people getting cancer, 20% cancer cases in India are below the age of 40 years: Study

OUR CORRESPONDENT
New Delhi

National Cancer Study done by Cancer Mukht Bharat Foundation highlighted that in India 20% of the cancer cases are those patients who are below the age of 40 years in which 60% were male and 40% were female, indicating that the incidences of cancer is rising among younger generation. In the United States, the American Cancer Society also recently reported that the demographics of cancer patients are increasingly shifting from older individuals to middle-aged people.

National Cancer Study by Cancer Mukht Bharat Foundation was conducted across 1368 cancer patients across India who called on its Cancer Helpline Number from 1st March 2024 to 15th May 2024. The most number of calls were from Hyderabad then Meerut, Mumbai and New Delhi.

Recently Under Cancer Mukht Bharat Campaign a free of cost National Cancer Helpline Number 93-555-20202 was launched which is operational from 10am to 5pm from Monday to Saturday. Cancer patients can call on this number to speak to leading Oncologists directly or even do a video call to discuss about the cancer treatment without paying any fees. This helpline number offers a free



opinion from leading oncologists, providing crucial guidance to patients navigating the complexities of cancer diagnosis and treatment. The helpline is accessible to anyone and promises to be a game-changer in the fight against cancer.

The Study also found that the most prevalent cases were of Head and Neck cancer 26% of patients, closely followed by GI cancers 16% and breast cancer 15% and then blood cancers 9% of patients. These data are in line with Globocan national India data. The Study also found that 27% cases diagnosed in India are in stage 1 and 2 of cancer whereas 63% were Stage 3 or 4 cancer. The most common question of the Cancer patients who called at Cancer Helpline number was for sec-

ond opinion and to confirm whether their cancer treatment is correct and upto date and check availability of any latest treatment or medicine to treat their respective cancer as in cancer treatment. New medicines are approved almost every week so this is an important reason to get another opinion. The second most common question we found was patients asking what stage their cancer is in indicating the importance of education to cancer patients and thirdly patients commonly asked regarding their family members, what they can do to prevent cancer highlighting the importance of cancer screening and awareness.

Dr. Ashish Gupta, Principal Investigator and Senior Oncologist who is heading Can-

cer Mukht Bharat Campaign in India said "Since the launch of free of cost National Cancer Helpline Number 9355520202, it is proving to an support system for cancer patients across India and we are getting almost hundreds of calls every day from across all the Indian states. This study helps us make more targeted cancer approach towards cancer treatment and make India Cancer Mukht. We found head and neck cancer was most prevalent which is nearly entirely preventable by lifestyle modification, vaccinations and screening strategies. Breast and colon cancers we have very effective screening strategies for which find cancer in the early stages. Unfortunately as is representative of the population at large in India we found nearly 2/3rds of cancers were detected late likely due to low adoption of proper screening. Cancer Mukht Bharat campaign aims to reduce the incidence and impact of cancer on individuals and communities through education and early detection."

Further it showed that 67% of The cancer patients who took help of National Cancer Helpline number (93-555-20202) were those patients who are taking treatment from private hospitals and 33% of the cancer patients were those who are being treated at government hospital.

Priyanka directs farmers to push them out from Delhi, who had stopped their entry in Delhi



SATISH HANDA
Panipat

Congress National General Secretary Priyanka Gandhi Vadra lashed out at Prime Minister Narendra Modi accusing him of not understanding the pains of farmers, labourers and the poor people, alleging that his government frames favourable policies only for his billionaire friends. After holding a Road Show at Sirsa in support of Congress candidate Kumari Shelja contesting Lok Sabha polls she addressed a rally in Panipat in support of Divyanshu Budhiraja contesting against the former Haryana chief minister Manohar Lal Khattar. Addressing a Lok Sabha poll rally in Panipat, Priyanka Gandhi announced that once the Indian National Developmental Inclusive Alliance (INDIA) forms its government at the Centre, farmers will get a legal guarantee on the minimum support price (MSP) for crops and their debts

will be waived.

Priyanka said, one thing that has become clear in past 10 years is that Modiji does not understand the pain of farmers, the poor, middle class, women and youngsters, whereas the loans of amount worth Rs 16 lakh crore availed by rich and 'karabpati' (Billionaire) friends were waived by his government. She made an appeal to farmers to wipe those out of Delhi who had stopped their entry in Delhi. Former Haryana chief minister Bhupinder Singh Hooda and Deepender Hooda Rajya Sabha member were also present at Priyanka Gandhi's rally. She said the Modi government does not care about the farming community aiming 'Kisano ko pesne do, gareebi ki daldal mein rehne do' (let the farmers suffer in poverty) and the situation has been created by him (Modi). She pointed out how protesting farmers were treated at Delhi's borders and that more than 600 of them lost their lives.

Wheat Procurement Surpasses Last Year's Mark, Ensuring Food Security

NEW DELHI: The procurement of wheat during the Rabi Marketing Season (RMS) 2024-25 is progressing smoothly across the country's major procuring states.

As of now, the Central Pool has already procured 262.48 Lakh Metric Tonnes (LMT) of wheat, surpassing last year's total procurement of 262.02 LMT. This year's procurement has benefited 22.31 lakh farmers, with a total Minimum Support Price (MSP) outflow of Rs. 59,715 crores. The significant contributors to the procurement are the states of Punjab (124.26 LMT), Haryana (71.49 LMT), Madhya Pradesh (47.78 LMT), Rajasthan (9.66 LMT), and Uttar Pradesh (9.07 LMT).

Furthermore, the rice procurement for the Kharif Mar-



keting Season (KMS) 2023-24 is also progressing smoothly. So far, 728.42 LMT of paddy, equivalent to 489.15 LMT of rice, has been procured directly from 98.26 lakh farmers, with a total MSP outflow of approximately Rs. 1,60,472 crores. With the combined stock of wheat and rice in the Central Pool exceeding 600 LMT, the country is well-positioned to meet its food grain requirements under the Pradhan Mantri Garib Kalyan Anna Yojana (PMGKAY) and other welfare schemes, as well as for market interventions.

People who are born with silver spoons can never understand the hardships of the common people : Bhagwant Mann

GURDASPUR: Chief Minister Bhagwant Mann on Friday campaigned for the AAP's Gurdaspur candidate Amansher Singh Shery Kalsi and held a massive road through the various constituencies of the Lok Sabha seat. He covered Dera Baba Nanak, Fatehgarh Churian and Batala and addressed the massive crowds in Kalanaur, Baba Lal Chawnk and Gandhi Chawnk of Batala respectively.



During the Dera Baba Nanak road show, Mann addressed a gathering in Kalanaur and said Kalanaur is a historic town, Akbar was crowned here. He was a good king who followed Din-e-alahi where people of all religions had a voice in his court. Mann said that the people of Kalanaur are ready to write some new history this time. He said, defeat those who think they cannot be defeated, who doubt the power of common people in democracy. Mann added that others see that Kalanaur is last, but from where I see it, it is the first, it deserves priority and after June

4th I am going to give top priority to all development projects of Kalanaur and Dera Baba Nanak constituency. Attacking the Congress candidate Sukhjinder Singh Randhawa, Mann said that he is collecting all the papers and files against all these corrupt leaders. He said that when these people are out of the field, he will make sure they are out for good. He said that these people looted the rights of the three generations of Punjab. They forced the future of our children towards darkness, they ruined our youth and

destroyed the lives of our elders. Mann advised the people to never vote for anyone who says it is their last election. They don't care, they have nothing to lose so they do not work for the common people. He said that Shery Kalsi is young, capable and spirited. Next he targeted BJP MP Sunny Deol, who after winning the Gurdaspur seat, never returned among the people and completely abandoned the constituency. He said that every time people use handpump in Gurdaspur, they curse Sunny Deol, he was uproot-

ing hand pumps on the other side of the border but he didn't have time for the people of Gurdaspur.

Mann said that those born with silver spoons in their mouths can never understand the pain and hardships of the common people. He said that we are like you, one of you, we come from villages, common families and we have come from fields. We have lived through hardships and poverty. I have worked hard for everything and now I am working for you, for Punjab and for the future of your children.

Mann said that he understands the problems of the farmers, that is why he instructed that the farmers should get 11 hours of uninterrupted electricity for irrigation during the daytime. He said that he is ensuring canal water to every corner of Punjab, even the tail-ends. He said that the electricity board and infrastructure is the same, the water availability is the same, then how he was able to make it possible and not the previous governments.

Project for first homeopathic medical college & hospital in Haryana left incomplete allegedly due to neglect

SATISH HANDA
Ambala

Leaders of the different political parties in the state during present Lok Sabha poll promotions making announcements, and assuring developmental promises to the public, but no one speaks about the large number of developmental projects going on at Ambala, on which amount worth crores of rupees has always been spent by the government are still hanging on fire incomplete, allegedly due to the corrupt practices by the contractor as well as neglect and embezzlements on the part of concerned government employees. The project, first in the state for developing a homeopathic medical college to provide education to 50 medical students every year, with provision for a hostel for the students, residential accommodation for the doctors and the para-medical staff along with a 100 Beds hospital was approved by the government.



The foundation stone for the construction of this project in 11 acres area was approved with the project cost Rs 65 crore and its foundation stone was laid by the Haryana state government on 12th January 2019 at village Chandpura near Ambala. However, as per the required norms by the government a homeopathic hospital with a provision for 25 Beds was also started at village Rampur with the investment worth Rs 60 lakh, hoping to shift the same to village Chandpura on

completion of building for the homeopathic medical college. The construction of building for the homeopathic medical college started at Chandpura came to the halt soon after the foundation work of the building was completed due to the embezzlements alleged on the part of the contractor as well as the government employees supervising this project, as a result all hopes for the completion of this project have been duped, since the construction work have come to the halt since a long time.

Gunshots fired just few yards away from the Congress rally of MP Gurjit Ajula



JAGMOHAN SINGH
Amritsar

Five people fired gun shots just few yards away from the ongoing election rally being organized in favor congress candidate Gurjit Singh Ajula who was also present in the public gathering here today.

Police said that the incident has no connection with the election rally as the incident occurred away from the Election rally.

Police made it confirmed that one person was reportedly injured in the firing incident.

SHO police station Ajnala Mr. Balbir Singh said that victim has been identified as Lovely who in a statement to police said that he was going to attend the election rally of Congress when he was attacked as gun shots fired just one hundred yards away from the rally venue.

SHO said that five accused have already been identified by the police as three were the residents of Ajnala village and rest two were outsiders as all were known to the victim. Police said that it was an incident of personal enmity. Various Police teams have been dispatched to nab the accused who would be arrested shortly, said SHO.

However, congress activists attending the rally accused the Punjab Government led by AAP for the firing incident.

Chandigarh Announces Dry Days for LS pol 2024 and Bye Elections



CHANDIGARH: The Chief Electoral Officer, Chandigarh, in compliance with the directions from the Election Commission of India, has announced the schedule for Dry Days during the upcoming General Elections to Lok Sabha 2024 and Bye Elections to various Assembly Constituencies (ACs).

In accordance with Section 135-C of the Representation of People Act, 1951, and Rule 37(9) of the Punjab Liquor License Rules 1956 (applicable to U.T. Chandigarh), the Excise & Taxation Commissioner, has ordered the closure of all liquor vends/shops in Union Territory of Chandigarh and specified areas along the inter-state borders as follows:

Schedule for Dry Days in Chandigarh:

FROM: 30th May 2024 (6:00 PM) to 1st June 2024 (6:00 PM) On the counting day: 4th June 2024 (whole day) Areas within 3 Kms of Inter-State Borders with Haryana and Punjab:

Bottling Plant license suspended in Punjab

CHANDIGARH: As Model Code of Conduct (MCC) came into force due to General Elections to Lok Sabha - 2024, there has been consistent efforts by the Excise Department as per the directions of Additional Chief Secretary-cum-Financial Commissioner (Taxation), Punjab Vikas Pratap, and Excise and Taxation Commissioner, Punjab Varun Rojjan, to ensure free and fair elections by putting complete control over smuggling of liquor as well as illicit distillation.

During this time period a well-executed plan of the Excise department has resulted into registration of about 1058 FIRs. In addition to it, 937 arrests have been made, 16965 litres of illicit liquor detected, 2756729 litres of lahan recovered and destroyed, 108180 Bottles of PML/IMFL/Beer has been seized.

653 criminals in 369 FIRs arrested in raids prior o Lok Sabha polls in Haryana



PARVESH HANDA
Chandigarh

Haryana police under Operation 'Aakraman-10' on Sunday with the help of 1199 police teams comprising of 5543 policemen arrested 653 criminals in 369 FIRs registered against them allegedly involved under sections of Indian Penal Code: Gambling Act, Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances Act, Excise Act and Arms Act. A spokesperson of DGP Haryana office said, the raids started on May 19 morning and continued until late evening in which a total of 24 FIRs were registered under Arms Act and seven pistols seized resulting in arrest of 12 individuals, besides, 3.3kg ganja, 51g heroin, 11.3g smack, and 2.4kg charas were seized. Haryana Police had conducted Operation Aakraman-10 to clamp down on criminals, illicit elements, and drug traffickers simultaneously prior to present Lok Sabha polls in the state to be held on 25th May. The operation was held by the state police to arrest notorious criminals and most-wanted miscreants, including cyber criminals and proclaimed offenders. According to police information, as many as 17 hard core criminals and a most wanted criminal, six cyber criminal, 38 bala jumbars avoiding arrest since a long time and criminals having registered against them 199 FIRs under Excise Act with 108 persons trapped in police net from whom 174 bottles English wine, 2266 bottles Country liquor, 330 bottles illicit liquor and 2430 litre 'Lahan' to prepare Desi liquor was seized. Police also arrested 12 persons involved in gambling from whom amount over Rs 2.25 lakh was recovered.

SAD president spent maximum time while talking about the independent candidate Amritpal Singh rather his own party candidate in election rally

JAGMOHAN SINGH
Khadoor Sahib

Shiromani Akali Dal (Badal) president Sukhbir Singh Badal today speaking in the election rally in favour of party candidate from Khadoor Sahib Virsa Singh Valthoa spent almost time while talking about the independent candidate Amritpal Singh a radical Sikh preacher contesting from the same constituency.

He said that Bhair Amritpal Singh could not be classified as a Bandi Singh even as he announced that he would not allow the latter to mislead the youth of Punjab and push the State back into darkness.

In a speech at village Nau-



rangabad which SAD president said that Amritpal Singh, who had spent one year in jail after arriving in Punjab in suspicious circumstances, was not a Bandi Singh. "The real Bandi Singhs are those who have spent 26 to 29 years in jail because of

certain acts after being swayed by emotions. These persons have never asked to be released from prison but it the SAD and the Sikh Sangat which is fighting for their freedom".

The SAD president, who was campaigning for party candi-

date Virsa Singh Valthoa, said "remember this person landed in Punjab two years back as a clean shaven Central agencies, which were privy to his movements, did not take any action against him but instead let him grow politically. Following this, when the law finally caught up with him, Amritpal adopted a disguise to escape and was finally 'arrested' after negotiations".

Badal also cast aspersions at the manner in which Amritpal entered politics from prison. "His main proposer and lawyer is Rajdev Singh, who is the RSS leader from Malwa Zone - 1. Will a panthic personality ever appoint a RSS functionary as his lawyer?" he asked.

INDIA bloc headed for clear mandate: Jairam Ramesh



CHANDIGARH: Congress in charge of communications, Jairam Ramesh, on Friday asserted the Indian National Developmental Inclusive Alliance (INDIA) bloc was headed for a clear and decisive mandate in the Lok Sabha polls.

Ramesh told the media here that trends from the first two phases had established that the INDIA bloc was set to form the government at the Centre, and cited how Prime Minister Narendra Modi's language has changed since April 19 and he started communalising his election strategy turning everything into a Hindu-Muslim issue.

The Congress General Secretary said the feedback from different states, where the party had fared badly in 2019, was quite encouraging and it was doing very well this time. He said history was repeating itself after 20 years. He said just like the Congress-led alliance stormed to power in 2004,

it would storm to power this time also.

As regards the appointment of the Prime Minister, he said once the INDIA bloc gets a majority, the Prime Minister will be appointed within days. He said in 2004 it took three days to appoint Manmohan Singh and this time, it may take even less than that.

Besides, he pointed out that in India, it is the party or the alliance which wins the elections, not an individual. He said in a parliamentary democracy like India, elections are not individual-centric.

Ramesh reaffirmed 'Paanch Nyay' -- justice for farmers, youth, labourers, women and proportionate representation, with five guarantees each for every 'Nyay'. He said the Congress has guaranteed in its manifesto that the MSP (minimum support price) will have a legal status, besides, farmers' loans will be waived off.

7 members of family from U P on way to Vaishno Devi killed, 10 severely injured



PARVESH HANDA
Ambala

Seven members of a family from Bulandshahr in Uttar Pradesh on way to holy Vaishno Devi shrine lost their lives in a road mishap on Delhi-Ambala highway. The victims were rushed to different hospitals in Ambala and Kurukshetra.

According to police information, a tempo traveller in which the pilgrims were travelling crashed into a truck on Delhi-Ambala National Highway near Mohra village close to Ambala Cantt early Friday morning. The victims were on their way from Bulandshahr in Uttar Pradesh to Vaishno Devi to pay obeisance.



According to the passengers travelling in the vehicle there were nearly 30 people and the accident happened after the traveller collided with a truck from rear side. According to the passengers, three persons had died on the spot whereas others succumbed to their injuries on way to hospitals. After the accident, the victims were rushed

to different hospitals in Ambala and Kurukshetra. SHO Parao Police station Dalip Kumar said, most of the victims travelling in ill-fated vehicles were relatives and were on their way to holy Vaishno Devi temple. The exact cause of the accident is yet to be ascertained. The victims have been shifted to hospitals for treatment.

As soon as the Congress comes to power, we will provide to Haryana youths lakhs of government jobs, says Hooda

PARVESH HANDA
Yamunanagar

While addressing a large gathering highlighting the situation of increasing unemployment among youths in Haryana, the leader of opposition in Vidhan Sabha and the former chief minister Bhopinder Singh Hooda made an appeal to youths not to leave their homes for petty labour jobs in other countries and promised that if his party comes to power, it will provide them government jobs. Congress leaders Bhopinder Hooda during the 'Vipaksh Aapke Samaksh' and 'Jai Bharat Satyagrah' programme at Jagadhari grain market in Yamunanagar assured youths. He said, under the Khattar regime the state has climbed to the top in the country in three major sectors: unemployment, crime and inflation. Speaking to youths, Hooda said that they should stay back, since BJP government is wiped out of the state and as soon as the Congress government comes to power, we will provide permanent employment to youth in Haryana itself and provide them lakhs of government jobs within



the state. He further said there has been a cut of 1.82 lakh permanent jobs in the state and the ruling government is acting like a contractor rather than ending contract system, as promised. The former CM Hooda also claimed that Haryana is among few of states, where debt is more than the actual budget. He said, the state's budget is Rs 1.83 lakh crore and they have accepted the fact that the debt is more than that at Rs 2.85 lakh crore, whereas actually it's more than Rs 4 lakh crore and he has data to corroborate the same, and will disclose the details in a press conference in Chandigarh in a day or so. Hooda said, Yamunanagar is popular for its plywood and

metal industry in the area, while sugarcane and popular trees are largely grown in the belt apart from other traditional crops. But due to present ruling government erratic policies, industries are shifting to neighbouring states. Many plywood and metal industries have already shifted to Moradabad and other places from Yamunanagar and Jagadhari which was popular in the country in manufacturing plywood and metal utensils in past now has lost the charm, Hooda said.

The Congress rally was attended by nearly two dozen party MLAs, large number of former ministers and scores of its leaders and workers in the state. Hooda said, the BJP is losing grip

over the state. Congress National President Mallikarjun Kharge in his address strongly condemned Prime Minister Narendra Modi in the habit of often abusing Congress, rather should explain achievements by his party in poll rallies, instead of creating terror among people if Congress comes to power. He raised a question, what excesses have been made by Congress government while ruling over the country for a period about 55 years. Kharge said, voters are going to give reply to BJP government in present polls as regard lathees, gun shots on farmers, increasing unemployment to youths, their conspiracy to finish constituency and repeatedly making false assurances to the people in Haryana state like to bring back black money in the country, credit amount worth Rs 15 lakh in the bank account of every citizen, to develop 100 smart cities, introduce Bullet trains, double the farmers income, provide residential house to every family below poverty line, apart from large number of other fake assurances made to the people time to time, which remained unfulfilled in their past 10 years rule.

AAP is discriminating against SCs and weaker sections of society, says Sukhbir Badal

JALANDHAR: Shiromani Akali Dal (SAD) president Sukhbir Singh Badal today said the Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) government was discriminating against the Dalits and weaker sections of society by withdrawing facilities given to them by erstwhile SAD governments and vowed to restore all facilities withdrawn by successive Congress and AAP governments back to them once the party formed a government in the State.

The SAD president, who addressed massive public meetings in favour of party candidate Mohinder Singh Kaypee at Shahkot, Nakodar, Phillaur and Phagwara, said "this anti-Punjab government, which is run from Delhi, is denying the SC scholarship to students and free cycles to girl students. It is not giving the Shagun benefit to brides from SC and underprivileged sections of society. It has stopped the Bhagat Pura Singh medical insurance scheme. It has closed down chemist shops and even Sewa Kendras".

Asserting that successive Congress and AAP governments had taken Punjab back by a decade, Mr Sukhbir Badal said "support the SAD to ensure all social welfare benefits



are restored. Support the SAD to force this anti-Punjab government to pay Rs 1, 000 per month to all women. Support the SAD to save Punjab and ensure its River water rights and its claim to its capital city of Chandigarh is not compromised".

Mr Badal also launched a frontal attack on chief minister Bhagwant Mann on the occasion. He said even now during electioneering the chief minister was indulging in cheap stunts. "Bhagwant Mann is doing road shows after closing down markets and clogging the area with his own vehicles and then claiming he has public support. He does not even get down from his vehicle, leave meeting anyone in even his home constituency

of Dhuri where people have put up 'missing' posters in his name. These shows are being repeated from town to town causing a huge loss to shopkeepers and their trade". The SAD president also questioned the chief minister's ability to run the State saying "someone who was deboarded from an international flight in Frankfurt in a drunken condition and even now indulges in antics on the top of his vehicle during electioneering cannot be trusted to run the State".

Mr Badal also spoke on how former chief minister Charanjit Singh Channi had looted the State during his three month tenure as chief minister by indulging in unprecedented corruption.

Congress & AAP alliance is corrupt, have no ideology and anti-Sanatan coalition

SATISH HANDA
Karnal

National President Bharatiya Janata Party, J P Nadda addressing public meeting 'Prabudh Jan Sammelan' in Karnal on Sunday when Haryana Chief Minister Nayab Singh Saini, BJP Lok Sabha Candidate from Kurukshetra Navin Jindal, Former Haryana CM and BJP Lok Sabha candidate from Karnal Manohar Lal Khattar and several other leaders were present said that in the past 10 years, due to the efforts of Prime Minister Narendra Modi not only Haryana but also the definition and culture of politics have changed in the country, and people now believe that we are advancing towards Viksit Bharat. Nadda said that there was a time when politics was based on caste, religion, region, and nepotism, but under the leadership of Modi Ji, politics in the country is now guided by the mantra of 'Sabka

Saath Sabka Vikas Sabka Vishwas Sabka Prayas'. Politics no longer revolves around the vote bank but has shifted its focus towards assessing performance through report cards.

Nadda expressed gratitude to have witnessed the BJP emerging as the world's largest political party. BJP's commitment to transparency in its manifesto, outlining factual targets and detailed expenditure plans for any proposed schemes, which has led to a significant improvement in last-mile delivery without the need for recommendations, as the process has become entirely digital which also include door-to-door delivery was undertaken, Ayushman cards and Ujjwala gas connections were provided in every village with the aim of achieving 100% saturation, which reflects the visionary and administrative strength of Hon'ble Prime Minister. Nadda stated that PM Narendra Modi has



given to women and the way he has worked to enhance women's development, this means not just empowering women, but development through women. He has very clearly stated that when an individual becomes empowered, they are empowered alone, but when a woman becomes empowered, she empowers the entire family. He said, In the previous Lok Sabha, out of 88 women MPs, 41 were from the BJP.

Nadda stated that while countries like Pakistan, Bangladesh, Afghanistan and Syria do not practice triple talaq, it was still prevalent in India, when Modi Ji ended triple talaq, granting freedom to Muslim women. Nadda said the BJP government has included women in every sector, increasing their participation in MSMEs by 28%. Women have been empowered in all areas of development. Our

esteemed Prime Minister has created a new class in the country, called the 'beneficiary class,' by ensuring that the benefits of BJP government schemes reach the very last person.

Nadda remarked that following the COVID-19 pandemic, nations such as the United States, Europe, Russia, China, and Japan are all confronting economic difficulties. However, under the leadership of Prime Minister Modi, India has ascended from the 11th to the 5th position in the global economy. In India, it took 28 years for tuberculosis medicine to arrive, 30 years for tetanus medicine, and 100 years for Japanese fever medicine. However, during the COVID-19 pandemic, under the leadership of Narendra Modi India developed two vaccines within 9 months and administered 220 crore double doses of the vaccine, ensuring the safety of 140 crore people in the country.

Strong wave in favour of INDIA bloc: Jairam Ramesh

SATISH HANDA
Sirsa

Congress general secretary and in-charge for Communications Jairam Ramesh said the INDIA bloc was set to defeat the BJP during present Lok Sabha polls in the country as well as in Haryana. Addressing a press conference, Ramesh campaigning for the Congress candidate Kumari Selja as former Union Minister as well as a former State President said that the INDIA bloc will sweep all the 10 parliamentary constituencies in Haryana, besides winning maximum number of seats in assembly elections which are scheduled to be held after the Lok Sabha elections. The Congress general secretary said that the people of the country have realised that Prime Minister Modi was spreading an 'epidemic of lies' in the country repeatedly, as such he has already lost the trust of the people of the country.

Repeating the history after 20 years, recalling the events of 2004 general elections, the BJP had fought on the theme of 'India Shining' under the leadership of the then Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee, Ramesh said that nobody that time believed that the BJP will lose, but the Congress led UPA made that happen and it is going to make that happen now again, he added that reports after 428 seats in five phases of the elections suggest that the INDIA bloc was headed for a clear and decisive vic-



KAVITA SHARMA
New Delhi

tory this time. Jairam said that the BJP was against the reservations and wanted to change the constitution. He referred to the UP Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath's write up published on his official website, where he had strongly opposed reservations.

Mentioning some of the guarantees the Congress has promised in its poll manifesto, Jairam said that the farmers' debt will be waived off, besides they will be provided legal guarantee for the minimum support price (MSP) of their crops, besides in case of any damage or loss to their crops, they will be compensated within 30 days. Jairam said, the poor will be given a 10 kgs ration instead of 5 Kg being given by the present ruling government and every poor family will also receive a monthly cash assistance of Rs 8500 to be deposited in their bank accounts. While addressing press conference, Ramesh said, the Congress in its poll manifesto has promised to hold the caste census, reserve 50% jobs for women in government departments, increase the daily minimum wages from Rs 250 to Rs 400 MNREGA workers and increase salaries of ASHA workers.

JIH President Syed Sadatullah Husaini extends condolences on the demise of Iranian President Dr Seyyed Ebrahim Raisi



KAVITA SHARMA
New Delhi

The President of Jamaat-e-Islami Hind extended his condolences to the people of Iran on the tragic demise of the President of the Islamic Republic of Iran - Dr Seyed Ebrahim Raisi, Foreign Minister Hossein Amir Abdollahian, and accompanying officials in the tragic helicopter accident in Varzaqan.

In a statement to the media, the JIH President offered glorious tributes to the late Iranian President saying, "Dr Raisi's passing away marks a profound loss not only for all Iranians but also for the entire Muslim Ummah. We stand with the people of Iran in their moment of grief. Dr Ibrahim Raisi was a resolute leader and a statesman who made many tough decisions to uphold the interests of the people in everyday governance and statecraft. His Presidency was marked by admirable resistance to Western powers who desire to arm-twist other countries into submission for economic exploitation. He will also be remembered for his resolute support to the Palestinian cause and their resistance against the Zionist settler colonialism and atrocities in Palestine."

Praising the role played by the former President of Iran, Syed Sadatullah averred, "Dr Raisi made a stellar contribution to strengthening the India-Iran bilateral relationship. He played a leading role in sealing the 10-year agreement with India to develop and operate the Chabahar port. The deal has taken the infrastructure and trade partnership with the Islamic Republic to the next level and will prove to be a boon to the people of both countries as well as the entire region. He will be sincerely missed by all friends of Iran in India."

Priyanka Gandhi to hold roadshow for Ajay Rai in Varanasi on May 25



NEW DELHI: Congress General Secretary Priyanka Gandhi Vadra will campaign and hold a roadshow in favour of Ajay Rai, the party's state president and candidate in Varanasi, on May 25. Prime Minister Narendra Modi is seeking a third consecutive term from Varanasi. Ajay Rai said on Wednesday, "Yes, Priyanka Gandhi will campaign and hold a roadshow in Varanasi on May 25." Rai has been camping here for the past few weeks. Priyanka Gandhi Vadra is one of the Congress's star campaigners. She along with her brother Rahul Gandhi and other senior party leaders, has been campaigning in different states. Priyanka camped in Rae Bareilly to campaign for party candidates -- Rahul Gandhi in Rae Bareilly and her family loyalist K.L. Sharma in Amethi -- from May 6 till the end of campaigning there on May 18. Polling in Varanasi will take place in the seventh and final phase of elections on June 1.

Bhupinder Hooda only focused on making his son MP, Nadda says in Haryana

ROHTAK: Taking a jibe at two-time Haryana Chief Minister Bhupinder Singh Hooda, BJP President J.P. Nadda said on Tuesday that the Congress leader is only focused on making his son an MP, but Rohtak desires 'Teerhi Baar, Modi Sarkar' (Modi government for a third term).

The Congress has fielded Bhupinder Hooda's son Deepender Singh Hooda as its candidate for the Rohtak Lok Sabha seat.

Conducting roadshows in Rohtak and Jind in support of BJP Lok Sabha candidates Arvind Sharma and Mohan Lal Badoli, respectively, amid slogans of 'Bharat Mata Ki Jai', Nadda said, "Congress and the INDI Alliance are living examples of corruption, dynastic politics, and appeasement. "The massive public support for the roadshows clearly indicates that the BJP is receiving overwhelming public endorsement, and Narendra Modi will



become the Prime Minister for the third consecutive time with more than 400 seats." He also said that along with Rohtak and Sonapat, the lotus will bloom with more than 50 per cent of vote share on the remaining eight Lok Sabha seats in the state as well. "The entire INDI Alliance,

including the Congress, is attempting to divide people and the nation. While the previous Congress-led governments kept issues like 'One rank, One Pension' hanging for 40 years, Prime Minister Narendra Modi resolved them in his first term. "Congress leader Rahul Gandhi says they speak for the welfare of farmers, but the Congress insulted Jat farmer leader Jagdeep Dhankhar who sits in a constitutional position. Also, the Congress-led UPA government sent only Rs 41, 000 crore to Haryana in 10 years, but the Modi government provided Haryana with Rs 2.70 lakh crore in the past 10 years," the BJP President said.

become the Prime Minister for the third consecutive time with more than 400 seats." He also said that along with Rohtak and Sonapat, the lotus will bloom with more than 50 per cent of vote share on the remaining eight Lok Sabha seats in the state as well. "The entire INDI Alliance,

INDIA bloc affected by communalism, casteism and nepotism -- diseases worse than cancer: PM Modi

SHRAWASTI (UP): Prime Minister Narendra Modi said on Wednesday that the INDIA bloc is afflicted with diseases like communalism, casteism and nepotism that are "worse than cancer" and can destroy the nation. "The INDI Alliance has diseases worse than cancer. They can destroy the whole of India if they spread. These



three diseases -- of being extremely communal, extremely racist and extremely nepotistic -- can be more destructive

for the country than cancer," said PM Modi while addressing an election rally in Uttar Pradesh's Shrawasti. Seeing the massive gathering, the Prime Minister said that the love and enthusiasm of people "clearly shows" that the INDI Alliance of SP-Congress has "completely collapsed" and the entire country is chanting 'phir ek baar, Modi sarkar'.

Ratna vandar key takes a centrestage in the campaign

ARABINDA MOHAPATRA
Bhubaneswar

The war of words between top BJP leaders including Prime Minister Narendra Modi and BJD star campaigner and chief minister Naveen Patnaik's Man Friday VK Pandian over the issue of missing keys of Puri Jagannath temple's Ratna Bhandar (treasure room) is escalating and heating up the campaign in Odisha. Addressing rallies at Angul and



Cuttack on May 20 following his roadshow in Puri the Prime Minister had launched a scathing attack on Pandian who joined the BJD a few months ago after taking voluntary retirement from IAS. Takin a dig at Pandian, who hails from

Tamil Nadu, Modi said, "People are saying that the keys have gone to Tamil Nadu. Who has taken it? The people will not forgive this. I assure you the mystery of the 'key' will be resolved. Those involved in cheating and fraud will not be spared. This is Modi's guarantee." A day later Pandian hit back saying the Prime Minister Narendra Modi should find out the keys to the Ratna Bhandar of Shree Jagannath temple in Puri if he has any knowledge about it.

Will 'Kisan-Jawan-Pahalwan' Barricade BJP's Win Path?

JAG MOHAN THAKEN

Has PM Modi smelt the essence of the ground? Are Ram Mandir, Dhara 370 and Hindu-Muslim slogans not working in the desired direction?

Political thinkers analyze that the Ram Mandir, Dhara 370 and Hindu-Muslim slogans do not seem to be giving much positive results for the party and issues of 'Kisan-Jawan Pahlwan' (Farmers- Soldiers and Wrestlers) have eroded these 'Ram Baan' (Medication for every disease) slogans of BJP. And PM Modi has got this point. That is why, now he is focusing more on 'Farmers- Soldiers and Wrestlers' and denying any discrimination with the Muslim community.

"The day I start talking about Hindu-Muslim (in politics) will be the day I lose my ability to lead a public life," Modi said, speaking in Hindi. "I will not do Hindu-Muslim. That is my resolve." PM Narendra Modi made these remarks in an interview with CNN-News18. Why Modi had to clarify his stand? What he had said? If he had said nothing provocative and hatred spreading, then why did the Samyukta Kisan Morcha had to demand the removal and prosecution of Prime Minister Narendra Modi?

Samyukta Kisan Morcha (SKM), an umbrella body of farmers' unions in India, in a press release on April 23, 2024, had demanded removal from the PM post and prosecution of the Prime Minister Narendra Modi for his alleged highly poisonous hate speech at Banarswara in Rajasthan on 20th April 2024. SKM had alleged that the Prime Minister had accused all members of the main minority group of the country as 'intruders' without any substance is nothing but insanity that violates the secular constitution that ensures separation of



state and religion in governance. Whether PM Modi is really following his words expressed in the News-18 interview? Has he softened his words and not voicing in the manner in which he expressed himself in Rajasthan? Yes, some changes seem there. Now he is not directly bursting against any community, as was alleged earlier, but using the words -- those doing 'vote-jihad'.

On May 18, addressing a rally in Haryana, PM Modi alleged that Congress is solely focused on appeasement politics. The manifesto crafted by Congress resembles the entire Muslim League manifesto. Congress claims that they will conduct an X-ray of the public's assets and then distribute those assets to those doing 'vote-jihad'.

For wooing 'Farmers- Soldiers and Wrestlers', PM Modi has started to preach the steps taken by the BJP government for the benefit of these segments, who are annoyed with the party due to barbaric behavior of BJP government during farmers' movement and dragging the wrestlers on Delhi roads.

PM Narendra Modi, while addressing public meetings in Ambala and Sonapat, Haryana on May 18, criticized the previous Congress government and highlighted various beneficial schemes for farmers in Haryana, initiated by the BJP government. Modi highlighted that be-

fore 2014, the Congress-led government had purchased grains from farmers at MSP worth only Rs 7.5 lakh crore. In contrast, during the 10 years of the Modi government, agricultural produce worth Rs 20 lakh crore has been procured from farmers at MSP. Previously, farmers often faced delays in receiving payments, but now the funds are directly deposited into their bank accounts. Congress has only betrayed sugarcane farmers. Presently, the FRP for sugarcane stands at nearly Rs 350 per quintal, while the Congress government used to offer around Rs 210 per quintal.

Modi divulged that in 2014, when the BJP took office, the pending dues for sugarcane were approximately Rs 60,000 crore. Contrastingly, this year, the government has cleared payments amounting to Rs 1 lakh 14 thousand crore. Over Rs 650 crore have been directly transferred to the accounts of farmers in Ambala, Karnal and Kurukshetra under the PM Kisan Samman Nidhi.

To show his government's affinity towards sports and sportspersons, PM Modi claimed that after forming the government in 2014, the BJP government increased the sports budget threefold, encouraging the youth to play more and win more medals. Whether its building top-notch training centers in India or sending athletes abroad for training, the Modi government spares no

expense in supporting athletes. Currently, thousands of athletes receive over Rs 50,000 monthly under the Target Olympic Podium Scheme (TOPS) from the government. It is because of such initiatives, India has won the most Olympic medals to date, enhanced its reputation in the Asian Games and set records in university games. India is now striving to host the 2036 Olympics and soon, the nation will witness the first Olympics in India, with Haryana and Sonapat youth winning gold medals.

To fetch the votes of ex-servicemen from congress basket, PM Modi alleged that Congress betrayed our ex-servicemen. For fourteen years, they made empty promises about «One Rank One Pension.» and when they realized that Modi posed to be a significant challenge in 2013, Rahul Gandhi allocated a budget of Rs 500 crores for it and held meetings with ex-servicemen in Haryana, Punjab, and Himachal Pradesh, spreading confusion. "But we implemented 'One Rank One Pension'. Their habit of lying is deeply ingrained. Our government fulfilled the promise of 'One Rank One Pension' with flying colors when given the opportunity to serve by the people. Everyone should know how Congress lies. Congress allocated Rs 500 crores for OROP, but when the BJP government implemented it, more than Rs 1 lakh 20 were allocated."

But has the people forgotten the death of more than 700 farmers, stating the farmers as terrorists, dragging the wrestlers on Delhi roads and dashing the hope of unemployed youths, who were preparing themselves for joining the Indian forces, by implementing Agni Veer scheme?

Dr. Inderjeet Singh National Vice-President of All India Kisan Sabha (AIKS) says, "BJP election rallies being addressed by Modi and Amit Shah are hardly making any significant

impact in the given isolation of BJP from the electorate in general and peasantry in particular. There are reports that Modis moderately attended rally in Gohana two days ago failed even to boost the BJP workers morale let alone woo the farmers. It was only a gathering of people mobilized with the misuse of power with the help of private school buses.

In the backdrop of excesses done during farmers movement and the women wrestlers as well as other sections including police repression meted out to Sarpanches, scheme workers etc. in the recent past have not faded from the memories of people. Visit of Modi-Shah and other BJP leaders is not cutting ice and deter the electorate suffering from unemployment and acute price rise from punishing BJP cutting across caste /community considerations."

R. C Punia, an RTI activist, career counselor and a former Gramin Bank Manager, who himself belongs to a farmer family, expresses, "As much as I have been able to know and have heard and talked to the farmers, based on their anger it can be said that most of the farmers in Haryana are now anti-BJP. In Bhiwani and Dadri, all the farmer organizations are campaigning against BJP in their own way. They are protesting vocally in Sirsa and Fatehabad. Protest is also going on in Bhiwani-Dadri. Ex-servicemen have also come together and announced their support to the Congress. The employees are separately causing harm to BJP. Thus, I do not think that the Modi-Shah duo will be able to do any magic. Everyone has made up their mind for change. The real situation will be known on June 4."

Will 'Kisan-Jawan-Pahalwan' resentment darken the BJP's fate? To provoke the farmers against Congress Party and get sympathy of farmers, especially the 'Jats', Union Home

Minister, Amit Shah during his visit to Haryana on 20th May, raised the issue of Vice-President Jagdeep Dhankhar. "Congress worked to insult the Vice President and son of a Jat farmer Shri Jagdeep Dhankhar who holds a constitutional post."

Shah stated that the Congress only talks about the poor but does nothing for their welfare. Congress leader Rahul Gandhi talks about farmers but insulted Shri Jagdeep Dankar, a farmer's son who is a representative leader for the Jat farmers.

But, whatever PM Modi or Amit Shah claim, the ground reality seems anti-BJP and the political observers conclude that the 'Kisan-Jawan-Pahalwan' issue is playing its major role to abstain the BJP from returning to power a third time. During farmers' agitation death of more than 700 farmers, women wrestlers' insult and curbing the employment chances for farmers', especially the ex-servicemen's, (as most of them prefer to send their wards in the Indian forces), next generation, the most affected areas of adjoining Rajasthan, Haryana and Punjab are giving a bigger jolt to the BJP.

People who watch political games eagerly state that Rajasthan, which gave 25 out of 25 Lok Sabha seats to BJP in 2019 elections, presently seems to be snatching 8 to 10 seats from BJP. Haryana, where BJP won all the 10 seats in 2019, now indicates a reverse trend. In Punjab, where BJP got only 2 seats out of 13 Lok Sabha seats in 2019, now may dash to ground without any share of seats.

This is the picture of today, political situations change day to day, what shall be the final figure will come out on June 4. Let us wait for the day!

Jag Mohan Thaken is a Senior Journalist, Columnist & Political Analyst, views are personal

Congress condemns Patra's blasphemous remark that Lord Jagannath is Modi-bhakt

KAVITA SHARMA
New Delhi

The Congress party condemned the outrageous and blasphemous remarks by the Bharatiya Janata party National Spokesperson and party's candidate from Puri parliamentary constituency, Sambit Patra, about Lord Jagannath that he was a 'Modi-bhakt'.

The party demanded that Prime Minister Narendra Modi must tender an apology to people for the hurt caused to their religious sentiments.

Addressing a press conference at the AICC headquarters here today, Congress spokesperson Supriya Shrinete rejected the apology tendered by Patra, saying it was just an eyewash done only after the Congress raised the matter.

She observed that this was a part of the propaganda plan of the BJP. She pointed out, even Prime Minister Narendra Modi



has been describing himself as God's Messenger with divine powers in various television interviews.

The Congress spokesperson said, it was not for the first time that the BJP leaders had made such outrageously blasphemous remarks. She quoted many past examples where the BJP leaders had described Modi as Vishnu's Avtar' She showed the pictures posted on BJP's official media handle where Prime Minister Modi was shown to be holding the finger and leading of Lord Rama, who was made to look like a kid, and taking him to the temple. She said, Modi's cutouts during the Pran Pratishtha ceremony were made bigger than Lord Ram's.

NIA attaches property of JeM terrorist in Kashmir

FW DESK

The National Investigation Agency (NIA) attached seven immovable properties linked to a prominent member of the banned Pakistan-based Jaish-e-Mohammed (JeM) organization Sartaj Ahmed Mantoo.

The properties, including land spanning 19 Marlas & 84 Sq ft in Kisarigam, Pulwama district, were seized under Section 33 (1) of the UA (P) Act, 1967, following orders from the NIA Special Court, Jammu.

Mantoo was apprehended on January 31, 2020, with a significant cache of arms, ammunition, and explosives. Charged on July 27, 2020, he currently faces trial under various sections of the Arms Act, IPC, Explosive Substances Act, UA (P) Act, and Indian Wireless Telegraphy Act, 1933. Investigations have revealed his involvement, along with five co-accused JeM members, in



transporting newly infiltrated terrorists into the Kashmir valley. JeM, established in 2000 by Maulana Masood Azhar, has been responsible for numerous terrorist attacks in India, particularly in J&K. The group was designated as a "Designated Foreign Terrorist Organisation" by UNSC Resolution 1267.

Moreover, in 2019, the UNSC designated JeM's leader, Maulana Masood Azhar, as a "Global Terrorist." The move by the NIA comes on the heels of its attachment of six immovable properties associated with another senior JeM militant in Kashmir, further intensifying its crackdown on terrorist operatives in the region.



India's strategic gamble with Chabahar port

India's recent 10-year agreement with Iran to develop and operate the Chabahar port is a bold step forward in strengthening its infrastructure and trade partnership with the Islamic Republic, despite the geopolitical tensions in West Asia. This commitment, involving a \$120 million investment and a \$250 million credit facility, aims to further develop the terminal in Chabahar's Shahid Beheshti port and related projects. Historically, the Chabahar project has been hindered by global sanctions on Iran. Conceived in 2003, it remained stagnant due to U.S. and UN sanctions over Iran's nuclear program. It wasn't until 2015, following eased sanctions, that India signed a memorandum of understanding, and a year later, the project gained momentum during Prime Minister Narendra Modi's visit to Iran. However, the U.S. withdrawal from the nuclear deal in 2018 and the reimposition of sanctions raised uncertainties about the project's future. Despite these challenges, the Chabahar port is crucial for India's connectivity strategy. It provides an alternative route to Afghanistan and Central Asia, bypassing Pakistan, thus enhancing trade opportunities in the region. Moreover, its expected connection to the International North-South Transport Corridor (NSTC) will facilitate a faster and more cost-effective trade route to Europe through Iran, Azerbaijan, and Russia. This corridor could significantly reduce the reliance on the Suez Canal, thus streamlining intercontinental trade. Geopolitically, Chabahar offers India a strategic vantage point, especially in proximity to Pakistan's Gwadar port, developed by China under its Belt and Road Initiative. This positioning allows India to extend its influence in Central Asia, countering Chinese and Pakistani interests. It is imperative now for India to remain steadfast in its commitment to Chabahar, focusing on enhancing its trade and connectivity projects with Central Asia. India must balance its strategic interests with diplomatic finesse, ensuring that the Chabahar port project not only thrives but also serves as a linchpin for broader regional connectivity and economic growth.

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EDITOR* ABDUL WASEY

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APAR GUPTA DELVES INTO THE REASONS BEHIND ATTACKING THE JUDICIARY

Judiciary's role in a democracy



Three recent judicial decisions have led to attacks on the Supreme Court's legitimacy. On February 15, the Court declared electoral bonds unconstitutional, stating that the "right to know supersedes anonymity." On May 10, the Court granted interim bail to Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal saying, "We... reject the argument that the reasoning... results in grant of privilege or special status to politicians." On May 15, the Court granted bail to Prabir Purkayastha, founder and Editor-in-Chief of NewsClick, holding that "communication of the grounds of arrest in writing was not provided... which vitiates the arrest." These judgments, based on legal merit, challenge state excesses and also harm the ruling party's interests. The BJP undeniably benefited from electoral bonds, Mr. Kejriwal's arrest, and the suppression of a critical media platform.

These decisions are healthy outcomes for any constitutional democracy where institutions have autonomy and there is a working system of checks and balances. However, they have been perceived by many as breaking a pattern. Legal scholars and even practitioners have been criticising the Court over the last few years for judicial abdication, acquiescence, avoidance, and, in some instances, for working hand-in-glove with the executive. Hence, the recent decisions, especially during an election year, have been seen as an unexpected but welcome display of courage.

A sustained campaign

In our digital media ecology, each hearing on subjects of public importance, especially those with political implications, receives immediate online commentary. The Supreme Court and High Courts have facilitated this by enabling live tweeting and streaming of proceedings. Legal reporting platforms have further brought the court into our social media streams.

However, a disturbing trend has surfaced: abuse of the judiciary. Many believe that institutions are colonial impositions or are rooted in western liberalism and are therefore in conflict with the social norms of "new India". When this authoritarian world view is challenged, its proponents seek to subvert the legitimacy of the court. Digital campaigns against the court exploit public frustration over the decades it takes for citizens to obtain justice, anger regarding judicial nepotism, and the lack of diversity in the higher judiciary, and even conjure up fantasies of a secret society of senior lawyers influencing the court. Such attacks masquerade as suggestions for reform. But the proposed "solutions" are not based on evidence. The masked objective seems to be to achieve absolute executive control.

This clever subterfuge has been brought forth by Joyjeet Pal and Sheyriil Agarwal, who gathered data from X over four months and highlighted spikes in comments on five days when the Chief Justice of India took positions antithetical to the

BJP-led government or its supporters. They concluded in their study that the "Chief Justice's liberal leanings in several judgments rankle many who lean right. But the more significant issue is that purging the Supreme Court of similarly liberal-leaning justices represents an existential thorn in institutional capture by the political establishment." They also noted that "attacks are more strongly tied to digital influencers who are highly polarised in favour of the BJP." While the study did not capture this clearly, many online influencers with large followings enjoy official patronage. Nowadays, high-ranking advisers and cabinet ministers devote significant time to participating in podcasts and YouTube interviews and often comment on the need for judicial reforms and even a repeal of the Constitution. Critics may dismiss this study as biased and point to instances where "liberal" and "left leaning" users have engaged in similar practices. However, the study notes distinctions in how the Opposition and wider civil society organise and conduct campaigns online

— by appealing to the Court to follow its constitutional role.

Today, each judgment and slip-up is put up, ridiculed, and delegitimised through coordinated campaigns. For example, the Juvenile Justice Board recently granted bail to the minor son of a builder who was allegedly driving the car that crashed into two people killing them. Juxtaposed against news reports of the grant of bail are captions such as "the Indian judiciary is a joke". This ignores the role of the police and politicians in the initial procedure. These drip campaigns are part of the long game of organised partisans calling for direct control by the Prime Minister.

The way forward

Television and social media play a crucial role in shaping norms. So, we must publicly acknowledge the threats facing the independence of the judiciary, carefully scrutinise proposals disguised as judicial reforms, and take urgent but careful remedial action on issues such as the collegium system. Public trust is the judiciary's greatest ally, and it must be restored by improving service delivery, increasing diversity in appointments, and improving the Court's counter-majoritarian spine. The judiciary and the wider legal fraternity must counter online threats by dispelling misinformation and exposing bad faith propaganda. This requires reasoned, consistent, and honest public communication about the judicial process. Finally, we the people must recognise the Court as an imperfect ally, sometimes even a negligent guardian, but nonetheless a protector of our constitutional rights. Our civic vision has to be broader than the narrow framing of a powerful Prime Minister or a dominant political party, regardless of the election results.

Apar Gupta is an Advocate based in New Delhi. Views are personal.



PRACHI BANSAL EXPLAINS HOW EFFECTIVE POLICIES CAN TAME INFLATION

The vegetable triumvirate's impact on inflation



Inflation is a critical indicator of an economy's health, reflecting the changes in the general price level and the cost of living. In India, the Consumer Price Index (CPI) is used to measure price inflation which is largely based on the Laspeyres' price index and measures the economy's cost of living. The CPI basket comprises 299 items of which vegetables account for a weight of 6.04% in the total basket.

Within vegetables, the three vegetables — tomato, onion, and potato (TOP) — hold a weightage of 2.2% in the overall CPI basket for an average Indian household. The significance of TOP goes beyond its numerical representation. These three commodities have historically played a pivotal role in influencing both food and beverages inflation as well as headline CPI figures. One notable fact is that the TOP group constitutes 3.6% of the total consumption basket in urban areas while it constitutes 5% of the total consumption basket in rural India for the bottom 5% of the consumption classes, respectively, as per the CPI basket classification.

In FY2023-24, vegetable prices in India soared by about 15% (year-on-year). Vegetable prices have exhibited significant volatility, shifting dramatically from a fall of 0.7% in June to a substantial rise of 37.4% in July. Though vegetables have a weight of only 6% in the total CPI basket, their contribution to inflation was as high as about 30% in February and March 2024. Tomato prices soared by 202% in July 2023 and contributed to 18.1% of the total headline inflation despite the weight of tomatoes being only 0.6% in

the CPI basket. During the same month, the contribution of vegetables to headline inflation was a high 31.9%, and of TOP was 17.2%.

Price volatility

One of the striking features of TOP is its price volatility (chart). The coefficient of variation (CoV) of inflation is a key measure of volatility. The inflation volatility of TOP has been measured using the coefficient of variation (CoV) for the period January 2015 to March 2024, yielding a value of 5.2. It is significantly higher than the volatility of the vegetables sub-group (CoV=3.0), the food group (CoV=0.6) as well as the volatility of headline inflation (CoV=0.3). This exercise reveals that

TOP's CoV surpasses not only the food and headline group but also the vegetables sub-group. This heightened volatility underscores the sensitivity of these commodities to market forces, weather fluctuations, and supply chain dynamics.

The chart shows the inflation trend for the three commodities, i.e., tomato, onion and potato, as well as for the constructed TOP group. The inflation rate for the TOP sub-group has remained quite volatile ranging from a minimum value of -36.6% in September 2021 to 132.0% in December 2019 (The writer's calculation uses data from the National Statistical Office).

Aiding the farmer

The volatility and importance of TOP

in shaping inflation trends highlight the need for effective policy interventions and a nuanced understanding of agricultural supply chains. These are perishable crops and are subject to a number of biotic and abiotic stresses. As these crops do not have Minimum Support Price and are mostly sold to private traders by farmers, this volatility in prices also hurts farmers, the majority of whom are net buyers of these crops. The possible solutions to reduce the volatility of inflation for these crops include an overhauling of agricultural value chains and improvement in the cold storage facilities, better prices for farmers to incentivise the production of the crops, and increased profitability in the cultivation that can be achieved by reducing the exorbitantly high input prices of fertilizers and pesticides used in the production of these crops.

The abrupt changes in lifting the export bans on onion ahead of the Maharashtra elections also show that we are still using short-term measures to deal with the price volatility in these crops as against measures that are demanded by the farmers. The memorable Kisan Long March from Nashik to Mumbai in March 2023 and continuous protests by farmers have time and again raised the demand for Minimum Support Prices for onion. This demand seems to be continually ignored by the government.

Prachi Bansal is Assistant Professor, Jindal School of Government and Public Policy, O.P. Jindal Global University, Haryana. Views are personal.



BOOKS: REVIEW

Book tells multigenerational saga of Korean resilience

Hwang Sok-yong is one of Korea's most celebrated authors, and his latest work, "Mater 2-10," is a testament to his literary prowess. This multigenerational saga seamlessly connects the exploitation faced by Koreans under Japanese rule with the mistreatment of industrial workers in post-independent Seoul. Expertly translated by Sora Kim-Russell and Youngjae Josephine Bae, "Mater 2-10" is a strong contender for this year's International Booker Prize.

The novel opens with the everyday routine of Yi Jino, a recently laid-off worker in his mid-50s, who stages a protest by living in a factory chimney against the employer's oppressive mandates. Hwang uses "mindam realism" — a narrative technique similar to magical realism but rooted in oral

history—to transition smoothly between different historical periods. As Jino gazes at the "sea of clouds surrounding the chimney" and steps into the air, he finds himself transported to Joseon, the period under Japanese rule, where we meet his 'Big Grandfather' Yi Baekman.

Throughout the novel, Hwang employs rich myth and folklore traditions, notably through the recurring appearances of Baekman's deceased wife, Juan-daek, at crucial junctures. The distinct personalities of Baekman's two sons, Ilcheol ('One Steel', Jino's grandfather) and Icheol ('Two Steel'), symbolize the divergent paths ideologies can lead one down, echoing the influences of literary classics like "Moby Dick" and "Don Quixote."

Hwang constructs moral dilemmas through concrete historical

events, notably the construction of the Gyeongbu Line railroad, built from "the blood and tears of the people of Joseon," as noted by Foreman Min. This railroad serves as a powerful metaphor for the sacrifices and suffering of the Korean people during the Japanese occupation.

The idea for "Mater 2-10" was sparked by Hwang's chance meeting in 1989 with an elderly gentleman who had been a locomotive engineer during the Japanese occupation. This novel, thirty years in the making, is enriched with stories passed down through generations and encompasses the harsh realities of the time, such as the forced prostitution of women. Hwang skillfully uses metaphors like the slaughtering of pigs to draw parallels with the butchering of a nation.



Mater 2-10
Hwang Sok-yong, trs Sora Kim-Russell and Youngjae Josephine Bae
Scribe,
474 pages; Rs 699.

A close reading of "Mater 2-10" reveals several parallels between Indian and Korean literature. The translators' note highlights the challenges of translating a polyphonic work like "Mater 2-10," where the storytelling is hyper-local, and the regions' and characters' names change frequently. Hwang centralizes themes of ownership, nationalism, and duty in the face of adversity, often through dialogue.

For instance, consider the conversation between Ilcheol and Kim, both Koreans working on the Gyeongbu Line for the Japanese. Ilcheol ponders, "who the railway belongs to," and Kim responds, "I mean, you

know, we don't have a country..." This conversation ends with Ilcheol's assertion: "We may be serving others at the moment, but we're still the owners. Let's not forget that." This dialogue mirrors arguments often made in favor of British colonialism in India, such as, "They built us the railways, didn't they?" While such rebuttals are absent in Indian fiction, "Mater 2-10" channels these conversations to create an archive of a lost time, home, and country.

Hwang Sok-yong's "Mater 2-10" is a masterful exploration of historical and contemporary struggles. Through its rich, multilayered narrative and deeply human characters, the novel not only offers a poignant reflection on Korea's past but also resonates with broader themes of exploitation, resilience, and the quest for justice. The deft translation by Sora Kim-Russell and Youngjae Josephine Bae ensures that the novel's nuances and cultural specificity are accessible to a global audience.

BEL Achieves Impressive 34% Growth in PAT for FY 2023-24

ARUN KUMAR RAO
Bengaluru

Défense PSU Bharat Electronics Limited (BEL) has achieved a remarkable turnover of Rs. 19,819.93 crore for FY 2023-24, reflecting a 14.35% increase compared to the Rs. 17,333.37 crore recorded in the previous fiscal year. As per statement issued by BEL. In the 4th quarter of FY 2023-24, BEL's turnover surged to Rs. 8,335.01 crore, up from Rs. 6,327.48 crore in the corresponding period of the prior year.

The company's Profit Before Tax (PBT) for FY 2023-24 reached Rs. 5,334.56 crore, representing a significant growth of 33.87% over the PBT of Rs. 3,984.88 crore from the previous year. In



the 4th quarter, PBT rose to Rs. 2,385.61 crore from Rs. 1,781.49 crore in the same period last year.

Varthana Secures INR 27 Crores Funding from Triodos Investment Management

ARUN KUMAR RAO
Bengaluru

Varthana, a leading Non-Banking Finance Company (NBFC) in the affordable education sector, has successfully secured 3 million Euros (INR 27 crores) funding from Triodos Investment Management through Non-Convertible Debentures (NCD). This funding marks a significant milestone in Varthana's mission to empower the education sector in India.

Netherlands-based Triodos Investment Management, known for its commitment to sustainable and impactful investments, recognizes Varthana's dedication to providing accessible financing solutions to educational institutions across India. The funding – provided through Triodos Fair Share Fund - will enable Varthana to further expand its reach and support more



schools and students in upgrading their infrastructure, facilities, and educational foundation.

Steve Hardgrave, Co-Founder and CEO of Varthana, stated, "We are thrilled to have Triodos Investment Management on board as a partner in our journey to transform education financing in India. The funding provided to Varthana reflects a shared vision of driving positive social impact and the importance of innovative financing solutions in addressing the challenges faced by the education sector. This investment reaffirms our commitment to making quality education accessible to all and will fuel our efforts to empower

more educational institutions across the country."

Varthana has been at the forefront of revolutionizing the education financing landscape in India since its inception. It has played a crucial role by financing more than 11,000 affordable private schools and facilitating over 16,500 loans for school expansion and renovation. With a presence in 16 states/union territories and 40 branches, Varthana also extends its services to Tier III and Tier IV cities, significantly contributing to fostering accessible education in India.

Dorian Marquer stated "We are very pleased to add Varthana to our financial inclusion portfolio. This investment shows that financial inclusion also plays a role in addressing other pressing issues, such as access to affordable quality education, which is seen as a key pillar to alleviate poverty. Education is an em-

powering force in the world and Varthana plays a very important role to equip children across India with the qualities and skills to shape and build their future."

Varthana - Varthana is a pioneer in the affordable education sector, headquartered in Bengaluru. It is the largest education Non-Banking Finance Company (NBFC) in India. Established in 2013, the organization has a presence in 16 states and union territories, through 40 branches and 150 spokes. Varthana aims to transform affordable education in India by catering to the needs of affordable private schools through financial assistance and academic support. It is also committed to serving domestic students attending college, technical training/short-term courses, and postgraduate studies by providing them with loans to continue education.

Tata Power Seeks \$1 Billion Loan for Clean Energy Projects



NEW DELHI: Tata Power Co., a major Indian power generation firm, is in talks to raise up to USD 1 billion in an Indian rupee-denominated loan to fund clean energy investments.

The planned borrowing would be the largest such loan in India so far this year.

The Tata Group Company is discussing the loan with banks including State Bank of India, IndusInd Bank, Axis Bank, and ICICI Bank, according to people familiar with the matter.

The funds would go towards Tata Power's previously announced USD 1.6 billion investment into pumped hydro storage projects.

OTC Markets Group Introduces New Overnight Trading Product



NEW YORK: OTC Markets Group Inc. operator of regulated financial markets for 12,000 U.S. and global securities, today introduced OTC Overnight, a new offering that will make OTC equity securities available for trading Sunday through Thursday between 8 PM and 4 AM eastern time.

Active securities across the OTC market tiers, including global brands like Roche, Adidas, Air Canada and Techtronic Industries, will be eligible for trading in an overnight session by broker-dealer subscribers in U.S. dollars. OTC Markets expects that OTC Overnight will be available in the second quarter of this year on the OTC Link NQB Alternative Trading System. This will allow investors to track and trade thousands of global equity securities during Asian market hours, at European market open and overnight in the U.S.

Altium Boosts Investment in India's Electronics Innovation and Education

Altium's investment and expansion in India will contribute to the country's growing electronics industry.

ARUN KUMAR RAO
Bengaluru

Altium, a global leader in electronic design systems, is significantly expanding its presence in Bangalore, India. This includes a major investment in additional technical and sales personnel and a new premium office space in the city's heart.

This expansion aligns with India's Make in India initiative, enhancing the country's impact on the global electronics market.

MEITY Secretary Advocates Broader AI Adoption in Food Processing Industry

NEW DELHI: The Indian government is planning to accelerate the adoption of artificial intelligence (AI) tools across the nation's vast food processing industry, top officials stated on Wednesday.

The move aims to bolster efficiency, augment farmer incomes, and mitigate environmental impacts.

During a conference organised by NIFTEM (National Institute of Food Technology Entrepreneurship and Man-



"Altium is fully committed to positioning India at the center of the electronics industry. By establishing a dedicated team that covers all aspects of customer engagement from Pre-Sales to Sales & Marketing and Customer Support, we can better address local market needs. This marks an important step

for Altium as it continues to grow and expand its reach into new markets," said Pelle Chiari, General Manager & Head of Sales - India.

India's electronics sector is projected to become a \$300 billion industry by 2026. Altium's investment will enhance its collaboration with India's electronics industry by providing solutions that drive innovation, accelerate production, and reduce costs. The expanded physical presence will enable Altium to work closely with its growing customer base in India, helping the industry adopt efficient and sustainable practices while speeding up innovation cycles.



agement) on leveraging frontier technologies in the sector, senior bureaucrats and government advisers underscored the pressing need to chart a comprehensive roadmap

for deploying AI solutions, which remain in nascent stages within India's food processing domain.

"As an industry, we need to create a roadmap. The MEITY secretary has come on board, and I am confident he will provide substantial support in this endeavour," remarked Food Processing Secretary Anita Praveen, referring to the Secretary of the Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology (MEITY).

WhatsApp working on several new features to enhance user experience



NEW DELHI: Meta-owned WhatsApp is reportedly working on several new features to enhance the user experience on the chatting platform.

The feature, which the company presently working on includes -- locked chats on linked devices, status updates of up to 1 minute, explore new channels, autoplay animated images, and hidden community group chats, according to WABetaInfo.

Currently available to some beta testers, the "locked chats on linked devices" feature will let users protect their conversations from their linked devices. However, users will be required to create a secret code to open the locked chats folder from their linked devices.

Another feature -- "status updates of up to 1 minute" will allow users to share videos of up to 1 minute in length via status updates. Earlier, the limit to share videos on status updates was 30 seconds. The feature is presently available to some beta testers and will roll out to more people over the coming weeks, the report said.

Further, WhatsApp introduced a new shortcut to "explore new channels", with an aim to make it promptly visible and accessible. According to the report, making the ability to explore channels more visible offers the advantage of improving user engagement with content discovery.

The explore new channels feature is available to some beta testers.

Wheels India logs Rs 67.9 cr PAT, dividend Rs 7.39 per share

NEW DELHI: Automobile wheel maker Wheels India Ltd said on May 20 that it closed FY24 with a higher net profit of Rs 67.9 crore. According to Wheels India, the company closed FY24 with a revenue of Rs 4,619 crore (FY23 - Rs 4,345 crore) and a net profit of Rs 67.9 crore (FY23 - Rs 62.5 crore). The company's Board has recommended a dividend of Rs 7.39 per share. "Exports did well for us in FY24, registering a 24.5 per cent growth. Earthmover wheels, aluminium wheels, and hydraulic cylinders were the prime drivers of growth on the export front. The company's air suspension



business did well along with growth in the bus market," said Srivats Ram, Managing Director, Wheels India. "We have been able to profitably ramp up the machining of windmill castings and will continue to grow this business. Another area with a lot of promise for growth, both in the domestic and export markets, is hydraulic cylinders," he added.

Ixigo receives SEBI nod for IPO as Oyo withdraws papers

NEW DELHI: Travel booking platform ixigo has received the nod from markets regulator, the Securities and Exchange Board of India (SEBI), for its initial public offering (IPO) while hospitality major Oyo has withdrawn its draft IPO papers.

Ixigo had refilled its draft red herring prospectus (DRHP) with the market regulator to raise Rs 120 crore worth of fresh issue and an offer for sale (OFS) of up to 66,677,674 equity shares.

Ixigo, run by Le Travenues Technology Ltd, clocked Rs 491 crore in revenue from operations with a profit of Rs 65.7 crore for the nine months ending December 2023. Meanwhile, as per the SEBI website, Oyo's parent company Oravel Stays has withdrawn the IPO paper. Oyo will refile its IPO papers with the markets regulator after refinancing its existing \$450 million Term Loan B (TLB) at a lower interest rate.

Inflation and Pharmaceutical Products: A Global Concern

DR. ANIL KUMAR ANGRISH

Revision in the prices of scheduled formulations on yearly basis in India seeks to reimburse manufacturers for the increase in input costs due to inflation. Any hike in prices of medicines prompts debate on price control of pharmaceuticals, and linkage of inflation with pharmaceutical prices. Manufacturers of scheduled formulations have been allowed an increase of (+) 0.005551% during the calendar year 2023 over the corresponding period in 2022 through Office Memorandum dated March 27, 2024 by National Pharmaceutical Pricing Authority (NPPA). Hike in prices of scheduled formulations is allowed as per the paragraph 16 (2) of the Drugs (Prices Control) Order, 2013. Scheduled formulation means any formulation which is included in the First Schedule of DPCO, 2013. National List of Essential Medicines (NLEM) which is published by the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare as updated and revised from time to time is included in the First Schedule of the DPCO, 2013. Annual hike in prices is based on the Wholesale Price Index (WPI) data which is provided by the Office of the Economic Advisor, Department of Industry and Internal Trade (DPIIT), Ministry of Commerce and Industry. Paragraph 16 of the DPCO provides for revision of the ceiling prices of scheduled formulations as per the annual WPI for preceding calendar year on or before April 1 of every year. It is not that only increase is allowed. In case of decline in the WPI, there shall

be a corresponding reduction in the maximum retail price (MRP). Within a period of 45 days; manufacturers have to ensure the compliance of the notification regarding the revised ceiling price. This provision essentially covers impact of inflation.

Paragraph 19 of DPCO, 2013 empowers government to allow an increase or decrease in the ceiling price or the retail price, as the case may be, irrespective of annual wholesale price index for that year. This provision is for fixation of ceiling price of a drug under certain circumstances, i.e., extraordinary circumstances. For example, in July 2021, the NPPA had allowed a one-time increase of 50 per cent in the ceiling prices of nine scheduled formulations of three drugs namely ibuprofen, carbamazepine, and ranitidine, to ensure their availability thereby not forcing the public to switch to costly alternatives. Upward price revision was allowed as these formulations were low-priced drugs. It was an exceptional measure as advised by the Standing Committee on Affordable Medicines and Health Products (SCAMHP). For this purpose, the NPPA invoked extraordinary powers in public interest under Para 19 of the DPCO. The Government also monitors the MRP of all the drugs, including the non-scheduled formulations. Under Paragraph 20 of DPCO, 2013 the government ensures that no manufacturer increases the MRP of a drug more than ten per cent of the MRP during preceding twelve months.

The WPI rate of (+) 0.005551% for the current fiscal is the lowest in last six years. Hike was in double dig-



its in previous two years, i.e., 12.12 per cent in 2022 which came into effect on April 1, 2023. 10.7 per cent in 2021 which came into effect on April 1, 2022. For the year 2020, 2019 and 2018, it was 1.88 per cent, 4.26 per cent, and 3.43 per cent respectively. Like any other industry, the pharmaceutical industry has to face price rise in raw materials, packaging cost, transportation cost, and increase in manufacturing costs. Essentially, it is a reimbursement for the increase in input costs. If the price does not cover inflation then it has implications for the quality of products as well as steady supply of essential medicines in the country. From the regulatory perspective, it is pertinent that drug price ceilings are not violated, and even non-scheduled drugs remain affordable.

For 2023, inflation remained the top concern for the pharmaceutical industry as per a poll of executives that was conducted by GlobalData Healthcare. Countries have their own mechanism to factor inflation in pricing of pharmaceutical products. The U.S.A. is the largest pharmaceutical market in the world. Inflation became a concern in the U.S.A. in recent years. In January 2022, inflation in

the USA rose to 7.5% which was the highest year-on-year rise since February 1982, i.e., highest in 40 years. In the U.S., the Inflation Reduction Act that came into effect on August 16, 2022 had specifically provided for pharmaceutical products. A report authored by Arielle Bosworth et al. (2022, September 30) tracked drug price changes from 2016-2022. From July 2021 to July 2022, the prices of 1,216 medications in the U.S. exceeded the inflation rate of 8.5 per cent. The average price increase for these 1,216 medications was 31.6 per cent. Not only that, there were some drugs for which the increase was more than 500% in 2022. In this background, the Inflation Reduction Act introduced a new requirement for manufacturers to pay rebates to Medicare for Part D drugs whose price increases exceeded inflation, starting from October 1, 2022. Medicare Part D, the prescription drug benefit, is the part of Medicare which covers most outpatient prescription drugs. Medicare offers coverage for Americans who are above the age of 65, or those who are younger with specific health conditions.

Europe is also facing similar concerns regarding infla-

tion and impact on medicine prices. Medicines for Europe Executive Committee highlighted the concern through writing to Health Council that comprises European Union Ministers for Health. In an Open Letter dated June 9, 2022, it expressed the concern over the impact of 'rampant inflation' on the secure supply of essential medicines for European patients. Medicines for Europe represented the pharmaceutical industry that supplied close to 70 per cent prescription medicines at very low cost to EU healthcare systems. In the letter, it highlighted higher inflation rate (over 7 per cent) in Europe, a level which has not been seen for decades along with external factors which exacerbated cost inflation for pharmaceuticals. External factors cited included 'energy costs and supply' due to the war in Ukraine (65% increase in gas prices and 30% increase in electricity), logistics (increase of up to 500% due to the bottlenecks caused by the Covid-19 pandemic and war in Ukraine), inputs and raw materials (rise between 50-160%), and skilled human resources (skill shortage for specialist science-based industry). Through this letter, industry representatives expressed inability to operate in an environment combining rampant cost inflation with policies that continuously lower prices. They asked for adopting measures so that companies should be able to adjust prices to the level of inflation.

In Pakistan, our neighbouring country which is the fifth-most populous country, the government approved a 14 per cent increase for essential medications, and a 20 per cent hike for non-essential

drugs in September 2023. This move caused the shortage and disappearance of over 200 medications which included life-saving and essential drugs. Ongoing inflation and fall in the value of their currency has affected pharmaceutical industry as well as patients in Pakistan. In March 2023, annual inflation in the country was 35%, and the Pakistan Pharmaceutical Manufacturing Association (PPMA) along with other industry associations had demanded a hike of 39% across-the-board.

Sri Lanka faced economic crisis in 2022 and in April 2022, the Sri Lankan government was not left with any option other than to increase the prices of antibiotics, certain painkillers and medications for heart conditions by almost 40 per cent. Prices of certain drugs rose by 97%. In April 2023, inflation was 25.2% in Sri Lanka, and with little reduction in inflation and easing of economic crisis, Sri Lanka could reduce prices of 60 essential drugs by 16% from June 15, 2023. At present, price cap in Sri Lanka is imposed by the National Medicines Regulatory Authority (NMRA) on 60 medicines only out of about 1,200 medicines available in the country. Prices of other medicines have seen an increase of 600-800%. In March 2024, All-Island Private Pharmacy Owners' Association (AIPPOA) had urged the government to abolish price controls on 60 specific medicines and also, to adopt a unified pricing mechanism based on the Cost, Insurance, and Freight (CIF) values. In Sri Lanka, the price of all medicines have been revised thrice since 2021, i.e., 9% increase in 2021, and revision of 29% and 40% in 2022.

Revision was mainly attributed to drastic devaluation of their currency in 2021. Due to economic crisis, devaluation of currency and inflation, pharmaceutical prices have remained higher in Sri Lanka. In April 2024, inflation rate in the economy was just 1.5 per cent as per the Colombo Consumer Price Index (CCPI) but prices of pharmaceutical products remained higher as Sri Lanka heavily relies on imports. By October 2022, Sri Lanka relied on imports for about 85% of its pharmaceutical requirements and about 80% of its medical supplies.

In Bangladesh, the Consumer Association of Bangladesh (CAB) filed a petition in April 2024 with the High Court for seeking direction to the Secretary of Health Services Division and the Directorate General of Drug Administration (DGDA) in 'not fixing the price of all drugs' under Section 30 of the Drugs and Cosmetics Act, 2023. The CAB cited a media report published on March 11, 2024 which said that medicine prices rose 7 to 140 per cent in two weeks. In January 2024 too, representatives of the Bangladesh Association of Pharmaceutical Industries (BAPI) conveyed to government authorities that drug production costs had increased by up to 30% in 2023 in addition to increase in gas, transportation, and operational costs, and still, DGDA chose not to raise medicine prices. Depreciation of domestic currency against US dollar (from \$=TK84 to \$=TK130) also contributed to increase in prices as 97% of raw materials are imported. They expressed apprehension of potential shortages and a decline in the quality of drugs in absence of hike in drug

prices. Prices of 53 essential drug brands across 20 generics were raised in the range of 13% to 75% by the DGDA in 2022. In Bangladesh, 308 pharmaceutical companies produce allopathic medicines with more than 27,000 brands of more than 1,500 drugs. 219 drugs are categorized as 'essential', and the government regulates prices of 117 of these essential medicines.

Lower hike in prices for scheduled formulations for 2024-25 has provided some relief for patients in India. At present, the ceiling prices on 923 medicines are effective. If WPI factor is considered for 2024 then there will be no change in the existing ceiling prices for 782 medicines till March 31, 2025. It is worthwhile to note that manufacture of pharmaceuticals; medicinal chemical and botanical products have overall 1.99 per cent weightage in WPI. Due to lower WPI in India, manufacturers of scheduled formulations can cater to overseas demand in a competitive manner as inflation is likely to remain elevated in many economies across the globe. To conclude, pharmaceutical pricing authorities in different countries need to strengthen their pricing mechanism so as to factor inflation appropriately through pharmaceutical sector specific indices. This move can bring transparency in compensating the increase in input costs.

Dr. Anil Kumar Angrish,
Associate Professor (Finance and Accounting),
Department of Pharmaceutical Management, NIPER, SAS Nagar (Mohali), Punjab
DISCLAIMER: Views are personal and do not represent the views of the Institute.

Sensex hits new all-time high; Nifty breaches 23,000-mark for first time

MUMBAI: Benchmark equity indices Sensex and Nifty hit their fresh all-time peaks in early trade on Friday amid buoyant investors' sentiment days ahead of the results of the Lok Sabha polls announcement and fresh foreign fund inflows.

The 30-share BSE Sensex climbed 164.24 points to hit its all-time high of 75,582.28 in early trade. The NSE Nifty went up by 36.4 points to breach the 23,000 mark for the first time ever. It hit its lifetime peak of 23,004.05.

From the Sensex firms, Bajaj Finance, Larsen & Toubro, Tata Steel, State Bank of India, HDFC Bank and Bharti Airtel were the major gainers.

Mahindra & Mahindra, Tata Consultancy Services, Maruti and JSW Steel were among the laggards.

Foreign Institutional Investors (FIIs) turned buyers on Thursday after days of offload-



ing equities. They bought equities worth Rs 4,670.95 crore on Thursday, according to exchange data.

The results of the ongoing general elections will be declared on June 4.

In Asian markets, Seoul, Tokyo, Shanghai and Hong Kong were trading lower.

Wall Street ended in negative territory on Thursday.

Global oil benchmark Brent crude climbed 0.05 per cent to

USD \$1.40 a barrel.

"Yesterday, Nifty neared the 23,000 mark, driven by investor optimism about the current regime's continuation in the upcoming general elections," said Prashanth Tapse, Senior VP (Research), Mehta Equities Ltd.

With nearly a fortnight left for the results of Lok Sabha polls, benchmark stock indices Sensex and Nifty zoomed more than 1.6 per cent to

close at lifetime high levels on Thursday. Regaining the 75,000 level, the BSE Sensex ended at an all-time peak of 75,418.04, up by 1,196.98 points or 1.61 per cent. The NSE Nifty inched closer to the 23,000 mark during the day on Thursday. The 50-issue index went up by 369.85 points or 1.64 per cent to 22,967.65.

«MSMEs operate with limited resources, and delays in disbursing subsidies adversely impact day-to-day productivity.» Mehta added.

Industrialists called for coordinated efforts from the district administration, municipal authorities, and the District Industries Centre to clear encroachments from industrial areas. They cited the newly constructed convention center on Sanwer Road Sector E as an example, where encroachments have undermined its intended purpose of providing a platform for MSMEs to showcase their products.

Full Budget Likely to be presented around July 10-12

NEW DELHI: With the general elections entering the final phases, ministries and departments of the Union government have begun the internal exercise to firm up proposals and expenditure plans for the full Budget 2024-25, which is likely to be presented around July 10-12, sources told to media.

In 2019, the budget was presented on July 5, a month and five days after Narendra Modi was sworn in on May 30. This time election results will be announced on June 4 and the swearing-in of the new government will likely happen before June 10. Given the paucity of time, only around a month will be available for the budget consultation with industry and other stakeholders before the Budget is presented in Parliament. Modi continues to express supreme confidence that his government will secure a straight third term in the ongoing general elections, even as the leaders of the opposition INDIA alliance see a tide in their favour.



"We have been told to firm up our proposals and recommendations now as there will not be much time after the government formation as the Budget has to be approved at the earliest for faster execution of proposals," a senior official said. Recently, a meeting of all financial advisers of all departments was held to sensitize them about the upcoming Budget. The Centre's expenditure so far has been as per the plans envisioned in the interim budget but will see acceleration only after June.

A source said the expenditure size of Rs 47.65 trillion presented in the interim budget in February for FY25 may see some changes depending on the new ideas included by the government, key ratios such as the fiscal deficit are unlikely to vary. The government may top up the 50-year interest-free capex loans to states by 15 per cent to Rs 1.5 trillion in 2024-25 from Rs 1.3 trillion provided in the interim budget due to increased demand for the liberal loan facility aimed at boosting economic activity across the country.

Interview to select SBI chief put off till Lok Sabha poll



NEW DELHI: FSIB—the headhunter for directors of state-owned banks and financial institutions — in an unexpected move has deferred the scheduled interview to select a suitable candidate for the post of SBI chairman. The last-minute postponement comes hours before the scheduled interview, sources said. The exact reasons for postponement could not be ascertained immediately. However, sources said, the new date for the interview will be decided after the formation of the new government after June 4. The Financial Services Institutions Bureau (FSIB) will schedule the interview well in advance to select a replacement for Dinesh Khara, who will be superannuating on August 28, when he turns 63, the upper age limit for the position of SBI chairman. The chairman is appointed from a pool of serving managing directors of SBI. FSIB will recommend the name and the final decision would be taken by the Appointments Committee of the Cabinet headed by PM Narendra Modi.

OYO may raise equity at \$4 billion valuation



NEW DELHI: Travel tech platform OYO, which is preparing to launch its maiden public issue, is likely to raise equity funds from institutional investors at a valuation of USD 3-4 billion, its founder Ritesh Agarwal told employees on Wednesday, according to sources.

The IPO-bound firm had its maiden net profitable year in FY24 when it posted a profit after tax (PAT) of Rs 99.6 crore (\$12 million). The company registered a profit after tax (PAT) of Rs 100 crore in the March quarter.

RBI Poised to Provide Substantial Dividend to Govt Coffers: Reports



NEW DELHI: The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) is reportedly planning to transfer a significant dividend payment to the government, potentially amounting to around Rs 1 lakh crore. Such a transfer would substantially bolster the central government's financial resources, according to a recent report by media. In a parallel development last week, the RBI announced a substantial reduction in the government's borrowing through treasury bills, slashing the amount by Rs 60,000 crore. This decision effectively curtails the funds that the central government would have raised through these short-term debt instruments. Furthermore, the central bank has implemented measures to facilitate the success of an upcoming debt management operation, in which the government plans to prematurely repay Rs 60,000 crore of its previous borrowings. These actions are widely perceived as strategic moves to utilise government funds that are currently dormant due to constraints on spending related to the recent electoral process.

Delayed Subsidies, Land Encroachments Stifle Indore's MSME Sector

INDORE: The industrial sector in Indore, a major hub for Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises (MSME), is grappling with challenges posed by delays in the release of government subsidies and rampant encroachment on industrial lands.

Industrialists have urged authorities to intervene and address these impediments that are stifling growth.

At a meeting held on Monday with the MSME Commissioner, Dr. Navneet Mohan Kothari, members of the Association of Industries Madhya Pradesh (AIMP) highlighted that encroachments on industrial plots



and green belts have proliferated, disrupting operations in several industrial pockets across the city. «Numerous cases of pending

subsidy dues, some dating back over two years, have burdened industries with debt and interest liabilities.» stated AIMP President Yogesh Mehta.

Paytm posts Rs 550 crore loss in Q4, hints at job cuts

NEW DELHI: One 97 Communications Ltd, the parent company of Paytm, clocked a net loss of Rs 550 crore in the January-March period of FY24, a 3.2 times jump compared to the same period in the last fiscal year. Paytm's revenue was down by 20 per cent compared to the previous quarter.

Its quarterly result took a beating after the Reserve Bank of India's (RBI) ban on some of the services of Paytm Payments Bank (PPBL). The

company posted a 3 per cent decline in its revenue for the fourth quarter of FY24 to Rs 2,267 crore.

This comes as the company plans to achieve significant cost efficiencies through artificial intelligence (AI)-led capabilities. The digital payments major is planning a "leaner organisation structure" and the "pruning of non-core businesses", indicating there may be job redundancies at the company in the near future.

India's forex reserves soar to lifetime high of \$648.7 billion

MUMBAI: India's foreign exchange reserves surged by \$4.55 billion to touch a new lifetime high of 648.7 billion mark during the week ended May 17, according to the latest data released by the RBI on Friday.

This is the third consecutive week during which the country's forex kitty has expanded which augurs well for the macroeconomic fundamentals of the economy as an ample supply of dollars helps to strengthen the rupee.

The country's forex reserves had increased by \$2.56 billion to \$644.15 billion during the week ended May 10 and had

recorded \$3.66 billion rise for the week ended May 3.

India's foreign exchange reserves had earlier touched a lifetime high of \$648.562 billion in April after which they had declined for three weeks in a row by \$10.6 billion as the RBI actively intervened in the market to buy dollars to stabilise the rupee.

An increase in the foreign exchange reserves gives the RBI more headroom to stabilise the rupee when it turns volatile.

This is because the RBI intervenes in the spot and forward currency markets by releasing more dollars to



prevent the rupee from going into a free fall.

Conversely, a declining forex kitty leaves the RBI less space

to intervene in the market to prop up the rupee.

India's forex reserves, including the central bank's forward holdings, can now cover more than 11 months of imports, which is a two-year high.

RBI Governor Shaktikanta Das recently referred to the record foreign exchange reserves as a reflection of the strength of the Indian economy.

"It is our prime focus to build a strong buffer in the form of a substantial quantum of forex reserves which will help us when the cycle turns," he remarked while unveiling the first monetary policy review of the current financial year that began on April 1.

Indians are ignoring Inflation in a political narrative



DR P S VOHRA
Indians must have felt that vegetable prices had not decreased throughout the last winter. Vegetables and fruits are generally more expensive in summer than in winter. India's internal inflation rate has been anticipated to be 5.4%, which is relatively high, based on the Consumer Price Index (CPI) for the years 2023-2024. It is important to note that different commodities and substances needed in the daily lives of an average person are separated into a total of six components when calculating inflation using the Consumer Price Index. Of these, the variety of foods and drinks utilised for food is the most significant. These items include vegetables, fruits, milk, pulses, spices, sugar, meat and fish, oil etc. In the calculation of Consumer Price Index, which presents the rate of inflation, food and food items have a weightage of about 46 percent in the day-to-day or monthly expenses of a common man. In rural areas, food and food items account for 54 percent of the day-to-day expenses of a common man. Whereas in urban areas, it is 36 percent. The main reason behind this is that the cost of living in a house in urban areas is approximately 22 percent, which is zero in rural areas. Therefore, it is almost always discussed that the inflation rate is controlled by the fluctuations in the price of food items. The cost of pulses skyrocketed in the most recent fiscal year



2023-2024, which significantly increased the average person's food budget expenditures and ultimately raised the yearly rate of inflation above 5%. It is also somewhat unexpected that many Indian states—which are also the top producers of pulses—saw quite substantial inflation in their pulse prices. For instance, the prices of pulses rose from 1.9 percent to 21 percent in the most recent year 2023-24 compared to the year 2022-23 in Madhya Pradesh, the state that produces the most pulses. It increased in price by almost 20% in Karnataka, 18% in Maharashtra and Gujarat, and, in Uttar Pradesh and Chhattisgarh by 15 percent.

It is also often heard that India's economy is always plagued by inflation and unemployment. Although every effort is made to manage them, it is a harsh reality that they are both constantly out of control. Even as the nation emerges from election season, the public's attention shifts away from economic concerns and towards a variety of other concerns, which seems even more unexpected.

If we understand this from the figures, then in four out of the ten states of the third phase of the current central government elections, the inflation rate on the basis of consumer price index is running higher than the inflation rate of the country. Bihar is at the top among these four states, where the inflation rate is 5.84 percent. Then there are Karnataka, Uttar Pradesh and Gujarat where the inflation rate is more than 5.7 percent. In the remaining six states, except Maharashtra, the inflation rate in all has been four percent or less during the year 2023-24. Although this rate is above five percent in Maharashtra, but the average inflation rate of the country is definitely less than 5.4 percent. It is also important to mention here that in all these states, inflation has been recorded to be higher in rural areas which is an indicator of a very dire situation because per capita income in rural areas is much lower than in urban areas.

It is also frequently argued that domestic inflation rises sometimes due to major global

upheavals also. When the price of crude oil increased globally due to the war between Russia and Ukraine, the cost of transportation increased due to the increase in the price of petrol and diesel in the domestic market and due to that almost everything became expensive in the Indian market. This also included food items, vegetables and fruits etc. However, during that time there was a double blow of inflation because the cost of petrol and diesel affects financially both directly and indirectly. In this era of globalization, it is justified to be helpless in front of all these things, but when the price of food items, vegetables, pulses etc. increases on the domestic front without any global reasons, then it seems incomprehensible and it is very important to discuss it for its solution. However, governments focus on all these through a social welfare scheme, under which on one hand, if we talk about the lives of farmers, then increasing the price of MSP and purchasing the crop with guarantee etc. are also included. On the other hand, distributing food grains to the poor for free is also commendable. But it is also very important to understand that all these are not permanent options to control inflation.

In the context of India, it has also been observed that the previous fiscal year saw significant setbacks in the agriculture sector as a result of climate change, leading to somewhat lower agricultural output. Subsequently, on the home front, restrictions were

placed on both the export of agricultural products and their ability to be stored in order to maintain the control of food prices. As a result of all of this, India's agricultural exports were worth roughly 15 billion US dollars in 2022-2023 but were extremely low in the most recent fiscal year.

It is also important to note that in order to curb inflation, everyone is looking on the RBI to cut interest rates, which will allow rupee to regulate the Indian Rupee's liquidity. The average person's purchasing power declines and financial loans become more expensive, even though this has no direct impact on inflation. However, the higher cost of bank loans also reduces a company's ability to expand, which results in a negligible gain in employment possibilities. In addition to all of this, it is a fact of the modern world that the Central Bank of India cannot make any kind of judgement without considering the circumstances across the world. For instance, the likelihood of a rate cut in India appears remote if the US Federal Reserve does not. In addition, the prospect of changes in the world market price of crude oil adds to the uncertainty. Consequently, it's important to recognise that inflation is a problem whose solution the nation's economic policies fail to recognise and instead attempt to overlook by treating it as a normal part of daily life.

Dr P S Vohra is Writer, columnist and financial thinker. View are personal

Household Savings in India Show Signs of Rebound: Crisil

NEW DELHI: According to a report released on May 21 by Crisil, a prominent rating agency, India's household savings, which had been declining since the COVID-19 pandemic due to higher borrowings, may have rebounded in the fiscal year 2023-24 (FY24).

While official data from the National Statistical Office (NSO) is still awaited, early indicators suggest that household savings may have revived in FY24, and the growth in household liabilities is likely to have moderated, as stated by Crisil. The report, titled 'Trends in Household Savings and Debt After the Pandemic,' notes that India's current account deficit (CAD) is estimated to have narrowed to around 1 per cent of GDP in FY24, down from 2 per cent in the previous fiscal year. However, investments rose to about 33.7 per cent of GDP from 32.2 per cent in the preceding year. "Amid low CAD, increasing domestic savings are likely to have financed rising investments in the economy. We



estimate that total domestic savings likely grew stronger in fiscal 2024, compared with 10.7 per cent on-year in the previous fiscal," the report states. Crisil highlights that bank deposits, which constitute the largest portion of gross financial savings, grew 13.5 per cent in FY24, compared with 9.6 per cent in the previous year, outpacing the 9.1 per cent nominal GDP growth in FY24.

Additionally, mutual fund investments by households grew at a faster rate in FY24 compared to recent years, with investments through systematic investment plans (SIPs), primarily opted for by individuals, continuing to rise.

India's Trade Imbalance with Russia Swells Amid Rising Energy Imports

NEW DELHI: India's trade deficit with Russia has surged to USD 57.18 billion in the fiscal year 2023-2024, marking a 33 per cent annual increase, according to data released by the Ministry of Commerce.

This substantial imbalance is primarily driven by India's heightened imports of discounted Russian crude oil in the wake of Western sanctions imposed on Moscow following the invasion of Ukraine.

The ministry's figures reveal that India's imports from Russia reached USD 61.44 billion in the fiscal year 2023-2024, a 33 per cent year-over-year rise. In contrast, exports to Rus-



2021. However, the past two fiscal years, 2023-2024 and 2022-2023, have witnessed a substantial surge in this imbalance, primarily attributed to India's increasing purchases of discounted Russian crude oil.

Between the fiscal years 2021-2022 and 2023-2024, the trade deficit with Russia has multiplied by over eight times, while exports have risen by approximately 32 per cent during the same period. In the fiscal year 2021-2022, India's trade deficit with Russia stood at USD 6.62 billion, with exports amounting to USD 3.23 billion and imports totalling USD 9.87 billion.

INTERNATIONAL

India abstains on UNGA resolution commemorating Srebrenica genocide

UNITED NATIONS: India has abstained on a UN General Assembly resolution to create an annual day to commemorate the 1995 genocide in Srebrenica during the civil war that followed the break-up of Yugoslavia.

The resolution sponsored by Germany and Rwanda was carried on Thursday with only 84 votes in the 193-member Assembly reflecting the deep divisions over it because most such motions are adopted by consensus. Nineteen countries voted against it, while 68 abstained and 22 altogether stayed away. India did not explain the reasons for the abstention.

With the passage of the resolution, the UN will commemorate every year on July 11 the killing of about 8,000 Bosnian Muslims by Bosnian Serbs, who were Orthodox Christians, as "The International Day of Reflection and Commemoration of the 1995 Genocide in Srebrenica".



The victims were men and boys separated from the women in the town of Srebrenica in Bosnia and Herzegovina by ethnic Serb fighters who overran it during the three-and-a-half-year-long civil war when the ethnic communities fought for supremacy in the nascent nation after Yugoslavia splintered. Germany's Permanent Representative Antje Leendertse said her country was sponsoring the resolution to prevent a genocide like that perpetrated by German Nazis from recurring. Six million Jews were killed by Nazis during World War II.

The commemoration was to honour the memory of the victims of the Srebrenica massacre in Bosnia and was not directed against Serbs, but only against those who committed the killings, Leendertse added. Aleksandar Vucic, the President of neighbouring Serbia, questioned the standing of Germany to make such a proposal given its history and said it was introduced for political reasons and to stigmatise the Serbian people. Those who carried out the massacre have already been tried, convicted, and sentenced

to prison, he said. The resolution was one-sided and was silent on the massacres of Serbians and people of other ethnicities, he added. Under the 1995 peace accord ending the civil war in Bosnia, it has a tripartite presidency shared by an ethnic Bosnian, a Serb, and a Croat.

The Serb President of Bosnia, Milorad Dodik, and Vucic came to the UN to campaign against the resolution, which they said was directed against the ethnic Serbs. In the polarised UN, it was viewed through the prism of the confrontation between the West and Russia, making it appear as directed against Serbia, a Moscow ally, and ethnic Serbians in Bosnia, and as a Western attempt to show solidarity with Muslims, who are furious with the Western-backed Israel attacks on Gaza that have killed more than 34,000.

The resolution introduced without a consensus and extensive consultations only ended up showing the rift in the UN.

Singapore Airlines Turbulence: 22 passengers suffered spinal cord injuries, 6 had head trauma

SINGAPORE: Twenty-two passengers from a Singapore Airlines flight that was hit by severe turbulence on Tuesday have spinal cord injuries and six others, including a two-year-old child, have brain and skull injuries, according to media reports on Friday.

Geoffrey Kitchen, a 73-year-old British passenger, died likely due to a heart attack on the Singapore Airlines (SIA) flight SQ321, operating from London (Heathrow) to Singapore. Nearly 60 passengers were injured after the flight on May 21 encountered "sudden extreme turbulence over the Irrawaddy Basin at 37,000 feet about 10 hours after departure". The pilot diverted the Boeing 777-300ER carrying 211 passengers and 18 crew members to Bangkok's Suvarnabhumi Airport, making an emergency landing.

Twenty people remained in intensive care, although none were life-threatening cases, reported The Straits Times, citing Dr Adinun Kittiratanapaibool, director of



Samitvej Srinakarim Hospital in Bangkok. The oldest patient at the hospital is 83-year-old, while the youngest is a two-year-old child who suffered a concussion. A concussion is a mild traumatic brain injury that affects brain function. Effects are often short-term and can include headaches and trouble with concentration, memory, balance, mood and sleep. Kittiratanapaibool said there were 40 patients at the hospital after the incident. The

London to Singapore flight made an emergency landing in Bangkok.

Sixty-five passengers and two crew members were still in Bangkok, said SIA in a Facebook post on Thursday.

It added that SIA chief executive Goh Choon Phong has been meeting the affected passengers, crew, their family members and loved ones in Bangkok to offer his support personally and to understand their concerns.

Haley will vote for Trump, triggers Vice President slot talk



WASHINGTON: After running a spirited primary challenge to former US President Donald Trump, Nikki Haley, the former Ambassador to the UN, said on Wednesday that she will vote for him.

"I will be voting for Trump, the Indian-descent politician said in a speech at Hudson Institute, a think-tank where she will hold a chair.

"She went on to explain her reasons. As a voter, I put my priorities on a President who's going to have the backs of our allies and hold our enemies to account. Who would secure the border, no more excuses. A President who would support capitalism and freedom. A President who understands we need less debt, not more debt."

"Trump has not been perfect on these policies. I have made that clear many, many times. But Biden has been a catastrophe." Haley's endorsement triggered talk of joining the Trump ticket as running mate.

Trump, who has stoked speculation about his running mate naming those in consideration, has ruled out Haley. But if Haley can change her mind about Trump, so can Trump about her. Running against him for the party's nomination to run for the White House, she had called him "unhinged" and chaos followed him wherever he went.

She had even suggested a mental acuity test for candidates running for President citing some of his many fumbles, which included mistaking Haley for Nancy Pelosi, a former Democratic Speaker of the House of Representatives. A key reason Trump could change his mind on Haley is her supporters in the Republican Party, who remain so deeply hostile to him that they have continued to vote for her in the ongoing primaries even though she is no longer in the race.

Biden asserts what's happening in Gaza is not genocide

WASHINGTON: US President Joe Biden has rejected accusations against the Israeli leadership that it is committing genocide in its fight against the Palestinian militant organisation Hamas in the Gaza Strip. "Contrary to allegations against

Israel made by the International Court of Justice, what's happening is not genocide. We reject that," Biden said on Monday in the Rose Garden of the White House at a Jewish American Heritage Month event.

On Monday, International Criminal Court (ICC) chief prosecutor Karim Khan applied for arrest warrants for Israel's Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and Defence Minister Joav Galant for alleged crimes against humanity.

SGPC President condoles demise of Iranian President Dr. Raisi & Foreign Minister Amir-Abdollahian

Expressed his grief by sending a condolence message to Supreme Leader of Iran, Mr. Hojatoleslam Seyed Ali Khamenei

JAGMOHAN SINGH Amritsar

Harjinder Singh Dhani, President of representative Sikh organization, Shiromani Gurdwara Parbandhak Committee (SGPC) has expressed grief over the demise of Iranian President Seyed Ibrahim Raisi and Iran's Foreign Minister Mr. Hossein Amir Abdollahian in a helicopter crash.

Expressing condolence over the demise of Dr Raisi, Mr. Abdollahian and others on board in the tragic crash, Dhani has sent a condolence message to the Supreme Leader of Iran, Mr. Hojatoleslam Seyed Ali Khamenei, Government of



Iran and the bereaved families. He also prayed to the Akal Purakh for the peace of the departed souls.

Dhani, as the president of SGPC, the representative organization of Sikhs, said in his condolence message that the relationship of Sikhs with the land of Iran has been connected since the time of Sri Guru Nanak Dev Ji's travel and many Sikh families live there. He said that the demise of Iranian President Dr. Raisi, Foreign Minister Mr. Abdollahian and others in a helicopter crash are extremely sad. On behalf of the entire Sikh

community, the SGPC President paid tribute to the departed souls by expressing his condolences to the Supreme Leader of Iranian Government.

It is extremely sad that Raisi and Foreign Minister Mr. Amir and other passengers died in a helicopter accident. On behalf of the entire Sikh community, he paid tribute to the departed souls by expressing his condolences the Supreme Leader of Iranian Government Mr. Hojatoleslam Syed Ali Khamenei, the bereaved families and the Iranian brotherhood. He further said that we recognize the seriousness of the Iranian Government towards the Sikh community of Iran with its 100 years of history and pray for further strengthening of mutual relationships.

Yoon, Sunak say AI global summit will discuss innovation & inclusivity



SEOUL: A global summit on artificial intelligence (AI), to be co-hosted by South Korea and Britain this week, will present global AI governance principles to foster innovation, safety and inclusivity, the two nations' leaders said on May 20.

In a joint opinion article, President Yoon Suk Yeol and British Prime Minister Rishi Sunak said the upcoming AI Seoul Summit aims to build on the conversation from the first AI Safety Summit held in England last November to address risks and triumphs of the fast-evolving technology, reports Yonhap news agency.

Vietnam announces former Minister to Lam as new President

HANOI: Vietnam's National Assembly, on Wednesday morning, approved to Lam, the Minister of Public Security, as the country's next President following a vote at its headquarters in Hanoi.

The appointment comes nearly two months after Vietnam's former President Vo Van Thuong resigned amid a corruption crackdown. Lam has become the third President of Vietnam in less than 18 months, in a country that has a reputation for its stable politics.

Lam, the third most powerful man in Vietnam besides the Party Chief and Prime Minister, is viewed as a hardliner when it comes to dealings with Vietnamese activists. Numerous dissidents and bloggers were jailed during his tenure as the Minister of Public Security.

Lam was handed the public security portfolio in 2016. In November 2021, To Lam



was widely mocked after a video emerged online showing him being hand-fed gold leaf steak worth thousands of dollars by celebrity chef Salt Bae during a trip to the UK, in which he also visited the grave of communist icon Karl Marx.

On Sunday, a spokesperson from the National Assembly announced to the media that Lam would also continue in his position as the Minister of Public Security.

Cumulative difficulties of Indian students abroad

SATISH SINGH
Even though India has become the fifth largest economy in the world and is rapidly moving towards becoming the fourth largest economy in the world, yet there are not enough options and opportunities available in the country to get quality higher education, nor is the sound education system at lower level available. Even, as per the qualification, employment is not available in the country, at the same time, there is no availability of basic facilities like roads, electricity, pure drinking water, basic health facility etc., leading to migration of youth from India.



tered in London with offices in Europe, Asia, and the USA, the Indian Institute of Management Ahmedabad is among the top 25 management institutes in the world in the Business and Management category, while the Indian Institute of Management, Bengaluru and Kolkata are among the top 50 business management institutes in the world. At the same time, in the university category, Jawaharlal University is one of the top 20 universities in the world. Savita Institute of Medical and Technical Sciences, Chennai; Ranked top 24th in the world in dentistry category. Thus, no higher education institution in India is included in the top 10 institutions in the world.

Despite continuous improvements in the higher education sector in India, QS's CEO Jessica Turner believes that the biggest challenge India faces is providing quality education to students, which can be achieved by providing infrastructure, skilled teachers and capital.

Due to large number of students pursuing education abroad, there is flow of capital from India to foreign countries and along with it there is also migration of talent. According to the Ministry of External Affairs, by January 2023, 15 lakh Indian students were studying abroad, while in 2022 this number was 13 lakh and in 2024 this number is likely to reach 24 lakh. During 2020 to 2021, the number of students pursuing education abroad increased by 50 percent. More children from Tier 2 and Tier 3 cities of India are going to

study abroad, due to the social status symbol and the desire to live abroad. Only 20 percent of the students studying abroad want to return to India after completing their studies, while 80 percent of the students want to settle there. Some youth are taking admission in "B" and "C" category educational institutions just to live abroad and are not hesitating even doing small jobs.

To change such situation, branches of foreign universities have been opened in India for Indian students to stay in India and take education from renowned universities of abroad, but Indian students are not taking much interest in taking admission in them, because the priority of student is to settle abroad instead of getting education from a foreign institute.

Among the students taking education abroad, 35 percent of the students are getting education in USA. Today, 1 out of every 4 students in USA's educational institutions is of Indian origin. In 2024, these students can spend 75 to 85 billion dollars abroad. According to the Reserve Bank of India, Rs 5 billion was spent in foreign exchange in the financial year 2021-22. Before the start of the Corona pandemic, students studying abroad had spent \$24 billion in foreign countries, which was 1 percent of India's gross domestic product (GDP). This amount is expected to increase to 80 billion dollars in 2024. If Indian students had not gone to study abroad, then the foreign currency would have been used to meet the need of imports, economic activities in the country would

have accelerated, the economy would have strengthened, the education system of the country would have been strengthened, the country's talent would have been utilized in the country etc.

According to statistics, after China, India has the highest number of students going abroad to study. Indian students are going to countries like China, Japan, South Korea, Ukraine, Russia, Australia, England, France, Germany, USA etc. to obtain degrees and diplomas in higher education like medical, engineering, business management.

Indian students have been going to countries like Russia, China, Ukraine, Kyrgyzstan, Kazakhstan, Philippines etc. for almost 3 decades to obtain medical degree, because due to less medical seats in India, medical education here is very expensive. According to the National Medical Commission, there were only 596 medical colleges across the country in the financial year 2021-22, where the total number of medical seats was only 88,120. However, there are few examples of people going abroad to study engineering.

For the past many years, Indian students studying abroad have been being murdered and discriminated against, but after the Corona pandemic and the beginning of the war between Russia and Ukraine, there is more concern about the safety of students studying abroad. This was done because during this period thousands of students in many countries became victims of the Corona pandemic. At the

same time, during the pandemic, the Australian government had also closed the country's borders for the Indian students studying threat.

Additionally, due to the ongoing war between Russia and Ukraine, more than 20,000 students were stranded in Ukraine in the early stages of the war. Even a few months ago, hundreds of Indian students were affected due to the closure of some colleges in Canada. A few days ago, some Indian students were attacked in Bishkek, the capital of Kyrgyzstan. In February 2024, Amarnath Ghosh, a student of Washington University in St. Louis, USA, was murdered. According to the Ministry of External Affairs, more than 400 students studying abroad have died since 2018, some of which were natural deaths, and some were murders. The highest number of deaths of students have occurred in Canada.

The government should increase the number of international treaties to improve the situation of murders or deadly attacks on Indian students abroad or racial remarks or discrimination. The number of seats in government medical and engineering colleges should be increased. Student insurance scheme should be started. Apart from this, there is a need for improvement at the grassroots level and greater investment in the field of education, promotion of innovation and research, better employment situation in the country, ease of doing business, good governance in the country and making the system transparent at every level.

Former External Affairs Minister Sushma Swaraj had once called Indian students studying abroad as brand ambassadors of the country, but today the lives of these Indian students are in danger. Hence, in this case, corrective steps need to be taken by the government.

Satish Singh, Ahmedabad based Senior Columnist, Views are personal

US confirms another human H5 bird flu case tied to dairy cow outbreak

LOS ANGELES: A new human case of highly pathogenic avian influenza (HPAI) A (H5 bird flu) virus infection in the US has been identified, health authorities said.

The case, identified in the state of Michigan, is the second associated with an ongoing multistate outbreak of H5N1 in dairy cows, the US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) said on Wednesday as quoted by Xinhua news agency report. The infected individual is a worker on a dairy farm where the H5N1 virus has been identified in cows, according to the CDC. The patient only reported eye symptoms.

The CDC has been watching influenza surveillance systems closely, particularly in affected states, and there has been no sign of unusual influenza activity in people, including in



syndromic surveillance, the agency said.

Based on the information available, this infection does not change the CDC's current H5N1 bird flu human health risk assessment for the US general public, which the agency considers to be low.

People with close or prolonged, unprotected exposures to infected birds or other animals, or to environments contaminated by infected birds or other animals, are at greater risk of infection, according to the CDC.

India & China Compete for Seabed Minerals Critical to EVs & Solar Panels

New Delhi: India and China are engaged in an underwater exploration race to secure access to critical mineral resources found on the seabeds of the Indian Ocean.

These minerals, such as cobalt and manganese, are essential components in the production of batteries for electric vehicles and solar panels, two rapidly growing industries, reported TOI.

Recent reports indicate that India has applied to the United Nations' International Seabed Authority (ISA) for licenses to explore the Carlsberg Ridge and Afanasy-Nikitin Seamount regions of the Indian Ocean.

Chinese interests have also been expressed in surveying the area for mineral deposits, heightening the strategic importance for India.

"We are aware that China and other countries are also eyeing these regions. So, for us, it is not only about mineral resources but also about strategic importance," stated M. Ravichandran, Secretary of India's Ministry of Earth Sciences.

India currently holds two exploration licenses in the In-



dian Ocean, granted by the ISA in 2002 and 2016 respectively. The first permits surveying for polymetallic nodules in the central Indian Ocean, while the second allows for exploration of polymetallic sulphides at the Rodriguez Triple Junction near Mauritius.

According to the National Institute of Oceanography, only about 300,000 square kilometers of the 71 million square kilometer Indian Ocean region have been comprehensively mapped since the 1980s.

These surveys have identified around 150,000 square kilometers containing polymetallic nodules rich in manganese, nickel, cobalt, copper, and iron hydroxide.

"In the 1980s, we recruited scientists to study polymetallic nodules in the Indian Ocean with the hope that one day there will be technology to explore these regions," said Sunil Kumar Singh, Director of the National Institute of Oceanography.

India has initiated preliminary test mining activities within an 18,000 square kilometer area of its Central Indian Ocean claim, developing extraction technologies while assessing potential environmental impacts.

Researchers estimate this area holds 380 million tonnes of polymetallic nodules, including 1.5 million tonnes of cobalt reserves.

Nimrat Kaur REFLECTS ON TWO DECADES IN INDUSTRY

'TRIED TO ENJOY THE MOMENTS, NOT REST ON PAST LAURELS'

MUMBAI: Nimrat Kaur, who started her acting career with the music video 'Tera Mera Pyar' in 2005, has reflected on her two decades of journey in the industry, sharing that she has tried to enjoy the moments, and not rest on past laurels.

The actress featured in Kumar Sanu's song 'Tera Mera Pyar' before doing a few commercials for television.

She made her film debut with a small role in the English movie 'One Night with the King', before starring in the 2012 crime thriller 'Peddlers' directed by Vasan Bala. Speaking to media on her journey, Nimrat said, "So much has happened. I have learned so much. And I have enjoyed every bit of it. 'Tera Mera Pyar' was my first work on camera. I had just come to Mumbai... I was very fortunate that it came my way, and opened the advertising world before me. I did a lot of ads after that. Then I did a lot of theatre."

She added, "I have always

been a student of life as an actor, and tried to learn every medium that I have explored. When I did 'The Test Case', it was one of the few web series to be made in India. I enjoyed every turn of this journey. I have tried to enjoy the moments, and not rest on past laurels or 'ki wo experience jo tha wahi hona chahiye dubara'. 'The Lunchbox waise thi, waise hi dubara ho'. No experience is ever repeated in life."

Nimrat, who last featured in the movie 'Sajini Shinde Ka Viral Video', said she enjoys life's reality, adding that everything comes with its own set of problems and excitement.

"I don't feel like it's been 20 years... It feels like a lot, sounds like a lot. What happens with actors is when you are essaying a part, a part of your life and your years are gone. Time keeps passing by... It's very interesting when you look back, I just like to experience my life through people and their reactions, and understandings," she added.

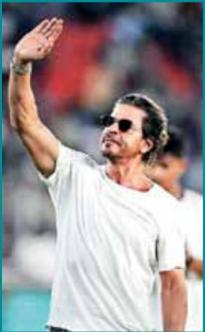


Sham Lal Gandhi, an e-rickshaw driver and independent candidate from Amritsar parliamentary seat, holding his election symbol 'gas cylinder' speaks with local people during a door to door campaign in Amritsar on Thursday, amid ongoing India's general election.

PHOTO-PRABHJOT GILL



Actor Shah Rukh Khan discharged from Ahmedabad hospital after receiving treatment for heat stroke



AHMEDABAD: Actor Shah Rukh Khan, who was admitted to a private hospital in Ahmedabad after suffering from a heat stroke, was discharged from the facility on Thursday evening, a police official said. "Khan has been discharged from the hospital this evening. He left for the airport from the hospital," said Ahmedabad (Rural) Superintendent of Police Om Prakash Jat.

The actor was admitted to the multi-specialty KD Hospital here on Wednesday. The private hospital has not yet issued any statement on Khan's health condition.

The actor was in Ahmedabad on Tuesday to attend an Indian Premier League (IPL) match of his Kolkata Knight Riders (KKR) team at the Narendra Modi Stadium. Several parts of Gujarat have been reeling under a severe heatwave for the last couple of days.

As per a report by the India Meteorological Department (IMD), Ahmedabad city was under "heatwave" on Tuesday and Wednesday when it recorded a maximum temperature of 45.2 and 45.9 degrees Celsius, respectively.



JANHVI KAPOOR'S big revelation: She believes in astrology

MUMBAI: Bollywood actress Janhvi Kapoor says she believes in astrology and has checked her zodiac compatibility "many times."

During the press conference for her upcoming film 'Mr & Mrs Mahi', Janhvi was asked if she believed in astrology, considering that her character Mahima's "kundali" is matched for an arranged marriage.

Janhvi told media: "I think we all have checked our zodiac compatibility. I have done it so many times. I do believe in astrology a lot but not to the extent where I stop talking to a person just because my zodiac sign doesn't match!"

'Mr & Mrs Mahi' also stars Rajkumar Rao and is slated to hit the screens on 31. She then has 'Devara: Chapter 1' with star Jr NTR releasing. She revealed that her character Thangam in the film is interesting.

The actress added: "I love working on a film set where people do their work with love. The passion these guys have is amazing and their storytelling is beautiful. With conviction they showcase each character, it is very different. I am very lucky to get a chance to work (in the film with Jr NTR)."

Richa shares how 'Tu Raja Ki Raj Dulari' was made by composer Sneha Khanwalkar

MUMBAI: Actress Richa Chadha, who was recently seen in the streaming series 'Heeramandi: The Diamond Bazaar', shared with her social media followers how the song 'Tu Raja Ki Raj Dulari' from her film 'Oye Lucky! Lucky Oye!' was created.

The actress re-shared a video from an Instagram handle that showcased that music composer Sneha Khanwalkar hired child artistes to sing the song.

Richa shared the video in the Stories section of her Instagram. The actress shared the video with the caption: "Sometimes, I think I will choke when I try to find the words to describe how much I love the art of @snehanwalkar, who I am fortunate to call a friend. I am also lucky, I began my journey with Oye Lucky... We have so much, so much talent in the film industry."



"Till we wake up to it, we will be accustomed to mediocrity, where mumbles will pass off for 'natural' dialogues, meanderings will pass off for screenplay, and just catchy beats that nobody remembers beyond 2 months will pass off for music. We deserve better, overall," she added.

Punjab's ITI Students Showcase Exceptional Skills

SCIENCE CITY HOSTS THRILLING ARC WELDING COMPETITION

KULBIR SINGH KALSI Chandigarh/Mohali

20 May 2024 Science City hosted Arc Welding Competition where more than 100 students participated from different ITIs across the Punjab. The main objective of the event was to encourage skill development and creativity in welding methods. The event highlighted the talent and potential of young students in welding. Participants demonstrated their skills in arc welding techniques. In this competition a team of Govt. ITI College sarhali Tarnarn has received first prize, Govt. ITI College Gill Road Ludhiana Stood second and third prize banded to Govt. ITI College Talwandi Chowdrian.

The well-known welder girl, Harpal Kaur, also known as Brown Kudi, was the special guest at the event. She shared

To know about 'Mandala Art'

GUNVIR KAUR

Mandala art is an intricate symbolic form of visual art originating from Hindu and Buddhist traditions.

A mandala as we know it modernly is a circular artistic form that may consist of different colors, drawings, graphics, and symbols. It is also called yantras. Traditional yantras are square, with a gate on each side around a centre circle that contains one of the Hindu gods. Through the meditative creation of a mandala, the artist summons that god to help them to discover cosmic truths.



Legends Intercontinental T-20 League unveiled; marks a new era in modern-day cricket



The inaugural edition of the Legends Intercontinental T-20 League is to take place from August 15 to 29, 2024, at Moosa Stadium in Texas, USA

KAVITA SHARMA New Delhi

USA-based Brosid Sports LLC on Thursday announced the launch of the inaugural edition of the Legends Intercontinental T-20 League during a press event at Shangri-La in New Delhi. The league, featuring legendary stars from various continents, is scheduled to take place from August 15 to 29, 2024 at Moosa Stadium in Texas, USA.

Gracing the occasion were former India wicketkeeper-batter Parthiv Patel and Australia's legendary pacer Bret Lee, who lend their esteemed presence as brand supporters of the Legends Intercontinental T-20 League. The league's CEO and former Ranji player, Mr Vishal Sharma, unveiled the teams, tournament schedule and marquee players for what promises to be a cricketing spectacle.

Scheduled to kickstart on August 16, the tournament will see seven teams - Indo Kings, Asian Avengers, Euro Rangers, American Mavericks, Trans-Tasman Titans, African Lions and Caribbean Vikings - all vying for the inaugural title. The LIT-20 will be played in a single round-robin format, with the top four teams at the end of the league stage advancing to the knockout stage. A total of 24 exhilarating matches will be played, with each day featuring double-headers. The semi-final will take place on August 27, followed by the grand finale on August 28.

Speaking about the newly formed League, Mr Vishal Sharma said, "We are thrilled to launch the Legends Intercontinental T-20 League, which

will feature legendary stars from various continents putting on a spectacular cricketing show. Cricket has been growing at a rapid pace in the USA, and we believe this is an ideal time to introduce a legends league to the cricket fans present in the USA. The idea behind the league is to introduce this new market to the legendary stars who have achieved great things in their careers and made us fall in love with the game through their talent. This is the beginning of something special, and we are excited to embark on this journey with stars like Parthiv Patel, Brett Lee, TM Dilshan, and Graeme Swann present with us today on this special occasion."

Expressing their excitement on being associated with the Legends Intercontinental T-20 League Dilshan said, "I think the Legends Intercontinental T-20 League is going to be amazing. We can share our memories. Those days we played together, we fought on the field and shared great rivalry. Still, people want to see legends playing. So, just excited and looking forward to competing in what will be a cricket extravaganza."

Lending his support to the league, former Aussie pacer Lee said, "It's always great for us to see guys that I've played against my whole career. I think that's great, seeing that sport does. It allows an opportunity for us to catch up again. And now with legends in front of our team, it's going to be a lot of fun. So looking forward to what is in store for the players and it's great."

Legendary players such as Graeme Swann, TM Dilshan and Liam Plunkett have confirmed their participation in the inaugural season of the Legends Intercontinental T-20 League. The full roster of players will be announced in the build-up to the tournament.



her experience and said that welding is a process used to connect materials like metals together. It is important in many industries, from building structures to making detailed metal designs. A good practical knowledge about welding helped students in shaping their future. She encouraged the students to work efficiently and innovatively in this field.

Instagram celebrity & chef Sanjyot Keer dedicates his Cannes red carpet walk to unsung chefs

MUMBAI: Mumbai based social media sensation Chef Sanjyot Singh Keer, who made his debut on the prestigious red carpet of the 77th edition of the Cannes Film Festival, shared that representing the Indian chef community gave him the confidence to put himself out there.

Sanjyot (32) becomes the second Indian chef to walk the Cannes Red Carpet. He was styled by the celebrity stylist Eka Lakhani, with his outfit designed by Rachit Ajmera.

Talking about the experience, Sanjyot, who runs a YouTube channel named 'Yourfoodlab' which has 5.59 million subscribers, said: "I'm usually very shy to put myself out there. Even in my videos, for the longest time, I've chosen to not show my face and let my work speak. But, I realise that only a few get such opportunities and as a culinary artist and a chef, the fact that I would be representing the Indian chef community gave me the confidence to take this opportunity and put myself out there."

"The fact that I would be representing the usually under-appreciated Indian chef



community is what gave me the confidence to take this opportunity and put myself out there," added Sanjyot, who has very recently produced an award-winning short film 'Before We Die' that brings to light the dire water crisis in the interiors of Maharashtra. 'Before We Die' short film has won the prestigious Dadasaheb Phalke Award and is streaming on JioCinema. Chef Sanjyot is a culinary sensation known for his innovative fusion of flavours and mouth-watering culinary creations. With over 9 million followers across platforms, Sanjyot has become a household name, captivating audiences with his delectable recipes and charismatic presence.

Sania Mirza continues association with Sony Sports Network as brand ambassador

The clay court spectacle will bring the Indian tennis fans closer to the action with the live broadcast of the prestigious tournament in English, Hindi, Tamil and Telugu.

KAVITA SHARMA Mumbai

Leading Sports broadcaster, Sony Sports Network is delighted to announce that Indian tennis great Sania Mirza has extended her association as the brand ambassador for tennis that includes Roland Garros, US Open & Australian Open amongst other tennis properties from the broadcaster's sports portfolio. Mirza will next be seen as the expert panellist on Sony Sports Network's flagship studio show Extraa Serve during the live coverage of Roland Garros.

Sania Mirza is one of the most successful Indian tennis players in history with six Grand Slam titles to her name. She is a recipient of the prestigious Arjuna Award, Major Dhyana Chand Khel Ratna Award, Padma Shri as well as the Padma Bhushan. She will be next seen sharing her expert opinions and



in-depth analysis for Roland Garros on Sony Sports Network. Along with Sania Mirza, Sony Sports Network will have Olympian & former India No. 1 and Asian Games & Commonwealth Games Gold Medalist Somdev Devvarman and Davis Cup player Purav Raja on the expert panel for Roland Garros.

Played on the toughest surface in tennis, one can expect surprises as the tournament comes into action on 26th May 2024, LIVE on Sony Sports Network. Roland Garros 2024 will be aired in four languages - English, Hindi, Tamil & Telugu from the get-go, raising the excitement levels of the Indian tennis fans. Sony

"I am looking forward to being part of Sony Sports Network's mission of bringing fans closer to the sport and providing tennis the recognition it deserves in India"

Sports Network is the Home of Tennis in India, with three out of four Grand Slams - Australian Open, Roland Garros & US Open, along with ATP Masters and Davis Cup in their portfolio.

On this occasion Rajesh Kaul, Chief Revenue Officer

- Distribution & International Business and Head - Sports Business, Sony Pictures Networks India said that

"We are absolutely delighted to extend the partnership with Sania Mirza, who continues to share her invaluable expertise and insights of the sport as the Tennis Ambassador on Sony Sports Network. This partnership will help us maintain our stance as the Home of Tennis in India in its truest sense, with the broadcast of the most important tennis tournaments complemented by unparalleled expert analysis."

Sania Mirza, former Roland Garros champion & Brand Ambassador for Tennis on Sony Sports Network said: "Following a year full of unforgettable memories in Grand Slams, I am elated to stay with Sony Sports Network as the brand ambassador and expert panellist. The upcoming Roland Garros will be a special one as world tennis ushers into a new era of greatness. I am looking forward to being part of Sony Sports Network's mission of bringing fans closer to the sport and providing tennis the recognition it deserves in India."