

REGION **2**



SGPC WRITES TO PUNJAB GOVT FOR EXEMPTION FROM FOREIGN LEAVE FOR GOVT EMPLOYEES VISITING SRI KARTARPUR SAHIB IN PAKISTAN

CM Mann Inaugurates 3rd Edition of 'Khedan Watan Punjab Dian'

SANGRUR: The local War Heroes Stadium on August 29, witnessed a dazzling start for one of the biggest sporting extravaganzas of the country-'Khedan Watan Punjab Dian', as Punjab Chief Minister Bhagwant Singh Mann inaugurated the third edition of these games. Punjab Chief Minister took salute from the impressive march past of the participating contingents of various districts. Announcing the opening of this around two months long much awaited gala sporting event, Bhagwant Singh Mann said that it is a matter of immense pride and satisfaction that this mega sporting event is being launched today to commemorate National Sports Day- the birth anniversary of Hockey Wizard Major Dhyan Chand. He said that this time around five lakh players will vie for medals in nine age groups of 37 games. Chief Minister of Punjab said that a cash prize of over Rs 9 crore will be distributed to the winners. He said that for the



first time, para sports, including Athletics, Badminton and Powerlifting, have also been included in the Khedan Watan Punjab Dian. Bhagwant Singh Mann said that in these three sports, para athletes from Punjab are participating in the Paris Paralympics. Chief Minister said that this major sports event aims at channelising the unbounded energy of youth in a positive direction to wean them away from the menace of drugs. He said that during these games block level competitions will be held from September 1-10, district level competitions will

be held from September 15-22 and state level competitions will be held from October 11 to November 9. Bhagwant Singh Mann said that the second season of "Khedan Watan Punjab Dian" was held in the year 2023 in which 4.5 lakh players had participated and Rs 8.87 crore rupees were distributed to 12, 500 winning players. Punjab CM also said that in order to give impetus to sports the state government has kept a budgetary provision of Rs 30 crore in Punjab for Khedan Watan Punjab Dian during current year. He said that the state government has given cash

prize worth Rs 1 crore each to eight players of Indian hockey contingent that had bagged bronze medals adding that Rs 15 lakh was given to participants apart from Rs 15 lakh given for preparation to them. Bhagwant Singh Mann said that ever since assuming the charge of office his government has disbursed Rs 87.47 crore to 24, 500 players for winning medals, participation in competition and preparation of such events.

CM Mann said that the sports budget for current fiscal was Rs 252 crore which was 16.36 % more than last year. He said that Punjab has become the first state in the country to create its medical cadre in sports for which 113 posts have been created adding that 500 new posts have been approved for outstanding sports personnel (medal winners). Bhagwant Singh Mann said that the posts of Junior Coaches, Senior Coaches, Assistant Directors and Deputy Directors have been enhanced from currently 444 to 581.

CORPORATES & INDUSTRY **5**



AMBANI ANNOUNCES JIO AI CLOUD WELCOME OFFER; UP TO 100 GB FREE CLOUD STORAGE FOR JIO USERS

RBI Recognises FACE as a Self-Regulatory Organisation in Fintech Sector

MUMBAI: The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) has taken a significant step in regulating the burgeoning fintech sector by recognising the Fintech Association for Consumer Empowerment (FACE) as a self-regulatory organisation (SRO).



This development, announced by RBI Governor Shaktikanta Das at the Global Fintech Fest on Wednesday, is expected to enhance consumer protection and ensure a balanced approach to innovation and regulation within the industry. The decision follows RBI's call for applications for SROs in the fintech sector, with three applications initially received. According to Governor Das, one application has been returned with provisions for resubmission after meeting specific criteria, while the third remains under examination.

had not been returned and expressed anticipation for further communication from the regulator.

Governor Das emphasised that the role of SROs would be crucial in fostering regular consultations, feedback mechanisms, and policy dialogues. This will facilitate open communication and help fintech companies stay informed about regulatory expectations and priorities. "Our endeavour is to carefully craft regulations to achieve this delicate balance, while simultaneously ensuring trust, security, accessibility, risk management, and competition," Das stated. The recognition of FACE

as an SRO is part of the RBI's broader strategy to ensure the sustainable and orderly development of the fintech sector.

Das highlighted the importance of a balanced approach between innovation and prudent regulation, advocating for self-regulation within the fintech ecosystem.

He underscored that banks and fintech non-banking financial companies (NBFCs) must adopt customer-centric approaches, robust security measures, and fair lending practices to ensure transparent financial products.

Looking ahead, Das outlined five policy priorities for India's financial system: digital financial inclusion, digital public infrastructure (DPI), consumer protection and cybersecurity, sustainable finance, and global integration and cooperation. He noted that the next two decades would see a significant focus on leveraging technology to deliver accessible and tailored financial services.

POTPOURRI **8**



SGPC SENDS LEGAL NOTICE TO PRODUCERS OF EMERGENCY FILM

Gautam Adani replaces Mukesh Ambani as wealthiest Indian



MUMBAI: Recouping the dent caused by the Hindenburg Research report, Gautam Adani's net worth shot up 95 per cent to Rs 11.6 lakh crore last year, which helped him replace Mukesh Ambani to become the richest Indian, a report said on Thursday.

Reliance Industries Chairman and Managing Director Ambani's overall net worth increased by 25 per cent to Rs 10.14 lakh crore, as per the 2024 Hurun India Rich List.

In 2023's report, Adani's wealth declined by 57 per cent to Rs 4.74 lakh crore, and Ambani was way ahead with a fortune of Rs 8.08 lakh crore.

Adani's net worth declined sharply following various allegations levelled by US-based short seller Hindenburg Research. The conglomerate has denied all the allegations.

In the 2014 edition, Hurun had pegged Adani's fortunes at Rs 44,000 crore, which made him the tenth richest Indian then. Shiv Nadar and family of HCL gained one spot to be the third richest with a net worth of Rs 3.14 lakh crore, while Serum Institute of India's Cyrus Poonawalla slipped by one notch to the fourth position with a net worth of Rs 2.89 lakh crore in 2024. Sun Pharmaceuticals' Dilip Shanghvi continued his ascent on the list, securing the fifth richest tag against sixth last year with a net worth of Rs 2.5 lakh crore.

Radha Vembu of Zoho was the wealthiest among self-made women with a fortune of Rs 47,500 crore, while Zepto's co-founders Kaivalya Vohra and Aadit Palicha, who are in their early 20s, were the youngest on the list with a net worth of Rs 3,600 crore and Rs 4,300 crore, respectively.

The list, which captures Indians having a net worth of over Rs 1,000 crore, grew by 220 individuals to 1,539 people in 2024. The cumulative wealth has seen a 46 per cent jump in the year.

Actor Shah Rukh Khan made his debut on the list with a fortune estimated at Rs 7,300 crore, which was much higher than business partner Jui Chawla with Rs 4,600 crore net worth who secured second place among the entertainers. Interestingly, 16 professionals also made it to the list with Arista Networks' chief executive Jayshree Ullal being the wealthiest at Rs 32,100 crore and followed by D-mart chief executive Ignatius Navil Noronha at Rs 6,900 crore, according to the list.

'Perform, Reform, Transform, Inform': PM Modi's four-point mantra for ministers



NEW DELHI: Prime Minister Narendra Modi, chairing a marathon meeting with his ministerial colleagues to review the functioning of the government, exhorted them to work without rest and gave a new four-point mantra of "Perform, Reform, Transform, Inform".

According to sources, the meeting at the Sushma Swaraj Bhavan on Wednesday lasted for more than five hours while PM Modi dwelled upon the government's functioning, its achievements, and their propagation and publicity, welfare measures and other key issues in an address to his colleagues, which lasted around 40 minutes.

The Prime Minister also asked the Ministers to connect with people through social media platforms to send across the message that the government is working responsibly. He also asked for people's responses to be expedited on social media so that his government is seen as responsive. The Ministers have been asked to give information about 10 major decisions of their respective Ministries on completion of 100 days of the Modi 3.0 government and also to propagate them on a mass level, sources said. Prime Minister Modi in the meeting has also specifically asked for faster and better communication of his government's decisions.

SGPC takes possession of holy Saroops returned by Qatar's Doha Police

AMRITSAR: The Shiromani Gurdwara Parbandhak Committee (SGPC) has taken possession of the holy Saroops (scriptures) of Guru Granth Sahib returned by the local police in Doha Qatar and preserved them with due respect at Gurdwara Shaheed Baba Gurbaksh Singh situated in Sri Darbar Sahib complex.



Sharing information in this regard, SGPC secretary Partap Singh said that information was received last night (on Wednesday) that the persons involved in this case are arriving at Sri Guru Ramdas International Airport, Sri Amritsar by flight with holy Saroops returned by Doha Police.

He said taking immediate action on this input, the SGPC took possession of the holy Saroops at the airport from the concerned persons

and brought the same with Maryada (Sikh conduct), reverence in a palanquin carriage vehicle and preserved them at Gurdwara Baba Gurbakshsh

Singh. He said this action has been taken on the directions of Jathedar of Sri Akal Takht Sahib Giani Raghbir Singh and the SGPC President Advocate Harjinder Singh Dhama.

He also informed that the report of this matter will be taken from the SGPC employees who went to receive the holy Saroops and sent to Sri Akal Takht Sahib.

Meanwhile, Regional Passport Officer of Amritsar, Abhishek Sharma, IFS, also reached SGPC headquarters for information in this regard, who was informed that the holy Saroops have been preserved at Sri Darbar Sahib with due respect.

Akal Takht declares SAD president Sukhbir Singh Badal Tankhaiya



JAGMOHAN SINGH
Amritsar

Jathedar Akal Takht Gyani Raghbir Singh on August 30 has declared SAD president and former Punjab deputy CM Sukhbir Singh Badal Tankhaiya (Sentenced to a religious punishment) as per Sikh rituals for extending severe damages to Sikh interests and party during their government 2007 to 2017 in Punjab as deputy CM.

Addressing the gathering in front of Akal Takht, Jathedar Akal Takht said that Sukhbir Singh Badal during his tenure in the Punjab Government from the period 2007 to 2017 as Deputy Chief Minister of Punjab took such decisions which extended damage to Sikh Panth as well as Sikh face.

At the same time Jathedar has also asked the entire Sikh cabinet ministers for the period of 2007- 2017 to appear at Akal Takht since they were also equally responsible for the damage extended to Sikh Panth

and asked them to submit their written clarification within fifteen days at Akal Takht. Jathedar asked Sukhbir Badal to appear at Akal Takht within fifteen days as a humble Sikh to seek apology for his sins towards Sikh Panth, adding that Sukhbir would remain tankhaiya until then.

Jathedar said Sukhbir Singh Badal declared tankhaiya as per Sikh tenets during the meeting of five Sikh high priests. After the meeting the decision to declare Sukhbir Singh Badal as tankhaiya was pronounced by the Jathedar Akal Takht as per long coming traditions of the Sikh community. However, Shiromani Akali Dal president Sukhbir Singh Badal on Thursday appointed senior leader Balwinder Singh Bhundar as the party's working president. "Sukhbir Singh Badal has appointed senior party leader Balwinder Singh Bhundar as Working President of the party," SAD leader and former Punjab Minister Daljit Singh Cheema posted on X.

Former Jharkhand CM Champai Soren joins BJP



RANCHI: After ending his political journey of four and a half decades with the Jharkhand Mukti Morcha (JMM), former chief minister Champai Soren formally joined the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) on Friday.

In a big public meeting organised at Shaheed Maidan in Ranchi's Dhurwa, Union Agriculture Minister and Jharkhand BJP election in-charge Shivraj Singh Chauhan, election co-in-charge and Assam CM Himanta Biswa Sarma

said that Champai Soren was among those leaders whose struggles led to the creation of a separate Jharkhand.

"Jharkhand Mukti Morcha has insulted such a leader. Now he is a member of the Bharatiya Janata Party. We are together and have come with the resolve to build a new Jharkhand," he added.

It may be noted that on August 18, Champai Soren wrote a post on the social media platform X and announced that he will start a new chapter separate from JMM. He had written that while being the CM of the state, he was insulted in JMM and the way he was removed from the post was extremely humiliating.

On August 28, he resigned from the primary membership of the party and all the posts, claiming that its "present style of functioning and policies" forced him to leave the party that he served for many years.

Indicted for 'religious misconduct', Sukhbir Badal to soon appear before Akal Takht



AMRITSAR: In a far-reaching development, Shiromani Akali Dal (SAD) chief Sukhbir Badal was on Friday indicted by the Akal Takht, the supreme temporal seat of Sikhs, for religious misconduct by the party and its government from 2007-17 when SAD was in power in Punjab.

After a meeting of five Sikh head priests, Giani Raghbir Singh, the Jathedar of Akal Takht, declared Sukhbir Badal 'Tankhaiya' (guilty of religious misconduct) and asked him to appear before Akal Takht Sahib in Amritsar within 15 days as a common Sikh. Reacting to his indictment, Sukhbir Badal said in a post on X, "Das bows his head and accepts the order issued by Sri Akal Takht Sahib, the highest shrine of Miri Piri. According to the order, I will soon appear in front of Sri Akal Takht Sahib and test the Khima."

The SAD Cabinet from 2007-2017, which was led by late Parkash Singh Badal, was asked to appear before the Akal Takht to explain its actions which caused harm to the Sikh 'Panth'. At that time, Sukhbir Badal was the Deputy Chief Minister and SAD President. The Akal Takht asked the ministers during the tenure of the SAD-BJP government to provide an explanation for their role in the mistakes committed during the two consecutive terms, from 2007-12, and 2012-2017.

Joint technical panel to probe collapse of Shivaji statue: CM Shinde

MUMBAI: Amid protests over the collapse of the Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj statue in the Rajkot Fort in Sindhadurg district, the Maharashtra government has announced the establishment of a joint technical committee comprising civil engineers, experts, representatives of IITs and Navy officers to investigate its reasons.



The decision was taken at a marathon meeting chaired by the Chief Minister with Ministers, senior bureaucrats and the Navy officers late Wednesday night. The Indian Navy had earlier constituted its own committee to conduct a probe.

The state government's committee will fix the responsibility for the collapse of the statue inaugurated by Prime Minister Narendra Modi in December 2023. The Chief Minister directed the Public Works Department to appoint a committee of the country's best sculptors, civil engineers,

experts and Naval officers to erect a grand and imposing statue of Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj befitting his achievements. According to the Chief Minister's office, CM Shinde has also directed the appointment of a committee of representatives of JJ School of Arts and IIT, Civil Engineers, renowned sculptors from Maharashtra and technical officers of the Navy to suggest a design for the statue in a new grand format. "The incident is unfortunate

and the feelings of Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj devotees are quite intense. The Navy had erected the statue at the Rajkot Fort on the occasion of Navy Day celebrations in good spirit," said CM Shinde. He cautioned, "We should be very careful so that such an accident never happens again in the future." The CM reiterated that a new statue should be erected which suits Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj's stature and image. He clarified that funds won't be an issue.

Bow my head at Shivaji's feet and apologise: PM on statue collapse

PALGHAR: Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Friday apologised to Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj and those hurt by the collapse of the warrior king's statue in coastal Sindhadurg district of Maharashtra.



"Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj is not just a name or a king. For us, he is our deity. Today, I bow my head at his feet and apologise to my deity," Modi said, after laying the foundation stone of the Rs 76,000 crore Vadhan Port project in Maharashtra's Palghar district.

"Our values are different. For us, nothing is bigger than our deity," Modi said. "Some people keep abusing Veer Savarkar but are not ready

to apologise for insulting him," he said. "The moment I landed here, I first apologised to Shivaji Maharaj over the statue collapse. I also apologise to the people who were hurt by the collapse," he said. Modi had unveiled the statue in December last year during the Navy Day cel-

ebrations in Sindhadurg district. The statue was aimed at honouring the legacy of Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj towards maritime defence. The state government has announced that a joint technical committee headed by the Navy with representatives from the state government and technical experts will investigate the reasons for the statue collapse. A developed Maharashtra is an essential part of the resolve for a Developed India, Modi said.

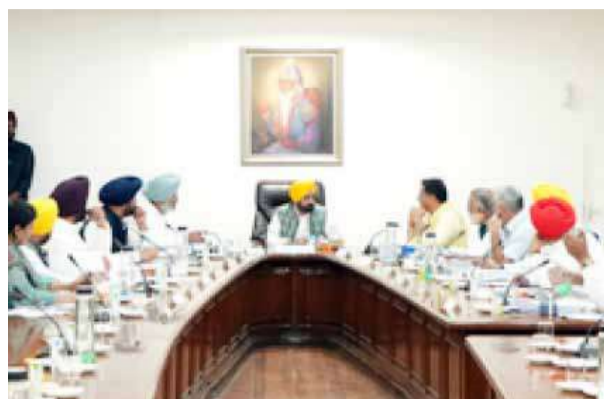
Punjab Cabinet bars party symbols in panchayat elections

CHANDIGARH: The Punjab Cabinet, in a meeting presided over by Chief Minister Bhagwant Mann, on Thursday decided to amend the Punjab Panchayat Election Rules, 1994, to bar the use of party symbols in panchayat polls.

The AAP government also gave consent to increase the number of Punjab Civil Services (PCS) officers by 59.

Briefing the media after the meeting, Finance Minister Harpal Cheema told the media here that the government approved an amendment to the Punjab Panchayat Election Rules and with this, elections in Punjab will not be held on party symbols.

The amendment to Section 12 of the Punjab Panchayat Election Rules has been approved and the measure will



now be tabled in the forthcoming Assembly session for approval.

A discussion on bringing this amendment was held in the previous Cabinet meeting too. With the amendment, contestants have been barred from using political party symbols during the rural body elections. Now the election of the sarpanchs and the panchs will be fought without the symbols of political parties. Elections for 13, 241 panchayats in the state are expected by the end of September, the time by

seats are likely to be held.

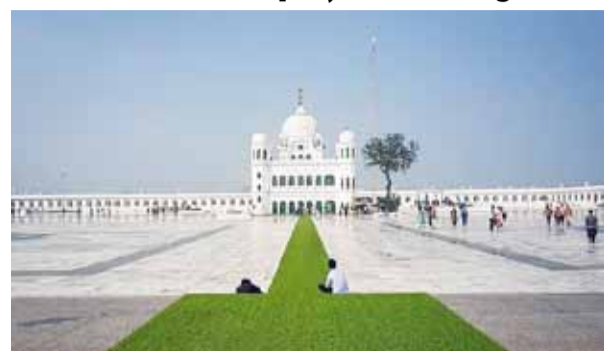
The Finance Minister said the number of the PCS officers has been increased to 369 from 310, as their strength has not been increased in the past eight years.

The recruitment process for the new PCS posts will start soon, said Cheema, adding the creation of additional districts had necessitated the creation of more posts.

Besides, the Cabinet sanctioned 36 posts of judicial officers for setting up a sessions court in Malerkotla.

It has also been decided to create a water-recharge well on 20 acres along the seasonal Ghaggar river at Chandu village to prevent flooding. It has also been decided to fill 435 vacant posts of doctors, including house surgeons.

SGPC writes to Punjab Govt for exemption from foreign leave for Govt employees visiting Sri Kartarpur Sahib in Pak



JAGMOHAN SINGH Amritsar

The Shiromani Gurdwara Parbandhak Committee (SGPC) has written to the Punjab Government, demanding exemption from foreign leave for government employees who tend to visit Gurdwara Sri Darbar Sahib Sri Kartarpur Sahib in Pakistan via Corridor.

In the letter written by the

SGPC to the Secretary of the Personnel Department, Punjab, it has been stated that through the department's letter 176 dated November 11, 2019, to the officers/employees going to Sri Kartarpur Sahib (Pakistan) on the occasion of the 550th birth anniversary of Sri Guru Nanak Dev, exemption from foreign leave was given to them, which has not been extended by the Punjab

government.

SGPC Secretary Partap Singh said that Sikhs have great devotion towards Gurdwara Sri Kartarpur Sahib, which is related to Sri Guru Nanak Dev. He said that on the occasion of the 550th birth anniversary of Sri Guru Nanak Dev, due to the long efforts of the Sikh community, Sri Kartarpur Sahib Corridor was opened for the governments of India and Pakistan, through which they can go to pay obeisance in the morning and return in the evening on the same day. He said that the government employees have sent letters to the SGPC saying that they are facing great difficulties in going to Sri Kartarpur Sahib. Officials/employees of the Punjab Government who wish to visit Sri Kartarpur Sahib have to go through a long process of foreign leave.

Massive jolt to Akali Dal! Sukhbir Badal's close leader Dimpy Dhillon joins AAP



SRI MUKTSAR SAHIB : Shiromani Akali Dal (Badal) suffered a major setback on Wednesday as Hardeep Singh Dimpy Dhillon, a veteran Akali leader and close aide of Sukhbir Badal, joined the Aam Aadmi Party (AAP). Dimpy Dhillon's move is expected to give a significant boost to AAP in the upcoming Gidderbaha assembly by-election.

Chief Minister Bhagwant Mann formally inducted Dimpy Dhillon into the party during a public meeting in Gidderbaha, where he also welcomed him officially. Alongside Dimpy Dhillon, hundreds of Akali leaders and workers who support him also joined AAP. Dimpy Dhillon had contested the assembly elections from Gidderbaha on an Akali Dal ticket in both 2017 and 2022. In 2022, he narrowly lost to Congress candidate Raja Warring by just 1, 350 votes.

Mann stated that Dimpy Dhillon did not leave the Akali Dal; rather, the party left him. When good ideas and valuable individuals are not given importance within the party, people are forced to leave. He emphasized that all individuals working for Punjab are welcomed into the AAP.

AAP gheraos the BJP, condemns Kangana Ranaut's remarks against farmers



CHANDIGARH: Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) Punjab leaders, on Wednesday, gheraoed the BJP office in Chandigarh and condemned the BJP and its leader Kangana Ranaut for their anti-farmers stance. The AAP leaders said that Kangana Ranaut's statement is nothing new but it is the ideology of the Bharatiya Janata Party.

MLA Jagtar Singh Dayalpur (AAP Punjab Kisan Wing President) and Shaminder Singh Khinda (Kisan Wing In-charge and Chairman Agro Industry Corporation) led the protest and a large number of AAP leaders and volunteers joined the protest. The AAP leaders raised slogans against MP Kangana Ranaut and the BJP.

AAP Punjab senior spokesperson Neel Garg said that Kangana Ranaut is an MP now, it is an important responsibility, she cannot give random statements to target one group of people or another. He said that it is not the first time that a BJP leader has given such a statement against our farmers. He said that during farmers protests BJP leaders continuously issued statements to build propaganda against our farmers. Kangana Ranaut's latest remarks are also derogatory towards our farmers and are very unfortunate. He added that BJP is only distancing itself from her statement because of the upcoming elections in states of Haryana, Maharashtra and Jharkhand.

Delhi Deputy CM Manish Sisodia pays obeisance at Golden Temple

JAGMOHAN SINGH Amritsar

AAP senior leader Manish Sisodia along with Punjab chief minister Bhagwant Mann paid obeisance at Golden Temple here on August 25.

Earlier, he arrived at Amritsar by air and while talking to media on the exit point of Shri Guru Ramdas international Airport, Manish Sisodia said that when he was in jail used to pray while keeping Golden Temple in his mind for the wellbeing of Punjab and Punjab AAP Team.

"I always keep in my memory the people of Punjab and the AAP Punjab team during the detention period since they are very hardworking people as always remained in action for the development of the Punjab under the leadership of chief minister Bhagwant Singh Mann", said he.

Talking about the BJP he



said that the way BJP was doing GHUCHAK (conspiracy) against the AAP leaders, having full faith on the constitution of the Nation and God's grace which helped me to come out from the detention. Now I am happy as God did His grace and put me out of prison and hope shortly Arvind Kejriwal will also

come out from the bars.

Now all the conspiracies hatched by BJP biting dust. While in prison, I Always prayed before God to release me to make me enabled to pay obeisance here, he added.

During visit to the Golden Temple, CM Bhagwant Singh Mann also joined Sisodia, where

talking to the media Mann said that Sisodia was the man who brought revolution in the Education sector with his innovative mind as a Education minister with Delhi Government.

Mann said that Sisodia was released now, earlier AAP leader Sanjay Singh was also released from jail as no solid proof was against him and shortly Kejriwal ji will also come out from the jail. He alleged that BJP attempted to break our party while sending our leaders to jails but they didn't succeed. While talking to media in the Golden Temple complex, Sisodia said that I feel lucky myself for having the privilege to pay obeisance here. My release is the victory of truth, he quipped.

During his visit he was accompanied by Punjab cabinet ministers Laljit Bhullar, Kuldeep Singh Dhaliwal, Harbhajan Singh ETO, MLAs Jeewanjot Kaur and Ajay Gupta.

Clear dues worth Rs 500 crore, rice millers threaten not to procure paddy from government agencies till dues are cleared



PARVESH HANDA

The North Haryana Rice Millers' Association addressing a press conference declared that nearly 500 rice millers from Ambala, Yamunanagar and Panchkula districts will not procure paddy from the government agencies and State Warehouse Corporation till their long pending payments for the amount over Rs 500 crore were cleared. They demanded a special package for the revival of the rice industry in the state. It was decided by the association chaired by Satpal Gupta state president, Vishal Arora Secretary and Manmohan Chottani Executive Member of the Association. The state president said the rice industry had been facing a huge loss due to the apathetic attitude of the government. He said, majority of rice millers are not able to run the rice milling industry in the state due to this incurring them heavy loss, forcing them to shut their business.

The President of the Association further said over 100 small and large mills had been closed in the state and more than 300 another rice mills are on the verge of closure, since amount worth over Rs 500 crore are pending with the State Warehouse Corporation, DFSC, Haryana Agro and HAFED and in-spite of repeated requests the concerned

officials of all the agencies the long overdue amount is not being released, said Satpal Gupta. According to information, this year's paddy crop is almost ready and likely to arrive in grain markets by September 15, but all rice millers have refused to accept stocks for milling till their old payments are released and they are facing harassment. The lifting of rice was delayed due to the shortage of space in government godowns for which rice millers are suffering heavy financial loss, even as on date the delivery of nearly 2.5 lakh ton rice is still pending, said Vishal Arora.

The Association members raised the point that there was no tax in Punjab, Delhi, UP and Rajasthan, while they were being charged 9.5% in the state, which should be waived off. During the addressing, they also announced that they will not procure the paddy having more than 17 per cent moisture. Among other demands were CMR delivery of rice should be 62% instead of 67% at present, the broken rice quantity should be increased from 25% to 35% and dryness quantity of rice should be increased to 2% from half percent at present. They also demanded rent for the storage of rice in their godowns, failing which they are not prepared to accept paddy stocks this season.

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Sikh Petitioners File PIL Against Kangana Ranaut's Film "Emergency," Alleging Anti-Sikh Narrative

TARUN BHAJNI Chandigarh

In a recent development, a Public Interest Litigation (PIL) has been filed seeking to prevent the release of Kangana Ranaut's upcoming film "Emergency," slated for release on September 6. The petition, submitted by two Amritdhari Sikhs, Gurinder Singh and Jagmohan Singh, alleges that the film contains scenes that deliberately misrepresent the Sikh community, fostering an anti-Sikh narrative.

The petition, represented by counsel Imaan Singh Khara and Deepinder Singh Virk, calls for the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting and the Central Board of Film Certification (CBFC) to remove specific scenes from the film



that allegedly target the Sikh community. The petitioners argue that these scenes present false and misleading historical facts, potentially disrupting the social harmony in Punjab. The controversial scenes in question, according to the petition, appear in the movie's trailer. The petition highlights a particular segment between the time frame of 02:37 to 02:39 minutes, where Sikh individuals are depicted firing indiscriminately at Hindus, allegedly due to religious discrimination. Another scene, from 02:32 to 02:36 minutes, portrays Sant Giani Baba Jarnal

Singh Khalsa Bhindranwale, a revered figure in Sikhism, in a compromising light. The petitioners claim that the trailer shows him striking a deal with Congress Party leaders to secure votes, an act they assert has no historical basis and is intended to defame the Sikh community.

The petitioners are also seeking legal action against Kangana Ranaut, who is also an MP from Mandi, Himachal Pradesh, and other individuals associated with the film. They have requested the Director General of Police (DGP) Punjab to register a First Information Report (FIR) under the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita (BNS), 2023, and the Cinematograph Act, accusing the film's creators of attempting to tarnish the image of the Sikh community.

Five arrested including father-in-law of victim Sukhchain Singh to give shelter to shooters



JAGMOHAN SINGH Amritsar

Punjab police with in overnight have arrested five accused including father-in-law of victim Sukhchain Singh for giving shelter to two shooters who shot at Sukhchain Singh an NRI who has recently returned from US.

Addressing the press conference here today early in the morning Commissioner police Amritsar Mr. Ranjit Singh Dhillon shared the name and identification of arrested accused said that Jagjit Singh resident of village Bhat of Tarn Taran district, Chamkor Singh resident of village Bhut of Tarn Taran district, Digamber Atari resident of Amritsar city, Abhilash Kapoor resident of Katra Ahlu-

walia Amritsar walled city and Sarwan Singh resident of village Bains of district Hoshiarpur.

Dhillon said FIR was registered on the statement of Harbhajan Kaur who was mother of victim. Dhillon said that accused, Digamber Atari resident of Amritsar city who is owner of hotel and manager of the hotel Abhilash Kapoor have provided room to shooters without obtaining their identification proofs. He said that accused Sarwan Singh resident of village Bains of district Hoshiarpur was father-in-law of the victim. He said shooters who shot at victim yet to be arrested have recently came out from Kapurthala prison on bail as they were facing numerous criminal case including murder and NDPS Act.

Congress spreading lies among voters, but they are not ready to give the 'hisaab' of their 10 years rule in Haryana. : Nayab Saini

PARVESH HANDA Ambala

Chief Minister Nayab Saini and Minister of State Aseem Goel at the Jan Ashirwad Rally in Ambala City, while addressing a large gathering strongly condemned the Congress leaders for running the 'Haryana Mange Hisaab' campaign against BJP government in Haryana and accused them for spreading lies among voters.

Saini said, former Chief Minister Bhupinder Singh Hooda and his son Deepender Hooda are seeking our accounts to the people of state, spreading lies to the youngsters and farmers who have been benefited by the policies of BJP in past 10 years rule in the state, demanding Hooda should also bring out the account of his 10-year rule in the state, must tell how corruption flourished under the Congress rule in the state and why poor, Dalits and farmers were exploited in his regime. "They are not ready to give the account of their rule in Haryana," Saini said.

CM Saini said our govern-



ment has worked in a mission mode in Haryana and took various initiatives and formed policies for the welfare of all the sections of society. He said the BJP government has given jobs on merit, decided to procure all 24 crops at minimum support price in Haryana and allotted plots to poor and beneficiaries who are yet to get the plots will get them after the model code of conduct is lifted. Highlighting the achievements and schemes launched by the BJP government, the CM said the BJP government has been taking pro-people decisions and taking strong steps for

the welfare of the people of Haryana. The BJP has ensured the development of all sections without discrimination in its 10-year rule, as such people will vote for the BJP in the Assembly elections to help us form the government a third time with a promise that the BJP will continue to develop Haryana at a rapid pace under the leadership of Prime Minister Narendra Modi. Addressing the rally, Minister of State for Transport as well as local MLA Aseem Goel, too, highlighted the works done in Ambala City constituency over the past 10 years.

Flight service for three hours disrupted due uncontrolled drone moments around Airport

AMRITSAR: It was a tough time for the Shri Guru Ramdas International Airport Authority when its ATC tower spotted a sudden moment of three drones in the Airspace which badly disrupted landing and taking off operation of all the scheduled flights.

Talking to FW, officiating Director Airport, Mr. Sandeep Aggarwal confirming the incident said that it happened on August 26 at 10.10 p.m and the moments of done remained active almost three hours.

Adding further he said that the flight operation from the Airport remained suspended from 10.10 p.m. to 12.45. Flight operation resumed after 12.45 a.m when ATC tower gave clearance for the flight moments.

He said that the Airport Authority, when noticed the drone moment, immediately informed the police which failed to find out the base where the drones were being operated.

He said that in this regard the help of the local Air Force station which was adjoining to Airport was also sought besides other intelligence agencies also



asked to find out the base of drone operation. He said due to the border area the moment of the drone around the airport was a matter of deep concern for the authorities.

He also made it clear that such moments in the air were spotted for the first time here.

When contacted SHO Airport Ms. Harsimar confirming the complaint made by Airport Authority said that the matter was reported to police thereafter comprehensive joint search operation with CISF (Central Industrial Security Force) was launched whereupon different people from different villages

around the airport were interacted but none of the person came forward to confirm the moment of drone. She said that usually when drones move in the air the lights fitted atop blinked but here as per Airport authority there was a single spot light. She said that yet it would be too early to say that it was a drone or some other article.

Since on Monday due to Janamasthami people were celebrating with crackers which were flying in the air carrying illuminated candles inside, said a police official seeking anonymity.

Sorry, says CM Mamata Banerjee on RG Kar rape-murder case

KOLKATA: West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee dedicated the foundation day of the Trinamool Congress' student wing TMCP on Wednesday to the memory of the woman doctor of the state-run R.G. Kar Medical College & Hospital who became the victim of a ghastly rape and murder earlier this month.

"Today I dedicate Trinamool Chhatra Parishad Foundation Day to our sister, whom we mourned the tragic loss of at RG Kar Hospital a few days ago. And please, our heartfelt condolences to the family of the sister who was brutally tortured to death and seeking speedy justice, as well as to all the women of all ages across India who have been subjected to such inhumane acts. Sorry," the Chief Minister said in a message posted on her official X handle in the morning.

According to her, since



students and youths have a great social role to play it is the task of student society to give the dream of a new day by keeping the society and culture awake and to inspire everyone around with the bright vows of a new day.

"My appeal to all of them today, be encouraged in this effort, stay committed. My dear students, stay well, stay healthy, stay committed to a bright future," the message read.

A mega programme is scheduled in Kolkata on Wednesday afternoon on the occasion of Trinamool Congress Chhatra Parishad's foundation day.

The Chief Minister herself is slated to address a gathering on the occasion. The programme coincides with the 12-hour general strike convened by the BJP condemning police action on the protesters participating in the 'Nabanna Abhijan' (March to Bengal

“My appeal to all of them today, be encouraged in this effort, stay committed. My dear students, stay well, stay healthy, stay committed to a bright future”

Secretariat) rally on Tuesday condemning the rape and murder case.

The Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) has already taken up the charge of investigation in the matter following an order of the Calcutta High Court. The central agency is also conducting a parallel probe on the financial irregularities in R.G. Kar, which many have claimed have some links with the gruesome rape and murder.

Rahul Gandhi calls for restoration of Jammu and Kashmir's statehood



FW DESK

Congress leader Rahul Gandhi has reiterated his call for the restoration of statehood to Jammu and Kashmir, saying that it does not make sense to run the region from Delhi.

During his recent visit to Srinagar, Gandhi interacted with a group of Kashmiri women and highlighted the importance of returning statehood, which, he said, was taken away for the first time in Indian history.

Gandhi expressed his concerns about Prime Minister Narendra Modi's leadership, accusing him of not listening to others and being unwilling to acknowledge mistakes. He suggested that this approach stemmed from insecurity and weakness, rather than strength.

The Congress leader also engaged in a candid conversation with the women, discussing issues ranging from societal pressures to get married to their educational aspirations. He noted the resilience and wisdom of the women of Kashmir and stressed the need to ensure their voices are heard.

Former Jamaat-e-Islami members expected to contest in PDP strongholds in South Kashmir



Former members of the Jamaat-e-Islami (JeI) are set to contest as Independent candidates across at least a dozen constituencies, with a particular focus on south Kashmir, according to a report in a section of Kashmir media.

These individuals, now operating under the banner of the newly-formed Justice and Development Front (JDF), will be challenging the People's Democratic Party (PDP) in areas traditionally considered its strongholds. Although the JDF could not officially register as a political party due to time constraints, it still plans to participate actively in the elections.

The reports quoting sources in the group indicated that they are likely to field candidates in constituencies including Pulwama, Rajpora, Tral, Bijbehara, Anantnag, Kulgam, Devsar, and Zainapora. These are areas where the PDP, already weakened by the departure of several key leaders since 2019, might face tough competition.

Get well soon, says Surjewala over Kangana's comment on farmers' protest

CHANDIGARH: Under fire over her remarks that the 'farmers' protest could have led to a Bangladesh-like situation in India if not for strong measures taken by the Modi government, Congress leader Randeep Surjewala on Monday asked BJP leader and Mandi MP Kangana Ranaut to "Get well soon."

Even BJP leaders in Punjab and Haryana have advised Kangana to refrain from making inflammatory comments as they fear this could further escalate farmers' outrage against the party.

In a video shared on X, Mandi MP Ranaut alleged that during the farmers' stir against the three farm laws, "bodies were seen hanging and rapes were taking place."



Responding to her post, senior Congress leader Surjewala wrote on X, "After all, why do BJP people hate the country's food providers so much? The BJP has always lied, deceived, conspired and oppressed our farmers. And once again a BJP MP has made baseless allegations against our food providers. The question

is that, has Kangana made this cheap allegation against the farmers as per the BJP's election strategy?"

The Congress leader who is campaigning in poll-bound Haryana that also saw year-long farmers' protest against the three farm laws that have now been rolled back, asked, "Were these just Kangana's words or did someone else copy them? If not, then why are the Prime Minister of the country, the Chief Minister of Haryana and all the BJP MPs and MLAs silent on this issue?"

When Haryana Chief Minister Nayab Singh Saini was questioned by the media over the purported remark of the party's MP against the farmers' agitation, he refused to com-

Govt committed to ensuring more youth play and shine: PM Modi on National Sports Day

NEW DELHI: On the occasion of National Sports Day, Prime Minister Narendra Modi extended his greetings to sports persons across the nation and reaffirmed the government's commitment to supporting sports and encouraging greater youth participation in the field.

August 29, the birth anniversary of legendary hockey player Major Dhyan Chand, is celebrated as National Sports Day in India.

"Greetings on National Sports Day. Today, we pay homage to Major Dhyan Chand Ji. It is an occasion to compliment all those passionate about sports and those who have played for India," PM Modi stated in a post on X.

Emphasising the government's dedication to promoting sports, he added, "Our Government is committed to supporting sports and ensuring more youth are able to play and shine."



The Prime Minister also shared a video on X, highlighting the significance of sports in everyone's life and its contribution to bringing the world together.

"Sports has been a part of the culture and heritage of India for years. Sports is not only about winning medals but also winning hearts. Sports is for everyone. Sports not only prepares champions but also promotes peace, progress, and wellness. Sports is also a way to bring the world together," the Prime Minister said in the video.

PM Modi further emphasised that the power of sports significantly enhances the country's global image and assured that no effort will be spared in making the 2036 Olympics, set to be held in India, a grand success.

"This is a dream of 140 crore Indians," the Prime Minister added. Reflecting on the current enthusiasm for sports among the youth, PM Modi remarked, "Today, the attraction towards sports we are seeing in youth, this is the biggest tribute to Major Dhyan Chand."

Minor victim of sexual assault should not be repeatedly called to testify: SC



NEW DELHI: The Supreme Court has stressed that a minor victim of sexual assault should not be repeatedly called to testify before the trial court.

A bench headed by Justice Sudhanshu Dhulia said that the child who has suffered a traumatic experience of sexual offence should not be called time and again to testify about the same incident.

The court was hearing a plea challenging the orders of the High Court of Orissa and the Additional Sessions Judge-Special Court under the Protection of Children from Sexual Offences (POCSO) Act, Nayagarh, which denied recalling a minor victim for re-examination as a witness.

Allegedly, the accused kidnapped the minor girl, got her married at a temple, and forced her to make sexual relations. Later, the victim was rescued by her parents with the help of the police.

The accused were booked in 2020 under the relevant sections of the Indian Penal Code, POCSO Act, and Prohibition of Child Marriage Act.

In the course of trial, the special court rejected the application moved by the accused for recalling the victim for re-examination as witness. The trial court relied upon Section 33 (5) of the POCSO Act mandating that a child will not be called in the court to testify.

Upholding the decision, the apex court said, "POCSO Act is a special legislation, which was enacted to protect children from sexual offences and for safeguarding their interests and ensuring the well-being of the child at every stage of trial of offences under the Act. A bare perusal of Section 33 (5) of the Act indicates that a duty is cast upon the special court to ensure that a child is not repeatedly called to give his/her testimony before the court."

It added that although Section 33 (5) would not act as an absolute bar to recall the victim for re-examination as a witness, each case must be looked at in the context of its individual facts and circumstances.

Congress corners BJP on Kangana's outrageous statement on farmers

KAVITA SHARMA
New Delhi

The Congress party cornered the Bharatiya Janata Party over the outrageously atrocious and provocative statement of its controversial MP Kangana Ranaut for describing farmers as "rapists" and "murderers".

The party also sought clarification from the union government on the MP's related statement that foreign powers including America and China were trying to create disturbances like in Bangladesh through these protests.

Addressing a press conference at the AICC headquarters, Chairperson of the Social and Digital Platforms, Supriya Shrinate referred to Ranaut's statement where she had alleged that murders and rapes took place during the farmers' protest.

Referring to the BJP's clarification distancing itself from the MP's statement, Shrinate asked, if it is so, what action did the party plan to take against her (Ranaut) as she did not deserve to sit in the parliament. The Congress spokesperson observed that the BJP MP had insulted the farmers of the country by making such outrageous and provocative



statements against them.

She also demanded clarification from the government on the allegations by the BJP MP that the US and China were trying to destabilise the country by orchestrating such protests.

She pointed out, this statement had come from an MP of the ruling party, hence the government owed an answer and clarification. She asked, if it is really so, what was the government of India doing. She said, the ministries of home affairs and external affairs must come out with clarification on the issue as it is a serious matter.

Shrinate said, the BJP cannot simply shrug off its responsibility by a token denial without following it up with any concrete action against the MP, who has been repeatedly and regularly making controversial statements.

PM Modi shares interaction video with 'Lakhpati Didis'

Highlights empowerment through SHGs

NEW DELHI: Prime Minister Narendra Modi engaged with the 'Lakhpati Didis' of Maharashtra's Jalgaon, praising their entrepreneurial spirit and the significant strides they have made towards financial independence and empowerment.

In a video posted by PM Modi on X, the women, who are beneficiaries of various government schemes aimed at women's welfare, were seen sharing their success stories with the Prime Minister.

The women, known as 'Lakhpati Didis' due to their ability to generate an annual household income of at least Rs 1 lakh, expressed their gratitude to PM Modi for the initiatives that have enabled them to support their families and inspire others in their communities.

"We are very proud to be Lakhpati Didis. PM Modi is doing great work for the welfare of women," one of the beneficiaries stated.

In a notable gesture, when the women welcomed PM Modi with an 'Arti,' the Prime Minister reciprocated by holding the Arti plate and performing their Arti instead.

During the interaction, PM



Modi asked the women about the key differences between those who have become 'Lakhpati Didis' and those who have not yet reached that milestone.

The women credited the welfare schemes for their financial independence and ability to contribute to their households.

One woman from Assam shared her journey of becoming a 'Lakhpati Didi' over five years and how she has helped 207 other women achieve the same status. "I now earn Rs 8 lakh per annum," she proudly informed the Prime Minister, who acknowledged her as an inspiration for others in Assam. "Yes sir, I have become a hero from zero," she added.

Another woman from Nashik, Maharashtra, revealed that she and 10 other women run a business producing sanitary pads. However, she noted that the stigma surrounding menstruation has prevented others from joining their venture. Despite this, their work continues to challenge social taboos and contribute to women's health.

From Nahana, Himachal Pradesh, a woman shared how her family's pride has grown as she transitioned from a housewife to a successful entrepreneur. "My children proudly tell others that their mother has gone to Maharashtra to meet Modiji," she said.

Many 'Lakhpati Didis' de-

scribed how they were once confined to their homes but are now running businesses and empowering other women. Some of them are involved in animal healthcare, while others assist farmers.

On Sunday, PM Modi released a revolving fund of Rs 2,500 crore to benefit 48 lakh members of 4.3 lakh Self-Help Groups (SHGs). He also disbursed bank loans totalling Rs 5,000 crore to support 25.8 lakh members of 2.35 lakh SHGs, furthering the government's commitment to women empowerment.

Since the inception of the Lakhpati Didi Yojana, 1 crore women have been empowered to become 'Lakhpati Didis,' with the government's goal to elevate 3 crore women to this status.

These women not only achieve financial independence but also serve as role models in their communities by adopting sustainable livelihood practices in farming, non-farming, or service sectors.

SHG groups, under the Lakhpati initiative, foster collective action and mutual support, providing platforms for essential financial literacy, skill development, and livelihood assistance.

Morality is Freedom-Nationwide Campaign by Jamaat-e-Islami Hind Women's Wing

Increase in Sexual Violence and Decline in Moral Values is a Serious Issue for the Country: Jamaat-e-Islami Hind Women's Wing

KAVITA SHARMA
New Delhi

A month-long nationwide campaign is set to be launched by the Women's Wing of Jamaat-e-Islami Hind in September 2024. The theme of this campaign is 'Morality is Freedom.' The objective of this campaign is to raise awareness among people and inform them about what true freedom is and how it is linked to morality," said Ms. Rahamathunnissa A, National Secretary of Jamaat-e-Islami Hind, at a press conference held at the headquarters in New Delhi.

Expressing regret over the increasing incidents of sexual



violence and homicide targeting women and girls in the country, she stated, "Social inequality, neglect of security, and discrimination against women in our society have further complicated this issue. Particularly, the cases of sexual violence against marginalized women, Dalits, Adivasis, minorities, and disabled women are even more severe. Recent incidents, such as the rape and murder of a female doctor at RG Kar Hospital in Kolkata (West Bengal), the gang rape and murder of a 14-year-old Dalit girl in Gopalpur (Bihar), the rape and brutal murder of a Muslim nurse

in Udhm Singh Nagar (Uttarakhand), and the sexual assault of two kindergarten girls at a school in Badlapur (Maharashtra), prove that there is a serious need to reflect on the mentality and behavior towards women and girls in our country." She added, "The statistics from the National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB) and the National Family Health Survey (NFHS) show that crimes against women are increasing year by year. These reports only include the cases that have been reported; who knows how many cases go unreported. How much struggle do women have to go through to get justice? The Bilkis Bano case, in which she was gang-raped during the 2002 Gujarat massacre, is a stark example. She fought a long and hard battle to get justice."

Three terrorists killed in separate encounters in Jammu and Kashmir



FW DESK

Three terrorists were killed in two separate encounters in Jammu and Kashmir's Kupwara district, officials said. The encounters began following a joint operation by the Indian Army and Jammu and Kashmir police, prompted by suspected terrorist movement.

According to the army's Srinagar-based Chinara Corps, intelligence inputs led to the operation on the night of August 28-29 in the Machhil area, where two terrorists were likely killed. Another terrorist was killed in an encounter in Tangdhar sector after an infiltration attempt was intercepted.

India has surpassed its NDC emission intensity target, where achievement target was 33% by 2030 Kirti Vardhan Singh



NEW DELHI: Speaking at the ASSOCHAM Environment and Carbon Conference Kirti Vardhan Singh Hon'ble Minister of State, Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change, Government of India shared that Government is doing the part with policies and it actively supports in achieving net zero under Viksit Bharat 2047. Of course, climate change is a big problem, we all know that and the effects of climate change are not defined by political or national borders. We all know that our country is very heavily dependent on our agricultural producers. So, climate change is basically a boundary-less phenomenon that we are facing.

And of course, we are doing our own bit in building our climate resilience and achieving our targets, our NDC targets. But at the same time, it also depends a lot on what is happening in the rest of the world. And Mission for Life is one of the areas which we also have to look. Whenever we talk about climate change, when we look at discussions and deliberations on UNFCCC and COP in the world stage, the majority of the focus is on industrial outputs, on how our industry can cope

up with climate change and what changes are needed in terms of infrastructure.

One of the key challenges that I feel our country faces is the lack of proper technology or the cutting-edge technology that is needed. If you talk about a circular economy, if you talk about converting our waste into worth, oblique wealth, when it comes to all this, we have a shortage of technology. We have already achieved the emission intensity of GDP, where the achievement target was 33% by 2030. We have already achieved 40% of our electrical installed capacity through non-fossil fuel sources. Again, 9 years before our target, he added.

A circular planning whereby whatever methods we adopt, whatever pathways we discover or research on, the ultimate goal is to achieve net zero. So, we have to take multiple facets into account when we talk about achieving net zero, when we talk about fighting climate change, when we look forward to the future that we are going to give our future generations to our children. So, our research has to be more focused towards finding the

right technology or developing technologies towards greener industries and towards low carbon emission.

Archana Varma, IAS, Mission Director, National Water Mission, Ministry of Jal Shakti, GoI discussed India has had, as we all know, historically India has had a low history of carbon emission. We have just contributed 4% of CO2 emissions despite housing 18% of the population. The Jal Jeevan Mission, in which 19 crore rural households are to be supplied with drinking water and already 14 crores and above have been supplied with drinking water. Govt is also working on the National Mission for Clean Ganga, in which the objective is to clean and reduce the pollution in Ganga. And we have the National River Conservation Directorate, which performs a similar function for the other rivers.

The National Water Mission, wherein the goal is that we use water efficiently and increase water use efficiency, especially in the industrial, agriculture and domestic sector by 20 percent, so that we achieve the parameters of water conservation and water security by 2047. Also, the scheme of Atal Bhujal Yojana, which basically relates to, we all know that groundwater table in many parts of India is really depleting. So, to ensure that groundwater table doesn't deplete, we have a community-led Atal Bhujal Yojana. We have the Jal Shakti Abhiyan 2019, which has its major objective of creating awareness and being a people-led movement for water conservation.

RAKESH GOSWAMI STRESSES RAPE INCIDENTS HIGHLIGHT SYSTEMIC FAILURES IN JUSTICE



Proper probe key to timely justice



Amid national outrage over the rape and murder of a trainee doctor in Kolkata and the sexual abuse of two kindergarten girls in Badlapur, Maharashtra, Prime Minister Narendra Modi has spoken twice in 10 days on crimes against women. In his 78th Independence Day address, Mr. Modi said that crimes against women should be investigated without any delay, and that it was important to instill fear among culprits of committing such crimes. "There should be a wide discussion about the criminals who get punished so that even those who commit such sins fear the consequences including hanging to death. I feel that it is very important to create this fear," he said. Then, while addressing the Lakhpati Didi Sammelan in Jalgaon, Maharashtra, on Sunday, Mr. Modi said that committing a crime against women was "an unpardonable sin", adding that the guilty should not be spared.

Protests erupted after a postgraduate trainee doctor was found dead after 36 hours of duty at Kolkata's R.G. Kar Hospital on August 9. Forensic reports stated that she had been raped. Furious at persistently high level of sexual violence despite reforms in the criminal justice system, women gathered on streets across India. The Calcutta High Court ordered the transfer of probe of the case to the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI). Later, the Supreme Court took suo motto cognisance of the case.

Following the gang rape and murder of a 23-year-old woman in New Delhi in December 2012, the government brought about several changes in the criminal justice system. The definition of rape was widened to include non-penetrative acts, fast-track courts were set up, and the age threshold was reduced so that even 16-year-olds could be tried as adults in sexual offences.

However, little seems to have changed. According to a government report, on average, one woman reported a rape every 15

minutes across the country in 2018. There were more than 31,000 reported rapes in 2022, the latest year for which data are available. Around the time of the 2012 Delhi case, data from the National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB) showed that there were 25,000 recorded rapes a year across India.

A collective failure

That the annual number of rapes is largely above 30,000 is not just a cause for concern, but also a reflection on the four components of the criminal justice system: the police, the prosecution, the courts, and the prisons. It is a collective failure of these four components that there is no fear of punishment in the minds of people who commit these heinous crimes. The police, which are the investigative agency, have to ensure that there are no infirmities in the investigation procedure. For this, the first step is to preserve the scene of crime so that experts can gather evidence in the best possible manner. A botched job in the early stages of investigation has serious ramifications and often leads to acquittal. A botched job also gives some rapists the confidence that they can get away with their crime. Early-stage botching begins with delay in the registration of the crime. There was a delay of 14 hours

in registering an FIR in the Kolkata case. In the Badlapur sexual abuse case too, the police sprung to action only after public outrage. The Bombay High Court slammed the police for the delay in filing the FIR and recording statements.

After the registration of the FIR, proper investigation needs to be done. This includes collection of vital evidence from the scene of crime. The role of the investigators, therefore, is of paramount importance. Police being a state subject, the State governments have a bigger role to play in ensuring delivery of timely and fair justice. Why should all highly publicised cases be transferred to the CBI after an outcry by the media and the public? Lack of confidence in state investigative agencies is a major cause for concern.

If the investigation is improper, the prosecution finds it difficult to pursue the case in a court of law. This creates problems in trials, appeals, and every step of legal proceedings, often ending in rapists getting away. As per the NCRB data, conviction rates for rapes were 27%-28% from 2018 to 2022. This means that almost 70% of rape cases in India end in acquittal. But even in cases where the prosecution manages to get conviction, inordinate delays in execution of the sentence makes delivery of justice a long process. In the 2012 Delhi case, even though the fast-track court which tried the case held the accused guilty of gang rape and murder in less than a year, the guilty were hanged after seven years.

Revamped justice system

In the revamped criminal justice system of India, forensic examination has been made mandatory in cases with offences that are

punishable with imprisonment of seven years or more, which are categorised under heinous offences. The maximum punishment for rape in India is life imprisonment and death penalty in the case of the victim being below 12 years of age. The forensic examination is aimed at enhancing the criminal investigation by ensuring that a team of experts conduct an on-site examination and gather evidence. The Bharatiya Nagarik Suraksha Sanhita, 2024, which has replaced the Code of Criminal Procedure, 1973, also makes it mandatory to video-tape the forensic examination. The revamped criminal justice system of the country has also fixed timelines for enforcement agencies to take cognisance of complaints and mercy petitions, for filing of charge sheets and e-FIR for women, along with timelines for hearings to address contemporary challenges.

But these legal reforms will yield the desired results only when the investigating agency does its job thoroughly. Often, failure in preliminary investigation and incomplete or delayed collection of forensic evidence leads to botched-up investigations that ultimately make it more difficult for the victim to get justice. It is important that the investigating agency preserves the scene of crime and collects forensic evidence to build a watertight case so that the accused persons get convicted. It is equally important to ensure that the appellate courts, such as the High Court and the Supreme Court, dispose of the appeals quickly and in a time-bound manner for sentences to be executed.

These steps may not prevent atrocities against women, but they will at least instill the fear of consequences in the minds of the perpetrators, and ensure that the victims and their families don't have to wait endlessly for delivery of justice.

Rakesh Goswami is Professor of Journalism at the Indian Institute of Mass Communication, New Delhi. Views are personal.

ELISABETH FAURE ON HOW JAN POSHAN KENDRA IS TRANSFORMING FOOD DISTRIBUTION LANDSCAPE



Reimagining India's fair price shops



As the backbone of India's Public Distribution System (PDS), fair price shops (FPS) play a crucial role in ensuring food security for millions of citizens. Reforms are needed to enhance the profitability of FPS dealers, strengthen their livelihood, and ensure they serve citizens' entitlements.

There are approximately 5.37 lakh ration shops in the country, of which around 2.95 lakh are operated by private individuals. The remaining are operated by cooperative societies, self-help groups, panchayats, and others. State governments also provide private dealerships to the disadvantaged. These shops, which are visited by millions of beneficiaries every month, can also function as social change establishments that promote citizens' nutrition.

Stepping into the future

In the past, the central and State governments have undertaken initiatives to support FPS operators in expanding their offerings and making them sustainable through additional sales and better uptake of rations by beneficiaries.

For instance, the PDS Control Order 2015 allowed dealers to sell non-PDS commodities. The Ministry of Consumer Affairs, Food, and Public Distribution has been partnering with other Ministries and agencies to broaden the range of products and services available, including Common Services Centre services, banking services, and the sale of cooking gas cylinders.

In 2023, the government started exploring ways to make ration shops vibrant, modern, and viable by enabling them to offer more

products and services along with the PDS operations.

The Department of Food and Public Distribution (DFPD) started an initiative to develop 75 model ration shops. These model shops could have waiting spaces, CCTV cameras, toilets, and drinking water facilities, among other things.

This initiative has shaped a programme for establishing SMART-FPS or Jan Poshan Kendra. It is a step in the right direction, addressing the viability of FPS while also focusing on improving nutritional outcomes. This initiative can potentially transform the country's food distribution landscape.

The United Nations World Food Programme (WFP) in India and the DFPD are collaborating at the national and State levels to increase efficiency, accountability and inclusion in the supply chain and distribution of food entitlement schemes. Apart from the Jan Poshan Kendra, these transformational

initiatives include route optimisation, rice fortification, smart warehouses, grain ATMs, and mobile storage units.

Unlocking entrepreneurship

One of the critical issues FPS face is the need for more access to credit to initiate new businesses. The proposed Jan Poshan Kendra programme recognises this challenge and aims to empower FPS owners to expand their business opportunities and revenue streams. The programme seeks to create an environment where these shops can establish creditworthiness through simple-to-use digital solutions and leverage credit facilities from the Small Industries Development Bank of India and other institutions.

Furthermore, the lack of entrepreneurship skills and training has been a significant barrier for FPS owners in diversifying their operations. The emphasis of the Jan Poshan Kendra programme on boosting the confidence of FPS owners and equipping them with essential entrepreneurship skills is a crucial step towards addressing this challenge. The programme aims to enhance their digital literacy and provide training in retail business, enabling FPS owners to leverage digital platforms and technologies effectively. This will further contribute to their success as they tap into the existing e-commerce market like aggregators already doing business with kirana or local grocery stores.

Jan Poshan Kendra as change agent

Transitioning from food security to nutrition security is another critical aspect that the Jan Poshan Kendra programme aims to address by encouraging FPS dealers to

offer affordable and diverse food to influence choices and preferences towards nutritious options. Thus, the programme aligns with the Prime Minister's Overarching Scheme for Holistic Nutrition (POSHAN) Abhiyan, creating a new pathway for improved nutrition for all citizens.

WFP Annapurta pilots showed the potential of FPS dealers as change agents. For example, a dealer in Uttarakhand transformed his shop into a modern, citizen-friendly space, attracting more beneficiaries and increasing PDS sales. This demonstrates that FPS dealers can change their behaviour and become agents of change with the right incentives.

The WFP supports DFPD pilots at 30 locations in Gujarat and Telangana by helping create a model for better infrastructure, skill-building, and income-generating opportunities. Additionally, WFP is setting up standalone Annapurtis in two locations to give beneficiaries 24-hour access to PDS foodgrains, mainly benefiting migrant populations. The proposed upgrade includes installing solar panels for renewable energy, waste management areas, and provisions for wheelchair access, creating an inclusive and sustainable environment for FPS and their customers.

The Jan Poshan Kendra programme aims to provide the support the FPS owners need to thrive. It envisions a future where they can sustain their businesses and contribute to building a healthier and more food-secure India.

Elisabeth Faure is Country Director of the World Food Programme in India. Views are personal.

LETTERBOX

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"When everything seems to be going against you, remember that the airplane takes off against the wind, not with it."
- Henry Ford

THE FINANCIAL WORLD

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BOOKS: REVIEW

New book 'Blood in the Sea' unveils Goa's hidden history

Blood in the Sea: The Dark History of Hindu Oppression in Goa" by Vinay Nalwa is an evocative exploration of Goa's layered history, a narrative that delves far deeper than the vibrant Portuguese influence that often dominates perceptions of this coastal region. This book embarks on a journey to uncover the ancient roots of Goa, intricately intertwined with Hindu legends, and navigates through the tumultuous eras of Islamic and Portuguese dominance, highlighting the resilience of the Goan people and their ultimate liberation.

The book begins with a captivating look at the geographical origins of Goa, establishing a foundation for the rich cultural tapestry that would later emerge. Nalwa deftly connects these origins to ancient Hindu legends, particularly the story of

Parshuram, providing a spiritual and historical context that sets the stage for the region's significance in Hindu mythology. This early period, as the author describes, was marked by the flourishing of Hindu dynasties that fostered a culture of art, architecture, and trade. The harmony and prosperity of this era laid the groundwork for what Goa would become, a cultural beacon in the Indian subcontinent.

As the narrative progresses, Nalwa shifts focus to the darker chapters in Goa's history. The arrival of Islamic rulers, particularly the reign of Adil Shah, introduced a period of oppression that sought to disrupt the cultural and religious fabric of the region. However, it is under Portuguese colonial rule that Goa's history takes a particularly grim turn. Nalwa does not shy away from detailing the brutal tactics employed by the Portuguese to consolidate

their control over the region. The narrative is filled with harrowing accounts of mass conversions, the ruthless inquisition led by Franciscan and Jesuit priests, and the systematic desecration of Hindu temples. These actions were part of a broader effort to erase Hindu cultural and religious practices, including the deliberate suppression of the local Konkani language in favor of Portuguese.

One of the most compelling aspects of "Blood in the Sea" is its focus on the resistance movements that arose in response to these oppressive regimes. Nalwa chronicles the bravery of those who fought against the foreign rulers, from the liberation of Dadra Nagar Haveli by RSS volunteers to the two major freedom struggle movements in Goa. The author paints a vivid picture of the courage and sacrifice of individuals who, despite overwhelming odds, stood up against their op-



Blood in the Sea: The Dark History of Hindu Oppression in Goa
By Vinay Nalwa; Prabhat Prakashan Pvt. Ltd.; 284 pages; Rs500.

pressors. These resistance movements, as Nalwa illustrates, were not just acts of defiance but also symbols of hope that inspired a collective consciousness among the Goan people, eventually leading to their liberation.

The culmination of Goa's liberation struggle is a particularly poignant section of the book. Nalwa meticulously describes the joint operation of the Indian armed forces, highlighting the strategic and moral challenges they faced. The narrative pays homage to the supreme sacrifice made by many Indians, both within Goa and across the nation, to secure the region's freedom. This part of the book is not just a recounting of historical events but a tribute to the indomitable spirit of the

Goan people and their unwavering commitment to reclaiming their cultural and political identity.

"Blood in the Sea" is much more than a historical account; it is a tribute to the resilience and perseverance of a region that has weathered centuries of turmoil. Through meticulous research and a compelling narrative, Vinay Nalwa brings to life the complex history of Goa, a history that is as rich and diverse as the culture it represents. The book serves as a powerful reminder of the struggles that have shaped Goa and the enduring spirit of its people. For anyone interested in the history of Goa, particularly beyond the well-trodden narratives of Portuguese influence, this book is an essential read.

In conclusion, "Blood in the Sea" not only educates readers about the intricate and often painful history of Goa but also celebrates the cultural richness and resilience that have defined the region. Vinay Nalwa's work is a testament to the power of history in shaping our understanding of identity and heritage, making it a must-read for anyone looking to explore the deeper layers of Goa's past.

Ambani announces Jio AI Cloud Welcome offer; Car manufacturers offer up to Rs 20,000 discount under new scrapping policy

NEW DELHI,

Stepping up the company's AI and cloud play, Reliance Industries Chairman Mukesh Ambani on Thursday announced that Jio users will get up to 100 GB of free cloud storage to securely store and access their photos, videos, documents, digital content and data.

Addressing the 47th AGM of RIL, Ambani said the Jio AI-Cloud Welcome offer will be launched during the upcoming Diwali, which would bring a "powerful and affordable solution where cloud data storage and data-powered AI services are available to everyone, everywhere". "Jio users will get up to 100 GB of free cloud storage to securely store and access all their photos, videos, documents, all other digital content, and data. And we will also have the most affordable prices in the market for those needing even higher storage," he said.



Jio is of the firm belief that AI should not be a luxury reserved for a select few, he said, adding that AI services must be accessible on all devices, not just expensive, high-end devices. "This requires a delivery model where AI services and the data processed by AI are both hosted in the cloud, allowing every user to access their data

and AI services from anywhere, on any device, over low-latency broadband networks," Ambani said. This is the only way to ensure that everyone will benefit from AI, irrespective of their socio-economic background. "We call this concept Connected Intelligence. As a first step to Connected Intelligence, every user needs ample and af-

fordable data storage capacity in the cloud, with the highest levels of privacy and security. With data safely stored in the cloud, AI can deliver intelligent, personalised services over the network," he said.

Jio has added its voice assistant "Hello Jio" to its newly launched operating system -- Jio TVOS, which will enable TV users to control their Set-Top Box with voice commands.

It will be accessible through the mic button on the Jio remote. "Recently, we made Hello Jio even smarter using the latest Generative AI technologies, improving its natural language understanding and making it feel more human-like. Now, finding content on JioSTB is easier than ever. For example, just say, 'Hello Jio, find action movies,' and it will search across all your apps like Amazon Prime, Disney+, HotStar and more," Reliance Jio Chairman Akash Ambani said.



NEW DELHI: Car and SUV manufacturers have agreed to offer discounts of 1.5 per cent of the ex-showroom price of a new car or Rs 20,000 whichever is lower, while truck manufacturers will offer discounts of up to 3 per cent with the launch of the Centre's Vehicle Scrapping Policy, according to an official statement issued on Wednesday.

These Original Equipment Manufacturers (OEM) discounts are in addition to the

scrap value provided by Registered Vehicle Scrapping Facilities (RVSFs) to the vehicle owners and existing incentives of Motor Vehicle Tax concession, waiver of fee for issuance of certificate of registration and waiver of liabilities by the Government of India under the Vehicle Scrapping Policy linked to the Certificate of Deposit (CD) on purchase of a new vehicle, applicable in many states, according to the statement of the Ministry of

Road Transport and Highways.

Car and SUV manufacturers including Maruti Suzuki India Ltd, Tata Motors, Mahindra & Mahindra, Hyundai Motor India, Kia Motors, Toyota Kirloskar Motor, Honda Cars, JSW MG Motor, Renault India, Nissan India and Skoda Volkswagen India, are offering discounts of 1.5 per cent of the ex-showroom price of new car or Rs 20,000, whichever is less, against the passenger vehicle scrapped by the owner in the last six months, said the statement issued by the Ministry of Road Transport and Highways.

Mercedes Benz India has offered a flat discount of Rs 25,000, which will be over and above all existing discounts.

Details of the scrapped vehicle have to be linked in the Vahan system.

Companies may voluntarily offer additional discounts on identified models.

National Infrastructure Trust files Rs 1,600 Draft Offer Document



**DOMINICK RODRIGUES
Mumbai**

National Infrastructure Trust – sponsored by Gaur Construction Limited (GCL or "Sponsor,"), has filed its Draft Offer Document with the regulator to raise an aggregate amount of Rs 1,600 crore via an issue of units to the public. The IPO comprises fresh issue of units aggregating upto Rs 1200 crore and Offer for Sale of upto Rs 400 crore by Sponsor Selling Unitholder. The Net Proceeds are proposed to be utilized towards providing loans to the Project SPVs for repayment/pre-payment of external borrowings, in part or in full from financial lenders; Loans to Project SPVs for repayment of unsecured loans availed by the Project SPVs from the Sponsor.

National Infrastructure Trust is an infrastructure investment trust sponsored by Gaur Construction Limited, established on September 25, 2023 with the objective to carry on the activities of, and to make investments as, an infrastructure investment trust, as permissible under the SEBI InvIT Regulations.

The Sponsor, Gaur Construction Limited is an infrastructure development and construction company in India with over 15 years experience, primarily engaged in construction of roads and highway projects across 19 states in India.

Revenue from operations of the SPV for fiscal 2024, 2023 and 2022 was Rs 1,485 crores, Rs 2,033 crores, Rs 1,908 crores respectively. Projected cash flows for FY25, FY26 and FY27 is estimated to be Rs 582 crores, Rs 662 crores and Rs 585 crores respectively. As per the Draft document, India's road network has grown 59% to become the second largest in the world in the last 10 years. A total 202 national highway projects worth Rs 79,789 crore (\$U.S. 9.59 billion) for building 6,270 kms in length are at the implementation stage in the country, and the Government has allocated Rs 111 lakh crore (\$U.S. 1.4 trillion) under the National Infrastructure Pipeline for FY25. SBI Capital Markets Limited and HDFC Bank Limited are appointed as the lead managers to the issue. Axis Trustee Services Limited has been appointed as the sole Trustee of the Trust. The Units are proposed to be listed on BSE and NSE.

Market Gives Thumbs Down to Resourceful Automobile Upon Listing

NEW DELHI: In a surprising turn of events, Resourceful Automobile shares made a flat debut on the BSE SME platform on August 29, listing at Rs 117, identical to its issue price.

This muted performance comes despite the company's initial public offering (IPO) being oversubscribed by an impressive 419 times. The Rs 12-crore public offer garnered substantial interest during its three-day bidding period, receiving bids for 40.76 crore shares against the available 9.76 lakh shares. However, the listing gains fell significantly short of grey market expectations, where shares were trading at a premium of 89 percent. The grey market, an unofficial trading platform operational from pre-subscription to listing day, had indicated much higher potential gains. Resourceful Automobile Limited, founded in 2018, operates under the brand "Sawhney Automobile."

The company offers a comprehensive range of Yamaha two-wheelers, including commuter bikes, sports bikes, cruisers, and scooters. Despite its recent entry into the market, the Delhi-based firm maintains only two outlets and employs a workforce of eight people. The company's operations are centered around two conceptual showrooms, each equipped with



an attached workshop.

The Blue Square showroom in Dwarka, New Delhi, showcases the full lineup of Yamaha two-wheelers, along with apparel and accessories. A second showroom is located on Palam Road, New Delhi. This development occurs against the backdrop of a surge in SME IPOs attracting record subscriptions throughout the year. Many of these offerings have been followed by impressive listing gains, often outperforming main board IPOs with stronger track records, disclosures, and financials. At least five SME IPOs have witnessed subscriptions of approximately 1,000 times. In light of this trend, on August 28, the Securities and Exchange Board of India (SEBI) issued an advisory cautioning investors about SME investing. The market regulator urged investors to be wary of companies presenting unrealistic positive outlooks and advised against relying on social media tips or rumours for investment decisions.

Gujarat, with 10 pc growth in direct selling, crosses Rs 1,000 cr business mark

**FW DESK
Ahmedabad (Gujarat)**

Ruling the roost at the second position after Maharashtra in the Western region, the direct selling business in Gujarat has crossed Rs 1,000 crore, registering a growth of nearly 10% in the year 2022-23, the Indian Direct Selling Association (IDSA) shared in a survey report to the media here on Thursday.

The report, prepared by the KANTAR, signifying the industry's core strength in creating self-employment, skill development opportunities, and socio-economic growth at the grass-roots levels, reflects that the state clocked a business turnover of Rs 1,014 crore during the period, Rs 91 crore above the 2021-22 fiscal, registering a robust 9.86% growth.

The state, which continued to be the ninth-top direct-selling market in the country, provided self-employment to over 2.1 lakh microentrepreneurs, with over



77,000 of them being women. The industry, which makes a significant contribution of over Rs 150 crore to the state exchequer through taxes, also has over 4.8 percent share on overall national sales, which stood at over Rs 21,282 crore in 2022-23, the IDSA shared.

In his address, Kunvarjibhai Mohanbhai Bavaliya, Minister for Food, Civil Supply, and Consumer Protection Affairs, said that while creating a conducive business environment for the direct selling industry, the state is committed to safeguarding the interests of consumers. Underscoring the need

to ensure the quality of the products for consumers, he offered all the help to the industry from his department, which is also working on constituting a monitoring Mechanism as envisaged in the Consumer Protection (Direct Selling) Rules 2021. He also felicitated 12 women entrepreneurs on the occasion who have excelled in the field of direct selling with respective companies in the state.

Vivek Katoch, Chairman, of IDSA, said, "Gujarat continues to be among the key and priority markets for the direct selling industry. The growth figures reflect that the

direct selling industry in the state is poised for new horizons, reaffirming the relentless hard work of direct sellers."

"The industry has provided sustainable self-employment and micro-entrepreneurship opportunities for nearly 86 lakh Indians and has demonstrated consistent and sustained growth with a CAGR of over eight percent during the last four years. The 19 member companies of IDSA can confidently lay claim to successfully protecting consumer interests as well as those of over 2.1 lakh direct sellers in the state," adds Katoch.

He said the "Union Ministry of Consumer Affairs, through the Consumer Protection (Direct Selling) Rules 2021, has brought regulatory clarity to the operations of the direct selling entities and to protect consumers. So far, ten states have established monitoring committees by the Rules provisions. I trust that other states, including Gujarat, will also accomplish the task soon."

TVS Motor Company Launches the "All-New TVS Jupiter 110"

Redefining the Benchmark in the Scooter Segment

**ARUNKUMAR RAO
Bengaluru**



TVS Jupiter 110". This latest model encapsulates the brand's

commitment to innovation, performance, and customer satisfaction by offering next-generation features that set it apart from the competition. The TVS Jupiter 110, embodying the spirit of "Zyada" (More), delivers more in every aspect: style, mileage, performance, comfort, convenience, safety, and technology.

For over a decade, the TVS

Jupiter has been a trusted companion for 6.5 million customers across India, becoming one of the most recognized and beloved scooter brands in the country. At the launch event in Bengaluru, Aniruddha Haldar, Senior Vice President – Head Commuter Business and Head Corporate Brand & Media, TVS Motor Company, expressed pride in the product's enduring success.

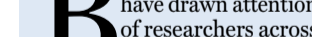
**ARUNKUMAR RAO
Bengaluru**

Hindustan Aeronautics Limited (HAL) and SAFHAL Helicopter Engines Pvt. Ltd. (SAFHAL) have signed a strategic airframer contract to jointly design, develop, manufacture, supply, and support a next-generation high-power engine named 'Aravalli.' This engine is intended for HAL's 13-ton Medium Lift class Indian Multi-Role Helicopter (IMRH) and the Deck-Based Multi-Role Helicopter (DBMRH). The name 'Aravalli,' inspired by India's iconic mountain range, symbolizes the nation's ambitions for achieving self-reliance in critical engine technologies. The contract was signed by Mr. S Anbuvelan, CEO (Helicopter Complex), HAL; Mr. Olivier Savin, Director, SAFHAL Helicopter Engines, and EVP, Sales & Marketing, Safran Helicopter Engines; and Mr. S K Mehta, Director, SAFHAL Helicopter Engines and Executive Director (Finance), HAL, according to a press statement from HAL.

Board Characteristics of Pharmaceutical Companies in India



DR. ANIL KUMAR ANGRISH



BHAKTI SAJGURE

Board characteristics have drawn attention of researchers across the world as board of directors exercise significant influence on success or failure of a corporate entity. Board size, board independence, and board gender diversity are integral components of Board characteristics. Diversity can be observed in terms of gender, age, and nationality of board members thereby recognizing their influence on directors' knowledge, experience and skills. Vijay Govindarajan and Chris Trimble in their paper titled, "The CEO's Role in Business Model Reinvention" (Harvard Business Review January-February 2011 Issue) cited N.R. Narayana Murthy of Infosys in this regard what he called the "30/30 rule": 30% of participants in any strategy discussion should be younger than age 30, because they are creative and not wedded to the past. In this way, Infosys relied heavily on inputs from young employees. The company assembled a Voices of Youth panel of higher performers who participated annually in eight senior management meetings. Murthy credits youth involvement for sparking more than

10 R&D projects at Infosys on diverse areas.

Regulation 17 of the Listing Regulations and Sections 149 and 152 of the Companies Act, 2013 has a requirement that the board size should lie between 3 and 15. Further, it is also provided as per Regulation 17 (1) (c) of SEBI (Listing Obligations & Disclosure Requirements) Regulations, 2015 (referred as 'SEBI LODR') that the Board of Directors of the top 1,000 listed companies (with effect from April 1, 2019) and the top 2,000 listed companies (with effect from April 1, 2020) shall comprise of not less than six directors. Top 1,000 and 2,000 was to be determined on the basis of market capitalization as at the end of the immediate previous financial year. In this background, board size in top 25 pharmaceutical companies in India in terms of market capitalization varies from 6 to 12 directors.

The Kotak Committee under the Chairmanship of Uday Kotak was constituted in June 2017 and one recommendation was regarding minimum six directors in all entities. This recommendation was positive but it was not possible to implement the recommendation or all entities at one go, and hence, it was implemented in a phased manner. At that time, 97% companies out of top 500 in terms of market capitalization at NSE, and 94% companies out of top 1,000 and 69% out of top 1,000 and above, had at least six directors on boards. For the companies listed on the BSE, 96% companies out of

Table 1:- Board Size in Top 25 Pharmaceutical Companies in India

Name of Companies	Number of Directors
JB Chemicals	6
Sun Pharma, Pfizer, and AstraZeneca	7
Lupin, Aurobindo Pharma, Ipca Labs, Ajanta Pharma, Laurus Labs, Sanofi and Suvon Pharma	8
Mankind Pharma, Abbott, GSK, and Gland Pharma	9
Dr. Reddy's Labs, Zydus Lifesciences, Torrent, Piramal Pharma, Alembic Pharma and Natco Pharma	10
Cipla, Divi's Labs, Alkem Labs, and Glenmark	12

Source: Compiled from Annual Reports (2023) of respective companies

top 500, 91% out of top 1,000, 78% out of top 2,000 and 63% out of top 3,000 companies had at least six directors. By 2023, out of 25 top pharmaceutical companies, only one company had 6 directors, and other 24 pharmaceutical companies had a higher number of directors as given in Table 1.

Board Independence is an important consideration as Section 149 (4) of the Companies Act asks for one-third of total directors as Independent Directors. Regulation 17 of the Listing Regulations mandate that in case the Chairman of the Board of Directors is a non-executive director, at least one-third of the Board of Directors shall comprise of independent directors and where the listed company does not have a regular non-executive chairman, at least half of the Board of Directors shall comprise of independent directors. 15 pharmaceutical companies (Sun Pharma, Cipla, Zydus Lifesciences, Torrent, Lupin, Aurobindo, Abbott, GSK, Gland, Ajanta, JB Chemicals, Laurus, Sanofi, Suvon and AstraZeneca) out of top 25 have three types of directors namely

Executive, Non-executive, and Independent directors, e.g., Pankaj R. Patel served as Non-Executive Chairman of Zydus Lifesciences, and Mukesh M. Patel served as Non-Executive Director. Dr. Sharvil P. Patel who is the son of Pankaj R. Patel served as Managing Director, and Ganesh N. Nayak is the Executive Director of the Company. On March 31, 2023 the company's board comprised of 10 directors which included 2 Executive Directors, and 8 Non-Executive Directors, including 6 Independent Directors. In other words, the board size of 10 directors comprised 4 non-Independent directors and 6 Independent Directors.

Eight (08) pharmaceutical companies (Natco Pharma, Pfizer India, Alembic Pharma, Glenmark, Ipca Labs, Alkem Labs, Divi's Labs, and Dr. Reddy's Labs) among top 25 had two categories of directors, i.e., Non-executive Independent Directors and Executive Directors. Glenmark had the highest number of non-executive independent directors, followed by Dr. Reddy's Laboratories. An equal num-



ber of non-executive independent directors and executive directors were present in the board of Natco Pharma, Ipca Labs, and Alkem Laboratories. Piramal Pharma and Mankind Pharma have used the nomenclature of Executive Directors, Non-Executive Independent Directors, and Non-Executive Non-Independent Directors, e.g., in Piramal Pharma, Nandini Piramal and Peter DeYoung (married to Nandini Piramal and acknowledged under inter-se relationships among directors) are Executive Directors – Promoters Group, one Executive Director – Non-Promoter Group, two non-Executive and Non-Independent Directors – Non Promoter Group and four board members represented as Non-Executive Independent Directors.

It is also mandated under Regulation 17 of the Listing Regulations that the Board of Directors shall have an optimum combination of executive and non-executive directors with at least one – woman director. The Kotak Committee as referred above had recommended "at least

one woman independent director" on all listed entity boards. Implementation of this recommendation was also found difficult for all entities at one go. Hence, it was made mandatory that the Board of Directors of the top 500 listed companies shall have at least one independent woman director by April 1, 2019 and by April 1, 2020 this provision was made mandatory for the top 1,000 listed companies. For FY23, each of 10 pharmaceutical companies (Natco, Alembic, Pfizer, Laurus, J.B. Chemicals, Ajanta, Gland Pharma, Ipca Labs, Sun Pharma and GSK India) had one – woman director. The highest number of female directors was in case of Glenmark, i.e., 4 out of 12. Each of six pharmaceutical companies namely AstraZeneca, Piramal Pharma, Abbott, Alkem Labs, Lupin and Dr. Reddy's Labs had 3 female directors. 8 out of 25 pharmaceutical companies had two female directors respectively.

Finally, the Committees of the Board also have a bearing on the Corporate Governance of any organization. Statu-

tory committees namely Audit Committee, Nomination and Remuneration Committee (NRC), Stakeholder Relationship Committee (SRC), Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR), and Risk Management Committee (RMC) are mandatory under the Companies Act. All top 25 pharmaceutical companies have these committees except that Lupin and Cipla has the Sustainability Committee that is entrusted with CSR activities, and in Zydus Lifesciences, ESG Committee deals with CSR mandate. Similarly, for Stakeholder Relationship Committee, Cipla and Zydus Lifesciences have different nomenclature.

Significant differences are found in Non-statutory Committees constituted by various pharmaceutical companies. Sun Pharma has a Corporate Governance and Ethics Committee. Cipla and Glenmark have an Operations & Administrative Committee. Certain Committees are for a specific purpose, e.g., Buyback of Shares. For 2023, Zydus Lifesciences as well as Natco Pharma had Buyback Committee. Only Zydus Lifesciences reported about Finance & Administration Committee. Dr. Reddy's Laboratories had a Banking & Authorization Committee for this period. Glenmark and Zydus reported about their Environmental, Social and Governance (ESG) Committee and no other pharmaceutical company among top 25 pharmaceutical companies had ESG Committee. Gland

Pharma and Natco Pharma had ESOP Compensation Committee. Just one company – Dr. Reddy's Laboratories, set up Science, Technology and Operations Committee. Other main committees set up by top pharmaceutical companies were: Committee dealing with Land Property by two pharmaceutical companies, Executive Committee by two pharmaceutical companies, Share Transfer Committee by four pharmaceutical companies, and Board Administrative & Share Transfer committee by one pharmaceutical company.

Board characteristics of top 25 pharmaceutical companies in India as captured above, present these companies in positive light. In finality, it is the board evaluation that can contribute significantly to improved performance at three levels – Organizational, Board and individual Board member level. Otherwise, just representation on the board without contribution is like what late Subir Raha as CMD, ONGC said in January 2009.....board members opening their mouth only to sip tea.

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

SBI Projects Lower GDP Growth 7.1% in Q1 FY25

NEW DELHI: In a recent report, economists at the State Bank of India (SBI), the country's largest lender, have projected a decrease in India's economic growth for the first quarter of the fiscal year 2025. The real GDP growth is estimated to be 7.1 per cent for the April-June period, down from 7.8 per cent in the same quarter of the previous year. The report, based on a 'Now-casting Model' utilising 41 lead indicators, suggests that the Gross Value Added (GVA) growth may fall below 7 per cent, to approximately 6.7-6.8 per cent for Q1 FY25.



This projection aligns with other analysts' expectations of a moderation in economic activity during this period. Several factors contribute to this anticipated slowdown, including softer manufacturing performance, lower government spending due to general elections, declining profit margins in the manufacturing sector, and increased staffing costs for manufacturing companies.

Despite the projected quarterly decline, SBI economists maintain their 7.5 per cent growth estimate for the entire fiscal year 2024-25, which exceeds the Reserve Bank of India's forecast of 7.2 per cent. The report also highlights global economic uncertainties, including persistent geopolitical tensions and concerns about potential recessions in key economies. However, it notes a positive development for India with the South West monsoon picking up from early July, potentially benefiting the agricultural sector.

RBI to Introduce Unified Lending Interface to Transform Credit Sector

MUMBAI: The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) is set to launch the Unified Lending Interface (ULI), a new initiative poised to boost the country's lending ecosystem. Announced by RBI Governor Shaktikanta Das on Monday in Bengaluru, the ULI is anticipated to have a transformative impact similar to the Unified Payments Interface (UPI) on the payments system. Das highlighted that the ULI will build on a pilot technology platform launched last year, designed to streamline credit processes by enabling frictionless access to critical data. The new system will facilitate the seamless, consent-based transfer of digital information, including PAN and Aadhaar records, lending history, income, credit records, and land records from multiple sources to lenders. The ULI aims to reduce



reshaping India's financial landscape. The UPI, launched in 2016, has revolutionised payments by allowing transactions through Virtual Payment Addresses (VPAs), minimising the need to share sensitive banking details. Das referred to the 'new trinity' of JAM-UPI-ULI, where JAM stands for Jan Dhan, Aadhaar, and Mobile. The ULI is anticipated to enhance India's digital infrastructure by offering a user-friendly interface that reduces technical complexities and documentation requirements. The RBI Governor also noted that by digitising and integrating disparate financial and non-financial data, the ULI will address significant credit demand across various sectors, especially benefiting agricultural and MSME borrowers.

credit appraisal times, particularly benefiting smaller and rural borrowers by employing common, standardised Application Programming Interfaces (APIs). This 'plug and play' approach is expected to simplify digital access to information from various providers. "The ULI will be introduced nationwide in due course," Das stated, emphasising that the initiative is expected to replicate the UPI's success in

Heatwave and Elections Lead to Contraction in India's Microfinance Sector



NEW DELHI: For the first time in 12 quarters, India's microfinance sector has faced a contraction, with the outstanding gross loan portfolio dropping to Rs 4.33 lakh crore at the end of June 2024, from Rs 4.42 lakh crore three months earlier. This 2 per cent decline marks a significant shift in the sector's growth trajectory, according to Sa-Dhan, an industry body citing data from credit information company Crif High Mark. The contraction is largely attributed to a severe heat wave in North India and disruptions caused by the two-month-long general elections. The extreme temperatures affected economic activities, particularly in rural areas where microfinance plays a crucial role. The elections also diverted resources and created uncertainty, impacting loan disbursements and repayments. In addition to these challenges, funding constraints and an over-extension of credit in some regions have further slowed growth. "There has been an overheating of credit in certain geographies," Sa-Dhan reported, highlighting the cautious stance adopted by both lenders and borrowers amid these conditions. Analysts suggest this could be a temporary setback for the microfinance sector, which has seen robust growth over the past few years. However, the contraction underscores the need for microfinance institutions (MFIs) to enhance their risk management practices and diversify their strategies to better withstand external shocks.

PhonePe launches PG Bolt to revolutionise in-app payments for merchants

NEW DELHI: PhonePe Payment Gateway on Thursday announced the launch of PhonePe PG Bolt -- a groundbreaking solution that empowers merchants by offering the fastest in-app payment experience to customers with a 99 per cent success rate. PhonePe PG Bolt offers a 1-second transaction time with the widest reach for registered PhonePe merchants and users who can integrate their payments across apps without multiple onboarding. PhonePe PG Bolt offers a multitude of benefits that set it apart from other payment solutions in the market. With a focus on speed, convenience, and reliability, PhonePe PG Bolt delivers a 10x faster payment experience with UPI Lite, Wallets, and EGVs, through a one-click, PIN-less process. Unlike other solutions that require multiple steps and phone permissions, PhonePe PG Bolt eliminates these hurdles, ensuring enhanced customer experience and an efficient payment journey which leads to increased conversion rates and drives business growth. By providing complete control over the customer's payment experience within the merchant app, PhonePe PG Bolt eliminates the need for redirection to external payment platforms. Merchants can offer a wide range of payment options, including UPI Lite, UPI-linked bank accounts, electronic gift cards, Rupaya credit cards, and wallets, to cater to diverse customer preferences. This comprehensive suite of payment options, coupled



"We are excited to launch PhonePe PG Bolt as it represents a significant milestone in our mission to empower businesses and enhance the overall payment experience for consumers

with PhonePe's extensive user base helps position merchants for success. PhonePe PG Bolt addresses key challenges faced by merchants, especially enterprises, by reducing transaction failures, eliminating payment funnel drop-offs, and minimising cart abandonment. By integrating the PhonePe PG Bolt, merchants can significantly improve customer satisfaction, increase sales, and gain a competitive edge in the market. "We are excited to launch PhonePe PG Bolt as it represents a significant milestone in our mission to empower businesses and enhance the overall payment experience for consumers," said Ankit Gaur, Head PhonePe Payment Gateway and Online Merchants. "By providing merchants with the tools to create a seam-

India Emerges as Global Leader in Digital Public Infrastructure

NEW DELHI: In a significant shift from its traditional role as a "rule-taker," India is now poised to become a key player in shaping global standards for digital financial technologies and Digital Public Infrastructure (DPI). This development marks a pivotal moment in India's technological evolution and its growing influence on the world stage. Damru Ravi, Secretary of Economic Relations at the Ministry of External Affairs, highlighted India's ambition to collaborate with international financial institutions like the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund. The goal is to establish standards for cutting-edge technologies including digital payments, blockchain, and cybersecurity. "For decades, India has followed rules set by the global community, primarily Western nations," Ravi stated at the Global Fintech Fest in Mumbai.

Federal Bank first Indian Bank to launch India's Pioneering Facial Payment System SmilePay

MUMBAI: Federal Bank, India's leading private sector Bank, is proud to announce the launch of SmilePay™, this groundbreaking technology will allow customers to complete transactions using only their face. This revolutionary product, unveiled as we enter India's 78th year post Independence, marks a significant milestone in the country's journey towards financial freedom and convenience. The launch of SmilePay™ happened at the Global Fintech Fest by Ms Shalini Warriar, Executive Director, Federal Bank. Introducing SmilePay™: Pioneering a New Era of Facial



Authentication Payments Two of India's largest corporate houses, Reliance Retail and Ananya Birla helmed Svatantra Micro Housing (SMHFC), are among the first to pilot this innovative technology with their customers at select outlets / branches. SmilePay™ is the first-of-its-kind payment solution in India, utilizing advanced facial authentication technology built on the UIDAI's Bhim Aadhaar Pay. This revolutionary product eliminates the need for traditional payment methods, offering unmatched convenience for customers and enhanced efficiency for merchants.

Proved Panacea for Economic and Social Problems



SATISH SINGH
The Pradhan Mantri Jan Dhan Yojana (PMJDY), launched on 28 August 2014, completed 10 years on 28 August 2024. During its 10-year journey, this scheme has achieved many achievements. It has been successful in realizing the concept of financial inclusion, increasing women empowerment, taking the process of digitalization to every village and every house, reducing the role of middlemen and users in rural areas, reducing incidents of theft, plummeting corruption, bringing social change, increasing pace of deposits and expenditure in the rural areas etc. In the current financial year, till August 16, 3 crore new accounts have been opened under this scheme. The number of Jan Dhan accounts was 14.72 crore in March 2015, which increased to 53.13 crore on 16 August 2024, which shows an increase of almost 4 times in the number of accounts opened. 66.6 per cent of the accounts opened are in rural and urban areas. Most importantly, 53.13 crore accounts are active and have a balance of Rs 2.3 lakh crore, whereas only 14.7 crore accounts could be opened till March 2015 and Rs.15,670 crore was deposited in them. The average balance in Jan Dhan accounts in August 2024 was Rs 4,352, which was Rs.1,065 in March 2015.

It is noteworthy that only 8.4 percent of Jan Dhan accounts had zero balance till 16 August 2024. Out of 53.13 crore accounts, 29.56 crore accounts belong to women, which is 55.6 in percentage. Public sector banks have played a positive and important role in opening Jan Dhan accounts. Government banks have opened 78 percent of the Jan Dhan accounts. Having 9.4 crore accounts, Uttar Pradesh has the highest number of Jan Dhan accounts, while Bihar is second in the case with 6.00 crore Jan Dhan accounts. Jan Dhan accounts, mobile and Aadhar card have played an important role in providing benefits of government schemes to the common people during the Corona pandemic and in distributing Kisan Samman Nidhi among small and marginal farmers through Direct Benefit Transfer (DBT). Due to this, many people from the deprived section were saved from untimely death during the Corona pandemic. Today, due to Jan Dhan accounts, 99.95 percent of the people living within a radius of 5 kms of the inhabited vil-

lages have access to banking facilities. The villagers are taking advantage of the banking facilities provided by bank branches, banking correspondents and Indian Post Payment Bank in some form or the other. People in rural and urban areas are also taking advantage of the phone-based non-financial services started by the State Bank of India without going to the bank branch, so that their valuable time is not wasted. No fee is charged by the bank for opening a Jan Dhan account, maintaining accounts and not maintaining the minimum balance or even if the account balance is zero and the customers are also being given the facility of overdraft up to Rs 10,000. Banks are also issuing RuPay cards free of cost, with which customers are also being given free accident insurance up to Rs 2 lakh. Today, due to the PMJDY, 80 percent of adults have a formal bank account, whereas in 2011 this percentage was just 50. This scheme has increased India's standing in the context of financial inclusion at the global level and due to this, common people have

access to banking facilities at the individual level instead of the family. To create a proper ecosystem for financial inclusion, it is necessary that along with the participation of the common people, the government should also have an active participation in the matter. In this context, the government and the common people are working dynamically, and work is also being done to promote it at the private level. However, there is still a need to make people financially literate along with Jan Dhan accounts and make them aware of the dangers of online fraud, which needs to be done continuously by both private and government entities, only then these goals can be achieved effectively. Due to Jan Dhan accounts, today RuPay cards have given the villagers access to the markets of the world. Now Amazon, Flipkart etc. are delivering products made in India and abroad even to the houses of the village. Not only this, Jan Dhan accounts have developed the tendency to save among the people as well as increased the tendency to spend, the main reason for which is the access of the villagers to the online market. These changes are also accelerating economic activities. Jan Dhan accounts are also carriers of social change. Due to these, incidents of theft in rural areas are decreasing and people's addiction to gambling and drinking alcohol is also diminishing. In the last decade, Rs.38.49 lakh crore was transferred

India's Space Sector Contributes \$24 Billion to GDP over Past Decade

NEW DELHI: As India celebrates its first National Space Day, marking the one-year anniversary of Chandrayaan-3's successful moon landing, a new report reveals the significant economic impact of the country's space sector. According to preliminary findings presented by Steve Boehinger of Novospace, a European consultancy, India's space sector has directly contributed approximately \$24 billion (Rs 20,000 crore) to the nation's Gross Domestic Product over the last ten years. The sector has also directly supported 96,000 jobs across public and private industries. The report, initiated by the Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO), highlights



The space sector in India has seen significant growth and diversification, with 700 companies now operating in the field, including 200 startups. Revenues have grown to \$6.3 billion in 2023, representing about 1.5% of the global space market. Satellite

communications emerged as the largest contributor to the space economy at 54%, followed by navigation (26%) and launches (11%). The main industries supported by the space sector were identified as telecom (25%), information technology (10%), and administrative services (7%). While the report paints a positive picture of the sector's growth, it also highlights areas for improvement. Many stakeholders indicated that while India's space progress has boosted national prestige and international leadership, it has yet to significantly impact company profitability or competitiveness. The report suggests that this may change as commercial space becomes a key priority area.

PMJDY world's largest financial inclusion scheme: Finance Minister



NEW DELHI: The Pradhan Mantri Jan Dhan Yojana (PMJDY), launched by Prime Minister Narendra Modi on August 28, 2014, has become the world's largest financial inclusion scheme — with more than 53.14 crore beneficiaries and total deposit balances at Rs 2,31,236 crore, the government said on Wednesday. The Ministry of Finance said in a latest statement that PMJDY accounts grow 3.6-fold from 15.67 crore in March 2015 to 53.14 crore as on August 14. Union Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman said that

universal and affordable access to formal banking services is essential for achieving financial inclusion and empowerment, as "it integrates the poor into the economic mainstream and plays a crucial role in the development of marginalised communities." "PM Jan Dhan Yojana has transformed the banking and financial landscape of the country over the last decade. These bank accounts have garnered a deposit balance of Rs. 2.3 lakh crore, and resulted in the issuance of over 36 crore free-of-cost RuPay cards, which also provide for a Rs 2 lakh accident insurance cover," Minister Sitharaman noted. "Notably, there are no account opening fees or maintenance charges and no requirement to maintain a minimum balance.

Gala Precision Engineering Limited IPO of Rs 167.93 cr

DOMINICK RODRIGUES
Mumbai



Gala Precision Engineering Limited is coming out with its IPO from September 2, 2024 to September 4, 2024 and price band of Rs 503 to Rs 509, aggregating Rs 157.93 crores. Gala Precision Engineering Limited is a precision component manufacturer of technical springs like disc and slip springs (DSS), coil and spiral springs (CSS), and special fastening solution (SFS). The proceeds from the fresh issue include: Rs 370 million being used for setting up a new facility at Vallam-Vadagal, SIPCOT, Sriperumbudur, Tamil Nadu for manufacturing high tensile fasteners and hex bolts;

Rs 110.69 million being used for funding capital expenditure requirements towards purchase of equipment, plant and machinery at Wada, Palghar, Maharashtra; Rs 454.30 million for repayment/prepayment, in full or part, of certain borrowings availed by the Company; and general corporate purposes. The Company, led by Kirit Vishanji Gala, is a technology-driven company with strong focus on quality, design tool development and application

engineering. The Company supplies its products to original equipment manufacturers (OEMs), Tier I and channel partners; used in sectors like renewable energy including wind turbine and hydro power plants, various industrial sectors like electrical off-highway equipment, infrastructure and general engineering, military segments such as automotive and railways. Its technical springs and high tensile fasteners, have been supplied to customers in countries such as Germany, Denmark, China, Italy, Brazil, USA, Sweden Switzerland etc. and is a key link to the global supply chains for OEMs.

INTERNATIONAL

B'desh court imposes travel ban on 14 former ministers, lawmakers

DHAKA: A Dhaka court on Thursday issued a travel ban on 14 former Awami League ministers and lawmakers in connection with corruption allegations brought against them by the interim government in Bangladesh, according to a media report.

The development comes after former prime minister Sheikh Hasina of the Awami League resigned and fled to India on August 5 following the mass movement against her government.

The Daily Star newspaper reported that the travel ban has been issued against former social welfare minister Dipu Moni, former health minister Zahid Maleque, former education minister Mohibul Hasan Chowdhury, former food minister Sadhan



Chandra Majumder, former industrial minister Nurul Majid Mahmud Humayun and former industrial deputy minister Kamal Ahmed Majumder.

Former lawmakers Salim Uddin, Mamunur Rashid Kiron, Kujendra Lal Tripura, Kajim Uddin, Noor-E-Alam Chowdhury Liton, Shahjahan Khan, Kamrul Islam and Ziaur

ACC Public Prosecutor Mahmud Hossain Jahangir had moved the petition on behalf of the ACC. In the application, Jahangir said the former ministers and lawmakers were trying to flee the country.

Former Bangladesh speaker Shirin Sharmin Chaudhury and ex-commerce minister Tipu Munshi have been arrested over the killing of a goldsmith during the recent quota reform protests.

Over 1,000 people have been killed during the protests against the Sheikh Hasina-led government while more than 400 were blinded by police fire, with some of them losing sight in one or both eyes, a top adviser of the interim government said on Thursday.

'Boring, rambled incoherently', Trump on Kamala Harris

WASHINGTON: Republican presidential candidate and former US President Donald Trump on Friday slammed his rival Kamala Harris over her first major interview since her entry into the election after Joe Biden's exit.

"I just saw Comrade Kamala Harris' answer to a very weakly-phrased question, a question that was put in more as a matter of defense than curiosity, but her answer rambled incoherently, and declared her 'values haven't changed...'" Trump said in a post on his Truth Social media platform.

"...On that I agree, her values haven't changed - The Border is going to remain open, not closed, there will be Free Healthcare for Illegal Aliens, Sanctuary Cities, No Cash Bail, Gun Confiscation, Zero Frack-



America will never allow an election WEAPONIZING MARXIST TO BE PRESIDENT OF THE US," he wrote.

On Thursday, US Vice-President Kamala Harris said her "values have not changed" as she has changed her position on key issues that could determine her elections, such as fracking, which she had once opposed and now doesn't.

She said this during an interview with CNN. Fracking, a process of extracting natural gas and petroleum from deep inside rocks, is popular in Pennsylvania, a key battleground state that will determine the outcome of the 2024 presidential election, along with a handful of other states. It is opposed by those who argue it contaminates underground and surface water.

BNP leader urges India to take relook at ties with Bangladesh



DHAKA: A senior BNP leader has blamed an "ecosystem of former diplomats, bureaucrats, politicians, and think tanks" for creating a "bogyman" to mislead the Indian establishment into believing that Indo-Bangla relations would deteriorate without the Sheikh Hasina-led Awami League.

Amir Khasru Mahmud Chowdhury of the Khalida Zia-led Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP) said Bangladesh wants strong ties with India. Chowdhury's party, the BNP, is the arch-rival of the Hasina's Awami League.

Chowdhury — who heads the foreign affairs cell of the BNP — asserted that New Delhi "failed to understand the pulse of the people of Bangladesh" and had "put all its eggs in one basket" by supporting one party and family in the country.

UN chief condemns attacks in Pakistan's Balochistan



UNITED NATIONS: UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres has condemned the attacks in Pakistan's Balochistan province, his spokesman said.

"The Secretary-General strongly condemns the 26 August attacks in Pakistan's Balochistan province," said Stéphane Dujarric, spokesperson for the UN Chief, at a daily briefing, on Monday. "The Secretary-General stresses that attacks against civilians are unacceptable," he added as reported by Xinhua news agency.

The UN Chief extended his deepest condolences to the families of the victims and called on the Pakistani government to conduct an investigation and ensure that those responsible

are held accountable, Dujarric said. More than 70 people have been killed in multiple cases of terror attacks in the Balochistan province in southwestern Pakistan, media reported, quoting military and police officials.

The country's military said that 14 soldiers and police were killed as well as 21 terrorists were also killed in fighting in a major attack that targeted vehicles on a major highway in Bela, a town in Lasbela district, Al Jazeera reported. In a separate attack in Musakhel district, local officials said at least 23 civilians were killed after attackers reportedly stopped their convoy, checked their IDs and determined they were from Punjab, with 35 vehicles also set

Humanitarians in UN armoured vehicle escape Israeli gunfire in Gaza



UNITED NATIONS: Two humanitarian workers in a UN-marked armoured vehicle escaped physically unharmed a salvo of Israeli Defense Forces (IDF) gunfire in Gaza, a UN spokesman said. "Yesterday (Tuesday) evening, a clearly marked UN humanitarian vehicle — part of a convoy that had been fully coordinated with the IDF — was struck 10 times by IDF gunfire, including with bullets targeting front windows," said Stéphane Dujarric, chief spokesman for UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres, on Wednesday. The World Food Programme (WFP) said it was pausing the movement of its employees in Gaza until further notice after the WFP team came under fire, Xinhua news agency reported. The agency said the incident occurred a few metres from an Israeli checkpoint at the Wadi Gaza bridge as the team was returning from a mission to Kerem Shalom/Karam Abu Salem in two armoured vehicles after escorting a convoy of trucks carrying humanitarian cargo routed to Gaza's central area.

Russia and Ukraine exchange 230 prisoners of war

MOSCOW: Russia and Ukraine successfully exchanged 230 prisoners of war following negotiations held with the mediation of the United Arab Emirates (UAE).

"As a result of the negotiation process, 115 Russian servicemen captured in the Kursk region have been returned from the territory controlled by the Kyiv regime. In exchange, 115 prisoners of war of the Ukrainian Armed Forces were transferred," the Russian Defence Ministry said in a statement.



It mentioned that currently, all Russian servicemen are in the territory of the Belarus, where they are receiving the "necessary psychological and medical assistance", as well as the opportunity to contact their relatives.

"All released servicemen will be delivered to the Russian Federation for treatment and rehabilitation in medical institutions of the Russian Ministry of Defence. The United Arab Emirates provided humanitarian mediation efforts during the return of Russian servicemen from captivity," the ministry added.

The exchange took place as Kyiv is celebrating the 33rd anniversary of Ukraine's Independence on Saturday.

The UAE Ministry of Foreign Affairs also expressed its appreciation to the Russian and Ukrainian governments

partnerships with both sides.

"These efforts reflect the UAE's commitment to being a reliable mediator supporting diplomacy to resolve the crisis between the two countries... Notably, since the beginning of this year, the UAE's mediation efforts have succeeded in completing exchanges of war captives between Russia and Ukraine, in addition to a successful exchange of two prisoners between the United States and the Russian Federation in December 2022," said the UAE Foreign Ministry.

The Ministry further affirmed the UAE's commitment to continuing all efforts and initiatives aimed at finding a peaceful solution to the conflict, stressing the importance of dialogue, and de-escalation, as the only ways to resolve the conflict, and for mitigating its humanitarian repercussions.

Imran Khan eyes Oxford University Chancellor post



LONDON: Pakistan's jailed former prime minister Imran Khan has decided to enter the race to be elected the new Chancellor of the University of Oxford to "give back" to the world. The 71-year-old cricketer-turned-politician studied philosophy, politics and economics (PPE) at the world-famous university's Keble College from 1972 to 1975 and also captained the university cricket team. He told 'The Daily Telegraph' from his prison cell in Rawalpindi this week that he would be a passionate advocate for the university. "Oxford University helped me a lot in my formative years. As Chancellor, I would passionately advocate for Oxford, championing its values of diversity, equality and inclusion, both in the UK and abroad," said Khan in his application.

GLOBAL ARMAMENT MARKET

Private Sector in Defense Industry is Upbeat Following Singh's US Visit



GOPAL MISRA

The three-day visit of the Indian Defence Minister, Rajnath Singh, to Washington on August 23-25, has kindled renewed hope for the nascent private sector in the armament industry.

During the nineties, the then Prime Minister, P.V. Narasimha Rao, had dared to open the capital goods sector and the services sector for the private sector. Similarly, after becoming the prime minister in 2014, Narendra Modi took a calculated risk by allowing the Indian private sector to venture in the defense production sector, still considered a holy cow.

Indeed, it was a calculated risk triggering paradigm changes in the country's defense procurement sector. Like the country's public sector, it had been one of the most lucrative sectors for augmenting political as well as personal wealth for the country's chosen politicians, defense and civilian officials engaged in procuring defense supplies.

During the past 10 years, India's private sector companies aspiring to become manufacturers and exporters in the lucrative armaments markets on a global scale have already achieved substantial experience. It is quite known that despite aggressive media rhetoric, the Indian defense sector has been languishing due to substandard technologies and the political apathy. For the politicians irrespective of their much-pronounced different ideologies, importing the state-of-the-art weapons

or fighter planes rather than developing even the engines for its planes was much more lucrative than allocating adequate budget for research and development without any substantial kick offs. The successive governments never shared the details of the plight of scientists and their exodus to various destinations across the continents, including China.

Therefore, it is a matter of little surprise that the country could not develop aircraft engines. Instead of taking corrective steps, a number of senior Indian Air Force officers have been engaged to justify the import of engines for the much-awaited Indian fighter plane, Tejas. Meanwhile, during the past four decades, the Chinese companies have already show-cased their high-tech weapons and aircrafts for the world markets.

A Bold Step- During his visit, Singh has supervised signing of the two historical pacts facilitating the availability of technologies to the Indian companies, and the appointment of liaison officers on reciprocal basis for sharing the experience and effectiveness of the new weapons being developed and marketed by the US and India.

It is hoped that the Modi government's decisive policy initiatives in this key sector may finally enable the Indian industries to access and assimilate new technologies for manufacturing new hi-tech weapons for the world markets.

Earlier, only the public sector such as Hindustan Aeronautics Limited (HAL) and the Defense Research and Development Organization (DRDO) were engaged in the



production and research. In spite of the Russian cooperation, the defense sector too suffered like most of the public sector industries.

With the entry of some of the top Indian companies, the Tata Advance System, Mahindra and Mahindra, Larsen and Toubro and many other private ventures is expected to revolutionize the country's present primitive armament industry to become a hub for exporting the state-of-the-art weapons and ammunition to be exported to other countries. The Indian corporations such as Tata or Mahindra and Mahindra are already global brands. However, the entry of Anil Ambani known for causing financial disaster to many companies in the Ambani empire, now in the defense sector is quite intriguing. He is being allowed to collaborate with the French company manufacturing Rafael fighters for assembling and servicing in India.

The Indian Government has rejected the allegation that the government had suggested the name of Anil as an Indian partner. It is being claimed that his name was suggested by the French company. Since Anil has hardly

any experience in this field, it is difficult to accept the Indian government's claim. It is believed that the truth will be known only after the change in regime in France. Anil, it is being stated despite being known as a thoroughly incompetent business man, might either have a godfather in the ruling BJP or have been supported by his elder brother, Mukesh.

Investments Opportunities - The recent agreements signed in Washington are expected to lure a large number of investors in India's defense production companies; thus boosting their market share like their peers in the US and Europe. The Indian corporate are hopeful that they too would be earning huge profits like the American armament industries. It has flourished in recent years, especially after the Russian invasion of Ukraine on February 24, 2022, and the ongoing conflict between Israel and Hamas, a terrorist outfit of the Palestinians in West Asia.

America's major defense manufacturing companies such as RTX, earlier known as Raytheon, Northrop Grumman's Corporation and Lockheed Martin have regis-

tered huge profits during the past three years. The prices of their shares have increased by more than 40 percent. In 2024, 900 billion USD is being allocated in the American defense budget, which is expected to boost the prospects of more profits this year.

It is stated that the emoluments of the CEOs of the weapons manufacturers is 100 times more than even the Secretary of Defense in America.

Expansion of the Collaboration - During this high-power visit, the agreements signed between the officials of the Pentagon and the Defense Ministry of India, include the SOSA or the Security of Supply Arrangement. The crucial pacts were signed before Rajnath Singh and his American counterpart, Lloyd Austin. The initiative is considered as a milestone in the growing US-India defense ties. India, thus, has become the 18th country to join the exclusive club of the SOSA countries, including the UK, Japan and Australia.

Liaison Officers - The two sides have also agreed to appoint liaison officers for better coordination in different commands. The details are yet to be shared about this proposal. It is believed that in the coming years, India and the US are going to have close coordination in the Indo-Pacific region. The two countries are worried that the aggressive Chinese policy in the region might lead to a war-like situation in the region.

In spite of the ongoing efforts for an immediate ceasefire in the Ukraine - Russia War and in the West Asian conflict, peace continues to be elusive.

2nd phase of Afghan refugee repatriation soon: Pak



ISLAMABAD: Pakistan will launch the second phase of the repatriation of Afghan refugees, Interior Minister Mohsin Naqvi has announced, emphasising the need for the role of the UN and the international community in their rehabilitation.

Naqvi said Pakistan has been hosting Afghan refugees for decades, and the phase-wise repatriation of illegal foreigners has already started. Naqvi said the second phase of the repatriation of refugees will be started soon.

Royal Malaysian Navy ship crew evacuated after taking on water



KUALA LUMPUR: The crew of a Royal Malaysian Navy (RMN) ship was evacuated due to heavy flooding, following a collision with an underwater object off the coast of Johor state.

All the crew had been recovered safely while the partially submerged ship was being salvaged, the RMN said on Sunday in a statement.

"A leak was first detected at 12 p.m. ... It is believed to have been caused by the vessel colliding with an underwater object. It (the leak) was initially detected in the ship's engine room before spreading uncontrollably. The crew was safely recovered after efforts

to control the situation and stabilise the vessel did not succeed," it added.

RMN said the ship partially sank in the incident, which occurred at noon two nautical miles southeast of Tanjung Penyusop while it was conducting an operation in the area, Xinhua news agency reported.

It said all 39 crew members were rescued after efforts to stem the leak and stabilise the ship failed.

The focus now is on conducting a salvage operation to save the ship.

RMN will establish a special investigative board immediately to determine the cause of the incident, it said.

SGPC sends legal notice to producers of Emergency film

JAGMOHAN SINGH
Amritsar

The Shiromani Gurdwara Parbandhak Committee (SGPC) has sent a legal notice to the producers of Kangana Ranaut's 'Emergency' film, which misrepresents the character and history of Sikhs, and asked them to remove the objectionable scenes presenting anti-Sikh sentiments. In the notice sent by Advocate Amanbir Singh Siali, legal adviser of SGPC, the producers of the film, including Kangana Ranaut, have been asked to remove the trailer released on August 14, 2024, from public and social media platforms and seek a written apology from the Sikh community.

Sharing information, SGPC Secretary Partap Singh said that as soon as the matter of Kangana Ranaut's Emergency film came to the notice, the Sikh body SGPC started action against it representing the Sikh sentiments. He said that while expressing strong objection to this film, separate letters were written to the Government of India's Minister of



Information and Broadcasting Mr. Ashwini Vaishnav, and Central Board of Film Certification's Chairperson Mr. Prasoon Joshi to ban this film.

Partap Singh said that as per the directions of the SGPC President Harjinder Singh Dhama, a legal notice has been sent to the producers of this film including Kangana Ranaut. He said that after the release of the trailer

of the Emergency film, many anti-Sikh scenes had come to light, which have deeply hurt the sentiments of the Sikh community. In the film, the character of Sikhs including the great martyr of the June 1984 massacre, Sant Jarnail Singh Khalsa Bhindranwale, an attempt has been made to show Sikhs as terrorists and separatists, which is unacceptable and far from the truth.

Partap Singh said that there is huge resentment in the Sikh community since the trailer of this film was released, due to which legal action has been initiated by the SGPC. He said that if the objectionable anti-Sikh scenes are not removed from the film by Kangana Ranaut and the filmmakers, then legal action will be taken against them at all levels along with strong opposition.

Farhan Akhtar back in Ladakh to shoot for 'special film'



NEW DELHI: Actor-filmmaker Farhan Akhtar on Wednesday said he is in Ladakh to shoot for a 'special film'. Farhan, who previously shot for his films 'Lakshya' (2004) and 'Bhaag Milkha Bhaag' (2013) in the mountainous region, shared the update in an Instagram post. 'Back in Ladakh after Lakshya and Bhaag Milkha Bhaag to shoot for a very special film,' he captioned a photo of the picturesque locals of the union territory. While 'Lakshya'—set during the 1999 Kargil War—was his second directorial venture, he played the role of the late Milkha Singh in the iconic sprinter's biopic 'Bhaag Milkha Bhaag', directed by Rakeysh Omprakash Mehra. 'Details to be revealed soon. Watch this space,' he added. Farhan's last project as an actor was sports drama 'Toofaan' (2021). As a director, his last film was 2011's 'Don 2 - The King Is Back', headlined by Shah Rukh Khan.

Hrithik Roshan or Mahesh Babu would be ideal to play Lord Krishna: Rakul Preet Singh

MUMBAI: Actress Rakul Preet Singh, who was recently seen in 'Indian 2', has shared her opinion on the ideal hero to essay the role of Lord Krishna if ever the Indian epic of Mahabharata is adapted into a movie.

The actress also reminisced about her childhood Janmashtami celebrations.

The actress spoke with IANS, and shared memories of her Janmashtami as a kid, and how the festive spirit used to bind everyone. She said, "I remember, in school as a kid we would be so excited about Dahi Handi. Participating in the ceremony was such an exhilarating experience. The energy, the teamwork, and the festive spirit all come together in such a vibrant way. Also, last year I attended Dahi Handi in Maharashtra for the very first time. And the experience was really amazing."

She further mentioned, "I remember playing Radha in a school play. As a young kid it was so exciting dressing up in the traditional attire, with the beautiful ghonghat, jewellery, and flowers. The excitement of performing on stage, dancing, and being part of that celebra-



tion with friends was pure joy."

Although the actress has visited Mathura, she never got a chance to visit the city during Janmashtami, the time when the city is a sight to behold.

Expressing her wish to visit Mathura during the festival, she said, "I should go there during Janmashtami as it must be so special. The energy there, the spirit and devotion with which it is celebrated... It would be such a beautiful celebration and I definitely would love to experience it. Stepping into a divine world where you can feel the essence of Lord Krishna's presence."

When asked if Mahabharata was being made into a movie, who does she think should essay the role of Krishna, she said, "Lord Krishna is such

a multifaceted character, wise, mischievous, charming, and deeply spiritual. I think someone who can balance all these traits with grace would be ideal. Perhaps someone like Hrithik Roshan, or even Mahesh Babu, who can bring both the playful and profound sides of Krishna to life on screen with his energy and versatility."

Talking about her favourite delicacy and prasad during the festival, she said, "I haven't personally cooked Prasad on Janmashtami, but the memories of relishing the special Prasad and food prepared at home are unforgettable. My favourite has always been the makkhan mishri. It's something I always look forward to every year."



Indian Wrestler Vinesh Phogat paying obeisance at Sri Harmandir Sahib (Golden Temple) on Friday.



PHOTOS: PRABHJOT GILL

SALMAN KHAN braves injury for eco-friendly Ganesh Chaturthi event

MUMBAI: Fans of Salman Khan grew concerned after videos of the actor appearing bothered by an injury at an event started doing the rounds on social media. People started posting get well soon messages for him online.

In several clips circulating on the Internet, Salman—who attended 'Bacche Bole Morya' on Wednesday to advocate the need of cleanliness and eco-friendly



Ganesh Chaturthi festival this season—could be seen wincing as he touched the right side of his rib cage. "He got hurt and isn't well, still he attended the event. It shows his commitment towards the environment. Thank you so much," said Amruta Fadnavis, the organiser of the event. It could not be confirmed whether the 58-year-old actor, who is currently shooting for his next film Sikandar, got hurt on set.

A source close to the actor confirmed that he had suffered a rib injury but is doing fine now.

When Shah Rukh Khan assisted Farah Khan on 'Kabhi Haan Kabhi Naa'



MUMBAI: Choreographer-director Farah Khan, shared an interesting anecdote about Bollywood megastar and her close friend Shah Rukh Khan.

A video of Farah shows her walking down the memory lane and talking about the budget constraints on 'Kabhi Haan Kabhi Naa' and how SRK served as her assistant on one of the songs.

She told Radio Nasha, "The film was made on a shoe-string budget. SRK was paid Rs 25,000 for that film. I was the highest paid resource on that movie, I want to tell you. I was paid Rs 5,000 for each song on that film, and there were 6 songs. So, I was paid Rs 30,000."

She further mentioned that the film didn't even have a budget for assistants in each department.

"For one song in the film, we didn't have the budget to pay the dancers. So, we hired all the locals in Goa. They had never done lip-sync and they didn't know how to catch the beat. So, SRK used to lie down, out of the frame, and he used to pinch them to get up when the beat came."

The film was directed by Kundan Shah of 'Jaane Bhi Do Yaaro' fame. It also starred Deepak Tijori, Suchitra Krishnamurthy and Naseeruddin Shah. It was made on a budget of Rs 1.4 crore, and grossed Rs 5.5 crore equivalent to Rs 80 crore adjusted for inflation as of 2018.

The film is remembered for its songs, and a compelling performance by SRK.



Priyanka Chopra is back to where she belongs, dives into nostalgia

MUMBAI: Actress Priyanka Chopra Jonas, who will be next seen in the American swashbuckler action drama film 'The Bluff', is currently in Mumbai, and revisiting some old places.

On Monday, the actress took to the Stories section of her Instagram, and shared a video in which she could be seen entering the filmcity in the Goregaon area of Mumbai.

The actress put up laughing emojis on the video and used the song 'Udd



Jaa Kaale Kaava' from the Sunny Deol-starrer blockbuster 'Gadar 2'. The actress visited the filmcity along with her mother Madhu Chopra and her brother Siddharth Chopra. She is in the filmcity for her upcoming Marathi production 'Paani'. Earlier, the actress attended the wedding festivities of her brother Siddharth Chopra. Siddharth and Neelam Upadhyaya had their roka ceremony in April this year. For the wedding celebra-

tion which also included an official engagement celebration, Priyanka Chopra wore a stunning saree channelling her inner desi girl. Meanwhile, the actress recently wrapped up the period film 'The Bluff' on August 10. On the occasion of the film's wrap up, she had shared a fun video of herself wearing a face mask on the sets.

She had shared a light-hearted video, in which she could be seen sporting a skincare sheet mask. She playfully commented, "Yes, this is my morning mask, no judgment. Last day at The Bluff today—exciting stuff, and going back home tomorrow. Yay".

The actress also has the second of her spy-thriller streaming show 'Citadel' in the pipeline. As per reports, the 2nd season of the global series is set to begin production this year, with Joe Russo directing. Priyanka Chopra Jonas will be returning to her role of Nadia along with Richard Madden, who essays the role of Mason Kane.

LPU awarded Rs 2.5 Cr Cash Prize to its Students Representing India in the Paris Olympics

JALANDHAR: In a grand celebration of athletic achievement, Lovely Professional University (LPU) awarded a remarkable Rs 2.5 crore in cash prizes to its students who represented India at the Paris Olympics. The event on campus welcomed 14 of the 24 Olympians, including wrestling star Vinesh Phogat and Indian hockey captain Harmanpreet Singh.

Despite her disqualification by a mere 100 grams, LPU



honored Vinesh Phogat with a cash prize of Rs 25 lakh, affirming her status as a champion in the university's eyes. Dr Ashok Kumar Mittal, Rajyasabha MP and Founder Chan-

cellor of LPU hailed Vinesh as 'Balali ki Jwalamukhi' and announced a commitment to sponsor 100 promising female-athletes in her honor. In a notable addition to the

university's curriculum, Dr. Mittal also revealed the introduction of a dedicated chapter on Vinesh Phogat in LPU's Physical Education program.

The ceremony coincided with National Sports Day, featuring vibrant performances and heartfelt tributes from fellow students. Olympians were celebrated with open-top bus parades, cultural performances, personalized artworks, and showering flowers and tricolours on the athletes creating

an inspiring atmosphere of camaraderie and pride.

Dr. Mittal expressed his enthusiasm for the athletes' return, emphasizing LPU's commitment to nurturing talent: "We are dedicated to empowering our students to shine on the global stage." He also announced a new program providing job opportunities for Olympians within four years, further underscoring LPU's dedication to supporting its athletes.

Talking Points

Narvijay Yadav



Despite the presence of CCTVs, Nirbhaya guidelines, and various legal acts, these measures will be ineffective unless boys are taught from a young age about respect for women and the distinction between right and wrong.

The safety of girls in India remains a significant concern despite various legal frameworks and initiatives aimed at their protection. The situation is complex, and while there have been improvements in certain areas, challenges persist, making safety a pressing issue. Sexual violence against minors, including rape, molestation, and sexual harassment, remains alarmingly high. Many cases go unreported due to social stigma, fear of retribution, and lack of awareness about legal rights. Recent incidents of child abuse in India, such as the case in Badlapur, highlight ongoing concerns about the safety of minors, particularly

young girls.

In Badlapur, two kindergarten girls, aged three and four, were allegedly sexually assaulted by a male school attendant recently. The incident sparked widespread outrage among parents and the local community, leading to protests, including a 10-hour blockade of railway tracks. The accused was arrested and has been remanded to judicial custody. In response, the Maharashtra government has initiated several measures, including the suspension of school staff and police officers and the formation of a special investigation team to ensure a thorough probe. The case has also led to calls for stricter safety protocols in schools to protect

Foster Boys' Mindset in Early Age



children from such heinous acts. Judges from the Bombay High Court emphasized that laws alone won't curb sexual crimes without a fundamental shift in mindset from an early age. In light of a recent case involving the sexual assault of two preschool girls in Balapur, the judges pointed out that societal issues like male chauvinism and dominance persist in the public consciousness. Educating children about equality at home and in schools is crucial. Despite the presence of CCTVs, Nirbhaya guidelines, and various legal acts, these measures will be ineffective unless boys are taught from a young age about respect for women and the distinction between right and wrong. Instilling these values in children should begin in

preschool.

The Protection of Children from Sexual Offences (POCSO) Act 2012 provides punishment for sexual offenses against children. However, the effectiveness of this law is often hindered by delayed justice, poor implementation, and victim-blaming attitudes. Minor girls are particularly vulnerable to trafficking for purposes such as sexual exploitation, forced labor, and domestic servitude. Traffickers often target girls from economically disadvantaged backgrounds. While there are efforts to rescue trafficked girls, the rehabilitation process is usually inadequate, with many victims facing difficulties reintegrating into society.

Many minor girls face barriers to accessing education, which can include societal attitudes that prioritize boys' education, financial constraints, and safety concerns related to traveling to school. Schools are meant to be safe spaces, but

incidents of harassment and abuse within educational institutions are reported. Minor girls, particularly in rural and marginalized communities, often suffer from malnutrition, which impacts their physical and mental development. Malnutrition also makes them more vulnerable to illnesses and less resilient to physical and psychological stress.

With the growing use of the internet and smartphones, minor girls are increasingly exposed to risks like cyberbullying, online harassment, and grooming by predators. The lack of digital literacy among children and parents contributes to this vulnerability. There is a critical need for education on digital safety for both minor girls and their guardians, as well as for stricter regulation of online content and platforms. India's patriarchal social structure often limits the freedom and safety of minor girls.

The writer is a senior journalist and columnist. Views are personal. Twitter @narvijayyadav

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