

REGION **2**



BJP'S SIKH CELL MEMBERS PROTEST AGAINST RAHUL, DEMAND APOLOGY

SC gives bail to Arvind Kejriwal, but upholds arrest by CBI in excise policy scam case

NEW DELHI: In a major relief to Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal, the Supreme Court on Friday granted him bail in the corruption case linked to the alleged liquor policy scam.

Apart from allowing Kejriwal's bail plea, Justice Surya Kant, heading a two-judge bench dismissed his distinct plea challenging the legality of arrest by the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) in the alleged liquor scam.

The other judge, Justice Ujjal Bhuyan, authored a separate opinion raising serious questions on the timings of arrest by the CBI and held the "belated arrest" by the central agency to be unjustified.

Last week, the top court reserved its decision after hearing the oral arguments advanced by senior advocate Abhishek Manu Singhvi, representing the Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) supremo, and Additional Solicitor General (ASG) S.V. Raju, who appeared on behalf of the CBI.

During the hearing, Singhvi contended that the CBI did not arrest CM Kejriwal



for two years but made an "insurance arrest in a hurry" to prevent his release in the money laundering case. The CBI arrested Kejriwal for "his non-cooperation and evasive replies" but there were several apex court judgments that held that cooperation with the probe should not mean that the accused should incriminate himself and confess to the offences alleged, he said.

Singhvi added that CM Kejriwal, a constitutional functionary holding the position of Delhi Chief Minister, satisfied the triple test for grant of bail. "He is not a flight risk, he will turn up to answer the questions of the

investigative agency, and cannot tamper with documents, running into lakhs of pages, and digital evidence after two years," he submitted. On the other hand, the central agency apprehended that the release of CM Kejriwal would turn many witnesses "hostile" and urged the apex court to not release him on bail. ASG Raju said that many candidates of the AAP in the Goa Assembly election came forward to give their statements to the central agency only after CM Kejriwal was arrested.

"They (witnesses) will turn hostile if your lordships release Kejriwal on bail," he argued. He argued that CM Kejriwal's

plea for bail should be remanded back to the trial court and he should not have petitioned the Delhi High Court for bail in the first instance. The ASG submitted that arrest is a part of investigation and ordinarily, an investigating officer will not require any permission from a court to make an arrest. "But, in the present case, there was an order of the court granting the power (to arrest)," he said. He added that when an arrest is made pursuant to an order of the court, an accused cannot take a plea of violation of fundamental rights.

Recently, the top court allowed bail pleas of senior AAP leader and former Delhi Deputy Chief Minister Manish Sisodia, BRS leader K. Kavitha, and AAP's former communication-in-charge Vijay Nair in the excise policy case.

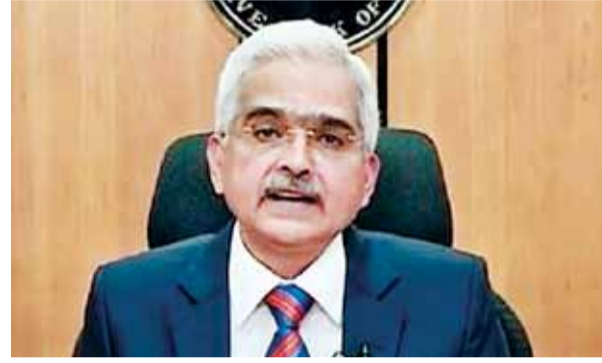
The Supreme Court, on July 12, ordered CM Kejriwal to be released on interim bail in connection with the money laundering case lodged by the Enforcement Directorate (ED). However, he was not able to walk out of jail since he was arrested by the CBI.

BANKING & FINANCE **6**



RBI PENALISES AXIS BANK, HDFC BANK FOR DEFICIENCIES IN REGULATORY COMPLIANCE

RBI Governor Projects India's Growth Potential at 7.5 per cent



NEW DELHI: In a statement made during the Bretton Woods Committee's annual Future of Finance Forum in Singapore, Reserve Bank of India (RBI) Governor Shaktikanta Das projected India's growth potential to be approximately 7.5 per cent or more.

This forecast slightly exceeds the RBI's own full-year projection for 2024, which stands at 7.2 per cent. Governor Das, speaking at the forum held in collaboration with Swiss bank UBS, emphasised that India's economic potential remains robust. Despite a modest start to the year, primarily attributed to subdued government expenditure during the national election period, the Indian economy is

poised for significant growth. Das's optimistic outlook aligns with broader expectations that the country's economic expansion will continue to outpace many global peers. However, Das acknowledged that the road to achieving this growth potential has not been without hurdles. He noted that India's merchandise exports have underperformed relative to expectations. The slower-than-anticipated growth in exports is largely due to a decline in external demand, which has impacted global trade dynamics.

On a more positive note, Das highlighted that India's services exports have shown marked improvement, counterbalancing some of the shortfalls in

merchandise trade. The forum, a key event for discussing global financial trends and economic outlooks, provided a platform for addressing these issues in detail. The partnership between the Bretton Woods Committee and UBS underscored the event's significance in shaping financial and economic policies worldwide. Das's comments reflect a nuanced view of India's economic landscape. While the country is on track to achieve a commendable growth rate by the end of 2024, there are challenges that require ongoing attention and strategic responses.

The disparities between merchandise and services export performance are particularly noteworthy, indicating areas where policy adjustments might be necessary to bolster trade and economic stability.

In summary, while India's growth potential is robust and slightly exceeds current forecasts, the nation faces a mixed economic environment. Continued efforts to address external demand issues and enhance the performance of merchandise exports will be crucial as India strives to reach and potentially surpass its growth targets for the year.

POTPOURRI **8**



MALAIKA ARORA SHARES STATEMENT AFTER FATHER'S DEMISE, REQUESTS PRIVACY

TMC MP Mahua Moitra lodges complaint with Lokpal against SEBI chief Buch



NEW DELHI: TMC MP Mahua Moitra on Friday lodged a complaint with the Lokpal against SEBI chairperson Madhabi Puri Buch alleging "quid pro quo arrangements which potentially threatens national interests".

"My LokPal complaint against Ms. Puri-Buch was filed electronically & in physical form. LokPal must within 30 days refer it to CBI/ED for a preliminary investigation and then a full FIR enquiry. Every single entity involved needs to be summoned & every link investigated," she posted on X. In a three-page letter, Moitra said as the issue concerns national interests and the interest of the crores of investors, the matter needs to be investigated. US short-seller Hindenburg Research in August alleged that it suspects SEBI's unwillingness to act against the Adani Group may be because of its head Madhabi Puri Buch had stakes in offshore funds linked to the conglomerate -- an allegation slammed by the SEBI head as "baseless" while Adani Group said it never had any commercial relations with Buch. Hindenburg alleged that Buch and her husband had undisclosed investments in obscure offshore funds in Bermuda and Mauritius, the same entities allegedly used by Vinod Adani, the elder brother of group chairman Gautam Adani, to round-trip funds and inflate stock prices. The TMC had earlier demanded that SEBI chairperson should be suspended.

Not long ago, this court has castigated the CBI comparing it to a caged parrot. It is imperative that CBI dispels the notion of it being a caged parrot. Rather, the perception should be that of an uncaged parrot," Justice Bhuyan wrote.

The top court judge said when Kejriwal has been granted bail under the more stringent provisions of the PMLA, further detention by the CBI in respect of the same predicate offense has become wholly untenable.

"When the CBI did not feel the necessity to arrest the appellant for 22 long months, I fail to understand the great hurry and urgency to arrest the appellant when he was on the cusp of release in the ED case," Justice Bhuyan said.

He said the CBI can't justify arrest and continued detention citing evasive replies by Kejriwal, and added that non-cooperation cannot mean self-incrimination.

"The CBI must dispel notion of being a caged parrot, must show it is an uncaged parrot," Justice Bhuyan said.

It would be travesty of justice to keep Kejriwal in custody when he has got bail in the ED case on the same grounds, he said.

1984 Sikh Genocide Delhi court frames murder charges against Jagdish Tytler



NEW DELHI: A Delhi court on Friday framed charges of murder and other offences against Congress leader Jagdish Tytler in a 1984-Sikh Genocide case.

Special Judge Rakesh Siyal directed that Tytler face trial after he pleaded not guilty to the offences. The judge had on August 30 said there was sufficient ground to proceed against the accused. A witness had earlier submitted in the charge sheet that Tytler came out of a white Ambassador car in front of Gurudwara Pul Bangash here on November 1, 1984 and instigated the mob by saying, "Kill the Sikhs, they have killed our mother", that led to "murder" of three people.

The court ordered framing of charges for various offences, including unlawful assembly, rioting, promoting enmity between different groups, house trespass and theft.

BJP equally responsible for Blue Star and 1984 Sikh riots: Punjab ex-CM Channi



NEW DELHI: Two top Punjab Congress leaders on Friday alleged that the BJP, its leader LK Advani and their ideological mentor, the RSS, were equally responsible for Operation Blue Star and the anti-Sikh riots that took place in the country after the assassination of PM Indira Gandhi in 1984. They said it was time the BJP apologised for its role in the Army operation and the massacre of Sikhs.

Responding to a question at a press conference at the AICC headquarters, Charanjit Singh Channi, Lok Sabha member and former Punjab Chief Minister, said Advani had admitted in his book that Operation Blue Star was launched as a result of pressure built by the BJP on the Congress government, then in power at the Centre, demanding strong action against Punjab militants. Advani had also written that the 1984 riots were a backlash, Channi said.

Charanjit Singh Channi, who was accompanied by the CLP leader of Punjab, Partap

Singh Bajwa, said the Congress had already apologised for the military operation targeting Harmandir Sahib and the riots, and the BJP should also do so. On the continuance of riot accused Jagdish Tytler in the Congress, Channi said the BJP had been in power at the Centre for the last 10 years, and it should take appropriate action against those guilty.

He said the BJP had twisted what Congress leader Rahul Gandhi had recently said during an interaction in the US. What Rahul said had struck a chord with the Sikhs and the BJP resented it, he claimed. The former CM said the concern expressed by Rahul Gandhi about the state of religious freedom of the minorities in BJP-ruled India was justified and every Sikh and non-Sikh resident of Punjab agreed with Rahul on the issue.

When farmers were agitating against the farm laws brought in by the BJP, they were unfairly called "Khalistanis" by the BJP, the Congress leaders said.

Congress seeks action against BJP leader for threatening Rahul Gandhi

KAVITA SHARMA
New Delhi

Asserting that the Leader of Opposition in Lok Sabha, Rahul Gandhi, had expressed genuine apprehensions about the Dalits, downtrodden & minorities in India during an address in the United States, the Congress today accused the Bharatiya Janata Party of blowing the issue out of proportion. The party also demanded an FIR against the BJP leader Tarvinder Singh Marwah for threatening Rahul Gandhi with the same fate as that of his grandmother Ms Indira Gandhi. The party asked whether Marwah was speaking for the entire BJP leadership.

Addressing a press conference at the AICC headquarters

here today, former Punjab Chief Minister Charanjit Singh Channi and Leader of the Opposition in Punjab Vidhan Sabha, Partap Singh Bajwa, said that people of Punjab and Sikhs strongly endorsed what Gandhi said in the United States.

Channi pointed out, Gandhi had raised the genuine apprehension prevailing among the minorities, Dalits and the downtrodden about their safety and survival in the country and said, there was nothing wrong in that. Bajwa referred to the series of events that have been taking place in the country during the last ten years. He said Punjab was being selectively targeted. He alleged that the BJP government was withholding grants worth thousands of crores to Punjab.

AAP leaders, workers gather outside Tihar to welcome Kejriwal

NEW DELHI: Amid heavy rains in the city, hundreds of AAP leaders and workers started gathering outside Tihar jail to welcome their party supremo and Delhi chief minister Arvind Kejriwal.

Kejriwal is expected to walk out of jail soon as he has been granted bail by the Supreme Court in the excise policy-linked corruption case by the CBI.

Braving the rains, several senior AAP leaders including the chief minister's wife Sunita Kejriwal are waiting for the AAP supremo to walk out of the jail.

Carrying umbrellas with posters, banners and a sea of blue and yellow party flags AAP supporters stand in attendance outside the jail amid heavy downpour. The joyous crowd are raising slogans hailing the chief minister.

Other senior AAP leaders including Punjab Chief Min-



ister Bhagwant Mann, Rajya Sabha MP Sanjay Singh, and party leader Manish Sisodia are also on the spot.

Large banners reading slogans like 'Jail ke taale toot gaye, Arvind Kejriwal chhooch gaye' have been placed outside the Tihar jail by the AAP supporters. Security has been beefed up outside the jail ahead of Kejriwal's release.

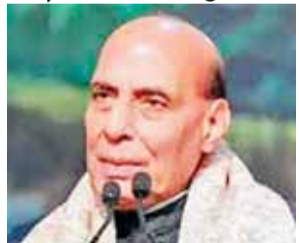
Border villages are country's first villages not remote area: Rajnath

NEW DELHI: Defence minister Rajnath Singh on Wednesday voiced Prime Minister Narendra Modi-led government's full commitment to the holistic development of border villages.

"Border villages are the country's first villages and not remote areas," the Defence Minister said while speaking at the Border Area Development Conclave in New Delhi. He pointed out that India's geo-strategic position is such that it is exposed to different kinds of challenges and the best way to deal with them is to ensure border area development. "Border Roads Organisation (BRO) has constructed over 8,500 km of roads and more than 400 permanent bridges. Atal Tunnel, Sela Tunnel and Shikun-La Tunnel, which is going to be the world's highest tunnel, will prove to be milestones in border area development," the Defence Minister said.

He added that the government has started the 220 Kilo-Volt Srinagar-Leh Electricity Line to connect the border areas of Ladakh with the National Electricity Grid.

He said that the transmission and distribution infrastructure of northeastern states is being strengthened. High-speed internet has been provided to



over 1,500 villages through the Bharat-Net broadband project. "In the last four years alone, more than 7,000 border villages have been connected with internet connection, and our focus has been Ladakh and Arunachal Pradesh," the Defence Minister said.

He said that the ongoing efforts have not only ensured prompt military deployments in sensitive regions but have also connected the people residing in border areas with the rest of the country.

He underlined the fact that while building roads, bridges and tunnels in border areas is imperative for national security, it is also important in making the lives of the people in these regions better, in collaboration with the state governments.

Indian Railways to Test Hydrogen Train by 2025

NEW DELHI: Indian Railways is set to embark on a transformative journey with its plan to conduct field trials of the country's first hydrogen-fueled train around January 2025.

This initiative marks a significant step toward cleaner, more sustainable rail transportation in India.

The project's roadmap reveals that the first prototype of this hydrogen-powered train is expected to be completed by December 2024. Senior officials from Indian

Railways have confirmed that field trials for this prototype will commence a month later. In the initial phase, some existing diesel locomotives will be retrofitted to accommodate hydrogen fuel cell technology.

Contracts have been awarded to convert a 1200 kW Diesel Electric Multiple Unit (DEMU) into a hydrogen fuel cell-based Distributed Power Rolling Stock (DPRS). This conversion is pivotal as it reflects a broader effort to reduce the rail network's carbon footprint.



Hydrogen-powered trains generate electricity through fuel cells by combining hydrogen and oxygen, with water being

the only by-product. This method ensures that the trains are emission-free at the point of use, unlike their diesel counterparts.

Indian Railways envisions the production of a full train set equipped with a hydrogen fuel cell propulsion system to supply traction energy. If successful, the project aims to roll out 35 train sets, each consisting of six cars. The Railways is evaluating eight potential sections for the deployment of these hydrogen trains.

A pilot project has already

demonstrated the feasibility of hydrogen fuel cell technology and the necessary ground infrastructure. This includes a system integration unit, battery, and fuel synchronisation tests.

Additionally, designs by global major Shell and hydrogen plant designs have received approval from the Petroleum and Explosives Safety Organisation (PESO). TÜV SÜD, a leading third-party safety auditor based in Munich, is overseeing onboard hydrogen safety approvals.

BJP's Sikh cell members protest against Rahul, demand apology

NEW DELHI: Members of the Delhi BJP's Sikh cell staged a protest against Rahul Gandhi near his 10, Janpath residence here on Wednesday, demanding an apology from the Congress leader over his remarks in the US concerning the community.

Raising slogans and carrying placards, the protesters, including women, tried to approach Gandhi's residence from Vignay Bhawan, but were stopped by police at a barricade.

The protesters raised slo-



gans against the leader of opposition in the Lok Sabha, demanded his apology for "humiliating" Sikhs and held the Congress responsible for the 1984 anti-Sikh riots in the country. BJP national spokesperson

RP Singh alleged that Gandhi has "insulted" Sikhs through his statement.

"Under Prime Minister Narendra Modi's leadership, the Sikh community is witnessing progress and the members of the community feel safe in India. The 1984 massacre, where Sikhs were beaten up and killed, occurred during the Congress rule," he said.

Delhi BJP's Sikh cell convenor Charanjeet Singh Lovely said Gandhi's "small-mindedness is evident from his statement.

Coaching centre deaths: Delhi HC asks CBI to state reason behind waterlogging



NEW DELHI: The Delhi High Court on Thursday asked the CBI to inform it the reason behind heavy waterlogging in Old Rajinder Nagar on July 27 when three civil services aspirants died after drowning in a flooded coaching basement.

The court passed the direction while reserving order on the bail pleas of the jailed co-owners of the basement -- Parvinder Singh, Tajinder Singh, Harvinder Singh and Sarbjit Singh -- in the criminal case concerning the deaths. "What was the reason on that day? Delhi has witnessed heavy downpours. Why so much waterlogging on that day? Was it the rain or something else? questioned Justice Dinesh Kumar Sharma.

The co-owners had moved the high court last month for bail on the ground that they are merely the landlords of the basement, which was let out on a rental basis to the coaching centre and, therefore, they had no role whatsoever in the unfortunate event.

The bench asked the agency to file a status report explaining the reason for the waterlogging in the area, the amount of rainfall received on the day of the incident as well as on the aspect of installation of

heavy gates at the entrance of the coaching centre to "block" any water from the road. Three civil service aspirants Shreya Yadav (25) from Uttar Pradesh, Tanya Soni (25) from Telangana and Nevin Delvin (24) from Kerala died after the basement of the building housing Rau's IAS Study Circle was flooded following heavy rain in central Delhi's Old Rajinder Nagar on July 27 evening. The case, being probed under the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita (BNS), including Section 105 (culpable homicide not amounting to murder), was transferred from the Delhi Police to the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) by the high court.

"I am in custody. I have suffered enough. Please consider... At this stage, I am only asking for liberty. I will face the trial," said the senior lawyer appearing for the four accused, who are brothers.

Opposing the bail pleas, the CBI said the investigation was at initial stages and no relief should be given until the independent witnesses are examined as they may be influenced.

On being queried by the bench, the CBI counsel said a charge sheet is expected to be filed in 10 days against the

present accused persons.

The court told the CBI that it was investigating a "very important case" and asked it if other buildings near the Rau's IAS Study Circle were also flooded.

The counsel for the father of the deceased victim Nevin Delvin also made submissions in favour of rejection of the bail pleas and said the coaching centre was running in violation of building and safety norms, and the owners had knowledge that deaths could occur on account of the non-compliance.

During the hearing, the court asked the senior counsel for the accused persons if they would pay any damages or compensation to the family of the deceased aspirants. The senior lawyer appearing for the four accused said their father will contribute to the noble cause, as has been done by some coaching centres that have announced a monetary compensation.

The CBI counsel said according to the statement of the witnesses, 35 to 40 students were present in the basement at the time of the incident and the water rose within seconds in a "dam failure" like manner after the gates broke down.

He also said that there was 58 mm rainfall on the day of the incident. Senior advocate Mohit Mathur, appearing for the accused persons, emphasised that the storm water drain on the road was not functional and despite allegations of misconduct, the CBI was yet to take any action against the Municipal Corporation of Delhi (MCD) employees. It was also claimed that the allegations of fraud to obtain safety clearances were not relevant to them as when they had purchased the premises, all such clearances were provided by the earlier owner.

Kejriwal walks out of Tihar jail, vows to step up fight against 'anti-India forces'



NEW DELHI: Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal walked out of Tihar jail on Friday, hours after the Supreme Court granted him conditional bail in the Delhi liquor policy scam.

As Kejriwal got out of the jail, he was greeted by hundreds of excited AAP workers and leaders who shouted 'Bharat Mata Ki Jai' and Vande Mataram slogans.

While party workers celebrated his release, the Delhi CM thundered that his courage and spirit remain unfazed by the incarceration and he feels more energised and invigorated to serve the nation.

Slamming the Centre, he said that their prisons won't shackle his resolve and he will be back at the service of people with greater determination.

"I have been fighting the anti-India forces and today I vow to step up this fight with greater intensity than before," the AAP chief declared.

Since evening, umpteen AAP leaders and workers had started gathering outside the Tihar jail to give a rousing reception to the party supremo. Though Delhi CM has got a reprieve in the liquor policy case, his powers have been severely curtailed. The Apex Court has restricted him from either visiting the Secretariat or signing any files.

Below are the conditionalities on which Arvind Kejriwal was granted bail on Friday:

Fake call center to cheat foreigners busted with 28 accused arrested

PARVESH HANDA Panipat

Police was successful by busting a fake call center arresting 28 accused including the kingpin Vijay a resident of Sector 18 Panipat and team leader Yogesh resident of Ugrakhera along with 10 girls. The accused were running a fake call center at an office in Tanej Tower near SD College on GT Road, Panipat. The youths in the racket studied up to MBA and B. Tech hailing from Panipat, Kalka, Rajasthan, and Jammu-Kashmir getting monthly salary up to Rs 25,000 to 30,000. The call centre was committing fraud with foreign nationals in the name of booking air tickets, cabs, hotels and providing software services called Quick Book and refunding the amount by cancelling the said booking



from Expedia. Police recovered 42 laptops and 19 headsets from the call centre. Satish Vats, DSP Headquarter while giving information to media persons in a press conference on Tuesday, said that the Cyber Crime Police Team of the police station had received secret information late on Monday night that two youths are running a fake call center on the second floor of Taneja Tower used to commit fraud with foreign nationals.

Police interrogation with the accused revealed that the accused had set up a diversion on the toll free number of Travel Monk and US Flight Service

sites registered in the name of one of the friends in the USA and phone calls coming on the toll free numbers used to reach the accused. The accused used to talk to them and get all the information from their credit cards and transfer 200 to 300 dollars. The workers employed in the office were having training in this regard. All the girls who are experts in English conversation used to tell their fake foreign names on the phone instead of their real names so that there is no doubt on them. Deputy Superintendent of Police Satish Vats said that the police registered a case in Cyber Crime Police Station and presented all the accused in the court on Tuesday, where both the accused Vijay and Yogesh were taken on one-day police remand and all others were granted bail.

Woman stabbed to death by brother-in-law in south-west Delhi

NEW DELHI : A 28-year-old woman was stabbed to death by her brother-in-law in southwest Delhi's Kapashera area, officials said on Thursday. A PCR call was received at 10.38 pm on Wednesday regarding the murder of a lady in Kapashera, an officer said. After receiving the call, the police reached the spot and the woman's body was recovered in a house with stab injuries. The 32 year-old accused, who is the victim's brother-in-law, was found absconding from the spot. The spot was inspected by the crime team and FSL team and exhibits were lifted from the spot, the officer said.

BJP is trying to distract the public from local issues, is engaging in negative politics based on religion and caste instead of focusing on development:-Kumari Selja

PARVESH HANDA

The General Secretary of the All India Congress Committee, former Union Minister, and MP from Sirsa, Kumari Selja, said that seeing its defeat in Haryana, the BJP is indulging in negative politics based on religion and caste rather than focusing on development. Religion-based politics only benefits political figures. All religions teach the spirit of love for one another, love for all, and working with honesty. Kumari Selja said that to dis-



tract the public from issues like unemployment, drugs, rising crime, and corruption, the BJP talks about Kashmir at times and Pakistan at others, but the people need jobs, food, clothing, and shelter. The people of

Haryana will not be misled by the BJP; they have decided to oust the BJP from power. When the assembly election results come, Congress will form the government.

In a statement released to the media, Kumari Selja said that the BJP made every effort to distract the public from local issues, but whether it's Prime Minister Modi or Chief Minister Nayab Saini, they will not succeed in diverting the public's attention. She said that Haryana has the highest unemployment rate today.

Seven cows died, 4 seriously injured after hit by Swarna Jayanti Shatabdi train

PARVESH HANDA Sonipat

A major train accident was averted when a group of 11 cows, arrived on the rail track all of sudden, were hit by Swarna Jayanti Shatabdi train (no 12029) running at 120 km per hour speed between Delhi and Amritsar near the Sugar mill at Sonipat. However, the loco pilot of the train as well driver of another passenger train (no. 04178) running between Kurukshetra and Delhi crossing on the adjoining rail track applied emergency brakes immediately and both trains stopped, as a result seven cows were crushed and died on the rail track, whereas four animals were seriously injured



in this mishap. However, all animals were removed from the rail track by the residents of the adjoining rural areas who arrived at the spot immediately and injured cows were rushed to the animal hospital.

On the information of loco pilots of Swarna Jayanti Express train both GRP and RPF

teams arrived at the spot from Sonipat Railway Station and started investigations. A case was registered by RPF against the owner of animals identified as Rajasthan Dera near the area that left animals in open. The rail traffic on the UP and DOWN rail track remained blocked on the spot as well on route between Ambala and Delhi for about one and half hour which affected a large number of trains including Amritsar Swarna Jayanti, Pathankot Express, KDM Passenger train no. 224297, Malwa Express, Shri Shakti Express, New Delhi Shatabdi and Kalka Shatabdi trains which were stopped at various railway stations for a long time.

Stalin, EPS, Chidambaram condole demise of CPI-M General Secretary Sitaram Yechury

CHENNAI: Tamil Nadu Chief Minister M.K. Stalin on Thursday condole the demise of CPI-M General Secretary Sitaram Yechury.

The 72-year-old veteran Left leader passed away at the AIIMS, New Delhi, earlier in the day.

Stalin said in a post on social media platform X, "Deeply shocked and saddened by the demise of Comrade Sitaram Yechury, a stalwart of the Left Movement and a towering figure in Indian politics."

The Chief Minister also said, "Comrade Sitaram Yechury was a fearless leader whose commitment to justice was evident from a young age, as he courageously stood against the Emergency as a student leader. His dedication to the cause of the working class, secularism, social justice, equality, and progressive values shaped a distinguished career that will continue to inspire



future generations." "I will always cherish the insightful interactions I had with him. My heartfelt condolences to his family and comrades during this difficult time. Red Salute, Comrade!" said Tamil Nadu Opposition leader and AIADMK General Secretary, Edappadi K. Palaniswami (EPS), who also condole the demise of Yechury.

In a post on X, EPS said, "Deeply saddened to hear the news that the General Secretary of @cpimspokes Comrade @SitaramYechury has passed away."

He added, "With his demise, the nation has lost an exemplary statesman and an astute front-runner of communist ideology. My deepest condolences to his family and Comrades. Farewell, Comrade! Senior Congress leader and former Union Minister P. Chidambaram in a post on X said, "The passing of Comrade Sitaram Yechury is a cruel blow

"The passing of Comrade Sitaram Yechury is a cruel blow to the forces that are engaged in a determined battle in the defence of democracy, liberty, equality, workers' rights and human rights"

to the forces that are engaged in a determined battle in the defence of democracy, liberty, equality, workers' rights and human rights."

He said, "I know that from 1996, Comrade Yechury had stood with the progressive forces of the country. He was a committed Marxist but he was practical enough to understand that some of the goals of Marxism could be achieved, in the current age, only if he stood by other progressive political parties.

The senior Congress leader added, "As the INDIA bloc is gathering strength, his services and support will be sorely missed. I salute the memory of my friend and comrade, Sitaram. I offer his family and his party, the CPI(M), my sincere and heartfelt condolences."

Conviction of Maulana Kaleem Siddiqui, Maulana Umar Gautam and others raises deep concern: JIH President

FW DESK New Delhi

The President of Jamaat-e-Islami Hind (JIH), Syed Sadatullah Hussaini has voiced concern over the recent judgment by a NIA-ATS Court that convicted Maulana Kaleem Siddiqui, Maulana Umar Gautam and 14 others for their alleged involvement in illegal conversion cases.

In a statement to the media, JIH President expressed profound dismay and concern over the ruling of NIA-ATS Court that has convicted Maulana Kaleem Siddiqui, Maulana Umar Gautam and 12 others under sections of the Indian Penal Code, including 417, 120B, 153A, 153B, 295A, 121A, 123 and the Illegal Conversion Act (sections 3, 4, and 5) and awarded the punishment of life-imprisonment to the accused. We strongly differ with the Hon'ble Court's assessment regarding the levelling of such grave charges. In a democratic country like India, who can force someone to change his religion? Islam does not allow it at all. Every individual has the right to choose, practice, and propagate the religion of his/her choice, and this right is enshrined in our Constitution. No authority can deprive a citizen of this right. The gravity of the allegations—terrorism, criminal conspiracy, promoting enmity, and plotting of offenses against the state—are



not only baseless but also set a deeply troubling precedent. Such accusations, in our view, undermine the very principles of justice and democracy that our Constitution seeks to uphold. It seems that the entire case has been created to send a certain message to people from minority communities who are practicing their constitutionally guaranteed right of practice and propagation of faith without any fear or coercion. The JIH President said, "The manner in which Maulana Siddiqui and Maulana Gautam were arrested and implicated coupled with the sensationalized reactions of certain media outlets, showed that the entire exercise was meant to exploit public sentiments by creating a charged atmosphere of fear, intimidation, and hatred for gaining political mileage. This case sets a dangerous precedent, casting a shadow over the fundamental right to practice and propagate the religion of one's choice. Creating a communal and emotionally charged atmosphere to divert attention from the real public issues is highly regrettable.

Nearly 16,000 samples pending in FSL in Haryana delaying justice in court

SATISH HANDA Karnal

Information reveals, nearly 16,000 samples forwarded to Forensic Science Laboratory (FSL) for testing in court cases are lying pending for reports since a long time due to work load, thus causing delay in providing justice to the victims in large number of court cases including murders, rapes, crime against women, cases registered under Posco Act, cyber cheatings and many more serious criminal cases due to repeated hearing dates in the courts and cases remain undecided in the absence of forensic reports for a long time. Information reveals that more than 1600 cases related to child abuse and more than 10,000 murder cases are pending in Haryana courts at present in the absence of FSL reports. Information also reveals, in November 2022 the stock of DNA kits being imported from USA costing amounts worth Rs 4 to 4.5 lakh each capable of preparing about 30 reports in FSL Madhuban (Karnal) was exhausted, as thousands of cases in courts in the state remained hanging for a long time.

DGP Haryana Shatruijit Kapoor while talking to me-



dia persons in recent past said decision has been taken to set up Forensic Science Laboratories in every district in the state enabling to reduce work load in existing five laboratories already functioning in the state at Karnal, Hisar, Panchkula, Rohtak and Gurugram. Information reveals, there are also 23 mobile FSL units functioning in the districts for emergency services across the state at present, visiting the scene of crime immediately in order to identify data at the place of crime, prepare video analysis of the case, record CCTV footage where applicable by an expert.

DGP Kapoor said, in order to upgrade services in criminal cases, process for the appointment of staff including 53 senior laboratory scientists, 135 scientific assistants and 155 posts in the cyber forensic units in the state is under process by Haryana Staff Selection Commission to curb fast increasing cyber cheating crimes in the state. Kapoor said all Police Commissioners and SPs have been directed to search suitable place for the proposed district level forensic laboratories having with infrastructure including cyber digital data extension lab, voice sample recording room, place for the storage of collected data, three SUV vehicles along with drivers and workplace for the scientists as well as other staff in each laboratory.

Identify, remove obstacles in research ecosystem: PM Modi at 1st ANRF meeting

NEW DELHI: Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Tuesday stressed on the need to identify and remove obstacles in the research ecosystem of the country.

He said this while chairing the first meeting of the Governing Board of the newly-formed Anusandhan National Research Foundation (ANRF) at his residence at Lok Kalyan Marg earlier on Tuesday.

The foundation was established under the ANRF Act of 2023, to regulate all research and development in natural sciences establishments in India.

The first meeting focussed on discussion about India's Science and Technology landscape and redesigning of research and development programmes.

"Research should focus on finding new solutions to existing problems," he said, emphasising the need to find localised solutions to global problems.

He called on the research community to set "big targets, focus on attaining them and doing path-breaking research".

The Prime Minister also discussed the "need for upgradation and standardisation of



institutions", to create a dashboard to easily track the ongoing research and development in the country and also suggested preparing a list of domain experts on the basis of their expertise.

"The scientific community of the country should have faith that there will be no dearth of resources for their endeavours," said PM Modi, while stressing on the need for scientific monitoring of utilisation of resources.

Further, he suggested grad-ing of Atal Tinkering Labs, and discussed the need for research "in environment change, battery ingredients for EVs, lab-grown diamonds".

The governing body also decided to launch a programme to

"pair universities where research is at a nascent stage with top tier established institutions in mentorship mode".

Meanwhile, the ANRF is expected to "launch programmes in select priority areas like EV mobility, advanced materials, solar cells, smart infrastructure, health and medical technology, sustainable agriculture, and photonics". The meeting also decided to launch Centres of Excellence to support interdisciplinary research in humanities and social sciences.

ANRF acts as an apex body to provide high-level strategic direction of scientific research in the country as per recommendations of the National

Education Policy.

The meeting of the foundation also deliberated upon redesigning of research and development programmes.

The ANRF has been established to promote research and development and also foster a culture of research and innovation throughout India's universities, research institutions, and R&D laboratories. Over the years, it seeks to launch programmes based on solution-focussed approach in mission mode in select priority areas. The meeting also discussed several areas of strategic interventions of ANRF which include global positioning of India in key sectors, aligning R&D with national priorities, promoting inclusive growth, capacity building, driving scientific advances and innovation ecosystem, as well as bridging the gap between academic research and industrial applications through industry-aligned translational research.

The Governing Body also directed the ANRF to align its strategies with the goals of Viksit Bharat 2047.

Amit Shah thanks Amitabh Bachchan for joining campaign against cybercrime



NEW DELHI: Union Home Minister Amit Shah on Wednesday expressed his gratitude to Bollywood actor Amitabh Bachchan for actively participating in the government's efforts to combat rising cybercrimes and help create a cyber-secure India.

"Pursuing Modi Ji's vision, the Ministry of Home Affairs is resolved to creating a safe cyberspace in the nation. The I4C (Indian Cyber Crime Coordination Centre) has taken several steps in this direction. I thank Shri Amitabh Bachchan Ji for joining this campaign. Amitabh Bachchan Ji's active involvement will further accelerate our mission to build

a Cyber-Secure Bharat," Shah wrote on X, sharing a post of Cyber Dost, the Ministry of Home Affairs' cyber safety and security awareness handle.

Cyber Dost also highlighted Amitabh Bachchan's involvement in the campaign, saying, "Supporting PM Shri Narendra Modi Ji and HM Shri Amit Shah Ji's vision, the iconic actor Shri Amitabh Bachchan Ji has joined I4C's campaign to make India cyber secure. You too can join this initiative, stay vigilant against cyber fraud, and contribute to building a Cyber-Secure Bharat."

In a video message, Amitabh Bachchan emphasised the importance of vigilance

against cybercrime.

"The rising cases of cybercrime in the country and across the world are a matter of concern. The Home Ministry's Indian Cyber Crime Coordination Centre is working towards controlling this. With Home Minister Amit Shah's insistence, I joined this campaign, and I want us all to unite against this problem. A bit of caution can protect us from cybercrimes," the Bollywood actor said. On Tuesday, Amit Shah addressed the first Foundation Day celebrations of the Indian Cyber Crime Coordination Centre (I4C) and launched the 'Samanvay' Platform, a joint cybercrime investigation facility system.

The I4C initiative was approved in October 2018 to address various forms of cybercrime in a comprehensive and coordinated manner. The government has since undertaken several measures to increase awareness, prevent cybercrime, and enhance law enforcement capacity by issuing cyber alerts, training officials, and improving cyber forensic facilities.

Akal Takht should take action against Chairman of National Commission for Minorities : Dhami



JAGMOHAN SINGH
Amritsar

The Shiromani Gurdwara Parbandhak Committee (SGPC) President Advocate Harjinder Singh Dhami taking notice of statement of Iqbal Singh Lalpura, Chairman of National Commission for Minorities (NCM) of trying to assimilate the Sikh existence with Sanatan, has appealed to Jathedar of Akal Takht the highest Sikh temporal seat of Sikhs to take strict action against him as per the Panthic traditions.

He said that during an event in Delhi recently, Lalpura has expressed fabricated rhetoric against the principles of Sikh faith and the ideology of the holy Gurbani, which has hurt the uniqueness of the Sikh community and its originality. He said Lalpura has called Sri Guru Nanak Dev, an avatar of Vishnu, which is his mischievous act to please the top leaders of RSS and BJP. Advocate Dhami said that such rhetoric of Lalpura is grossly disrespectful to the ideology of Gurus and the Sikh community, for which strict action should be taken against him.

He said that the holy Gurbani of Sri Guru Granth Sahib connects to only one Akal Purakh (One Timeless being) and incarnation has no place in Sikh faith. Association of Sikh Gurus with Hindu Deities by Lalpura is only part of advancing the agenda of the RSS.

Dhmi said that this is a matter of great concern for the Sikh community, in which the Jathedar of Sri Akal Takht Sahib should intervene so that no such anti-Sikh action is taken in the future and the pride of Sikhs as Sui generis, a district entity is not hurt

Two terrorists killed in anti-infiltration operation in J&K's Nowshera



FW DESK

The Indian Army has killed two terrorists and recovered a large cache of warlike stores including two AK-47 rifles and a pistol in the Nowshera region of Jammu and Kashmir.

In an ongoing anti-infiltration operation named «Operation Kanchi» launched by the Indian Army on the night of September 8-9, was based on intelligence inputs from the Jammu and Kashmir Police and other agencies. The White Knight Corps confirmed that the operation is being conducted in the general area of the Lam region in Nowshera.

assaulted. According to BJP sources, Fadnavis and Bawankule briefed Home Minister Shah about the party's informal talks with Shiv Sena and NCP but reiterated that the party should be careful while considering the allocation of seats about 70 plus each.

"BJP, which had won 105 seats in the 2019 election, should press for 160 seats leaving 60 each to Shiv Sena and NCP and eight to other smaller parties. Even though the MahaYuti will contest the upcoming Assembly polls under the leadership of Chief Minister Eknath Shinde, the party should strive to win maximum seats," sources said.

'Minorities thriving in India', Iqbal Lalpura slams Rahul Gandhi for remarks on Sikhs



NEW DELHI: Iqbal Singh Lalpura, Chairman of the National Commission for Minorities (NCM), on Tuesday criticised Leader of Opposition Rahul Gandhi for his controversial remarks on Sikhs' religious freedom in India, accusing the Congress MP of having "old mentality".

Interacting with the Indian community in Virginia during his ongoing US trip, Rahul Gandhi said, "First of all, you have to understand what the fight is about. The fight is not about politics. The fight is about whether a Sikh will be allowed to wear his turban in India. Or he as a Sikh is going to be allowed to wear a 'kada' in India. Or if a Sikh will be able to go to the gurdwara. That's what the fight is about, and not just for him, for all religions."

Dismissing the LoP's concerns, Lalpura told IANS, "He has an old mentality, which is why he makes such statements. Since 1947, the promises made by former Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru to protect the Sikh community were not fully fulfilled, and many agitations took place because of this issue."

The NCM Chairman also emphasised that since the BJP came to power (in 2014), Prime Minister Narendra Modi has undertaken "at least 30 significant measures for the Sikh community, which were previously unthinkable".

Addressing the Congress leader's mention of the turban, Lalpura said, "Rahul Gandhi should know that among the only three Field Marshals in India's history, two were from minority communities -- Field Marshal Sam Manekshaw and Air Chief Marshal Arjan Singh."

"Minorities in India are not only protected but are thriving. Many from minority backgrounds, including Sikhs, have held the highest offices, including the President of India. We don't just ensure their equality, but also focus on their progress," Lalpura said.

He also criticised Rahul Gandhi for "thinking like his ancestors", accusing the Congress of betraying the Sikh community.

"The victims of the 1984 Sikh massacre began receiving justice only after PM Modi took office. Many high-profile Congress leaders involved in the killings are now facing justice, with some already in jail."

"For Sikhs, India is the safest place on Earth where we are prospering. Rahul Gandhi should not have made such remarks," Lalpura concluded.

Kharge promises 5 guarantees for J&K if NC-Cong alliance wins

SRINAGAR: Congress President Mallikarjun Kharge on Wednesday promised five guarantees to the people of Jammu and Kashmir (J&K) if the Congress-National Conference (NC) alliance is voted to power in the Union Territory (UT).

He said that the promise for return of Kashmir Pandit migrants to their homes, which was made during the tenure of Manmohan Singh as the country's Prime Minister, will be fulfilled.

He also added that the OBCs will also get their rights as enshrined in the Constitution.

The Congress-NC alliance will strive for statehood and also fill all the vacancies lying vacant in various government departments in Jammu and Kashmir and promised Rs 3,000 per month to women heads of each family.

The Congress President criticised the BJP and also targeted Prime Minister Narendra Modi.

"If we had just 20 more seats in the Lok Sabha, all these people would have been in jail and they deserve to be there," he said on Wednesday during the



Congress' poll rally in Anantnag district.

He noted that the BJP had stalled development in Jammu and Kashmir and had backtracked on all its poll promises.

He slammed the BJP's claim of '400 Paar' during the Lok Sabha elections, saying, "Where is your '400 paar' now? You are stuck at 240."

Kharge said that the BJP was staying in power as a minority government, adding that it was afraid of the Congress-NC alliance.

He alleged that constant revision of the BJP candidates list was evidence of the uncertainty that the Congress-NC alliance

had created within the former.

Kharge accused the BJP of misleading the youth on the promise of employment.

"Deception is the only policy of the BJP for the youth of J&K. Exam paper leaks, bribes, and rampant corruption have delayed recruitment in government departments for the last four years," he alleged.

He said the BJP had stalled development in the Union Territory.

He quoted the example of a market project inaugurated 10 years ago in Anantnag, which he said had seen no progress under PM Modi-led Union government.

Cong appoints vice presidents, general secretaries of APCC



AMARAVATI: All India Congress Committee (AICC) has appointed office-bearers of the Andhra Pradesh Congress Committee (APCC).

AICC President Mallikarjun Kharge approved the appointment of vice presidents, general secretaries, presidents of the district/city Congress committees and heads of various cells of the APCC.

The party named 13 vice-presidents, 37 general secretaries, 25 DCC presidents, and 10 City Congress committee presidents.

The vice presidents are Kota Sathyanarayana, Valiboyina Gurusudham, Sripathi Prakasam, K. Venugopal Reddy, M. Surya Nayak, Udaitha Venakata Rao Yadav, K. Vinaya Kumar, M. Venkata Siva Prasad, K. Shivaji, S. Martin Luther, K. Srinivasu, Vegi Venkatesh and D. Rambhupal Reddy.

The appointment of the APCC office-bearer came nearly eight months after Y. S. Sharmila Reddy was appointed the APCC president.

Sharmila led the party in the simultaneous elections to the state Assembly and Lok Sabha held in May. However, in the third consecutive election, the Congress party drew a blank

in both the Assembly and Lok Sabha.

Mallikarjun Kharge on January 16 had appointed Sharmila as APCC president, a few days after she merged the YSR Telangana Party (YSRTP) with the Congress party.

Sharmila is the sister of former Andhra Pradesh chief minister and YSR Congress Party president Y. S. Jagan Mohan Reddy and daughter of former chief minister late Y. S. Rajasekhara Reddy, who was popular as YSR.

While joining Congress, Sharmila had recalled that her father YSR not only served the Congress party his entire life but also gave his life serving the Congress party.

Sharmila, who had actively campaigned for YSR Congress Party in the 2019 elections, felt sidelined by Jagan after the party came to power with a landslide victory. In 2021, she entered politics in Telangana and floated the YSRTP.

However, she did not contest the recent Assembly elections in Telangana. She claimed that since Congress stood a chance of winning in Telangana, she graciously withheld YSRTP from contesting Assembly elections as she did not want to divide anti-KCR votes.

Rahul Gandhi in US : Fight in India is whether a Sikh will be allowed to wear turban, go to Gurdwara

New Delhi a highly controversial statement, Congress leader Rahul Gandhi has said that the fight in India was not about politics but about religious freedom and regional identities.

While interacting with the members of the Indian community in Virginia, Rahul Gandhi asked a person his name and said that the fight was about whether he, as a Sikh, was going to be allowed to wear a turban in India and be able to visit a Gurdwara or a Tamilian allowed to speak in his language.

He said that the fight is not about politics. "First of all, you have to understand what the fight is about. The fight is not about politics. It is superficial. What is your name?... brother...with the turban... Balinder Singh...The fight is about whether... he as a Sikh is going to be allowed to wear his turban in India... or he as a Sikh is going to be allowed to wear a kada in India... or he as



a Sikh is going to be able to go to Gurdwara. That's what the fight is about and not just for him, for all religions."

"Fight is also about...I can see here in the crowd, people from Tamil Nadu, Punjab, Haryana, Telangana, Karnataka, Andhra Pradesh, and Kerala. When I say Kerala...I have been a Member of Parliament for Kerala...when I say Kerala...Kerala is a simple word, and Punjab is a simple word, but these are not simple

words. This is your history, your language, your tradition. Your entire imagination is in these words," the Congress leader said. Rahul Gandhi attacked the RSS saying it does not believe in diversity.

"...And what the RSS is basically saying is that certain states are inferior to other states, certain languages are inferior to other languages, certain religions are inferior to religions, and certain communities are

Maha BJP leaders meet Amit Shah, make case for contesting 160 Assembly seats

MUMBAI: Maharashtra BJP leaders have made a strong case for contesting about 160 seats in the upcoming state Assembly elections saying that the party should leave seats to allies Shiv Sena and NCP only after considering their respective strengths and winnability during seat-sharing arrangement.

Senior party leaders headed by Deputy Chief Minister Devendra Fadnavis held a meeting late Sunday night with the Union Home Minister Amit Shah.

The leaders reiterated that the BJP should remain a big brother in MahaYuti (grand alliance) and three parties together after learning from the

mistakes of the Lok Sabha elections should contest the ensuing Assembly election unitedly to defeat the Maha Vikas Aghadi.

The meeting was attended by state BJP chief Chandrashekhar Bawankule, Mumbai unit chief Ashish Shelar, former Union Minister Raosaheb Danve, state Higher and Technical Education Minister Chandrakant Patil, state Rural Development Minister Girish Mahajan, state Public Works Minister Ravindra Chavan, and party legislator Pankaja Munde.

The meeting took place when BJP had already launched a poll management plan for reaching up to 99,000 booths across Maharashtra and contesting



the election on the development plank. However, Amit Shah's move to hold interaction with state party leaders deserves significance, especially, when the MahaYuti government is under attack from the Maha Vikas Aghadi over the collapse

of the Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj's statue despite an apology from Prime Minister Narendra Modi and also over the spate of sexual abuse cases, including the Badlapur case where in two four-year-old girls from a reputed school were sexually

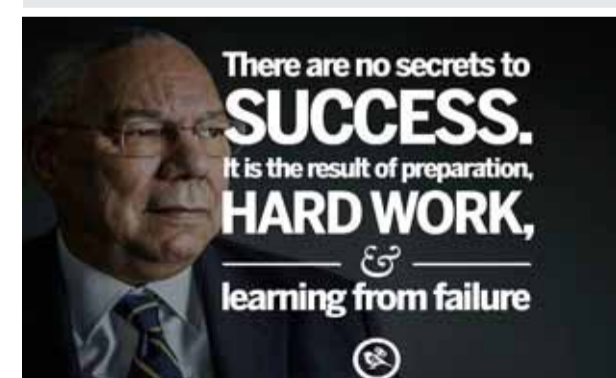


Focus returns to Southeast Asia with PM's visits

Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi's recent visits to Brunei and Singapore signal a renewed emphasis on India's "Act East" policy, marking a crucial step in reconnecting with Southeast Asia. In his third tenure, Modi's outreach is timely, coming after a gap since 2018 when Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) leaders were invited to India for a summit. His forthcoming visits to Laos, the Philippines, and Indonesia, alongside hosting the Prime Ministers of Vietnam and Malaysia, reinforce India's intent to revitalise ties with the region. Modi's visit to Brunei was significant, being the first-ever by an Indian Prime Minister. This neglect is striking, considering Brunei's strategic importance, with ties to the United States, China, and its central ASEAN position. Although trade with the ASEAN region has doubled for India, bilateral trade with Brunei has decreased, especially after India began ramping up oil imports from Russia. While discussions on defence and geostrategic issues occurred, tangible outcomes in trade and investment are yet to be seen. In Singapore, the focus on semiconductor collaboration holds immense potential. With India seeking to expand its rare earth and chip-making industries, and Singapore facing rising costs, this partnership could reduce reliance on US-China-Taiwan tensions. However, a larger, consistent India-ASEAN engagement is necessary. India's exit from the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP) was a setback, and revisiting trade agreements like ASEAN-India Trade in Goods Agreement (AITIGA) and the Comprehensive Economic Cooperation Agreement (CECA) with Singapore is crucial. India's historical ties with Southeast Asia run deep, but modern relationships require recalibration. The Act East policy must evolve beyond rhetoric to ensure that India remains a strategic player in this dynamic region. Enhanced cooperation on regional security, trade, and technology will help solidify India's role in the Indo-Pacific. Positive results will require active engagement in the region.

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REEM AL HASHIMY STRESSES THE TWO NATIONS' COMMITMENT TO GROW TOGETHER

UAE-India: Bonds of trust



During the visit of Sheikh Khaled, the Crown Prince of Abu Dhabi, to Delhi this week, there was one engagement that had emblematic significance for him and for the ties between the United Arab Emirates (UAE) and India.

Visiting Rajghat, His Highness planted a tree in memory of Mahatma Gandhi, following the example of his father, Sheikh Mohamed bin Zayed, in 2016, and his grandfather, the founding president of our country, Sheikh Zayed, in 1992.

The three trees, planted by three generations of the past, current and future leaders of our country, within the span of three decades, will stand side by side, a symbol of the deeply-rooted and growing ties between our two countries: embedded in the past but reaching towards the future. At first glance, our countries appear to be very different. India is almost 40 times larger than the UAE in size and is also the most populous country in the world. There are more than 1,000 Indian citizens for every Emirati citizen. Our economies too are founded on different strengths: agriculture is a key pillar of India's economy, for example, but only makes up less than 1% of the UAE's GDP. And while we both emerged as modern nations in the 20th century, our histories and governance are very different. Yet, the strongest ties between nations are those where common interests and values are enriched by complementary strengths and diversity, embracing difference rather than seeking to paper over it.

The secret of the success — and distinctiveness — of the UAE-India relationship is the way it is rooted in affinity, trust and respect, derived from generations of

human connections. Just as trees depend on strong roots to draw the water and nutrients they need for growth and to hold them fast in tough times, partnerships between nations must have these qualities in order to thrive.

Ours has always been a relationship about people and progress. The first trade links between the Arabian Gulf and India go back thousands of years, as people, goods and ideas crossed back and forth across the ocean. Pottery discovered in recent archaeological excavations in Abu Dhabi shows connections to the Indus Valley civilisations of more than four millennia ago. In my parents' time, many Emiratis travelled to India for medical treatment, and when my children catch the typical colds and flus of childhood, I turn to Indian homoeopathic medicine first, before other remedies.

Strength of the expatriate community

The UAE is home to more than 3.5 million Indians, the largest expatriate

community in our country. Our success is built on our leaders' far-sighted commitment to tolerance, inclusion and the empowerment of women and minorities, and we are grateful for the contribution Indian nationals make to the strength and vibrancy of our economy. The degree of connectivity between our countries

can be seen in the simple fact that there are more than 1,500 flights between the UAE and India every single week.

When a relationship is founded on respect and a sincere inclination towards partnership and collaboration, there is no limit to what can be achieved. In February 2022, India became the first country with which the UAE signed a Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement. Trade negotiations often take years, if not decades, and are sometimes abandoned due to insurmountable differences. We were able to agree our partnership agreement within six months, because of the trust and affinity at the heart of our relationship. In its first year of operation, our bilateral trade jumped by over 15%. We have signed billions of rupees of additional investment deals, and plan to go much further.

Sheikh Khaled recently attended the inauguration of the Indian Institute of Technology Delhi Abu Dhabi, which is the first overseas branch of the prestigious university. We have exchanged agreements

on topics including health innovation and renewable energy, crucial to our nations' and the world's future. During the Crown Prince's visit, further co-operation agreements will be signed, including on civil nuclear technology: a domestic success story for the Emirates, but one rooted in international co-operation. India's research into nuclear desalination to produce clean drinking water — which has obvious importance for a desert country such as the UAE — is one example of the many opportunities which our partnership can enable advances not just in green energy production but also in medical technology, scientific research, agriculture and industry.

Ties that will flourish

Like his grandfather, Sheikh Khaled planted an amaltas tree, Cassia fistula. His father, Sheikh Mohamed bin Zayed, planted the mousari tree (*Mimusops elengi*). Amaltas trees grow fast, embodying opportunity and renewal, while the slower-growing mousari points us to the virtues of stability and patient trust. As the UAE and India continue to develop our comprehensive strategic partnership, these different qualities symbolise our approach. We can have confidence in our mutual affinity and respect and our long history of connection, but also be determined to keep growing and innovating together, renewing our partnership and finding new ways to flourish.

Reem Al Hashimy is the United Arab Emirates (UAE) Minister of State for International Cooperation and the UAE Special Envoy to the Republic of India. Views are personal.



ATANU BISWAS EXPLAINS WHY INDIA NEEDS REGISTER-BASED AND DYNAMIC CENSUSES

Census should be the last enumeration-based one

According to media reports, India is likely to begin conducting the long-delayed Census exercise and complete the survey within 18 months. So, realistically, the final Census report might be available sometime in late 2026 or in 2027, with a roughly 16-year gap since the last Census of 2011. The COVID-19 pandemic, however, is cited as the primary reason for the delay in the census.

As per a United Nations report, in the interim, India surpassed China in population. There have been significant changes in the demographics too. Hauz Khas, a posh neighbourhood in southern Delhi with affluent urbanites, was partly designated as rural in 2011, for example.

While many people are worried that India has been operating without proper data for a long time, in today's world, there remains a significant discrepancy between reality and the data available, even for a decennial census. This discrepancy is especially noticeable as the decade-long gap draws to a close. In actuality, the decennial format of most censuses was merely a compulsion because conducting a census is a mammoth and prohibitively expensive undertaking. It certainly makes sense that if census exercises were conducted more frequently, a number of policies and their execution as well as socioeconomic and health-related studies, might be dynamically adjusted by observing the findings.

An idea to pursue

For the past few years, this writer has personally supported "register-based" and "dynamic" censuses, which could furnish up-to-date census data whenever needed. The database would be updated continuously in real-time during a "dynamic" census. Reportedly, a few years ago, India was preparing software by which



the birth date of a child will come into the back end of the database of the Census Register, and after attaining the age of 18 years, this person would be registered as a voter in the voter list from the Office of the Census Registrar. The name would be removed from the voter list upon death.

Global trends

This could be a significant leap in the direction of a dynamic database. However, India's next Census, which will be the nation's first "digital census", may be a complete enumeration. On the other hand, a number of countries, including Austria, Bahrain, Denmark, Finland, Germany, Greenland, the Netherlands, Singapore, Sweden and Switzerland, are currently moving towards register-based censuses, which produce useful statistics primarily from government sources using data from various administrative registers, which includes population, tax, employment, school, hospital records, and data from municipalities.

These may be complemented by some well-

planned small-scale sample surveys such as those conducted in Switzerland with 5%-10% of the population. Even the United States and the United Kingdom are moving towards register-based censuses. Unsurprisingly, such a census exercise will be cost-effective too. For instance, the cost of the 2001 Census in Austria was €72 million. However when the register-based approach was implemented in 2011, the cost fell to €10 million.

The United Kingdom government declared in 2014 that statistics derived from more frequent and timely administrative data will take the place of the decennial census after 2021. In place of the customary questionnaire-based approach, the U.K. will harvest the data people leave behind in their everyday lives. At the time, the Royal Statistical Society's executive director said the U.K. government had "made the right call". It is actually a "dynamic register-based census", meaning that every pertinent social, economic, and demographic activity and event in people's lives is constantly added to the census database.

Further, in order to produce its official figures, the Office for National Statistics in the U.K. has recently begun to gather more data — reliable data, of course — even from private companies. Examples of this include data collected from supermarket scanners and data on cars and trains from Auto Trader and the Rail Delivery Groups. Notably, India already has an Aadhaar-centric database, unlike the U.K.

And, reportedly, a few years back, the Home Minister asked officials to devise a strategy to merge the voter card, Aadhaar card, and other databases into the Census database.

Database integration

However, combining many registers is never a simple operation. Even though it has been increasingly customary in India recently to integrate databases such as Aadhaar, PAN, voter ID, bank accounts, and mobile numbers, it is still a mammoth task to solve the jigsaw puzzle and to build up the "elephant" by correctly assembling different types of "registers". However, I believe the nation has sufficient expertise to accomplish that. And, by using the administrative data of various available registers instead, thousands of crores of rupees can be saved.

A census serves as a valuable repository of data pertaining to various economic endeavours, educational attainment and literacy rates, housing and domestic facilities, urbanisation, migration, mortality, fertility, religion, language, and additional socio-economic, cultural, and demographic information. It is unclear if our intended method will be able to update data on the majority of these aspects in real time. Naturally, if any data is lacking, it can be updated on a regular basis by properly conducting surveys, perhaps on a small scale.

Overall, such an exercise might usher in an era of dynamic, continuous censuses. And the greatest legacy of digital India might be that, if it can be implemented. Let the upcoming Census be India's last complete enumeration-based census.

Atanu Biswas is Professor of Statistics at the Indian Statistical Institute, Kolkata. Views are personal.



BOOKS: REVIEW

New book dives deep into India's Eastern Frontier

In India's Near East: A New History, Avinash Paliwal offers an intricate and meticulously researched exploration of India's eastern periphery, covering its relations with Bangladesh, Myanmar, and China. By weaving together the threads of history, politics, and diplomacy, Paliwal presents a compelling narrative that not only decodes the region's current turmoil but also traces its historical antecedents. The book is a masterclass in combining thorough research with thoughtful analysis, making it a significant contribution to understanding the complex dynamics of South Asia.

At the heart of the book is the premise that India's domestic state-building and its international diplomacy are deeply intertwined in what Paliwal terms the "near east" — a region largely composed of Bangladesh and Myanmar. The book also touches upon the influence of China, whose presence

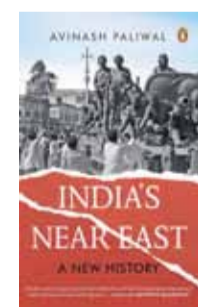
looms large in the region. Paliwal's analysis focuses on the interplay of political ambitions, insurgencies, narco-crime, and religious nationalism, showing how these forces have shaped the region since colonial times.

One of the book's central themes is the idea that history repeats itself in echoes. Paliwal draws a fascinating parallel between the political decline of Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, the founding father of Bangladesh, and the challenges currently facing his daughter, Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina. He writes, "Keen to preserve an ally, India overlooked Mujib's authoritarianism, inability to contain corruption..." Replace "Mujib" with "Sheikh Hasina," and the parallels become clear. This insight reflects how old political patterns continue to shape the present, with history's lessons often unheeded by those in power.

However, reducing the book to just a primer on Bangladesh would

be doing it a disservice. Paliwal's work spans the broader region, interconnecting the histories of India's northeast, Bangladesh, and Myanmar. He unpacks the complex relationships between these areas, tracing the ripple effects of major historical events. One such event is the partition of Burma from British India in 1937, which Paliwal argues still reverberates in regional politics, particularly in questions concerning minority rights and ethnic tensions. This historical approach allows Paliwal to present a rich, multifaceted picture of a region where the past continuously shapes the present.

The book also challenges some entrenched myths about India's strategic posture in its early days as a republic. Contrary to the belief that India was passive in its strategic motivations, Paliwal details India's proactive military assistance to Burma in 1949 to counter Burmese communists. He highlights how India adopted colonial counter-



India's Near East: A New History By Avinash Paliwal; India Penguin; 480 pages; Rs 799

insurgency methods to quell insurgencies in its northeastern states. This paints a picture of a nation deeply engaged in projecting power and safeguarding its interests in the region, even in its nascent years.

One of the book's most fascinating sections is its exploration of India's intelligence operations. Through archival research and interviews, Paliwal sheds light on the role of India's Research and Analysis Wing (RAW) in its diplomacy and regional strategy. The intelligence agency's involvement in the day-to-day diplomacy of the region is presented in remarkable detail, offering readers a rare glimpse into the behind-the-scenes operations that have shaped India's foreign policy. This portrayal of RAW's extensive influence adds a layer of

intrigue and depth to the narrative.

While Paliwal is critical of India's engagement with the region, he is not without hope. He describes India's record in the region as "sub-optimal," suggesting that Delhi has often failed to connect with its neighbors in a sustainable way. Yet, his critique is balanced with an acknowledgment of the opportunities that lie ahead. The book invites readers to reflect on the implications of India's strategic outlook for the region, particularly for India's northeast and its connectivity ambitions in Southeast Asia. By doing so, Paliwal brings attention to a region that is often overlooked in public discourse, except during moments of crisis such as migration or political upheaval.

One of the book's enduring contributions is its ability to spark a public debate on India's eastern periphery. Paliwal successfully moves the conversation about India's "near east" from academic seminars into the public spotlight, where it rightfully belongs. His careful analysis and the vast historical context he provides make the book essential reading for policymakers, scholars, and anyone interested in the future of South Asia.

Govt vows to protect retailers facing competition from e-comm players, says Piyush Goyal

NEW DELHI: Commerce Minister Piyush Goyal on Wednesday said the government will protect the interest of 100 million small retailers, who are facing competition from major e-commerce players.

Last month, the minister lambasted the e-commerce companies, questioning their business model that has been impacting small retailers in the country.

"I assure you that we will continue to work with you to meet the aspirations of 1.4 billion Indians for a better quality of life, for a better future, the aspirations of 140 million farming families... the aspiration of a 100 million small retailers, the small mom-and-pop stores, which have disappeared from the US landscape,



which we are at least making an effort to protect to some extent," he said.

Goyal was addressing members of the India-US business council.

He also said that the US-India CEO forum will meet on October 2-3 in Washington to further their commercial dialogue. The minister noted the

stated that e-commerce companies are eating into the small retailers' high-value, high-margin products that are the only items through which the mom-and-pop stores survive.

The government on Wednesday launched a trade portal to provide all kinds of information related to exports and imports to guide existing and aspiring exporters on the opportunities available in the international market. The Trade Connect ePlatform will provide detailed information on global demand of a product, country-wise trade information, market access conditions. Launching the portal, Union Minister Piyush Goyal said it will act as a one-stop solution for all kinds of information such as customs duties, rules, and regulations.

"common source of concern" for both the US and India in critical minerals and stressed on self-reliance in the sector.

"Let us work towards critical minerals which is an important part of our partnership to have a resilient supply chain. We have a lot to offer and you have a lot to offer," he added. The minister had last month

BEL Secures 850 Cr Order from Cochin Shipyard for Indigenous Multi-Function Radar, Boosting Naval Defence Capabilities



ARUN KUMAR RAO
Bengaluru

Navratna Defence Public Sector Undertaking Bharat Electronics Limited (BEL) has once again demonstrated its leadership in advanced defence technology, securing a prestigious order worth Rs 850 crore from Cochin Shipyard Limited (CSL). This deal is for the supply of an indigenous Multi-Function Radar (MFR) operating in the X Band, a critical system designed to safeguard naval vessels by detecting, acquiring, and

tracking airborne threats, press statement from BEL said.

In a ceremonial handover, T.D. Nandakumar, GM (ADSN) of BEL, received the order from Sreejith, Director (Operations) at CSL. The event was attended by key industry figures including Suresh Kumar KV, Director (Marketing)/BEL, Jose VJ, Director (Finance)/CSL, and Prabha Goyal, Executive Director (National Marketing)/BEL, further solidifying BEL's commitment to delivering cutting-edge defence technologies.

The MFR (X) is fully designed

by the Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO) and manufactured by BEL, underlining India's growing prowess in indigenous defence capabilities. The radar's advanced features provide naval ships with robust protection, reflecting BEL's dedication to enhancing India's maritime security.

BEL has been on a winning streak, securing orders worth Rs 305 crore just after its recent announcement on August 22, 2024. These include a wide array of equipment such as navigational systems, thermal imagers, communication gear, and fire control systems, contributing to its cumulative order book, which now stands at an impressive Rs 7,075 crore for the financial year. This success not only highlights BEL's technical expertise but also reinforces its role as a key player in India's defence sector, driving innovation and self-reliance.

MSME Registration Surge with 5 Crore Units Registered



NEW DELHI: In a significant development for India's economic landscape, the Ministry of Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs) has reported a remarkable increase in the number of registered MSMEs over the past year.

The figure has skyrocketed from 1.65 crore to 5 crore, marking a substantial stride in the formalisation of this crucial sector.

Dr. Rajneesh, Additional Secretary and Development Commissioner at the Ministry of MSME, revealed these figures during the FICCI MSME National Conference 2024.

He highlighted that this surge is the result of a concerted effort by the government, in collaboration with state authorities and industry associations, to bridge the formalisation gap in the MSME sector.

The importance of this development cannot be overstated. MSMEs are the backbone of the Indian economy, contributing approximately 30 per cent to the national GDP, 36 per cent to manufacturing, and 44 per cent to exports.

Moreover, they provide employment to an estimated 21 crore individuals, making them the second-largest employer after agriculture.

Alongside the registration drive, the government has made significant strides in addressing the credit needs of MSMEs.

The Credit Guarantee Trust for Micro and Small Enterprises (CGTMSE) has extended credit guarantees worth Rs 4 lakh crore in the last two years alone, a figure that surpasses the cumulative amount of Rs 2.6 lakh crore provided over the previous 22 years.

Government to Revise FTAs to Boost Indian Auto Components Industry



NEW DELHI: The Indian government is set to revise several Free Trade Agreements (FTAs) to bolster domestic industries, according to Union Minister of State for Commerce and Industry Jitin Prasada. Speaking at the 64th annual session of the Automotive Component Manufacturers Association (ACMA) event in the national capital, he said that the automotive industry has the potential to contribute \$1.6 trillion by 2047.

EVs can drive Indian automotive industry reach Rs 134 lakh cr by 2047

NEW DELHI: The domestic automotive industry has crossed Rs 20 lakh crore mark in FY24 and has the potential to be worth \$1.6 trillion (about Rs 134 lakh crore) by 2047, driven by electric vehicles (EVs), according to industry leaders.

The automotive industry in the country is poised to be one of the key growth engines in towards achieving a \$32-trillion GDP by 2047, according to Pawan Goenka, Chairman of IN-SPACE at the Department of Space. Addressing the Automotive Component Manufacturers Association (ACMA) event in the national capital, he said that the automotive industry has the potential to contribute \$1.6 trillion by 2047.

The auto sector also contributes significantly to the direct and indirect employment generation in the country, Goenka further said, adding that the



auto industry will contribute more and more to the GDP of the country from the current level of around 6.8 per cent. Over the last two decades or so, the industry has grown by 17 per cent CAGR. The Society of Indian Automobile Manufacturers (SIAM) President Vinod Aggarwal said that the domestic auto industry has identified

50 critical components for local production in order to reduce import dependence.

As most of these items are electrical or electronics, there is a need to develop capabilities and capacities in India for such high tech items, he added. Aggarwal told the gathering that the Indian automotive industry has crossed a landmark figure

of Rs 20 lakh crore in FY24 and is contributing almost 14-15 per cent of the total GST collected in the country.

SIAM, along with ACMA, has voluntarily set targets for increasing localisation. The industry bodies are committed to reduce import content by 60 per cent to 20 per cent by 2025 from the base 2019-20 levels, thereby targeting the reduced reports to the tune of Rs 20,000 to Rs 25,000 crore in five years. The country has become the third largest passenger vehicle market, the largest two and three wheeler market and third largest commercial vehicle market.

As the adoption of EVs increase in the country, the cost of EVs will almost match petrol and diesel vehicles within the next two years, Union Minister for Road Transport and Highways, Nitin Gadkari, earlier said at the event.

LIC's new business premium up 35 pc to Rs 19,309 crore in August

MUMBAI: Life Insurance Corporation (LIC) of India saw a 35.1 per cent surge in its new business premium for the month of August to Rs 19,309.10 crore, from Rs 14,292.53 crore in the same month last year, showed data by the Life Insurance Council on Monday.

The LIC's new business premium collection for the first five months of FY25 rose by 27.73 per cent to Rs 95,180.63 crore, up from Rs 74,516.31 crore in the same period last year. The individual premium segment saw collections of Rs 5,047.36 crore in August, representing a 4.60 per cent rise from Rs 4,825.52 crore in August 2023.

Meanwhile, the group premium segment experienced a significant increase of 46 per cent, amounting to Rs



13,559.22 crore in August, compared to Rs 9,287.40 crore in August 2023.

Notably, group yearly premiums surged by 291.14 per cent to Rs 702.52 crore, a substantial increase from Rs 179.61 crore in the previous year.

Late last month, LIC presented a cheque of Rs 3,662.17 crore to Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman as the government's share of the company's dividend, approved by the shareholders. LIC has completed 68 years since its incorporation and has an asset base of over Rs 52.85 lakh crore (as of March 31, 2024).

FOREX RATE RISK

Measurement and Mitigation by Pharmaceutical Companies in India



DR. ANIL KUMAR ANGRISH | **ISHA ANAND**

Foreign exchange exposure is the sensitivity of changes in the real domestic currency value of assets, liabilities, or operating incomes to unanticipated changes in exchange rates (Adler & Dumas, 1984). Pharmaceutical companies in India are continually exposed to the danger of fluctuating exchange rates because of their growing global presence. Pharmaceutical companies in India face forex exposure due to their global exports and imports. Drugs & Pharmaceutical exports from India remained a key driver of merchandise export growth from India in FY 2023-24. In FY 2023-24, drugs and pharmaceuticals export touched a new level of US \$ 27.85 Bn as compared to exports of US \$ 25.39 Bn in FY2022-23, thereby registering a percentage increase of 9.67 per cent. Drugs and pharmaceutical exports formed 3.59 per cent of overall exports (merchandise as well as services) from India. Merchandise exports for 2023-24 stood at US \$437.06 Bn and Services exports for the same period stood at \$339.62 Bn. So, exports of Drugs and Pharmaceuticals remained one of 17 sectors which exhibited positive growth of 12.73 per cent in March 2024 as compared to same period during last year, i.e., March 2023. Overall, 17 out of 30 key sectors have shown positive growth in March 2024 as compared to the same period of previous year. On import front, Medicinal & Pharmaceutical Products have exhibited negative growth (-2.85%) in March 2024. It is not only overall exports and imports but the country-specific forex rate fluctuations, e.g., Indian Rupee vs. US\$. Quantum of overall pharmaceutical exports to that economy and imports from that economy also determines impact of exchange rate fluctuations, e.g., the USA

remained the top most market for pharmaceuticals from India as it accounted for 31.34 per cent of India's Drugs and Pharmaceutical exports for 2023-24. Growth rate of exports to the USA was 15.66 per cent during FY23-24 as compared to FY22-23. The USA, United Kingdom (UK), South Africa, Netherlands, and France constituted 41.65 per cent of overall exports from India's Drugs and Pharmaceuticals. Besides the USA, growth rates for FY2023-24 remained in double digits for UK (21.12 per cent), Netherlands (17.64 per cent), and France (17.14 per cent).

Pharmaceutical company specific impact can be observed from the sensitivity of changes in their real domestic currency value of assets, liabilities, or operating incomes. Revenue split in terms of domestic revenue and revenue from foreign countries becomes pertinent in this regard. Foreign exchange earnings and outgo give overall picture (Table 1).

It can be observed from above table that for certain pharmaceutical companies forex earnings and outgo is comparatively low, e.g., Abbott India, or Alembic Pharma whereas it is very high for certain companies like Sun Pharma, Dr. Reddy's Laboratories, Aurobindo Pharma. Certain pharmaceutical companies are export-intensive in nature as they get huge chunk of their revenue from overseas. There are pharmaceutical companies which are import-intensive in nature which rely heavily on imports, and resultant forex outgo is on higher side for those companies.

Effect of exchange differences on restatement of foreign currency cash and cash equivalents can be significant, e.g., translation exposure of Glenmark was found to be the highest amongst top 20 companies. It was Rs.918.11 million in 2023. It was Rs. 731 mn for Zydus Lifesciences, Rs. 445 mn for Dr. Reddy's Laboratories, and Rs. 195.30 mn for Sun Pharma for FY23.

External Commercial Borrowings (ECBs) have implications for pharmaceutical companies in India as funds are borrowed



Table 1: Forex earnings and outgo of top 20 pharmaceutical companies in India for 2023

Company	Forex Earnings	Forex Outgo
Sun Pharma	154,052.60	71,511.40
Cipla	64,281.70	20,201.80
Dr. Reddy's Labs	1,28,803.00	41,484.00
Divi's Labs	66,536.80	15,714.70
Zydus Lifesciences	67,577.00	20,544.00
Mankind Pharma	1,795.19	870.67
Torrent Pharma	20,994.20	3,735.30
Lupin	48,057.30	21,751.70
Aurobindo Pharma	85,483.30	41,447.20
Alkem Labs	16,916.30	4,189.50
Abbott India	309.80	5,817.50
Ipsca Labs	26,434.20	8,177.50
GSK	1,621.67	15,629.95
Glenmark	46,463.66	12,712.17
Gland Pharma	30,589.57	17,818.72
JB Chemicals	8,943.28	2,142.58
Ajanta Pharma	22,420.20	4,293.10
Laurus Labs	43,470.00	13,720.00
Sanofi India	3,904.02	4,036.77
Alembic Pharma	15.68	29.90

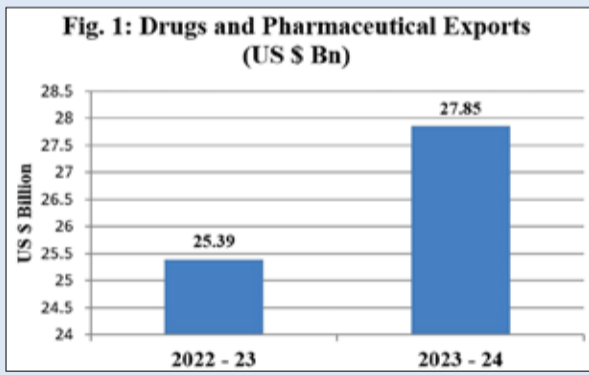
Source: Compiled from Annual Reports of respective companies (2023)

in foreign currency-denominated debt via the ECB and trade credit. ECBs can include Commercial Bank loans, Buyers' Credit, Suppliers' Credit, Securitised Instruments like floating rate notes and fixed rate notes, Credit from official export credit agencies, or commercial borrowings from multilateral financial institutions, e.g., International Finance Corporation. ECBs must meet certain parameters such as minimum maturity, permitted and non-permitted end uses and maximum all-in-cost ceiling. Certain companies have faced crisis in past on account of Foreign Currency Convertible Bonds (FCCBs), e.g., Wockhard defaulted on its FCCBs in 2009. The company struggled for many years because of FCCBs. Singapore-based hedge fund QVT had approached the Bombay High Court in 2010 against Wockhard.

Out of top 20 pharmaceutical companies, four companies namely Sun Pharma, Zydus Lifesciences, Ipsca Labs, and Glen-

mark had undergone ECB in 2022-23. Lengthy minimum maturity requirements may effectively wipe out any short-term funding alternatives through the ECB route. ECB can be as secured loan or unsecured loan, and can be in difference currencies, e.g., Sun Pharma had ECB in the form of secured loan from Industrial Development Fund, Russia amounting to RUB 25 million, and it had unsecured loan in USD to the tune of US \$16.7 mn, and in Japanese Yen to the tune of JPY 1,666.7 mn.

To mitigate foreign exchange risk, companies follow strategies which are broadly categorized as Internal Strategies, and External Strategies. Internal Strategies comprise (a) invoicing in local currency, (b) netting (involves linking or aggregating numerous financial responsibilities to determine the amount of net obligations), (c) matching as distinct from netting as netting relates to possible flows among group companies whereas matching includes third-party companies,



and (d) leading (paying an obligation before the due date) and lagging (paying an obligation after the due date). External Strategies involve (a) hedging through Forward Contracts, (b) Hedging through Future Contracts, (c) Hedging through Currency Options, and (d) Hedging through Currency Swaps.

Pharmaceutical companies use forward contracts and currency swaps as tools to mitigate the foreign exchange risk. For example, Sun Pharmaceutical Industries Limited used Forward Contracts and Currency Swaps to mitigate FX risk while dealing with USD, ZAR, RUB, GBP, and EUR. Cipla used Forward Contracts and Option Contracts to mitigate FX risk while dealing with USD, ZAR, AUD, GBP, and EUR. For these two companies, key markets (currencies involved) remained US (USD), South Africa (ZAR), Russia (RUB), the UK, Australia (AUD) and Europe. Similarly, Dr. Reddy's Laboratories, Ipsca Labs used Forward Contracts as well as Option Contracts to mitigate forex risk. Companies like Divi's Labs, Zydus Lifesciences, Aurobindo Pharma, Glenmark, Gland Pharma, Ajanta Pharma, Sanofi India did not carry out any commodity business and had not undertaken any hedging activities in FY23. Mankind Pharma dealt in various currencies but the company had not reported the use of any tool or technique to manage FX risk in their annual report for FY23.

Abbott, Lupin, JB Chemicals, and Laurus Labs used Forward Contracts to mitigate forex risk. Torrent Pharma also used Forward Contracts and Option Contracts. Another aspect is that amount associated with each

currency varies according to the market in which the company operates.

The maximum amount associated with forex transactions of pharmaceutical companies from India for 2023 was US Dollar followed by Australian Dollar and Great Britain Pound (GBP). The US dollar's supremacy in cross-border B2B payments is mostly due to its stability and liquidity. The use of dollar is a general trend and holds true for pharmaceutical sector too as this widespread acceptability means that businesses in a variety of nations are prepared to accept USD payments.

Macro-economic impact can be gauged from the fact that in 2023-24, India's drugs and pharmaceuticals exports touched US \$ 27.9 billion with a year-on-year increase of 9.67 per cent whereas in rupee terms, pharma exports from India for 2023-24 stood at Rs. 2.30 lakh crore with a year-on-year growth of 13 per cent as exports for 2022-23 stood at Rs. 2.04 lakh crore. Hence, exchange rate has the potential to provide or take away part of the growth in pharmaceutical sector. Hence, mitigation measures need attention.

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DISCLAIMER: Views are personal and do not represent the views of the Institute.

Hostile business environment and indifferent government policies hit Ambala mixi industry, says manufacturers

SATISH HANDA
Ambala

Ambala has gone down in history as the city where the first mixi in India was manufactured way back in 1963. Recalling the good old days, Ajay Aggarwal President of Ambala Electrical Appliances said it was boom time for this industrialists in this business in the seventies as there was ready business for every body, despite the lack of



sound technical knowledge, the idea caught on like wildfire and soon there were more than 500 unit engaged in this business to produce mixers, grinders, juicers and its components being supplied across the country.

India's ambitious semiconductor journey is taking shape



NEW DELHI: As India begins its semiconductor electronics manufacturing journey amid Prime Minister Narendra Modi's "it is right time to be in India" call, the reformist government, a growing manufacturing base in Bharat, and a huge aspirational market can help realise the mega chip dream. To begin with, about Rs 1.52 lakh crore (nearly \$18 billion) worth of investments have come in India's semiconductor manufacturing space in a short span of time and several projects are already in the pipeline.

The construction of two semiconductor units is in full swing (Micron's plant in Gujarat and Tata Electronics' unit in Assam) and the work will soon commence on the three more units in the country. According to industry experts, the country could receive up to \$30 billion investment in the sector in the next three-four years which would further bolster its position in the global supply chain. In March this year, PM Modi laid the foundation stone of three semiconductor projects worth Rs 1.25 lakh crore.

As per reports, India's semiconductor-related market will reach \$64 billion in 2026, nearly triple the size in 2019. Towards achieving this goal, the 'Semicon India' initiative allows financial support for front-end fabrication units, display fabs, semiconductor packaging, compound semiconductors, sensors, and display

manufacturing. Semiconductors is a foundational industry. With the advent of artificial intelligence (AI), chips are being used in medical instruments, mobile phones, laptops, cars, trucks, trains, televisions and practically every device on earth India is a major consumer of chips and has built the world's best digital public infrastructure (DPI) on this chip.

This small chip is playing a significant role in ensuring last-mile delivery in Bharat. Whether it is the unified payments interface (UPI), RuPay card, Digi Locker, or Digi Yatra, various digital platforms have become part of everyday life. The demand for data centres in the country is continuously rising and these run on chips. Experts say that by expanding production capacity, the country is poised to become a major player in the sector. National initiatives, such as the Semicon India Programme and the India Semiconductor Mission (ISM), are focused on capturing a significant share of the global market, driving innovation, and stimulating economic growth through job creation and technological advancement. The government is working on setting up a semiconductor research centre at the Indian Institute of Space Sciences, along with partnering with IITs so that engineers not only develop high-tech chips for today but also research next-gen chips.

RBI penalises Axis Bank, HDFC Bank for deficiencies in regulatory compliance

A penalty of Rs 1.91 crore has been imposed on Axis Bank, of Rs 1 crore on HDFC Bank. The RBI has imposed penalties totalling Rs 2.91 crore on Axis Bank and HDFC Bank for certain deficiencies in statutory and regulatory compliance.



In a statement on Tuesday, the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) said a penalty of Rs 1.91 crore has been imposed on Axis Bank for contravention of certain provisions of the Banking Regulation Act, and non-compliance with certain directions on 'Interest Rate on Deposits', 'Know Your Customer (KYC)' and 'Credit Flow to Agriculture-Collateral free agricultural loans'.

evaluation of the bank was conducted by RBI with reference to its financial position as on March 31, 2023 and a review of activities of its subsidiary company was carried out. A notice was issued. After considering Axis Bank's reply to the notice, the RBI said charges against the bank were sustained, warranting imposition of monetary penalty.

allotted multiple customer identification codes to certain customers instead of a Unique Customer Identification Code (UCIC) for each customer. The RBI further said Axis Bank had obtained collateral security for agricultural loans up to Rs 1.6 lakh in certain cases.

In case of HDFC Bank, the RBI said a statutory inspection for supervisory evaluation of the bank was conducted with reference to its financial position as on March 31, 2022. Based on supervisory findings of non-compliance with RBI directions and related correspondence in that regard, a notice was issued to the bank. After considering the HDFC Bank's reply to the notice, additional submissions made by it and oral submissions made during the personal hearing, the RBI found, inter alia, that the following charges against the bank were sustained, warranting imposition of monetary penalty, the RBI said.

A wholly owned subsidiary of the bank undertook business of technology service provider, which is not permissible business that can be undertaken by a banking company, it added.

The central bank, however, added that the penalties are based on deficiencies in statutory and regulatory compliance and is not intended to pronounce upon the validity of any transaction or agreement entered into by the banks with their customers.

Musk may be world's first trillionaire by 2027, Adani in 2028, Ambani in 2033: Report

Elon Musk will be the richest in the world with USD 237 billion net worth, to become the world's first trillionaire needs to grow at an average annual growth rate of 110 per cent, the report says



NEW DELHI: Elon Musk, the charismatic CEO of electric car maker Tesla and rocket manufacturer SpaceX, may become the world's first trillionaire by 2027, while Indian tycoon Gautam Adani may attain that status in the following year, and Asia's richest man Mukesh Ambani may do so in 2033, according to an Informa Connect Academy report.

with a wealth of just under USD 100 billion, maybe the second trillionaire (net worth equal to at least one trillion US dollars) if his ports-to-power conglomerate was to continue growing at the current 123 per cent average annual rate, it added. Rival Ambani, now ranked Asia's richest with a net worth of USD 111 billion, may achieve the same status in 2033, according to the report. His oil-to-telecom-and-retail conglomerate is slated to hit trillion-dollar market cap

status in 2035. Ambani's Reliance Industries Ltd is the only Indian company projected to hit that mark. The companies that will hit the trillion-dollar market cap mark include Taiwan's semiconductor maker TSMC, which has a market cap of USD 893.7 billion now and is expected to achieve that status in 2025. It will be closely followed by Berkshire Hathaway, pharma giant Eli Lilly, technology company Broadcom and electric automobile firm Tesla.

Yes Bank stake buy jeopardised by 51% demand



MUMBAI: Bidders' insistence on having a 51 per cent stake in Yes Bank may end up jeopardising the stake buy, an informed source said on Thursday.

As per the source, the talks on any deal "are not going anywhere" because of all the bidders' push on the 51 per cent stake. The source explained that the RBI was uncomfortable with a foreign entity owning a 51 per cent stake in a big entity like Yes Bank. There are reports of two bidders — Japan's SMBC and Emirates NBD.

Retail inflation at 3.65 pc in August: Govt data



NEW DELHI: Retail inflation marginally increased to 3.65 per cent in August and remained within the Reserve Bank's target of 4 per cent, the government data showed on Thursday. The Consumer Price Index (CPI)-based retail inflation was 3.6 per cent in July 2024 and 6.83 per cent in August 2023. Inflation in the food basket was 5.66 per cent in August, marginally up from 5.42 per cent in July, according to the data released by the National Statistical Office (NSO). The inflation also was below 4 per cent in July. The government has tasked the Reserve Bank of India to ensure that the CPI inflation remains at 4 per cent with a margin of 2 per cent on either side.

Ola rival Ather Energy files for IPO to raise Rs 3,100 cr



NEW DELHI: Electric two-wheeler maker Ather Energy on Monday filed preliminary papers with capital markets regulator Sebi to raise funds through an Initial Public Offering (IPO).

The proposed IPO is a combination of a fresh issue of equity shares worth Rs 3,100 crore and an Offer For Sale of 2.2 crore equity shares by promoters and investors shareholders.

Sensex trades lower, ITC and HUL top losers

MUMBAI: Indian frontline indices opened lower on Friday due to heavyweights like ITC, HUL, Asian Paints and M&M falling the most. At 9.58 a.m., Sensex was down 200 points or 0.25 per cent at 82,762 and Nifty was down 63 points or 0.25 per cent at 25,325.



The broader market trend remained bullish. On the National Stock Exchange (NSE), 1697 shares were trading in the green and 598 shares in the red. In early trading hours, Nifty mid-cap 100 index was up 363 points or 0.61 per cent at 60,003 and

Nifty smallcap 100 index was up 128 points or 0.66 per cent at 19,482. In the Sensex pack, Tata Steel, Wipro, JSW Steel, Tata Motors, Power Grid, Nestle, IndusInd Bank, NTPC, SBI, Bajaj Finserv, SBI and Kotak Mahindra Bank were the top gainers. Asian Paints, HUL, ITC, Bharti Airtel, M&M, Bajaj Finance, Infosys, Maruti Suzuki and Ultra-Tech Cement were the top losers.

Among the sectoral indices, FMCG, pharma, fin service and IT fell the most. PSU bank, metal, realty and media contributed the most. Hardik Matalia, Derivative Analyst of Choice Broking said, "After a gap up opening, Nifty can find support at 25,300 followed by 25,250 and 25,200. On the higher side, 25,500 can be an immediate resistance, followed by 25,550 and 25,600."

Union Minister Nitin Gadkari assures he won't oppose incentives to e-vehicles



NEW DELHI: With falling lithium-ion battery prices, electric vehicles can now maintain cost without subsidies but it is for the finance and heavy industries ministries to decide if incentives need to be given to electric vehicles, Union Minister Nitin Gadkari said on Monday.

years, the cost of EVs will be the same with their petrol and diesel counterparts.

"First of all, I am not against any subsidies. I don't have any problem," Gadkari said when asked if more incentives were needed to accelerate electric mobility as adoption in India has not been as expected.

Speaking at the annual session of Automotive Components Manufacturers Association (ACMA), Gadkari, the Minister for Road Transport and Highways, said within two

Elaborating his views, he said at one point the price of the lithium ion battery was USD 150 per kilowatt hour. Now it is something USD 108 to 110 per kilowatt hour. "I am confident it will come to USD 100," he asserted. Moreover, he said the manufacturing of EVs has witnessed an increase in volume terms. "My assessment was that without subsidy, you can maintain that cost (of EVs) because the cost of production is less," Gadkari said.

India Aims to Double MSME Credit Guarantees in Next Two Years

NEW DELHI: The Indian government aims to significantly enhance the credit guarantees available to micro and small enterprises (MSEs) under the Credit Guarantee Fund Trust for Micro and Small Enterprises (CGTMSE) scheme, with plans to expand this by an additional Rs 5 lakh crore over the next



two years, a senior official announced. Speaking at a FICCI event on Tuesday, Rajneesh,

Additional Secretary and Development Commissioner of Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs), revealed that credit guarantees worth Rs 4 lakh crore had been extended to MSEs in the past two years. This follows a cumulative credit guarantee of Rs 2.6 lakh crore disbursed through the CGTMSE

scheme in the first 20 years of its existence. "In a span of 22 years, CGTMSE had extended credit guarantees worth Rs 2.6 lakh crore. However, in the last two years alone, we have surpassed that by providing Rs 4 lakh crore. In the next two years, we plan to ramp this up by another Rs 5 lakh crore," Rajneesh stated.

Hindi Language in Banks- Battles for Betterment



SATISH SINGH
In the seven decades after independence, there has been an unprecedented increase in the use of Hindi, for which there have been many reasons, of which the market force has been the most important. But Hindi has not yet become the working language in Banks, but the situation has improved from before. Employees who are fond of Hindi send mails or correspond in Hindi. As per the instructions of the bank, Mangal or Unicode font of Hindi has been installed in all computers, so that willing bank employees can work in Hindi. This initiative of the bank has made working in Hindi easier in Banks.



customer wants, he can get the passbook printed in Hindi by choosing the option of Hindi language; money can also be withdrawn from the ATM machine by adopting the option Hindi language or any app of the bank can now be used in Hindi, but most of the customers use the technical equipment or apps related to banking in English instead of Hindi, while they do not even know the English language. There is a need for change in such a situation or mindset.

Hindi, but no one writes notes in Hindi. If someone wants to write, the top executives do not sign the Hindi notes.

or want to work in Hindi. Many times, those working in Hindi are even punished. It is common to make fun of employees and officers working in Banks. Employees who communicate in Hindi are looked down upon.

in the mental slavery of English, which Prime Minister Narendra Modi had talked about. In Banks, English has dominated everyone's mind. By the way, one reason for this has been the half-hearted promotion of Hindi by the country's policy makers after independence. As a result, today the banking system is badly entangled in the web of English.

Banks are constantly trying to promote the Hindi language. In this matter, it is also the responsibility of the common people that they should not be ashamed of working in Hindi language. No one becomes illiterate or stupid by communicating in Hindi language or writing in Hindi language. Since, banks have provided facility to choose Hindi language option by using technology to promote Hindi language, therefore, banks should also be concerned whether customers are choosing Hindi language option or not and should encourage customers to carry out banking operations in Hindi language.

To show the Home Ministry of India or to meet the standards set by the Parliamentary Committee reviewing the progress of Hindi, Mangal font or Unicode is installed on the computer desktop of all employees and officers. The department heads confirm this in writing, but in reality, except for Hindi Savvy, no employee or officer works in Hindi on the computer.

By and large, everyone in Banks is doing all banking related work in English. Even if they do not have knowledge of English language. Due to compulsion, bank officials are ready to read, write or speak in Hindi. They earn their bread with Hindi and remain trapped in the trap of English. Their love for English is so strong that their children are educated in convent schools.

However, despite all the obstacles faced by Hindi in Banks, it would be appropriate to say that the condition of Hindi language has improved in Banks compared to earlier. Change does not come in a day. Therefore, we can hope that the future of Hindi in Banks will be bright in the coming times.

The condition of Hindi in Banks is so bad that no senior officer wants to discuss or converse in Hindi at the internal level. In Banks, Hindi is considered the language of employees and lower level officers or employees. However, in all the branches in many states of the country, Bank employees have to speak in Hindi, because customers communicate in Hindi or local dialects.

The employees and officers posted in the official language department and the top executives of the Bank shows displeasure about the poor condition and direction of Hindi in Banks, but after 14 September or after the month of September, they forget about taking Hindi forward. However, the top executives of the Bank do not want to be left behind at any cost in performing the annual ritual of "Hindi Diwas", but what will be the result of such formality? Will this promote Hindi in Banks or will the desire to imbibe Hindi wholeheartedly grow in the minds of Bank employees?

A beautiful picture of Hindi can change if the thinking changes. In this case, the employees of Hindi speaking states can take the initiative to work in Hindi. Language is not only the identity of the country but also of the human being. Talking in one's own language does not reduce anyone's value. Today, Prime Minister Narendra Modi and many of his cabinet ministers communicate in Hindi. There have been many instances of the Prime Minister and several Union ministers communicating with Bank heads in Hindi. In such a situation, not working in Hindi in Banks is beyond comprehension.

The way the current government shows support for Hindi in its work, it is possible that the thinking of Bank employees may also change, and they may move forward in the direction of getting rid of the English mindset. The top executive of the Bank should take cognizance of the current situation and take initiative to change the situation. Even if slowly, Bank employees are moving forward in this direction. Therefore, it can be expected that the working of Hindi will continue to move forward in Banks.

Review of Work in Hindi The work being done in Hindi is reviewed every quarter in the regional, administrative, local head offices and corporate offices of banks. In terms of statistics, all departments achieve the target of working in Hindi, but in reality, the situation is very different & dismal. Some departments do correspond in

Today, even in South India, many customers communicate in Hindi. Especially in big cities. Despite this, employees and officers posted in Bank branches do internal correspondence in English. Since the nationalization of Banks, the dominance of English language has remained in Banks.

Conclusion Our Banks are also trapped

Since its inception, the com-

Flexiloans Secures Rs 290 Crore in Series C Funding to Expand MSME Lending Operations

NEW DELHI: MSME-focused digital lending platform Flexiloans has raised Rs 290 crore in its Series C equity funding round, led by global investors Accion, Nuveen (the investment manager of TIAA), and Fundamentum, with existing investor Maj Invest also participating.



Capital, Maj Invest, and others.

The funding round comprised both primary and secondary transactions.

The Mumbai-based NBFC-fintech firm plans to utilise the capital to expand its operations, enhance its product offerings, and strengthen its technological infrastructure.

FlexiLoans' recent capital infusion reflects the growing investor interest in fintech NBFCs, particularly those addressing the credit needs of underserved MSMEs.

Founded in 2016 by Deepak Jain, Ritesh Jain, and Manish Lunia, FlexiLoans focuses on providing loans to MSMEs that are typically excluded from traditional lending due to a lack of conventional credit history.

As of June 30, 2023, FlexiLoans' assets under management (AUM) stood at Rs 1,817 crore, a significant increase from Rs 1,067 crore in March 2023.

Fintech NBFCs are increasingly leveraging advanced technology to offer financial services, benefiting from improved regulatory clarity around digital lending and NBFC operations.

Through its in-house NBFC, Epimoney Private Limited, and partnerships with over 20 lenders, FlexiLoans offers working capital loans ranging from Rs 2 lakh to Rs 25 lakh, and supply chain finance with limits between Rs 25 lakh and Rs 10 crore.

Approximately 54 per cent of FlexiLoans' borrowers are first-time business loan recipients, and 70 per cent of its loans are directed to MSMEs in Tier 2 and Tier 3 cities.

A Crisil report estimated that the MSME credit gap in India stood at Rs 92 trillion as of fiscal 2023, with less than 10 per cent of the 70 million MSMEs accessing formal credit.

My Mudra Fincorp debuts on NSE SME with 18.2% premium

NEW DELHI: My Mudra Fincorp Ltd made its stock market debut on September 12, with shares listing at Rs 130 on the NSE SME platform, an 18.2 per cent premium over the issue price of Rs 110 per share.



Capital and non-banking financial companies (NBFCs) in India.

The initial public offering (IPO), which raised Rs 33.26 crore through a fresh issue of 30.24 lakh shares, garnered significant investor interest during its three-day subscription period.

109 times their portion, while qualified institutional buyers purchased over 48 times their allotment.

The company specialises in distributing and selling various financial products, including secured and unsecured loans, as well as credit cards. Recently, it has expanded its portfolio to include insurance products.

The issue was oversubscribed by more than 100 times, with non-institutional investors leading the demand at 159 times their allotted quota. Retail investors subscribed

Despite the strong listing, the gains fell short of grey market expectations, where shares were trading at a premium of nearly 33% prior to the official debut.

The company intends to use the IPO proceeds for multiple purposes, including partial repayment of existing borrowings, investment in technology development and digital infrastructure, and fulfilling working capital requirements.

My Mudra Fincorp, established in 2013, operates as a Channel Partner for major

A portion of the funds will also be allocated for general corporate purposes.

INTERNATIONAL

Donald Trump: no more presidential debate with Kamala Harris

NEW YORK: Former US President Donald Trump, the Republican presidential nominee, has announced that he will not participate in another presidential debate against Vice President Kamala Harris, the Democratic nominee.

In a post on Truth Social, his social media platform, Trump on Thursday claimed that he won the debate hosted by ABC News in Philadelphia on Tuesday night, and accused Harris of refusing to accept debate invitations from Fox News, NBC News and CBS News.

In a post on social media platform X, Harris said on Thursday



that "we owe it to the voters to have another debate."

Harris' campaign also claimed victory in the first debate between the two. "Vice President Harris commanded the stage on every single issue



that matters to the American people," according to a statement released earlier.

A CNN poll of debate watchers showed that 63 per cent agreed that Harris turned in a better performance onstage

in Philadelphia, Xinhua news agency reported.

According to Fox News, 12 voters on a panel thought Harris won the debate, while five believed Trump won. Many said that Trump did not know how to attack his new opponent in the presidential race.

A New York Times article noted that after the debate, many Democratic strategists and officials cheered Harris' performance, while Republicans complained about the "tenor of the questions" from the moderators and acknowledged Trump's "missed opportunities" to unleash focused attack lines.

South Korea-US stress alliance's 'robustness' amid growing North Korean 'threats'

WASHINGTON: The defence chiefs of South Korea and the US have reiterated the "robustness" of the two countries' alliance in a phone call, the Pentagon said, as Pyongyang has ratcheted up tensions with missile launches and other "provocative" moves.

Seoul's Defence Minister Kim Yong-hyun and US Defence Secretary Lloyd Austin on Thursday held the talks after Pyongyang launched multiple short-range ballistic missiles into the East Sea and unveiled a new road-mobile missile launcher earlier this week, Yonhap news agency reported. "The two leaders reviewed the security situation



on the Korean Peninsula and in the region, "Pentagon press secretary Maj. Gen. Pat Ryder said in a readout.

"Both officials reaffirmed the robustness of the ROK-US Alliance and reviewed priorities to strengthen the combined defence posture," he added, referring to South Korea by its

official name, the Republic of Korea. Austin also noted that he looked forward to hosting Kim for the allies' annual defence ministerial talks, called the Security Consultative Meeting, which is slated to take place in Washington later this year.

This week, Pyongyang has been "raising tensions" on the Korean Peninsula.

On Friday, the North's state media revealed that North Korean leader Kim Jong-un recently visited a uranium enrichment base — a rare disclosure of Kim's tour of such a key nuclear site. There, he called for increasing the number of centrifuges for uranium enrichment.

Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi MP elected as Chairman of UK Defence Select Committee



LONDON: The new Chair of the Defence Select Committee of British parliament is Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi MP. Following a vote on 11 September, within which only the 650 MPs in the UK House of Commons can vote, Tan Dhesi MP has been elected Chair of the Defence Select Committee. The Committee plays an influential and powerful role, especially in scrutinising the UK Government's policies on defence.

It is a watershed moment in the UK, since Tan Dhesi MP has become the first Black, Asian or Minority Ethnic MP to ever be elected as Defence Committee Chairman. Indeed, when he served on the Committee in 2020, he was only the second ever BAME Member of Parliament to do so. It is a landmark historic moment for another reason, Dhesi becomes the first Sikh and first Punjabi to be elected as Chair of a UK Parliament Select Committee.

Dhesi has been serving for over seven years as the MP for Slough and was recently re-elected for a third time in the General Election on 4th July 2024. Following the Committee election result today, which was announced in the UK Parliament by Speaker Sir Lindsay Hoyle, Tan Dhesi MP said: "I am honoured to have been elected as Chair of the Defence Select Committee. I want to thank all those who have supported me, and the whole House of Commons for putting their trust and confidence in me. Threats to national security and global stability are increasing in both scale and complexity, and it is vital that our nation is ready to rise to these challenges. As a voice for our brave veterans and service personnel, I will ensure that the Government is held to the highest of standards as it undertakes its primary duty: keeping the country safe."

Six UN relief workers killed in Israeli strikes on Gaza



UNITED NATIONS: Six staff members of the UN relief agency for Palestinians, known as UNRWA, were killed in Israeli airstrikes in Gaza, UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres said. Israeli airstrikes hit a school-turned-shelter for around 12,000 people on Wednesday, and six UNRWA staff members were among those killed, Guterres said on X. "What's happening in Gaza is unacceptable," he said. "These dramatic violations of international humanitarian law need to stop now."

At least 18 Palestinians were killed and many others wounded in an Israeli airstrike on a UN-run school sheltering displaced people in the central Gaza Strip on Wednesday, reports Xinhua news agency, quoting Palestinian sources. The sources said that an Israeli warplane fired at least one missile at the shelter in the al-Nuseirat refugee camp. The Hamas-run Gaza government media office said that aid workers were among the victims.

Rahul Gandhi: Cong destroyed 'idea of Modi', no hate towards him

WASHINGTON: Congress leader Rahul Gandhi addressed students at Georgetown University in Washington, US, stating that the grand old party has dismantled the "idea of Modi" and emphasised that while he doesn't hate Prime Minister Narendra Modi, he has a differing perspective from him.

"The politics in India has fundamentally changed. From our perspective, what we see is a clash of visions. We don't agree with Mr Modi's vision, and we fight it," Rahul Gandhi said during his interaction.

He described how Congress has a history of reinventing itself, citing examples from the



1970s when the party nationalised banks to the 1990s when it opened the economy with liberalisation. He attributed this adaptability to the foundation laid by Mahatma Gandhi.

Reflecting on the 2024 elec-

tions, and there was a point when we sat down with the treasurer, who said, 'Look, your bank accounts are frozen. How are you supposed to fight an election if your accounts are frozen?' That was the reaction, and we didn't have an answer," he said.

"But then the Congress party fought the elections with our bank accounts frozen. And has basically destroyed the idea of Modi...And you can see it because when you see the Prime Minister now in the Parliament, and we come face to face, he is psychologically trapped, and he basically cannot understand how this has happened," the LoP added.

"I was watching the elec-

India and UAE Sign Civil Nuclear Cooperation Agreement



NEW DELHI: India and the United Arab Emirates (UAE) have signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) for civil nuclear cooperation, marking the first such agreement between the two nations.

The agreement was formalized during the visit of Sheikh Khalid bin Mohamed bin Zayed Al Nahyan, Crown Prince of Abu Dhabi, to India on Monday.

The MoU, signed between the Nuclear Power Corporation of India Limited (NPCIL) and the Emirates Nuclear Energy Company (ENEC)-led Barakah Nuclear Power Plant Operations and Maintenance, represents a significant step forward in the bilateral relationship.

This agreement builds upon the foundation laid during Prime Minister Narendra Modi's visit to the UAE in August 2015, where both countries expressed their intent to cooperate in the peaceful use of nuclear energy. The nuclear cooperation agreement is part of a broader framework of energy collaboration.

In September 2022, the foreign ministers of India, UAE, and France launched a trilateral cooperation format, which was further discussed in February 2023. This initiative aims to promote cooperation in various energy sectors, with a particular focus on solar and nuclear energy. During the Crown Prince's visit, several other significant agreements were signed.

Denouncing discord at UNSC hampering peacekeeping, India presses for reforms

UNITED NATIONS: Denouncing the political discord in the Security Council affecting peacekeeping operations, India has called for making its permanent membership more representative, especially with Africa's participation.

Making his first address to the Security Council on Monday, newly-appointed India's Permanent Representative to the UN Parvathaneni Harish said, "The lack of political unity in the Security Council,



often witnessed in recent years, has negatively impacted UN peacekeeping. The Security

Council needs to be more representative of today's realities particularly in the permanent

category." Because more than half of the Security Council's work is focused on Africa, "India has been consistently calling for greater representation of Africa" as demanded by the continent's nations. In their Sirte Declaration, named for the Libyan city where it was made, and the Ezulwini Consensus reached at the valley in Eswatini, the African nations demanded two permanent seats and three more elected seats at the Security Council.

HAPPY DAYS AGAIN FOR PAKISTAN

Islamabad Hopes to Mint Billions of US Dollars from the Baloch Uprising



GOPAL MISRA The Pakistani establishment, a euphemism for the army, has evolved a unique business model to earn money from each crisis, both domestic as well as in the region.

The country has been suffering a huge financial crunch for the past four years following the exit of the US-led army from Afghanistan. The recent uprising of the Baloch nationalists has opened a new opportunity to get international assistance for crushing the armed rebellion.

Few were surprised, when the army finally decided to crush the demands of civil liberties and the fundamental rights of the peaceful citizens of Balochistan. Any peaceful solution could have adversely affected the financial bonanza, the confrontation could have brought in for the army, its favorite contractors and politicians.

The decision to go for a military solution to resolve the perennial Balochistan problem reminds the genocide in its eastern wing that had finally led to the secession and the emergence of Bangladesh. In spite of its failure in the military operations, which had led to the surrender of 93,000 soldiers before the Indian army, the hold of the army in West Pakistan had continued. In the ongoing rebellion, Pakistan does not expect any direct intervention of India.

Before embarking upon the campaign against its own people, the men in uniform were upbeat following the ouster of an elected government in Dacca with the help of Islamists or Jamaat-e-Islami. With this conviction, the Pakistani army chief, Asim

Munir, who could recite the Holy Kuran by heart without the text, has succeeded in enlisting the support of his Corps Commanders at a recent meeting.

Earlier, he had been to China seeking endorsement and support of the Dragon presumably for more funds and liberal supply of weapons and ammunition.

It is believed that General Munir has also been able to get clearance of the generals for the court martial of Faize Hamid, a former chief of the Inter-Services Intelligence or ISI. He has been accused of corruption charges, but it is a non-issue for the army. Its generals' luxurious lifestyle after their superannuation could be a cause of envy for the rich across the continents. The main cause, according to the observers of the Pakistani affairs, could be attributed to the conspiracy he had hatched with the former Prime Minister Imran Khan to supersede senior generals, including the present army chief, for perpetually retaining power in the country. With losing the support of the army, Khan had to go, and face consequences his predecessors had been subjected to.

With the recent success of the Bangladesh army to depose an elected prime minister for 15 years, Sheikh Hasina, with the tacit approval of the US and China by collaborating with Islamists, the GHQ has embarked upon to crush the Baloch nationalists with renewed confidence. It is now ready to assert and retain its unbridled power in the country, which it has been enjoying since its inception in 1947.

Ramifications of the Actions It is difficult to predict the possible spin offs of the military intervention in Balochistan, the country's biggest province in terms of its geographical area, but it could become a hotbed of the Geopolitics of great powers. The crucial support of Muslim clergy to the army in protecting the interests of the army too has been crucial for the army. The enlightened civil society of Pakistan, which believes in running with the hare and hunting with the hounds, could not escape the collapse of democracy in the country.



The Indian concern is genuine regarding the civilian uprising in Balochistan. She is being accused of meddling in the affairs of Balochistan.

The conflict is expected to reopen the treasure of the huge funds it had been enjoying during the Cold War era and later during the Afghan War.

It will be for China to escape from the bottomless pit of Pakistani greed. Like the USSR, the Chinese too would be suffering both financially and strategically for meddling in the region. The Afghan conflict finally had led to the fragmentation of the USSR. It is for China to escape from this trap.

The Chinese support to Pakistan's campaign against the civilian rebellion could be an attempt to save its dream project, the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC). It already has invested billions of US dollars, but might remain incomplete despite pumping in more funds to Islamabad.

It hopes to repeat the profitable mining of gold and copper in the province might end up in huge losses, if it supports the military solution.

India's Epochal Blunder

In spite of our personal admiration for the country's first prime minister Jawaharlal Nehru, it is difficult to forgive his huge mistakes in conceding Tibet to China, announcing ceasefire in Jammu and Kashmir against the invading Pakistani army without consulting his cabinet. Again, it has never been explained why his government did not accede to the request of the Khan of Kalat, Balochistan, to join the Indian federation.

Lacking a strategic understanding of the importance of India's sensitive western region, the Indian leadership during the transfer of power genuinely believed in the rhetoric of and non-alignment. The bubble finally burst, when China attacked in 1962. The country could have contributed to the political and stability of the region, if Subhash Chandra Bose had not suddenly eclipsed from the political horizon.

Before transferring power to the favorites in India and Pakistan, the British also ensured that the fighters of Bose's Indian National Army were not rehabilitated in the army. Both Mahatma Gandhi and Nehru ensured that INA soldiers, who were fighting for

a united India were sidelined. They were refused to be rehabilitated in the army. Their abandonment also ensured the division of the secular army of British India without much hassles.

The dumb wits in New Delhi, did have little understanding, many may disagree with this author, about the play of global politics and how the fratricide among Hindus and Muslims are still serving the interests of the former rulers of this region.

It is indeed intriguing that why the mistake of not merging Balochistan in India was never corrected by the then Prime Minister Jawahar Lal Nehru and his Houne Minister, Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel, even after the statement of a Home Ministry official, V.P. Menon, who had foolishly announced in an All India Radio broadcast on March 27, 1948, that the request of the ruler of Kalat, Balochistan, Mir Ahmadyar Khan, to merge with India has been rejected. Next day, on March 28, Jinnah sent his confidant, Major General Mohammad Akbar to Quetta. Mir Ahmadyar Khan was brought to Karachi to sign the accession to Pakistan, thus India again lost her influence in the region.

The Chinese finally became more assertive in the region, which had become an easy prey of Chinese expansionism, if not imperialism.

Changes in Baloch Society

It is indeed pathetic that few scholars in India care to study the ongoing unprecedented anger against Pakistan and China. The exploitation of minerals in the province during the past four decades has accrued huge profits to the army officers. Apart from the official mining, the Pakistani army and the Chinese companies have also been making substantial gains without

showing in their accounts.

Earlier, the erstwhile rulers despite promises of the successive military dictators could not get any financial or political autonomy during the past decades. During the regime of the military dictator, Ayub Khan, instead of allowing provincial autonomy, the country was divided into two administrative units, West Pakistan and the then East Pakistan, now Bangladesh. The provincial autonomy was partially introduced during the regime of the Prime Minister, Z.A. Bhutto. Under the new constitution, the provinces were to be given vast powers and the federal government had to retain defense, foreign affairs, currency, postal department etc. The provincial leaders, including Wali Khan, son of Abdul Gaffar Khan, the great freedom fighter, and rulers of Sindh and Balochistan were promised that the devolution of power would be completed within 10 years, but the army and its political proxies ensured that the real provincial autonomy should never be allowed.

Meanwhile, societal changes through education and working in the Gulf countries have taken place among the tribal people. These changes have created a strong middle class in the region.

The current uprising in Balochistan is now being led by the educated youths. This transformation has erupted in the present uprising. Interestingly, the majority of tribal leaders, who had initially aligned with the Pakistani establishment, too are supporting the freedom fighters.

Gopal Misra has been associated with national and international media. His books on journalism and geo-politics have been well-appreciated. Views are personal.

Kamala Harris and Trump clash on Afghanistan

WASHINGTON: Vice President Kamala Harris defended President Joe Biden's decision to withdraw the US from Afghanistan saying it was something that four other presidents had wanted but not done and it saved \$300 million a day that was spent on staying there.

But she pivoted to attack Trump for setting up the withdrawal with a deal with "terrorists" Taliban and keeping out the Afghan government. "He calls himself a deal maker, even his national security adviser said it was a weak, terrible deal, and here's how it went down. He bypassed the Afghan government. He negotiated directly with a terrorist organisation called the Taliban. The negotiation involved the Taliban getting 5000 terrorists. Taliban terrorists released and got this. No, get this. And the president at the time, invited the Taliban to Camp David, a place of storied significance for us as Americans, a place where we honour the importance of



American diplomacy, where we invite and receive respected world leaders. And this former President, as President, invited them to Camp David because he does not again appreciate the role and responsibility of the President of the United States to be commander in chief with a level of respect," she said.

"So if you take a look at that period of time, the Taliban was killing our soldiers, a lot of them with snipers," Trump said, defending himself. "And I got involved with the Taliban because the Taliban was doing the killing. That's the fighting force within Afghanistan. They don't bother doing that because, you know, they deal with the wrong people all the time. But I got involved, and Abdul is the head of the Taliban.

India-Bangladesh Rail Trade Resumes with 40,000 Tonnes of Freight Exported

NEW DELHI: Trade relations between India and Bangladesh have experienced a significant boost following the resumption of railway cargo services through the Benapole land port.

Since the restart of these services, approximately 40,000 tonnes of freight have been exported from India to Bangladesh. This marks a substantial recovery after a 47-day hiatus in trade, which was resolved through high-level discussions between officials from both nations. The resumed cargo shipments include essential goods such as fly ash, dry oil cake, gypsum, stone, and natural gas. Of particular note, 16 rakes have been dispatched



from three Indian railway stations to Bangladesh in the past fortnight.

Among these, seven rakes were loaded with dry oil cake, a critical commodity for Bangladesh's agricultural sector, while four rakes carried fly ash, an important material for cement production.

Additionally, three rakes transported natural gas, with the remaining rakes carrying gypsum and stone.

Malaika Arora shares statement after father's demise, requests privacy



MUMBAI: Actress Malaika Arora has shared a statement in the light of her father, Anil Kuldip Mehta's demise. The actress took to her Instagram on Wednesday evening and shared a note with a monochromatic picture of her father. She shared that the family is still in shock, and has requested privacy in these testing times. The actress also shared the names of her pets in the official statement on social media.

She wrote, "We are deeply saddened to announce the passing

of our dear father, Anil Mehta. He was a gentle soul, a devoted grandfather, a loving husband, and our best friend."

She further mentioned, "Our family is in deep shock by this loss, and we kindly request privacy from the media and well-wishers during this difficult time. We appreciate your understanding, support, and respect. With gratitude, Joyce, Malaika, Amrita, Shakeel, Arhaan, Azaan, Rayyan, Casper, Axl, Duffy & Buddy."

Netizens took to the comments section as they paid their con-



lences to the departed soul.

One user wrote, "May the family get the strength to cope up with this untimely loss of its loved one. Stay strong." Another wrote, "Sending you love, light and prayers."

A third user wrote, "Very very sorry to hear. Deepest condolences to you and the family. Sending you healing and positivity."

Members of the entertainment industry also took to the comment section, and expressed their heartfelt condolences.

Anil Mehta fell from the 6th

floor of his residence in the Ayesha Manor building in the Bandra area of Mumbai at around 9:00 am on Wednesday while the actress was on her way to Pune for an event.

Malaika was born in Thane, Maharashtra. Her parents got divorced when she was 11 years old, and she moved to Chembur with her mother and sister Amrita Arora. Her mother, Joyce Polycarp, is a Malayali Christian, and her father, Anil was a Punjabi, who worked in the Indian Merchant Navy.

Diljit Dosanjh and Alia Bhatt Team Up for 'Kudi' Song in 'Jigra'

MUMBAI: Punjabi sensation and actor Diljit Dosanjh is set to lend his vocal talents to a song in the upcoming film Jigra.

The song, tentatively titled "Kudi", will feature actress Alia Bhatt, sparking excitement among fans of both stars.

Alia Bhatt recently shared a photo on social media that hinted at their collaboration. In the picture, both Diljit and Alia are seated on chairs with their backs to the camera. Diljit's chair has the words "Sings about Kudi", while Alia's chair reads



"The said Kudi", playfully teasing their roles in the song. Alia captioned the post, "Chairs say it all @diljitosanjh", further fueling excitement about their collaboration in Jigra. The teaser

for Jigra was unveiled on September 8, offering a glimpse into the life of two siblings, portrayed by Vedang Raina and Alia Bhatt, who have endured a troubled childhood. Directed by Vasan Bala, the film revolves around the deep bond between a sister and her brother, focusing on how the sister will go to any lengths to protect him. Produced by Dharma Productions, Jigra is set to hit theaters on October 11, 2024, and promises to be an emotional drama highlighting the power of familial love.

Hina Khan has 'promise to fulfil' for her 'future self'; drops workout video



MUMBAI: Despite undergoing chemotherapy for Stage Three breast cancer, actress Hina Khan remains undeterred, and on Monday has offered her followers a glimpse into her ongoing journey towards recovery.

Taking to Instagram, Hina, who has 20.3 million followers, shared a Reel video of her workout session. In the clip, we can see Hina lifting weights, doing leg workouts, and other exercises.

The video is captioned as: "Thousand Reasons may present itself to pull you down everyday. But I have a Promise to fulfil for my future self. And I am committed, are you? #DUA #ScaredNotScared #AWindowToMyJourney #TheGirlWhoNeverGivesUp #DaddysStrongGirl #OneDay-AtATime".

She was showered with love by her fans, as they wrote: "You are an inspiration", "Most bravest girl", "Get well soon", and "u will rock again".

Earlier, Hina had revealed that she is through her fifth chemo infusion.

Best known for her role as Akshara in 'Yeh Rishta Kya Kehlata Hai', Hina has participated in 'Fear Factor: Khatron Ke Khiladi 8', 'Bigg Boss 11', and 'Bigg Boss 14'.

She has also been a part of the movies like 'Hacked', 'Wishlist', and a short film 'Smartphone'. The diva has starred in music videos like 'Bhasoodi', 'Ranjhana', 'Humko Tum Mil Gaye', 'Patthar Wargi', 'Baarish Ban Jaana', 'Main Bhi Barbaad', 'Mohabbat Hai', 'Barsaat Aa Gayi', and the recent track by Asees Kaur, and Saaj Bhatt-- 'Halki Halki Si' Hina had also recently made her Punjabi film debut with 'Shinda Shinda No Papa', alongside Gippy Grewal. She next has 'Country of Blind' in the pipeline.

From wrestling mat to political ring: Kavita Dalal's journey to Julana with AAP



NEW DELHI: The Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) has nominated former professional wrestler Kavita Dalal to contest the Julana Assembly seat in Haryana's Jind, facing off against Congress' Vinesh Phogat and BJP's Captain Yogesh Bairagi. With Dalal in the mix, the election in Julana will feature a unique contest - wrestler versus captain. Dalal is the first female professional wrestler of Indian nationality to compete in the WWE.

Kavita Dalal, often called India's "female Great Khali", has gained recognition for her impressive wrestling feats while competing in traditional attire.

Known in the wrestling world as Kavita Devi, she was born on September 20, 1987, in Malvi village, Jind district, Haryana. Kavita has been given a ticket by the Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) to contest from the Julana constituency, which encompasses her native village.

Kavita Dalal in 2016 South Asian Games represented India in weightlifting and won a gold medal. She later transitioned to professional wrestling, and in WWE, she made a significant impact. Kavita showcased her strength to the world during the Mae Young Classic 2017 and received acclaim for her performance at WrestleMania 34.

In India, she is known as 'Lady Khali'. Kavita Devi weighs over 70 kg and stands 5 feet 9 inches tall. In comparison, The Great Khali weighs around 150 kg and is over 7 feet tall.

Kavita Dalal got married in 2009, and a year later, she gave birth to a son. After that, she considered quitting sports, but with the support of her husband, she continued. Kavita showcased her skills in WWE from 2017 to 2021 before retiring from the ring.

It is now clear with Kavita also in the "ring" with another wrestler, Vinesh Phogat, Julana Assembly seat in Haryana has become a "hot" election arena.

Kavita began her political career in 2022, but before that, she had already made a name for herself in wrestling. She received the "First Lady" award from the President and won a gold medal in weightlifting at the 12th Asian Games in 2016.

Cardi B welcomes baby girl, says 'prettiest lil thing'



LOS ANGELES: Cardi B has welcomed a baby girl with her estranged husband Offset more than a month after filing for divorce.

The two are already parents to 6-year-old daughter Kulture and 2-year-old son Wave.

"The prettiest lil thing," Cardi captioned a Sept. 12 Instagram post featuring photos of their family at the hospital, noting the birth date, "9/7/24."

The "Bodak Yellow" hitmaker announced her pregnancy hours after filing for a divorce from the 32-year-old rapper on August 1 by showing off her bump in an Instagram post, reports online.com.

She had captioned the post: "With every ending comes a new beginning! I am so grateful to have shared this season with you, you have brought me more love, more life and most of all renewed my power! Reminded me that I can have it all!"

She added: "You've reminded me that I never have to choose between life, love, and my passion! I love you so much and can not wait for you to witness what you helped me accomplish, what you pushed me to do.

Raja Randhir Singh elected as President of Olympic Council of Asia



44th Olympic Council of Asia General Assembly concludes successfully in New Delhi

KAVITA SHARMA
New Delhi

Legendary Indian shooter and sports administrator Raja Randhir Singh was officially declared as the new head of the Olympic Council of Asia, as the 44th OCA General Assembly concluded successfully at the Bharat Mandapam on Sunday. Hon'ble Union Minister of Health and Family Welfare and Hon'ble Union Minister of Chemicals and Fertilizers JP Nadda, Hon'ble Minister of Youth Affairs and Sports, Dr. Mansukh Mandaviya, Hon'ble Minister of State for Youth Affairs & Sports, Raksha Nikhil Khadse, and Indian Olympic Association President P T Usha, were also in attendance along with sports leader from all 45 Asian countries.

President, Olympic Council of Asia, Raja Randhir Singh further added, "I thank everyone for the extraordinary support and goodwill and putting across my name as the sole candidate for the top position. I promise I will continue to serve Asia and the Asian athletes to the best of my abilities and to keep the OCA moving forward. It is truly an honour and privilege for India to be hosting the General Assembly. I congratulate Asian National Olympic Committees

for the successful performance at the Paris Olympic Games. It presented a powerful and positive image of Asia in the world. There is no doubt that success of Asia in Paris 2024 was due to the quality of Asian Games in Hangzhou. We promise to assure that the 20th Asian Games in Nagoya, Japan, 2026 will do the same for the next Olympics in Los Angeles in 2028."

Union Minister of Health & Family Welfare and Minister of Chemicals & Fertilizers JP Nadda, "With our efforts we can help sports as a symbol of unity. Sports is not just a competition, it promotes harmony and help in keeping a good mental health. Under able leadership of PM Modi India has already hosted large scale International Sporting events in the last 10 years."

Speaking after the OCA elections, Minister of Youth Affairs and Sports, Dr. Mansukh Mandaviya said, "We stand united in our mission to elevate sports standards across our continent, in line with the Olympic ideals. Under the dynamic leadership of Hon'ble Prime Minister Narendra Modi ji, the government has significantly increased the sports budget, leading to India's laudable performance at numerous International games. Through the implementation of initiatives such as 'Khelo India', the ASMITA program, and TOPS, we are fostering grassroots talent identification, promoting gender equality, and preparing our athletes for global competi-

tions. With the aim of hosting various global Games and championships, we are committed to welcoming the world with open arms and ensuring fair, clean competition. Together, we will strengthen Asia's sporting legacy and inspire future generations."

Indian Olympic Association President PT Usha said, "Raja Randhir Singh's election as OCA President is the testament of his commitment towards the Olympic Asian Council and sports.

India is honoured to host this prestigious assembly, and I extend a warm welcome to all the distinguished delegates from over 45 countries. We are committed to supporting the Olympic Movement and fostering a culture of sportsmanship, teamwork, and excellence. The General Assembly we are attending today is not just a formal gathering; it is a platform where ideas are exchanged, where the future of sports is envisioned, and where nations come together to promote peace and harmony through sport. As we prepare for upcoming Asian and Olympic events, we reaffirm our collective commitment to nurturing talent, encouraging fair play, and ensuring that athletes are given the opportunity to shine on the world stage."

44th Olympic Council of Asia Election results :

OCA President: Raja Randhir Singh (India)
OCA Vice Presidents:
East Asia: Timothy Fok (Hong

Kong, China)
Southeast Asia: Dr Norza Zakaria (Malaysia)
South Asia: HRH Prince Jigyel Ugyen Wangchuck (Bhutan)
West Asia: Dr Thani Al-Kuwari (Qatar)
Central Asia: Otabek Umarov (Uzbekistan)

Executive Board members:

East Asia: Ms. Mikako Kotani (Japan)
Southeast Asia: Prof. Dr. Supit Samahito (Thailand)
Central Asia: Ms. Olga Rybakova (Kazakhstan)
West Asia: Noora Al Jasmii (United Arab Emirates)
South Asia: No candidate

The all-important event was also highlighted by the inclusion of Yoga as a demonstration sport in the upcoming edition of the Asian Games, a matter close to the Prime Minister Narendra Modi's heart. Meanwhile, the Hangzhou Asian Games committee and the committee for the upcoming 2026 Nagoya Asian Games gave important presentations to outline the future roadmap for the Games.

About Olympics Council of Asia

The Olympic Council Of Asia (OCA) is an independent non-governmental no-for-profit international Asian sport organization for unlimited duration recognized by the International Olympic Committee (IOC), the Association of National Olympic Committee (ANOC) and the 45 member Asian National Olympic Committee (NOCs).

Talking Points

Narvijay Yadav



The rising number of senior citizens and increased life expectancy make healthcare a critical issue for this demographic. The government's plan to help elders over 70 is a step forward, but is it enough?

The government's decision to extend healthcare insurance benefits of Rs 5 lakh to elders above 70 is a step in the right direction. The initiative, driven by the Ayushman Bharat - PM Jan Arogya Yojana (PMJAY), aims to provide significant financial relief to the elderly, especially for expensive secondary and tertiary hospitalizations. However, as India's elderly population overgrows, there is a strong case for extending this benefit to all elderly people above 60, particularly those from the private sector or with limited economic resources. Universal healthcare coverage for all senior citizens will ensure that India's elderly can age with dignity, health, and financial security.

India is witnessing a demographic shift, with its elderly population growing

unprecedentedly. According to the National Statistical Office, the number of people aged 60 and above in 2023 is estimated to be around 150 million, and by 2031, this figure is expected to rise to 194 million. The proportion of senior citizens in India's population is expected to grow from 10.1% in 2021 to 14.9% by 2036, indicating a substantial rise in the number of people needing healthcare support. Moreover, the dependency ratio - the number of elderly persons per 100 working-age individuals is on the rise, moving from 15.7 in 2021 to a projected 20.1 by 2031. This growing dependency highlights the increasing strain on families and the social security system to support the elderly.

Under the PMJAY, the government offers Rs 5 lakh per family per year in health

Extend Health Benefits to Elders Above 60



insurance coverage for secondary and tertiary hospitalization. While not explicitly designed for those above 70, this scheme includes elderly individuals who meet the Socio-Economic Caste Census 2011 criteria, primarily targeting the economically weaker sections. The scheme covers treatment for various ailments, including critical conditions like cardiovascular diseases and cancer, and provides cashless and paperless treatment in empaneled public and private hospitals.

About 71% of the elderly population depends on others, either family or the government, for financial support. Chronic illnesses such

as diabetes, hypertension, and cardiovascular diseases affect 20-30% of the elderly, demanding regular and often expensive medical care. As people age, they are more prone to chronic illnesses and need frequent medical interventions. Covering all citizens above 60 under the Rs 5 lakh insurance plan would ensure better access to healthcare and reduce out-of-pocket expenses for medical treatments. In the absence of comprehensive healthcare coverage, many elderly individuals bear significant healthcare costs, which can push families into poverty. A large proportion of the elderly population, around

70%, still resides in rural areas where healthcare facilities are limited. Providing universal healthcare insurance to all senior citizens, especially those in remote areas, would ensure that they have access to quality medical care.

While the PMJAY and state-specific schemes are a good starting point, they have limitations in terms of eligibility and coverage. These schemes primarily cater to BPL families and retired government employees, leaving out a significant section of the elderly population that doesn't qualify but still faces financial constraints. A more inclusive and expansive approach is needed to ensure universal healthcare coverage for all senior citizens, especially those above 60. A comprehensive healthcare insurance scheme for all seniors could provide access to outpatient care, diagnostic services, free medicines, and long-term care for chronic conditions. Extending healthcare benefits to all above 60 is not just a matter of equity but a necessity.

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

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