

REGION

2

## 1,000 "MODEL GHATS" ACROSS THE CITY FOR THE UPCOMING CHHATH PUJA SAYS CM ATISHI



## Arvind Kejriwal makes an emotional appeal to Delhi voters to re-elect him as Chief Minister

**NEW DELHI:** Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) national convener Arvind Kejriwal on October 16 made an emotional appeal to Delhi voters to re-elect him as the Chief Minister in the upcoming Assembly elections.

The legislator from the New Delhi Assembly constituency accused the BJP of conspiring to halt development in the national capital and sought public support to defeat it. In a letter addressed to Delhiites, Kejriwal hit out at the BJP, claiming that he was jailed for five months not because he indulged in corruption but due to his efforts to improve the city's infrastructure and services. "I believe you will re-elect the AAP government in Delhi to continue all the work. With your vote, I will again take on the responsibility of Chief Minister and continue to work for you as before," he wrote in Hindi.



Kejriwal cannot indulge in corruption. So why did they arrest me? It's because of the work I'm doing for you in Delhi and the services I'm providing, that they wanted to stop. They arrested me to halt these services," said Kejriwal. The former Delhi Chief Minister argued that the BJP is envious of the work done in the capital as they are "unable to replicate" similar achievements in other states. "I have done such work in Delhi that has never been done before in the country. They have governments in 22 states, but they are unable to replicate the work done in

Delhi. People in those states have started asking them why similar work isn't being done there. They don't have an answer," he stated. Kejriwal claimed that after AAP's success in Punjab, the BJP plotted to block the party's good work in Delhi. The BJP is afraid that if the AAP continues to expand its influence nationwide, it could become a threat to it, he said. "For the past 10 years, they have tried to stop Delhi's work through the LG, but I didn't let any of your work get stopped. I am educated, and having been an officer in the government, I know how to get things done.

When they failed in that, they arrested me," he said. Accusing the BJP of attempting to harm his health while he was in jail, Kejriwal alleged, "They were so afraid of my good work that they made every effort in jail to prevent me from coming out healthy. They stopped my medication. I'm a diabetic and have been taking insulin injections four times a day for the past ten years. They stopped my injections in jail, which could have damaged my kidneys and even caused my death." The former Delhi CM further emphasised that while he was imprisoned, numerous developmental works, such as road repairs, sewer cleaning, and improvement in water supply, were halted. However, he assured the people that all halted works would be resumed. "Their conspiracy failed again, but now they are planning to somehow come to power and stop all the work in Delhi," he warned, adding that it was now up to the people to prevent this from happening. He also painted a grim picture of what could happen if the BJP came to power in Delhi.

BANKING & FINANCE

6

## MICROFINANCE INSTITUTIONS SEEK RELAXATIONS IN RBI'S 2022 REGULATORY FRAMEWORK



OUR CORRESPONDENT  
New Delhi

Environment Minister Gopal Rai announced on Friday that the Delhi government established coordination committees at 13 key locations in the city to identify and address local sources of pollution. These areas, identified as pollution hotspots, are currently experiencing "very poor" air quality, with the Air Quality Index (AQI) exceeding 300. Minister Rai highlighted that while the entire city is grappling with "poor" air quality, these 13 locations are particularly affected. The identified hotspots include Narela, Bawana, Mundka, Wazirpur, Rohini, R K Puram, Okhla, Jahangirpuri, Anand Vihar, Punjabi Bagh, Mayapuri, and Dwarka Sector-8. Each of these committees will be led by deputy commissioners from the Municipal Corporation of Delhi (MCD), with engineers from the Delhi Pollution Control Committee (DPC) also assigned to these areas. The engineers are tasked with submitting daily reports to a specially set up 'Pollution War Room,' which

POTPOURRI

8

## SALMAN KHAN: THE MAN BEHIND BABA SIDDIQUE'S ELECTION WIN



## Delhi court grants bail to AAP leader Satyendar Jain after two years in money laundry case



OUR CORRESPONDENT  
New Delhi

Senior AAP leader Satyendar Jain granted bail on Friday after more than two years in prison in connection with the Delhi excise policy scam case. The Rouse Avenue Court, citing a "delay in trial" and Jain's "long incarceration," set the bail at Rs 50,000 with two sureties of the same amount. Special Judge Vishal Gogne stated, "Considering the delay in trial and long incarceration of 18 months, and the fact that the trial will take long to start, let alone conclude, the accused is favourably suited for relief." Jain was arrested by the Enforcement Directorate (ED) in May 2022 on charges of laundering money through four companies allegedly linked to him. The ED's case is based on an FIR lodged by the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) in 2017 under the Prevention of Corruption Act. The court's decision to release Jain comes a month after AAP chief Arvind Kejriwal was granted bail by the Supreme Court in the same case. Jain's release has sparked a jubilant response from the Aam Aadmi Party (AAP), with party members claiming that the BJP's "conspiracy" had failed.

## Wrestler's harassment case: HC seeks Delhi Police to reply to Brij Bhushan's plea for early hearing



OUR CORRESPONDENT  
New Delhi

Delhi High Court sought response from the Delhi Police and several women wrestlers regarding a plea filed by Brij Bhushan Singh, the former chief of the Wrestling Federation of India. Singh is seeking an expedited hearing for his petition to quash an FIR filed against him by multiple female wrestlers. Singh's main petition, currently listed for hearing on January 13, 2025, seeks pre-emption due to the ongoing trial court proceedings where prosecution evidence is being recorded. Singh argues that by the time the High Court hears the case, most of the witnesses will have already testified, potentially affecting the fairness of his defense.

## PM Modi proposes holding NDA leaders conclave twice every year

**CHANDIGARH:** Prime Minister Narendra Modi has described the meeting of NDA leaders in Chandigarh on Thursday as the largest get-together of non-Congress political parties post 1975, the year Emergency was imposed, and called for holding such a conclave twice every year, a BJP statement said. Making a point about the deeper connect his government enjoys with people compared to the previous Congress-led UPA government, he said at the meeting that he has received over 4.5 crore letters in the past 10 years compared to only 5 lakh letters received by his predecessor. Manmohan Singh headed the UPA government during 2004-14. This reflects people's trust in his government, he said. Modi said at the conclave attended by 17 chief ministers and 18 deputy chief ministers from the BJP and its several allies that smooth governance, fast decision-making and transparency in governance have helped in attracting investors and investment in the states ruled by the NDA. The NDA is fulfilling the rising



aspirations of the common citizens and it has been the distinction of its government to ensure the last mile delivery which has helped in building the trust in public towards the government since 2014, he said. Modi dwelt on the concept of pro-people proactive good governance (P2G2), stressing the need for greater interaction between all NDA-ruled states, as also among ministers and MLAs and advocated the use of social media for this. The prime minister lauded the BJP's win in Haryana as significant and historic, saying the NDA has secured the trust and support of all sections of society.

The opposition, he said, tried to portray a false narrative of the NDA being anti-farmer whereas it was the farmers who came out in large numbers to support the ruling party. People gave a clear message that they stand with progress and the good governance agenda of the NDA. He said good governance ultimately means finding solutions to people's problems, asserting that solution-centric governance with focus on grievance-redressal is a distinctive identity of all NDA state governments. The statement said, "The prime minister complimented the gathering

describing it as the largest group of non-Congress political parties post 1975. A total of 17 chief ministers and 18 deputy chief ministers participated in this conclave. The PM suggested that such meetings should be held twice every year." A total of six resolutions were passed in the meeting, including Defence Minister Rajnath Singh's proposal on the celebration of 75 years of the making of Constitution of India as "Samvidhan Ka Amrut Mahotsav" and Home Minister Amit Shah's proposal to observe 2025 as the 50th year of the "murder of democracy," a reference to the Emergency.

## Sensex, Nifty bounce back after 3-day fall on buying in bank stocks

**MUMBAI:** Benchmark indices Sensex and Nifty bounced back on Friday after three days of fall, led by heavy buying in bank stocks and firm global market trends. Recovering from its early lows, the BSE Sensex climbed 218.14 points or 0.27 per cent to settle at 81,224.75. During the day, it jumped 384.54 points or 0.47 per cent to 81,391.15. The NSE Nifty ended 104.20 points or 0.42 per cent higher at 24,854.05. Also, buying by domestic institutional investors supported market recovery. From the 30 Sensex firms, Axis Bank jumped nearly 6 per cent after the company's consolidated net profit for the September quarter rose by 19.29 per cent to Rs 7,401.26 crore. ICICI Bank, Tata Motors, Tata Steel, NTPC, JSW Steel, State Bank of India and Adani Ports were the other big gainers. Among the blue-chip pack, Infosys tanked over 4 per cent after its second quarter earnings failed to cheer investors. India's second-largest IT services exporter on Thursday reported a near 5 per cent rise in its second quarter net profit and raised revenue guidance for the year on broad-based recovery in demand particularly from its



key financial industry clients. Asian Paints, Nestle, Tech Mahindra, HCL Technologies, Hindustan Unilever and ITC were the other big laggards. Foreign Institutional Investors (FIIs) offloaded equities worth Rs 7,421.40 crore on Thursday, according to exchange data. DIIs, however, bought equities worth Rs 4,979.83 crore. In Asian markets, Tokyo, Shanghai and Hong Kong settled sharply higher while Seoul ended lower. European markets were trading in positive territory. The US markets ended mostly higher on Thursday. Global oil benchmark Brent crude dipped 0.07 per cent to USD 74.40 a barrel. The BSE benchmark Sensex tanked 494.75 points or 0.61 per cent to settle at 81,006.61 on Thursday. During the day, it tumbled 595.72 points or 0.73 per cent to 80,905.64. The NSE Nifty slumped 221.45 points or 0.89 per cent to 24,749.85.

## Doctor's Rape & Murder Case: Junior doctors' fast-unto-death enters 14th day



**KOLKATA:** The fast-unto-death by a group of junior doctors protesting against the brutal rape and murder of a trainee doctor at R.G. Kar Medical College & Hospital in Kolkata has entered the 14th day on Friday. With each passing day, the number of common people and representatives from other professional spheres coming forward to express their solidarity with the protesting doctors is increasing. On Friday, members of the two acclaimed cultural and literary groups in West Bengal decided to observe a token 12-hour hunger strike expressing solidarity with the fasting junior doctors.

One of the two cultural groups will also organise a cultural programme at the dais of the hunger strike at Esplanade in central Kolkata in support of the protesting doctors. "Our strength is the spontaneous and unstinting support from the people. We have been able to carry forward our movement in support of our demands because of the mass support," said a representative of West Bengal Junior Doctors Front, the umbrella body spearheading the movement on this issue. Meanwhile, a crucial meeting has been convened by the West Bengal government on Friday, which will be chaired by Chief Minister Mamata Ba-

nerjee, to review the progress of security and infrastructure upgrading work at different state-run medical colleges & hospitals as directed by the Supreme Court. It is learnt that the heads of all state-run medical colleges & hospitals have been asked to be present at the meeting. Those who will not be able to be present at the meeting physically have been asked to join virtually. Eight junior doctors have continued with the hunger strike till date, out of whom seven are at Esplanade in central Kolkata and one is at the campus of North Bengal Medical College & Hospital at Siliguri in Darjeeling district. So far six doctors, participating in the hunger strike that started on the evening of October 5, had to be hospitalised following deteriorations in their medical conditions. One of them, Aniket Mahato of R.G. Kar, who was the first to be hospitalised, was released from the hospital on Thursday afternoon. However, the doctors have advised him to remain under strict medical and diet restrictions for some time. Mahato has also been advised not to resume fasting,

## Supreme Court to consider plea for J&K statehood restoration



FW DESK

The Supreme Court of India (SC) has agreed to consider hearing a plea seeking the time-bound restoration of statehood for Jammu and Kashmir. The apex court had earlier upheld the abrogation of Article 370 and directed that assembly elections be held in the region by September 2024. On October 17, a bench led by Chief Justice of India DY Chandrachud, along with Justices JB Pardiwala and Manoj Misra, responded to a request for an urgent hearing made by senior advocate Gopal Sankaranarayanan. "There is a Miscellaneous Application (MA) for restoring statehood. It was noted in the judgment that this should be time-bound," Sankaranarayanan told the court. The CJI replied, "I will deal with it."

## Omar Abdullah takes oath as J&K CM Surinder Choudhary named Deputy CM

FW DESK  
Srinagar

Omar Abdullah, vice president of the National Conference (NC), was sworn in as the new Chief Minister of Jammu and Kashmir on Wednesday, marking his second term after first holding office in 2009. Surinder Kumar Choudhary, a prominent leader from the Jammu region, took oath as Deputy Chief Minister during the ceremony held at the Sher-i-Kashmir International Convention Centre (SKICC). The event, presided over by Lieutenant Governor Manoj Sinha, also saw the swearing-in of five ministers: Satish Sharma, Sakina Yatoo, Javid Dar, Surinder Kumar Choudhary, and Javid Rana. Choudhary secured his position as DCM after defeating BJP's Ravinder Raina in the Nowshera constituency. Members of the Congress party stayed away from the ceremony in protest, demanding the restoration of J&K's statehood. Omar Abdullah's return to



office is significant as he becomes the first Chief Minister of Jammu and Kashmir after the abrogation of Article 370 in 2019, operating under the modified governance framework with enhanced powers granted to the Lieutenant Governor.



# 1,000 “model ghats” across the city for the upcoming Chhath Puja says CM Atishi

OUR CORRESPONDENT  
New Delhi

The Delhi government will set up 1,000 “model ghats” across the city for the upcoming Purvanchali festival, Chhath, Chief Minister Atishi announced. These ghats will be constructed in each of Delhi’s 70 assembly constituencies to facilitate the Chhath Puja, which is performed by lakhs of devotees in the city.

In a high-level meeting, Atishi directed officials to coordinate with Chhath Puja committees to incorporate their suggestions in the preparations, which will include arrangements for lighting, clean water, toilets, tents, and security at the ghats. The chief



minister emphasized that the government is committed to ensuring the festival is celebrated smoothly, without any inconvenience to the devotees. The Delhi government statement highlighted that

each ghat will have essential facilities, including clean water, electricity, toilets, security, medical services, power backup, and CCTV cameras. Atishi also instructed officials to prioritize cleanliness

at the ghats and ensure all necessary arrangements are in place.

District magistrates have been directed to meet with local Chhath Puja committees to gather feedback on the arrangements needed for the festival. Chhath Puja, celebrated by Purvanchalis (natives of Bihar and eastern Uttar Pradesh), involves devotees, mainly women, worshipping the Sun god and performing the ritual of ‘Arghya’ in knee-deep water.

This year’s festival holds particular significance as the assembly elections are scheduled for February next year, with Purvanchali voters playing a crucial role in several constituencies.

# Delhi Chief Minister Atishi offers prayer at Bhagwan Valmiki Mandir



**NEW DELHI:** After the visit, Atishi shared snippets from the visit on her X handle stating, “Visited the Valmiki Temple at Panchkuian Road on the occasion of Bhagwan Valmiki’s Prakatotsav and sought his blessings.”

Dwlhi has 12 reserved Assembly seats, and all of these were won by the AAP in the Assembly elections in 2020. However, in the 2024 Lok Sabha elections, the BJP outperformed the INDIA bloc (AAP and Congress) by winning eight out of the 12 assembly segments.

“The pen in Bhagwan Valmiki’s hand is a reminder that anyone, no matter how marginalised, can progress in life through education,” she said.

“Bhagwan Valmiki taught that education is the path to societal advancement. Following his guidance, we are committed to providing world-class education to every child in Delhi. The progress of our society is directly

linked to the education of our children,” the CM added. Earlier on October 16, Delhi Government had regularised the services of 607 sanitation workers in the Municipal Corporation of Delhi (MCD).

CM Atishi, speaking to a gathering, said the Kejriwal government’s efforts aimed at uplifting the underprivileged, particularly through initiatives in education and the regularisation of workers. She underscored the impact of key figures like Mahatma Gandhi and Dr Bhimrao Ambedkar in shaping the administration’s policies. “Our administration is committed to regularising sanitation workers and ensuring timely salary payments, unlike past administrations,” she said.

While, Mayor Dr Shelly Oberoi, delivering a message from Arvind Kejriwal, congratulated the newly regularised workers. “We are fulfilling our promises, including representation for

“We are committed to providing world-class education to every child in Delhi. The progress of our society is directly linked to the education of our children”

the Dalit community.”

The broom party is also pushing to make a Dalit Mayor, AAP supremo Arvind Kejriwal urged the Municipal Corporation of Delhi (MCD) to expedite the mayoral elections, stressing the importance of electing a member from the Dalit community to the role.

He accused the BJP of orchestrating a “conspiracy” to deprive the Scheduled Caste community of its rights by delaying the elections.

Recently, with the newly set-up Delhi Cabinet, AAP brought a new face with the introduction of Dalit leader and MLA Mukesh Ahlawat from Sultanpur Majra in the backdrop after two Dalit leaders — Rajendra Pal Gautam and Raaj Kumar Anand — left the party citing non-representation.

# SC summons Chief Secretaries of Punjab, Haryana over stubble burning

**NEW DELHI:** The Supreme Court on Wednesday summoned the Chief Secretaries of Punjab and Haryana governments over non-compliance with the directions issued by the Commission for Air Quality Management (CAQM), a statutory body tasked with preparing strategies to curb air pollution in Delhi-NCR.

A bench headed by Justice Abhay S. Oka questioned why the states of Punjab and Haryana were reluctant to launch prosecution against violators and were collecting a “nominal amount of fines” for stubble burning. “For the past three years, you have not prosecuted even a single person, only nominal fines were imposed. Nothing has been done,” remarked Justice Okale Bench. The Bench, also comprising Justices Ashanudin Amanullah and AG Masih, was hearing a public interest litigation (PIL) relating to the control of air pollution in the national capital. The apex court ordered the initiation of penal action against officials for not complying with the directions of CAQM.

The CAQM recently issued a directive empowering District Magistrates in Punjab, Haryana, and NCR areas of Uttar Pradesh and Rajasthan to prosecute officials for inaction on stubble burning enforcement. In the previous hearing, the top court raised eyebrows over the collection of nominal compensation from farmers burning paddy stubble.

# Anil Vij meets JP Nadda as BJP prepares for govt formation in Haryana



**NEW DELHI:** Senior BJP leader and former Home and Health Minister of Haryana, Anil Vij, met with the party’s national president J.P. Nadda on October 13. The meeting has sparked some buzz in the political circles of the state as the government formation is in process. Vij, who has won the Ambala Cantt assembly seat for the seventh time, is reported to have congratulated the party chief for BJP’s third consecutive victory in Haryana.

After securing a third consecutive victory in Haryana, the BJP is now engaged in the process of forming a new government. The top leadership has officially endorsed Nayab Singh Saini as the candidate for Chief Minister. The swearing-in ceremony for the new Haryana government will take place on October 17. Prime Minister Narendra Modi will attend the ceremony along with chief ministers of some states ruled by the National Democratic Alliance (NDA).

Meanwhile, the party on Sunday named Union Home Minister Amit Shah and Madhya Pradesh Chief Minister Mohan Yadav as central observers for the Haryana BJP legislature party meeting, which will elect the next Chief Minister for the state, the party said in a post on X.

# Cyber crime syndicate busted by Panipat police operating from China & Dubai



PARVESH HANDA  
Sonepat

Cyber crime cell of Sonepat police arrested four persons identified as Ashieesh hailing from Rajasthan, Tushar and Divya both from Ahmedabad in Gujarat and Harshit of Gandhi Nagar allegedly cheated 4291 persons for amount worth Rs 16.74 crore in which 149 FIRs including nine registered in Haryana police stations. Further to the news published in The Financial World on 11th October the accused during police investigation admitted that the cyber crime syndicate involved in Cryptocurrency was being operated from China and Dubai where the amount cheated from people in trade traders and industry offering heavy profits in share market on their investment through WhatsApp group was being transferred abroad through cryptocurrency. Addressing a press conference, Probine P. DCP cyber crime cell Sonepat said the gang members used to attract investors in share market, initially offering heavy returns to gain confidence.

# Baba Siddique Murder: One accused gets police custody till Oct 21; another sent for medical test

**MUMBAI:** A Mumbai court on Sunday remanded one of the two prime accused behind the killing of Nationalist Congress Party leader Baba Ziauddin Siddique to police custody till October 21 and the other for a medical test to determine his age status.

While Gurnail Singh has been given police custody for a week, the other accused — reportedly a minor — has been sent for an ossification test to determine his true age, said a lawyer assisting the court.



The duo have been charged with shooting Siddique near his Congress MLA son Zeeshan Siddique’s office in Nirmal Nagar, Bandra, on Saturday evening, sending shockwaves in political circles. They were presented at the Esplanade Court on Sunday afternoon.

A Mumbai Police official said that they are questioning the two arrested accused, while 15 police teams are on the lookout for the third accused, and they are collaborating with the police in other states.

The police have recovered 28 live bullets from the accused plus two mobiles and further investigations are underway into the conspiracy behind Siddique’s suspected contract killing by the trio who came here from Haryana and Uttar Pradesh on September 2.

# Delhi CM Atishi calls on PM Modi, first time after taking oath

**NEW DELHI:** Delhi Chief Minister Atishi met Prime Minister Narendra Modi here on Monday. This is the first meeting after she became chief minister of Delhi.

The Prime Minister’s Office (PMO) put out just one line on X, saying, “Chief Minister of Delhi, Atishi, called on PM Narendra Modi.” Atishi later posted on X, saying, “Called on Hon’ble Prime Minister Narendra Modi ji today. I look forward to full cooperation between the Centre and the Delhi government for the welfare and progress of our capital.”

Atishi took over as the chief minister from Aam Aadmi Party supremo Arvind Kejriwal on September 17. However, she took charge on September 25 drawing parallels between her leadership transition and the



epic Ramayana, likening her situation to Bharat’s refusal to sit on Lord Ram’s throne, highlighting her personal connection and loyalty to Kejriwal. She pointed to the media the empty chair and said that this will remain vacant till Kejriwal returns to power. Atishi is the third woman to become Chief

Minister of Delhi and also the youngest to hold the top post. Her succession to the CM post followed Kejriwal’s resignation as the Chief Minister after his bail in the liquor policy scam by the Supreme Court.

Atishi, who represents Delhi’s Kalkaji constituency, is not only the third woman to serve as

Delhi’s Chief Minister but also the youngest to hold the position. Her tenure began amid tensions between the AAP-led Delhi government and the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) at the Centre. One of the recent flashpoints has been the controversy over the allotment of the Chief Minister’s residence, Sheesh Mahal, and projections from the Finance Ministry suggesting Delhi is facing a revenue deficit for the first time in its history. These issues continue to fuel political rivalry between the two parties as Atishi steps into her role at a critical juncture for Delhi’s governance and finances.

Delhi will go to the polls early next year unless the Election Commission prepones it with the elections in Maharashtra and Jharkhand as demanded by the Aam Aadmi Party.

# Two killed in a house fire in Delhi’s Shahdara, 2 children rescued

**NEW DELHI:** A fire broke out in a residential building in Delhi’s Shahdara area on Friday morning, resulting in death of two individuals. A call regarding the fire was received at 5:25 am, following which six fire tenders were rushed to Bhol Nath Nagar to douse the fire. Two children were rescued from the spot. According to local residents, the blaze erupted around 5:05 am, causing chaos and panic. Eyewitnesses recalled the alarming scenes as flames engulfed the building in seconds. One eyewitness said, “I was standing on my balcony, performing prayers when I noticed the fire. It sounded like fireworks. I assumed it was a short circuit and immediately called the fire brigade. Unfortunately, fire trucks experienced significant delays due



to parked vehicles obstructing their path, which exacerbated the situation.” According to the residents, it took approximately an hour and a half for fire tenders to arrive at the spot. This apparently allowed fire to intensify and engulf the whole building, leading to injuries and fatalities. Two individuals were killed in the fire. They were identified as 42 year-old Shilpi Gupta and 16 year-old Pranav Gupta. Their bodies were taken out from inside the apartment by the fire-fighters. Preliminary investigations suggested they died of suffocation.

# Air quality is deteriorating due to stubble burning, AQI reaching at dangerous point



SATISH HANDA

Increasing cases of burning paddy crop wastes in the open in the agriculture fields in Haryana has started deteriorating air due to pollution before winter not only in the state, but also in NCR area and Capital Delhi. Despite all the restrictions as per law by the government, stubble is being burnt openly. The Air Quality Index (AQI) in many cities across the state has reached 225 which include the highest recorded as 225 recorded at Bahadurgarh with a light layer of smog also visible in the morning in some places. According to the Pollution Control Board, there are four stages of AQI, such as in case AQI is identified between 201 to 300 it is bad, if it come between 301 to 400 it comes in the category of very bad, in case AQI arrives in the third stage between 401 to 450 it is identified as serious, whereas

the fourth stage of AQI above 450 is very serious.

A couple of days ago Dr Ankur Tewari, Additional Director Pollution Control Board arrived at Hisar and visited a few sights along with the staff of State Agriculture Board where stubble burning complaints were received and discussed with the experts of Haryana Agriculture University. Information reveals, maximum complaints of stubble burning in Haryana state have been received in Kurukshetra, Karnal, Kaithal, Yamunanagar, Ambala and Sonapat districts. According to available data, with effect from 15th September to 17th October this year nearly 575 stubble burning complaints have been received so far as against 340 complaints received in 2023, 83 complaints received in 2022 and 247 complaints received during 2021.

The detail of stubble burn-

ing complaints received so far from different districts in the state identified as 575 cases include 40 in Sonapat, 86 in Kurukshetra, 66 in Ambala, 55 in Karnal, 97 in Kaithal, 47 in Jind, 40 in Sonapat, 32 in Fatehabad, 25 in Panipat, 23 in Yamunanagar, 27 in Faridabad, 26 in Palwal, 16 in Hisar, 14 each in Panchkula and Sirsa, 6 in Rohtak and 1 in Jhajjar. Haryana state agriculture department has conducted a large number of raids on getting stubble burning complaints in the state in the past about three weeks.

Amount worth Rs 90 thousand was imposed towards fine on getting 83 stubble burning complaints in Kaithal district. As against 11 stubble burning complaints received from Yamunanagar Rs 27,500 fine was imposed on the farmers. Similarly, as against 51 stubble burning complaints received in Ambala district, a fine for amount worth Rs 60,000 has been recovered from the farmers and amount worth Rs 1,20,000 towards fine recovered against 45 complaints received in Kurukshetra district so far. An FIR has been registered with the police against a farmer in Radaur when caught while burning paddy crop remains in open in his field. State has also registered five FIRs, 30 red entries in land records and environmental compensation worth Rs 1.50 lakh imposed in stubble burning cases.

# Youth Congress to launch campaign against drugs, for employment- ‘Naukri Do Nasha Nahi’

KAVITA SHARMA  
New Delhi

In order to address the issue of rising unemployment and drug addiction among youth in the country, the Indian Youth Congress will launch a nationwide movement from tomorrow to draw the attention of the people and force the government of India to take remedial measures.

Addressing a press conference at the AICC headquarters here today, the newly appointed president of the Indian Youth Congress, Uday Bhanu Chib said that the youth of the country were facing the double whammy. He pointed



out, on the one side there was widespread unemployment, while on the other hand there was rampant drug addiction across the country.

He reminded the Prime Minister Narendra Modi and the BJP government at the centre that ten years ago, they

had promised to bring back black money stashed abroad but instead they have brought drugs which are eating into the vitals of the society as the youth are falling prey to this scourge. Chib said, the nationwide movement, called, “Naukri Do, Nasha Nahi” (give jobs, not

drugs) will start from Jantar Mantar in New Delhi on 16th October and will reach out to every state, district and each assembly segment across the country. This, he added, was being done to create awareness among the youth and also wake up the government from its deep slumber.

The IYC president observed that a false fear was being created that religion was in danger. But, he said, what was actually in danger was the future of the youth of the country, who were facing unemployment and were at the risk of drug addiction. He said, the IYC campaign is aimed at protecting the youth and future of the country.

# Lawrence gang’s shooter Sukha was caught through honeytrap by police laid a trap through a girl

SATISH HANDA  
Panipat

Mumbai Police with the assistance of Haryana police arrested Lawrence Bishnoi gang’s shooter Sukhvir alias Sukha allegedly accused of firing at Salman Khan’s house from a hotel in Panipat. Police trapped him in a net through a young woman in a honeytrap attempt. Sukha was taken to Mumbai for questioning by the police after his arrest. Under a plan, the young woman called him and said that she had drunk too much alcohol and invited her to a room she had booked in Hotel Abhinandan at Panipat. She said that she was under the heavy influence of liquor and invited him to the hotel room on the first floor she had booked and sent him the location. Lawrence Bishnoi gang’s henchman and shooter Sukhvir alias Sukha was known to the young woman three months ago through facebook friendship enabling to catch him. This young woman was constantly in touch with Sukha and was trying to trap him when police succeeded in this plan on Wednesday night when Mumbai police along with Panipat police, waiting in three rooms of hotel Abhinandan on the second floor, on getting her blank call conducted a surprise raid and arrested Sukhvir alias Sukha while enjoying drinks with the young woman.



On Thursday, the Mumbai Police team produced Sukha, originally working as a driver, got caught like this after making friendship before the magistrate and then left for Mumbai along with the alleged



accused. According to sources, preliminary investigation has revealed that after firing at Bollywood actor Salman Khan’s house, the Lawrence gang was preparing for another major attack. Panvel Police Station City had registered a case against six henchmen of Lawrence Bishnoi who were arrested whereas Sukha was involved in the firing case yet

absconding. During interrogation, the name of Sukhvir alias Sukha, resident of Raikala village in Panipat (Haryana) came to light and police interrogation revealed that he was the main accused in the firing case. Mumbai Police made efforts to arrest him several times, but he could not be caught. The Mumbai police started laying a trap to catch

Sukha three months ago and a young woman was prepared to contact Sukha and befriend him to lay a trap, as such she was in constant touch with him on social media.

Mumbai police succeeded in its plan to arrest Sukha a sharp shooter of Lawrence Bishnoi gang as per the plan in which a room in Hotel Abhinandan in Panipat was booked where she called Sukha to have drinks with her, saying that she was somewhere in Panipat, but don’t know which place in the city it is sending him the location invited Sukha. After this Sukha reached the girl’s location where both of them first drank alcohol in room number 104 of the hotel and the girl secretly made a missed call to the Mumbai Police team waiting on the second floor.



## Union Minister Piyush Goyal addresses challenges faced by Pharmaceutical Exporters

**NEW DELHI:** In a significant move to bolster India's pharmaceutical exports, Union Commerce and Industry Minister Piyush Goyal convened a crucial meeting on Wednesday with key stakeholders from the pharmaceutical sector, including Mehul Shah, General Secretary of the Indian Drug Manufacturers Association (IDMA).

The discussions aimed at addressing the pressing challenges faced by pharmaceutical exporters, ensuring that India maintains its prominent position in the global market. The meeting, attended by various industry representatives, focused on identifying the key hurdles that pharmaceutical exporters encounter. With India being one of the largest suppliers of generic drugs worldwide, accounting for a substantial share of the global market, it is imperative for the sector to overcome these challenges to sustain growth and competitiveness.

The Minister's office emphasized that the discussions were centered around exploring practical solutions that could enhance the industry's performance on a global scale.



In a statement posted on X, the Minister's office highlighted the collaborative spirit of the meeting. "Minister @PiyushGoyal held a meeting with Mehul Shah, General Secretary of the Indian Drug Manufacturers Association (IDMA) and other pharma industry stakeholders. Discussions centred on addressing the challenges faced by pharma exporters and exploring potential solutions to further strengthen India's position in the pharmaceutical sector globally," the statement read.

Key issues discussed during the meeting included regulatory compliance, intellectual property rights, and the need for improved supply chain logistics.

The stakeholders underscored the importance of streamlining processes to ensure that Indian pharmaceutical products remain competitive in both quality and pricing.

The collaboration between the government and the industry was seen as crucial for fostering an environment conducive to innovation and growth.

Moreover, the discussions extended beyond immediate concerns, as participants outlined a long-term vision for solidifying India's reputation as a leading pharmaceutical hub.

This vision includes investing in research and development, enhancing production capabilities, and promoting sustainable practices within the industry.

The Indian pharmaceutical sector plays a pivotal role in the country's economy, not only providing essential medications domestically but also exporting to over 200 countries.

The Minister's proactive engagement with industry leaders reflects the government's commitment to supporting the sector and ensuring its continued success.

As India navigates the complexities of global trade, this meeting signals a concerted effort to address challenges head-on, paving the way for a stronger, more competitive pharmaceutical industry in the years to come.

## India needs to Scale up precision farming for sustainable growth in Agriculture: Rammath Thakur



**NEW DELHI:** At the ASSOCHAM National Conference on Climate Resilient Farming Solutions, Rammath Thakur, Hon'ble Minister of State for Agriculture and Farmers Welfare, Govt of India stressed on Climate-resilient farming solutions that play a crucial role in improving both food security and fuel security. By implementing strategies such as cultivating drought-resistant crops, utilizing precision agriculture techniques, and practising sustainable water management, these solutions ensure consistent food production despite unpredictable climate conditions, thereby protecting communities from potential food shortages.

Furthermore, the use of cli-

mate-resilient crops for biofuel production, in conjunction with initiatives that convert agricultural waste into energy, helps to bolster fuel security by providing renewable energy sources. This integrated approach not only reduces reliance on fossil fuels but also promotes a circular economy where food and fuel production complement each other. Ultimately, climate-resilient farming practices enhance the resilience of food systems while advancing sustainable energy solutions, effectively addressing the interconnected challenges of food scarcity and energy insecurity in the face of a changing climate. This showcases government initiatives, when coupled

with dedication and innovative farming practices, can bring transformative success to our farmers, turning challenges into opportunities.

In his welcome address Jaidev R Shroff, Chairman, Agri Inputs and Farming Practices Council, ASSOCHAM & Global CEO, UPL Limited said Food security in India hinges on farmer resilience, as 40% of the population depends on agriculture for their livelihood. With volatile crop prices, shifting weather patterns, and rising food inflation, policies on crop insurance, bio-CNG, and ethanol will be key drivers of sustainable agricultural production.

Franklin L. Khobung, Joint Secretary (NRM/RFS), Ministry of Agriculture & Farmers Welfare, Government of India shared that India's steady increase in food grain production reflects a growing commitment to food security amidst rising population demands. By integrating a circular economy approach and blending ethanol with diesel, the nation is paving the way for sustainable agricultural growth.

## Congress warns against impending agrarian crisis in Punjab



**KAVITA SHARMA**  
New Delhi

The Congress has warned against an impending agrarian crisis in Punjab due to the non-availability of storage space for about 185 lakh metric tons of paddy which is likely to arrive in the market by the end of the current procurement season.

The party alleged that it was a well thought out conspiracy by the Bharatiya Janata Party in association with Punjab Chief Minister Bhagwant Mann to destroy the state's economy.

Addressing media persons at the AICC headquarters the Punjab Congress Legislative Party (CLP) leader Partap Singh Bajwa warned that the agrarian crisis can spiral out of control and may lead to serious law and order crisis.

He disclosed that Punjab was expecting about 185 lakh metric tons of paddy to arrive in the 'mandis' (markets). But, he added, there was no space available in the godowns across the state, as the previous stocks had not been cleared.

Referring to Punjab Chief Minister Bhagwant Mann's statement after meeting the Union Food and Civil Supplies Minister Pralhad Joshi that he had assured that all the old godowns will be cleared by March 31, Bajwa said, it was impossible to clear the entire space within next four months.

He blamed both Mann and the central government for not taking timely measures to clear the godown space in the state so that the new produce could be stored there. Bajwa alleged that it was a well thought conspiracy by the BJP and Mann to destroy Punjab's economy. He also alleged that this was being done with an intention to force farmers to go for distress sale and help Adani buy the produce on cheap prices as he has massive storage capacity with silos in Moga, Raikot and Kathunangal in Punjab. Bajwa took a dig at Mann for taking Union Minister of State for Railways Raveen Singh Bittu, whom he described as a "neo-convert" (to BJP), along for meeting Union minister Joshi. He said, it was already a public knowledge in Punjab that Bittu was earlier his "go-between" with the Union home ministry, now he has extended it to the Union food ministry also.

## PM Modi extends wishes on NSG's 40th Raising Day



**NEW DELHI:** Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Wednesday extended his wishes to National Security Guard (NSG) personnel on the 40th Raising Day of NSG, India's elite counter-terrorism unit, also known as the 'Black Cats'. Taking this to social media platform X, PM Modi said in a post, "On the occasion of NSG Raising Day, India salutes all NSG personnel for their unwavering dedication, courage and determination in safeguarding our nation. Their commitment to protecting our nation against threats is admirable. They embody valour and professionalism." Further, Union Home Minister Amit Shah and Minister of Road Transport & Highways Nitin Gadkari, too, took to their X handles to extend their wishes on the occasion. "NSG is a Central contingency 'Zero-Error Force' to deal with anti-terrorist activities in all its manifestations.

## Congress appoints 11 Observers, 2 Coordinators for Maharashtra polls

**NEW DELHI:** Wary after the bitter experience in the Haryana Assembly elections recently, the Congress is apparently not taking any chances for the Maharashtra Assembly polls scheduled for November 20.

As the first step in this endeavour, the Congress President Mallikarjun Kharge has named 11 political stalwarts from different states as "observers" for the five regions in the state and also two Election Senior Coordinators for the crucial assembly elections, coming up post-Diwali festivities. The two state Election Senior Coordinators appointed for the state are: Mukul Wasnik and Avinash Pande, who would oversee the minute details and systematise various aspects of the Assembly elections within the party for the 288 seats, said party sources here. For the country's commercial capital Mumbai and coastal Konkan Division, the observers named are former Rajasthan Chief Minister Ashok Gehlot and Karnataka Home Minister Dr. G. Parameashwara.

Vidarbha region has been entrusted to former Chief Minister of Chhattisgarh Bhupesh Baghel, former Chief Minister of Punjab Charanjit



Singh Channi and ex-minister and sitting MLA of Madhya Pradesh Umang Singhar.

Marathwada shall be under the observation of former Deputy Chief Minister Rajasthan Sachin Pilot and Telangana Minister Uttam Kumar Reddy. Western Maharashtra shall be looked after by T. S. Singh Deo, the former Deputy CM of Chhattisgarh and Karnataka Minister M. B. Patil.

Finally, the North Maharashtra would be handled by Rajya Sabha Member from Karnataka Syed Nasir Husain and Telangana Minister Dansari Anasuya popularly known as Seethakka. There are demands from various quarters within and outside

the party to deploy Congress' Leader of Opposition Rahul Gandhi in a big way for Maharashtra in the high-stakes elections and organize at least two election rallies for him in each region. A party source pointed out that in the 2024 LS polls, Rahul Gandhi and Priyanka Gandhi's genuineness had struck a chord with the state masses that helped the Maha Vikas Aghadi (MVA) allies Congress-Nationalist Congress Party (SP)-Shiv Sena (UBT) bag 31 of the 48 parliamentary seats here. However, Rahul Gandhi would also be required to campaign in the Jharkhand Assembly polls (Nov. 13-20) not to mention the Lok Sabha by-polls in

Nanded (Maharashtra) and Wayanad (Kerala), which the Congress will fight to retain.

Wayanad was won by Rahul Gandhi in the 2019 and 2024 LS polls but he opted to retain the Rae Bareilly seat (which he had bagged in 2024), while Nanded fell vacant after the recent demise of the sitting Congress MP Vasant Rao B. Chavan. Though the candidate for Nanded is yet to be announced, Priyanka Gandhi-Vadra is expected to fight her maiden elections from Wayanad, making it another prestige issue for the party. Aware of the pitfalls in the state with a belligerent MahaYuti working to retain power, the Congress top brass had made it clear that it would not tolerate any laggard behaviour from the state party leaders or workers, at a high-level meeting held in New Delhi at Kharge's home yesterday (October 14).

The central leadership has also stressed on the need to maintain intra-party unity at all costs, curb any signs of potential rebellion, and extend full cooperation to all the MVA allies besides the smaller supporting parties with the solitary aim of capturing Maharashtra again with the highest number of seats.

## Congress policies responsible for its defeat in Haryana assembly polls: INDI Alliance

**SATISH HANDA**  
New Delhi

According to members of INDI Alliance, in spite of wave in favour of Congress and majority of Exit Poll results in their favour to form a government in Haryana state, it failed to return to power in the state due to its own policies, was blamed by the leaders of several political parties of members of INDI Alliance which include Trinamool Congress, Shiv Sena, UBT, Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) and Samajwadi Party and various other regional parties. They said, Congress itself is responsible for its defeat by not joining hands with other political parties in spite of the fact it had proposed to contest polls jointly. Congress neglected to contest polls jointly with AAP, INLD and Samajwadi Party in the last stage just prior to the polls hoping to form government in Haryana independently, which may also adversely affect the coming assembly polls to be held in Jharkhand and Maharashtra shortly.

According to INDI Alliance members, refusing to join hands offered by AAP, Samajwadi Party and few other regional political parties in recent past Haryana assembly election solely depending



on the leadership of for chief minister Bhupinder Singh Hooda and his son Deepender Hooda which also resulted to rift among senior party leaders is another prime reason for Congress defeat in recently assembly polls. The leaders of various political parties in the country, too, are of the view that self-confidence, self superiority and neglect towards few senior leaders in the party as well as regional political parties in Haryana are some of the prime reasons for Congress defeat in recent Haryana assembly election.

Meanwhile, various senior political leaders Sanjay Raut of Shiv Sena, Saket Gokhale of TMC, Manish Sisodia of AAP, D.Raajaaaja of BKP and Omer Abdullah of National Conference, Akhlesh Yadav of Samajwadi Party has suggested Congress high command not to neglect other political parties and find out reasons of their defeat in Haryana assembly polls in spite of Congress wave in the state as well as majority of Exit Polls were in favour of Congress victory in these election.

### KASMIRI PANDITS' HOPE REKINDLED

## Omar resumes new inning in Srinagar, Father Farooq asks for the return

**GOPAL MISRA**  
With Omar Abdullah reoccupying the office of chief minister of

Jammu and Kashmir, one of the most challenging states of the Indian Union, his father, Farooq Abdullah, chief of ruling National Conference, not only boldly announces, but also exhorts Kashmiri Pandits to return to their homes in the valley as well as in the other parts of the state.

It is estimated that about a million Hindus were made refugees in their own country during the regime of Vishwanath Pratap Singh, which was then supported by the BJP-led by Atal Bihari Vajpayee and L.K. Advani. During his tenure as the prime minister, he tried to please, if not bribe, the pro-Pakistani terrorists and perhaps, their political face, Mufti Mohammad Saeed, as his Home Minister. Earlier, Mufti had begun his political innings as a National Conference leader: later when his mentor G.M. Saeed migrated to the Congress Party, he also served as Minister for Tourism in the Rajiv Gandhi government.

Being quite an ambitious politician, he founded a family political outfit, People's Democratic Party (PDP), which is now being headed by his daughter, Mehbooba Mufti. In a bid to find some support base, Mehbooba had launched

her 'healing touch' drama with the support of the BJP Government in New Delhi. In 2016, her supporters in the ruling establishment were sidelined following the merciless killings of Hindus in the state.

During the period 2019-24, the PDP was further sidelined following the cleansing operation against the separatists in the valley. The Congress Party, which could have regained strength in the state, lost its opportunity by showing disrespect to the senior most and trusted leader from the state, Ghulam Nabi Azad.

With the final marginalization of the Congress Party, both Farooq Abdullah and his son, Omar, have emerged as the unquestioned leader of the state with secular credentials.

### Warning to Pakistan

It is being stated that during his recent visit to Islamabad, India's External Affairs Minister (EAM), S. Jaishankar, told both Pakistan and its close ally since 1962, China, that India is in no mood to return to the era of either to the Aman ki Asha or hope for peace, or to reenact the Hindi-Chini bhabhi slogans. Being a weather-beaten or one of the most admired, he did not state directly, but asked for implementing the SCO's commitment to peace and prosperity by mustering strength to fight terrorism.

During the EAM's visit to Islamabad, the Indian media was abuzz with details of In-

dia's focus in obtaining high-performing drones and the new generation of the missiles equipped with the state-of-the-art technology in hitting the target with precision bombing in any mission.

With these communications, the Indian side has reasserted their commitment to the political elected government in Jammu and Kashmir. Any Hamas-type venture in the state might lead to a bigger flare-up than the Kargil invasion due to the illogical peace overtures of Vajpayee and his deputy Advani calling Jinnah a secular leader. Advani, perhaps, could not distinguish between being a non-conformist and a secular. The movement for making a state free from the influence of the church is called secularism. On the other hand, the meaning of the word, non-conformist is that the person does not follow the rituals or the protocol of a faith, but even not being a genuine believer, a person could be communal. Since Jinnah led the movement for Pakistan in the name of the faith could not be secular, only a confused person could anoint him as a secular leader.

With the end of the dilemma facing the Indian state, the peace has finally dawned in the valley. Since 1980, the confusion had hit the state, it was under almost unending turmoil.

### The Revival of Confidence

With the announcement of the return of the Pandits in the



valley, the BJP leadership, perhaps regained its confidence. During the past five years despite the end of the insurgency, New Delhi could not create any hope for their return causing dismay. However, the recently held polls have not only established the secular credentials of the National Conference, it has also sealed the fate of the Congress Party. It has won only one seat in Jammu, because the predominantly Muslim constituency could not have voted for the BJP. The other seats were won with the help of the National Conference.

The BJP might not get any share in the state government, but by ushering in peace and Farooq's request to Pandits return is expected to influence the political fortunes of the PM Narendra Modi and his Home Minister Amit Shah personally within the party as well as for the BJP to face the forthcoming assembly polls in Maharashtra. The recently held elections in the state might have adverse

impact on the leadership of Rahul-Priyanka and also adversely impact the Congress Party's immediate and long-term prospects. The party has bagged only six seats in the 90-member strong state assembly with only six seats. The Omar Abdullah led National Conference has emerged as the largest party with 42 seats. The BJP got 29 seats in the Jammu region.

### The Tasks Ahead

Omar Abdullah will be managing the state with the tourism business reaching its pinnacle and exports all time high. The economy of Jammu and Kashmir, is much more optimistic despite the continuance of the regional imbalance, is much more robust than it ever was during the past four decades, most specifically since the 1980s. It has been contributing more than two thousand crores per year to the state's economy from 2019. It is estimated that in recent years the region's gross domestic product has gone up significantly

from 1.60 lakh crores in 2019 to 2.46 lakh crores in 2023. This unprecedented growth is expected to cross in the current financial year by 9.9 per cent approximately.

### Twin Challenges

For Omar as well as for his father, Farooq, governing the state has always been challenging. They could not resist the inflammable radical Sunni Islam of the Deobandi as well as Bareilvi cults.

It may be recalled that during the pre-partition years the Sunnis of the Bareilvi cult had supported the formation of Pakistan by joining hands with Shias, Ahmediyas and the Bengali Muslims supported by the Nawab of Dacca. The Deobandis had opposed the creation of Pakistan.

Apart from the Hindus, a large number of Muslims find it hard to seek refuge in many parts of the country. They were scared that the terrorists might not only violate their women, their young daughters were also being turned into sex slaves.

The return of the Abdullah's to the center-stage of state politics reminds us of Omar's grandfather, Sheikh Abdullah, who knew that the destiny of Jammu and Kashmir was safe with the new India being heralded under the leadership of Mahatma Gandhi and Jawaharlal Nehru. He had refused to meet the British stooge MA Jinnah to endorse the proposed Muslim homeland i.e. Pakistan. Interestingly, the

partition of India was supported by the Communist Party of India (CPI) and the All India Christian Association resolution of 1942. The famous plan of India's fragmentation prepared by the then CPI General Secretary, Gangadhar Adhikari, had claimed that the fragmentation of India would be reinvigorating the Indian culture and traditions. The party had not only endorsed the country's partition, it also described Mohammad Ali Jinnah, a progressive leader and Muslim League, an outfit of the poor. On the other hand, Gandhi and Nehru were called bourgeois leaders and the Congress Party, an organization of the vested interests.

The Kashmiri Muslims also do not trust the Chinese. They still remember that the Chinese PM Zhou-enlai had telephoned during the China-India War in 1962 to the army dictator, Ayub Khan to attack Jammu and Kashmir and occupy it. Fortunately, the then US President John F. Kennedy dissuaded Khan to keep off from the conflict.

The woes of the state were enhanced during the decades 1969-1979 as well as in later years, when Pakistan was liberally funded by the US and its western allies for training the Jihadists and also against the Taliban terrorists.

Meanwhile, reinvigorated with the latest weapons and funds, Pakistan introduced this low-key war against India, more

specifically the state of Jammu and Kashmir.

### International Conspiracies

Omar as well as the people of the state are quite aware of the fact that the key to peace is still with Rawalpindi, the headquarters of the Pakistan army. The borders between the Pakistan occupied region of the state despite fencing could be violated.

Earlier, during the period of the much-discussed composite dialogue between India and Pakistan, the Nawaz Sharif government in Islamabad, and later the period of the 'aman ki asha' or hope for the peace could not usher in between the twins, India and Pakistan. In spite of being born from the womb of the white mother i.e. the House of Commons in 1947, they are indulging in fratricide.

The return of the democratic government in Srinagar despite its challenge has thwarted the Pakistani conspiracies at least for a while. The state government as well as the Union Government are aware of the terrorist attack of October 7 last year in Israel, and Pakistan can repeat the Hamas type mischief in the Kashmir Valley.

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





KINGSHUK SARKAR ON WHY DEFINING 'EMPLOYMENT RELATION' IS THE KEY

## Gig workers need social safety net



are perceived as a subset of informal sector workers. Accordingly, the said code provided for the formulation of social security schemes for gig and platform workers by the central government. Further, like informal workers, gig workers ought to register themselves under the e-Shram portal through self-declaration.

### Worker definition

The issue arises from the definition of gig workers in the Social Security Code 2020, which places them outside the traditional employer-employee relationship. This is problematic since many gig employers, as in some of the well-known companies, operate as formal entities within the formal sector. The exclusion of gig workers from the traditional employment framework is the crux of the problem.

It is a deliberate ploy on the part of the "aggregator" to demystify employment relations in gig and platform economies such that the application of existing labour laws get pre-empted. In a gig economy, employment relations remain ambiguous and workers are categorised as independent workers or contractors.

Such camouflaging of employment re-

lations leads to the misconception that the gig worker is an independent worker. The Social Security Code 2020 accepts this deception and includes gig workers as part of the informal sector. The Code does not decipher the real employment relation in the gig and employment economy.

Also, there is a huge difference in terms of entitlement between institutional social security and social security schemes. For example, formal workers get 26 weeks of paid leave along with job security for the entire period of maternity under the Maternity Benefit Act, 1961. This is part of institutional social security coverage.

Under social security schemes, for maternity benefits, there is a cash benefit such as 5,000- 10,000 given to registered informal workers. The gap between an institutional social security and a social security scheme in terms of entitlement is very clearly evident. The Social Security Code 2020 sets to provide gig workers with only certain social security schemes but not institutional social security.

Similarly, other forms of institutional protection such as minimum wage protection are missing for gig workers. Occupational safety and health regulations do not apply for gig workers. Gig workers are not included under the Industrial Relations Code 2020 and are not covered under the dispute resolution mechanism provided thereunder.

The cornerstone of protection under labour laws is the explicit employment relation. This is what is not defined for gig work in the Indian context. Pieces of legislation introduced in recent times in States such as Rajasthan and Karnataka also suffer from

this particular lacunae.

### The core issue

If the Union Ministry of Labour and Employment is serious about protecting the interests of an ever increasing number of gig workers in the country, it should define the employment relation in gig and platform in an explicit manner and remove the veil created by so-called "aggregators". Recognising "aggregators" as employer and reclaiming explicit employment relation in gig work is the key factor.

An important precedent here is the ruling by the U.K. Supreme Court on the Uber case in 2021 — Uber was deemed to be an employer, Uber drivers as "workers" and Uber asked to honour the prevailing labour laws of the land.

Once the employment relationship is clearly defined, gig workers can be included under the proposed four labour codes, eliminating the need for separate legislation. The welfare board model, as suggested by the Union Ministry of Labour and Employment has shown limited effectiveness in the past, particularly with construction workers, who were also classified as informal despite working for formal employers. Clarifying the employment relationship in gig work would further promote the formalisation of workers in this sector.

Moreover, the entire labour code was designed for simplification and rationalisation. Introducing separate laws for specific workforce segments undermines this goal. The key is to recognise the employment relationship in gig work. Once this is addressed, the rest will follow.

*Kingshuk Sarkar is a faculty member at the Goa Institute of Management and former labour administrator with Government of West Bengal. Views are personal.*



ATANU BISWAS SAYS REVITALISE AND MODERNISE, DON'T ELIMINATE INDIA'S TRAMS

## The end of the bell lap for Kolkata's tramway



diesel-fuelled buses and private vehicles, are a better option in an era of mounting concerns about climate change. Moreover, the tram was, surely, an integral part of the city's cultural heritage and political fabric too. A historic protest movement led by Jyoti Basu and others in Kolkata in 1953 in response to a one-paisa increase in tram fares in the second class is an important chapter of the State's political history.

### A cultural icon

The tram in Kolkata truly connects people's everyday life with literature, music, film, and photography. In Mahanagar, a 1963 film directed by Satyajit Ray, the tram is portrayed as a representation of the monotony and tedium of the city. Moreover, the tram has appeared in some other films directed by legendary directors such as Satyajit Ray, Ritwik Ghatak, Mrinal Sen and Buddhadeb Dasguta.

In Tagore's poem, Swapna (Dream), the tram carriage is rushing down Calcutta's roads, which have turned into a snake. "I walk along the tram line: night now deep/I hear the teasing of some life of the past:/You are like a broken tram—/there is no depot, you don't need wage/Alas, when has this occurred!/That old life sinks behind/The star in the sky, in darkness," wrote poet Jibanananda Das (translation by Faizul Latif Chowdhury). Sunil Gangopadhyay compared the emotions of his fictitious muse, Neera, to a tram's movement in one of his poems. Neera becomes extremely disturbed when the tram is forced to stop.

Contemporary Turkish playwright, novelist and thinker Mehmet Murat Ildan may be a little bit fascinated with trams. He said, "Cities who do not have trams always look less literary, less poetic, and less mysterious!" Well, 60 years after Bombay bid adieu to its trams (1964), the passenger tramway in Kolkata, India's last remaining network, has come to an end 151 years after its introduction. West Bengal's administrative authorities contend that trams cause unnecessary congestion on roads that are increasingly difficult to manage. A small stretch from Maidan to the Esplanade, however, will be retained as a heritage for tram lovers for occasional time-machine rides.

Interestingly, in September 2021, The New York Times ran a piece titled "Kolkata's 'Fairy Tale' Trams, Once Essential, Are Now a Neglected Relic". Although the tramway system makes sense for a city of 1.5 crore people experiencing congestion and pollution, "many trips now are more nostalgic than necessary," it argued. Then, in 2023, Kolkata commemorated 150 years of tram services in the city. However, at the moment, its death sentence was virtually heard.

### A symbol of the city

If the Victoria Memorial characterises Kolkata's skyline, the trams became a visual landmark of its cityscape. Further, the sluggishness of the trams somewhat complemented the city's languid pace. The first horse-drawn trams in India travelled just 3.9 km in 1873, from Sealdah to Armenian Ghat in Kolkata. Kolkata's trams were discontinued in 1980. Then the first electric tramcar in Asia made its debut in Kolkata in 1902, completely changing the city's public transportation system. It gained popularity as a means of public transit,

serving as a link between different areas of the city and beyond, such as the Howrah section, which was connected by the Howrah Bridge.

In 2020, Kolkata also launched a tram library in a four-and-a-half-kilometre stretch between Shyambazar and Esplanade, past the iconic "boi para" (colony of books) of its College Street neighbourhood. Kolkata loved it because it combined two of its favourite things: books and trams.

Meanwhile, the tram's popularity started to steadily diminish in the 1970s. Ridership fell from 9,50,000 in 1965 to 7,41,000 in 1971, according to an assessment in 1972 by the Calcutta Metropolitan Planning Organisation. Trams added to traffic congestion as cars and buses became more prevalent on the narrow streets. And tram services have been declining for the previous few decades due to low maintenance, a lack of investment, and a steep reduction in passenger volume. Trams in full-scale operation do, however, make sense for a city that is dealing with congestion and pollution. The emission-free trams, which are powered by overhead electric wires rather than

### Networks elsewhere and a revival

There were trams in a number of other Indian cities, such as Bombay, Delhi, Madras, and Poona. The rise in buses and private vehicles — and speed — in these cities in the 20th century led to a fall in the tram systems. On the other hand, Europe boasts a vast array of tramway networks, some of which have been modernised to light rail standards with enhanced speed. These networks are referred to as metro ligero in Portugal, sneltram in the Netherlands, Stadtbahn in Germany, premetros in Belgium, and fast trams in certain countries. Trams were reintroduced in Paris in 1992 and in Luxembourg City in 2017. While the Melbourne tramway network in Australia is the world's largest operational urban tram network and one of the most used, with 250 kilometres of double tram track, Vienna's network is among the largest in the world with its 173.4 km of track.

However, one may argue that Indian cities are more populated. But there are examples of cities such as Beijing and Shanghai, which are also experiencing a revival of tram networks. Furthermore, Hong Kong's century-old tram system has not only endured but has evolved and modernised, covering a sizable portion of the city.

Hence, Kolkata certainly had an alternative, possibly more eco-friendly and effective, by revitalising, modernising, and expanding the tramway network rather than dismantling it. Mehmet Murat Ildan might think that the city instead opted to become less literary, less poetic, and less mysterious.

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

## Growth is fine, but address hunger first

The 2024 Global Hunger Index (GHI) paints a sobering picture for India, revealing that its undernourished population, estimated at 200 million, is equivalent to the entire population of Brazil.

This number represents about 14 per cent of India's total population, a distressing figure that highlights the persistent and systemic challenges India faces in ensuring food security. Ranked 105th out of 127 countries, India's position on the Index is classified as "serious," yet the reality of its hunger and malnutrition crisis could arguably be deemed "extremely alarming." Despite its status as the world's fastest-growing economy in 2024, India's per capita income remains significantly lower than the global average, underscoring the severe income inequality that hampers many citizens' access to essential resources, including food. This disparity is further exacerbated by rising food inflation, which more than doubled from FY22 to FY24, driven by extreme weather events and fluctuating agricultural outputs. While the country achieved record food production of 332 million tonnes in 2023-24, extreme weather has damaged vital crops, making food access unpredictable for the most vulnerable populations. India's troubling indicators extend beyond hunger. The nation's infant mortality rate stands at 26 per 1,000 live births, while child stunting and wasting rates are alarmingly high at 35.5 per cent and 18.7 per cent, respectively. These figures suggest not only gaps in food distribution but also fundamental flaws in healthcare and social safety nets, as well as a failure to address the long-term impacts of climate change on food security. India's impressive economic growth will remain hollow if it cannot provide its citizens with basic sustenance and well-being. Addressing these challenges requires a robust, multi-pronged approach focused on equitable income distribution, climate resilience, and enhanced healthcare systems. Only then can India hope to transform its demographic dividend into a true developmental advantage.

India formulated four new labour codes in 2019 and 2020. These codes essentially simplified and rationalised existing labour laws and enabled 29 central labour laws to be merged in four broad codes: namely, wage, social security, industrial relation and occupational safety health working conditions. The only code where gig and platform workers found mention is the Social Security Code 2020.

### Labour codes

In this context, it can be mentioned that India formulated four new labour codes in 2019 and 2020. These codes essentially simplified and rationalised existing labour laws and enabled 29 central labour laws to be merged in four broad codes: namely, wage, social security, industrial relation and occupational safety health working conditions. The only code where gig and platform workers found mention is the Social Security Code 2020.

In this code, gig and platform workers

**LETTERBOX**  
Readers' feedback adds value to the newspaper. Please email comments on reports, features and columns to [fwletters@gmail.com](mailto:fwletters@gmail.com). We will publish them.



## THE FINANCIAL WORLD

RNI NO. DELENG/2011/38860  
PRINTED & PUBLISHED BY SWINDER PAL SINGH BAJWA  
ON BEHALF OF FW MEDIA  
PRINTED AT JAGJIT PUBLISHING CO. PVT LTD  
D-12, INDUSTRIAL AREA, PHASE-1, MOHALI,  
PUNJAB 160059  
PRINTER & PUBLISHER SWINDER PAL SINGH BAJWA  
OWNER : FW MEDIA  
PUBLISHED AT: BUILDING NO-23, NEHRU PLACE  
NEW DELHI 110019; PHONE: 9888040061  
EDITOR\* ABDUL WASEY  
(\*RESPONSIBLE FOR SELECTION OF NEWS UNDER THE PRB ACT)

## BOOKS: REVIEW

## Infiltrating utopia: New book dissects radicalism

Rachel Kushner's novel, *Creation Lake*, is a deep dive into the intersection of personal and political narratives, masterfully woven through a landscape of eco-terrorism, anarchist communes, and the fraught boundaries of surveillance. Known for her work on the prison-industrial complex and revolutionary movements, Kushner's signature style shines here as she interweaves urgent themes with nuance and intensity. This work has rightfully earned her a spot on this year's Booker Prize shortlist, as it resonates with both current and timeless issues.

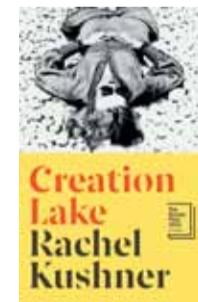
*Creation Lake* stands apart from typical spy thrillers. While marketed as such, the novel moves beyond the conventions of the genre, embracing a more reflective approach that challenges readers to question the ethical underpinnings of rebellion and surveillance. The protagonist,

Sadie Smith, is a former federal agent whose failed case has left her disillusioned. She is tasked with infiltrating a commune led by the enigmatic Bruno Lacombe, an anthropologist with a radical vision. Bruno, a recluse hiding in caves, represents a world far removed from conventional society, one that explores consciousness and reality beyond the bounds of modern life.

Kushner deftly intertwines themes of surveillance, isolation, and ideological disillusionment throughout the novel. Rather than a straightforward narrative of agents versus anarchists, she examines the underlying motivations and contradictions that drive both sides. Sadie's infiltration is neither swift nor decisive; instead, her methods are slow and deliberate. This restrained pacing brings the reader closer to Sadie's internal conflict and underscores her detachment. As she navigates the commune, she

finds herself strategically using her connections—even engaging in a relationship with someone loosely affiliated with the group. Yet, her past haunts her, and despite her best efforts, she cannot entirely insulate herself emotionally from the people she is surveilling.

One of the novel's most compelling aspects is Kushner's exploration of character, particularly her treatment of Sadie. Kushner has stated her ambivalence towards "20th-century subjectivity" in characters—a notion that they must be psychologically complete. This perspective is evident in *Creation Lake*, where Sadie's identity is fragmented and elusive. She is less a fully fleshed-out individual and more a reflection of her circumstances and profession. As a spy, Sadie slips between identities, leaving readers uncertain of her true self. Her voice on the page is introspective, almost detached, mirroring her emotional distance



*Creation Lake*  
By Rachel Kushner  
Jonathan Cape;  
413 pages; Rs.799.

and the ambivalence she feels towards her mission.

Bruno, on the other hand, is an intriguing figure whose radical philosophies challenge the reader's notions of morality and rebellion. His communiques, intercepted by Sadie, are filled with reflections on a "pure" existence that romanticises the Neanderthals, positioning them as symbols of untainted humanity. Through Bruno's lengthy and often absurd monologues, Kushner forces readers to grapple with questions of societal abandonment and the ethics of violent resistance. Bruno's ideas, while frequently outlandish, offer a window into the philosophical core of the commune and its utopian aspirations.

The novel's exploration of uto-

pian ideals is grounded in real historical references. Kushner draws inspiration from radical movements, such as those associated with Notre-Dame-des-Landes, an environmental resistance site in France. The commune depicted in *Creation Lake* echoes these real-world struggles, blending fiction with history to deepen its impact. Yet, Kushner doesn't idealise the commune. Through Sadie's observations, the reader sees its flaws and the inevitable tensions within any collective that aims to transcend societal norms.

As *Creation Lake* unfolds, it becomes clear that Kushner is not merely telling a story about eco-terrorism or anarchist rebellion. Rather, she's examining the broader human condition, probing the limitations of ideology, the nature of identity, and the complexities of personal versus political change. Sadie's moral ambiguity is matched by the commune's imperfect pursuit of utopia. Both are steeped in contradictions, embodying the novel's central theme: that meaningful change, whether on an individual or societal level, is fraught with challenges and rarely conforms to a straightforward narrative.



# India Unveils Textile Policy 2024-2029 Aiming for USD 100 Bn Exports

**NEW DELHI:** The Government of India has unveiled its comprehensive Textile Policy for 2024-2029, outlining ambitious goals to boost the country's textile and apparel sector.

This policy aims to position India as a leading global textile hub, with a focus on increasing exports, enhancing productivity, and fostering innovation within the industry. Key objectives of the policy include raising textile and apparel exports to USD 100 billion by 2030, improving the sector's global competitiveness, and creating substantial employment opportunities.

The government plans to achieve these targets through a series of strategic initiatives and support measures. One of the primary focuses of the policy is to enhance the entire value chain, from fibre production to high-value-added products.

The government intends to increase cotton production sig-



nificantly, addressing raw material needs that are crucial for the industry's growth and self-reliance. To boost exports, the policy outlines plans to diversify product lines and explore new markets. Special emphasis will be placed on technical textiles and sustainable textiles, areas where India sees potential for growth and innovation.

The government also aims to attract foreign direct investment and promote domestic investment to bring in new

technologies and expertise. Sustainability and compliance with international standards are key components of the new policy.

The government plans to implement measures to reduce the industry's environmental footprint and improve working conditions, aligning with global best practices and buyer requirements. The policy addresses several challenges faced by the textile sector, including infrastructure development, technology upgradation, and

access to finance.

Proposed solutions include improving logistics, facilitating the adoption of modern machinery, and introducing new financing schemes for businesses across the value chain.

Human resource development is another crucial aspect of the policy. The government plans to enhance skill development programs and promote research and development to create a workforce capable of meeting the industry's evolving needs. While the policy sets ambitious targets, its success will depend on effective implementation and sustained government support.

The coming years will be critical in determining whether India can realise its vision of becoming a global textile powerhouse and achieve the substantial economic benefits outlined in this forward-looking policy.

# Tata Group will create five lakh jobs in five years: Chairman



**MUMBAI:** Tata Group would create 5 lakh manufacturing jobs in the next five years across sectors such as semiconductor, electric vehicles, battery and related industries, its Chairman N Chandrasekaran said on Tuesday.

Speaking at a symposium of Indian Foundation for Quality Management, the Tata Sons Chairman said India could not achieve the goals of being a developed nation, if it could create

manufacturing jobs.

"Between our investments in semiconductors, our investment in precision manufacturing, assembly, electric vehicles, batteries and related industries, I think we will create five lakh manufacturing jobs in the next five years," he said.

Citing the group's upcoming semiconductor plant in Assam and other new manufacturing units for electric vehicles and battery, he said, "We are setting up a number of plants".

**“**We cannot achieve the goals of Viksit Bharat if we cannot create manufacturing jobs, because we all know one million people are joining the workforce every month”

While he has not got the full details, Chandrasekaran said based on 'basic math', these jobs would have multiplier effects. "We cannot achieve the goals of Viksit Bharat if we cannot create manufacturing jobs, because we all know one million people are joining the workforce every month," he said.

# India's Wholesale Price Inflation Surges to 1.84% in September



**NEW DELHI:** India's wholesale price inflation rose to 1.84 percent in September, driven primarily by a surge in food prices, according to government data released on Monday.

This marks a significant increase from the 1.31 percent recorded in August and contrasts sharply with the negative inflation rate of -0.07 percent observed in September of the previous year.

The data reveals a substantial spike in food inflation, which jumped to 11.53 percent last month from 3.11 percent in August. Vegetables were the main contributor to this increase, with inflation in this category soaring to 48.73 percent, a dramatic shift from the -10.01 percent deflation recorded in August.

Notably, potato and onion prices continued to exert upward pressure, with inflation rates of 78.13 percent and 78.82 percent, respectively.

# Indian construction industry to reach Rs 25.31 trillion in 2024



**DOMINICK RODRIGUES**  
Mumbai

India's construction industry is expected to reach Rs 25.31 trillion in 2024 with a projected CAGR of 9.6% between 2024 and 2028, according to Yogesh Mudras, Managing Director, Informa Markets in India.

Mudras was speaking during the 10th edition of the "World of Concrete India 2024" three-day event, which opened here on October 16, showcasing industry insights and global innovations.

Noting that 15,000 delegates are expected to attend this event alongside global brands and exhibitors from key markets like Germany, Italy, USA, Kuwait, South Korea, Finland and Japan, Mudras said this construction industry growth acts as a catalyst for several allied industries, including cement, steel and real estate.

# Ola Electric's share drops 3 pc amid probe into pricing practices



**NEW DELHI:** Ola Electric shares closed nearly 3 per cent down on Monday - a fall for the third consecutive session - as the Automotive Research Association of India (ARAI) asked the EV firm to clarify its pricing practices.

The automotive testing agency, operating under the Ministry of Heavy Industries, has asked the EV company to provide clarification about a price reduction for its S1 X 2 kWh electric two-wheeler in its recently announced sale. Ola Electric's share closed at Rs 87.44 apiece. The stock has lost its sheen from its all-time high of Rs 157.40. If fails to provide a satisfying answer, Ola Electric may face legal action and potentially lose the subsidies its electric vehicles are eligible for under the PM Electric DRIVE Revolution in Innovative Vehicle Enhancement (PM E-DRIVE) scheme. According to reports, if any violations are found, action is likely to be taken in accordance with the law and the E-DRIVE scheme guidelines. Bhavish Aggarwal-run Ola Electric has also been slapped with a notice from the Central Consumer Protection Authority (CCPA), after the National Consumer Helpline (NCH) received over 10,000 complaints in the last one year regarding its poor after-sales service.

Spread over 600 acres, the Manesar facility began operations in October 2006. The company manufactures Brezza, Ertiga, XL6, Ciaz, Dzire, Wagon

# Maruti Suzuki India crosses production of 1 cr units at Manesar facility

**New Delhi:** Leading automaker Maruti Suzuki India Limited on Thursday said it has crossed the 1-crore cumulative production milestone at its Manesar facility in Haryana.

With this, the facility became the fastest among Suzuki's global automobile manufacturing facilities, to reach the milestone in just 18 years, the company said in a statement. "As we reach this important landmark, I thank our customers for placing their trust in us. I also thank all our employees, business associates and government of India for their continued support," said Hisashi Takeuchi, Managing Director and CEO, Maruti Suzuki India Limited.

Manesar facility is a testament to India's manufacturing capability and their commitment to the larger national goal of 'Make in India'. "With a strong focus on local manufacturing of components, since inception, the Company has been able to establish a vast supply chain in India. Through our large-scale manufacturing facilities, we have been able to provide



R, S-Presso and Celerio at this facility. According to Maruti Suzuki India, these models are sold in domestic market and are exported to regions like Latin America, Middle East, Africa, and neighbouring countries in Asia. Maruti Suzuki's first passenger car to be exported to Japan, the Baleno, was also manufactured at this facility. Takeuchi said the feat at

direct and indirect employment to millions of people," said the automaker's CEO. Maruti Suzuki's overall production capability stands at about 2.35 million units per annum. Since inception, the company has produced over 3.11 crore vehicles (as on October 6). In August, Maruti Suzuki India sold 184,727 vehicles, up from 181,343 units sold in the same month last year. The figure included domestic sales of 148,061 units, sales to other original equipment manufacturers (OEMs) of 8,938 units and exports of 27,728 units. In the six months of current fiscal (April-September), Maruti Suzuki India sold 1,063,418 units, up from 1,050,085 in the same period last fiscal. The export figure for the first six months of FY25 was 148,276 units, up from 132,542 units in the last fiscal for the same period.

# HDFC Securities launch HDFC TRU

**DOMINICK RODRIGUES**  
Mumbai

HDFC Securities announced the launch of its new Wealth Advisory offering - HDFC TRU - marking a significant milestone in the company's journey as a trusted name in equity research, broking and financial distribution.

Dhiraj Relhi, MD & CEO, HDFC Securities, said here October 17 that with over 5.7 million clients digitally and



across 250+ branches pan-India, HDFC Securities is expanding its service portfolio to provide comprehensive wealth advisory solutions for High-

Net-Worth individuals (HNIs) Ultra-High-Net-Worth Individuals (UHNIs), Family Offices and Corporate Treasuries.

Replying to questions, he said

about three years went into the making of the HDFC TRU offering and with wealth services on the cusp of exponential growth, HDFC Securities is highlighting its "Honesty and Expertise" factors on the MF side (advisory and distribution). Noting that HDFC TRU had no revenue targets as the focus was more on differentiated value, and with Rs 168 lakh crore AUM, "This pie will increase while debt and equity continue to do well with debt reforming over the years and more rate cuts being witnessed also."

# Employment Dynamics in Indian Pharmaceutical Industry

**DR. ANIL KUMAR ANGRISH**

**Annual Report 2020-21**

21 of the Department of Pharmaceuticals stated that pharmaceutical sector in India contributes around 1.72% to the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) of India. Indian Pharmaceutical Alliance (June 2019) cited estimates that the pharmaceutical industry directly and indirectly provides employment to over 2.7 million people. Same number was cited by another report, Reimagining pharma and healthcare for India @100 by OPPI and EY Parthenon in November 2023. Pharmaceutical industry provides employment in high-skill areas such as R&D, manufacturing, marketing, regulatory etc. Data pertaining to top ten pharmaceutical companies in India reveals that pharmaceutical companies provide significant employment in 'non-permanent category' for employees as well as workers. For example, in Sun Pharma, the largest pharma company India had 24.58 per cent employees & workers in 'Other than Permanent' category.

Data regarding employees and workers of top 10 listed pharmaceutical companies in India in terms of market capitalization provide the glimpse of employment generated by pharmaceutical sector.



tries Limited, the largest pharmaceutical company in India has 43,000+ global employee base out of which 3,000+ employees form global R&D team. In 2023-24, the company's headcount grew by over 4 per cent. The company has a diverse and multicultural workforce representing more than 50 nationalities. Consolidated financial statements reveal the list of entities comprise 117 entities including subsidiaries, a joint venture entity, associates and subsidiaries of associates. Sun Pharma had 8 differently abled employees as permanent and 28 differently abled permanent workers. Females form 9.71 per cent of permanent employees, and 37.13 per cent of Other than permanent employees.

Divi's Laboratories is the largest API manufacturer in the world for 10 of the Generic APIs manufactured. The company has about 17,500 employees across 3 countries including 600 scientists working in three R&D centres across functions as on March 31, 2024. About 10 per cent employees are women employees. Average age of employees was 30.34

years in 2023-24. The company employed 17 differently abled employees in permanent positions, and 11 workers in 'Other than Permanent' category.

Cipla Limited has presence in 17 countries with 27,764 permanent employees and workers headcount as on March 31, 2024 including nine differently abled employees and workers. Gender statistics reveal that females form 25 per cent of permanent employees in Top Management, 13.97 per cent in Senior Management, 13.46 per cent in Middle Management, 14.84 per cent in Junior management, 29.66 per cent among Associates/Non-Management, and 18.28 per cent in Indian Subsidiaries of the company.

Torrent Pharma had the total employee strength of 16,056 at the end of FY 2023-24. There was an increase of 649 employees as against 15,407 at the end of FY 2022-23. The company had 782 scientists and 167 support staff in R&D function. More than 28 per cent of scientists at R&D facility were females. Over 23 per cent of Corporate Office workforce

Table 1: Employees in Top 10 Pharmaceutical Companies in India (FY 23-24)

Name of the Company	Employees			Workers			Total (Permanent)
	Permanent	Other than Permanent	Total	Permanent	Other than Permanent	Total	
Sun Pharma	14,760	1,239	15,999	4,770	5,125	9,895	19,530
Divi's Labs	9,683	1,424	11,107	58	6,359	6,417	9,741
Cipla	27,379	4,917	32,681	385	8,312	8,697	27,764
Torrent Pharma	14,066	285	14,351	565	2,355	2,920	14,631
Zydus Lifesci.	21,649	73	21,722	5,272	2,481	7,753	26,921
DRL	26,343	8,226	34,569	643	8,657	9,300	26,986
Lupin Ltd.	19,653	442	20,095	1,059	295	1,354	20,712
Mankind Pharma	18,428	0	18,428	1,112	0	1,112	19,540
Aurobindo Pharma	26,015	0	26,015	0	11,581	11,581	26,015
Alkem Labs	15,611	232	15,843	1,821	3,393	5,214	17,432

Source: Annual Reports of respective pharmaceutical companies (2023-24)

consisted of females. There were 19 companies listed as holding, subsidiary, associates (including joint ventures) by Torrent Pharma. The company employed 27 differently abled employees.

Zydus Lifesciences Limited had 26,921 permanent employees and workers in total including 187 differently abled employees and workers. In other than permanent employees and workers category, the company had differently abled employees (10), and workers (09). The company had over 1,400 researchers across its 8 R&D centres.

Dr. Reddy's Laboratories (DRL) Limited had 26,343 employees and 643 workers in Permanent category as per their Integrated Annual Report of 2023-24 including 3,335 R&D scientists employed in 8 R&D facilities. 6,281 employees have been onboarded in FY2024 alone. Number of employees in per-

manent category included 104 differently abled employees, in addition to 22 differently abled employees and 21 differently abled workers in 'Other than Permanent' category. Female constituted 19.8 per cent of permanent employees and 33.4 per cent of Other than Permanent employees.

Lupin Limited has given detailed information about global workforce, global workforce (North America), and global workforce (ROW). R&D team headcount as on March 31, 2024 was 1,400+. The company also provided the number of permanent employees at different managerial levels which helps in understanding number of positions at different hierarchical levels.

Mankind Pharma had a total workforce of 23,279 (including 534 females) in FY24 as against 22,000 in FY23. Out of total workforce, the company had 19,540 permanent employees on the rolls

as on March 31, 2024. The company had a retention rate of 90 per cent for employees associated for more than 5 years. About 7,000 employees of the company have been associated with the company for more than 5 years. The company had 12,255 MRs in FY24 as against 11,691 MRs in FY23. The company had 3,788 Field Managers in FY24 as against 3,561 Field managers in FY23. The company employed just 2 differently abled employees.

Aurobindo Pharma had 37,596 global workforce including both permanent and contractual workers as the company has multiple subsidiaries. Women employees form 12.54 per cent of total strength. The company's workforce comprised 26,015 permanent employees and 11,581 contractual workers in FY24 as compared to 23,453 permanent employees in FY23. The company employed 12 differently abled employees

in permanent capacity and 5 workers in 'Other than Permanent' group. R&D team size is of 1,500+ scientists and analysts in 9 research facilities.

Alkem Labs had 17,277 permanent employees on its rolls as on March 31, 2024. But for the financial year, the number of permanent employees stood at 15,611 and permanent workers at 1,821. The company employed 3 differently abled employees as permanent employees, 3 as permanent workers and 3 workers in Other than Permanent category. Alkem Labs had about 665 scientists onboard across 4 R&D facilities.

Top Management and Senior Management positions in Cipla form 0.76 per cent of total managerial level positions including top management, senior management middle management and junior management. This does not include positions in Indian subsidiaries of the company.

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



## Microfinance institutions Seek Relaxations in RBI's 2022 Regulatory Framework

**NEW DELHI:** Microfinance institutions (MFIs) in India have approached the Reserve Bank of India (RBI), requesting relaxations in the regulatory guidelines introduced in 2022.

The move comes as industry players grapple with restrictions on asset deployment and lending flexibility under the revised framework, three sources familiar with the matter told businessline.

Previously, MFIs were required to maintain at least 85 per cent of their net assets—total assets excluding cash, bank balances, and money market instruments—as qualifying loans.

However, the 2022 revision mandated that at least 75 per cent of the total assets of MFIs must now be in the form of microfinance loans.

Industry representatives argue that the shift to total assets limits their ability to park funds in other avenues, reducing their returns.

Accordingly, they are requesting that the RBI either revert to the earlier 85 per cent criterion



based on net assets or lower the current minimum lending requirement from 75 per cent to 60 per cent of total assets.

“The current framework restricts lending flexibility, especially for loyal borrowers who have successfully repaid multiple loan cycles,” one industry source said. “If such borrowers seek higher-ticket loans—for housing or business—MFIs should be able to service them as microfinance loans, not just under non-qualifying assets.”

Additionally, the current

norm limits microfinance lending to households with annual incomes up to Rs 3 lakh and caps borrower repayment outflows at 50 per cent of monthly income.

Some players argue that the regulator could explore more flexibility to include higher-value loans within the qualifying MFI loan category.

Another key request is the uniform allowance for e-KYC across all MFIs, which would streamline the loan sanctioning process.

The RBI has acknowledged

the industry's feedback, with Deputy Governor M. Rajeshwar Rao recently stating that the regulator will review the guidelines “at an appropriate time.” However, RBI remains cautious, as it continues to monitor signs of over-leverage in the sector.

Reports suggest that in certain regions, borrowers have taken loans from more than five MFIs, raising concerns about debt overload.

Additionally, since the RBI removed caps on loan pricing in 2022, there have been instances of MFIs charging interest rates as high as 40-45 per cent.

The regulator is evaluating whether adjustments to the framework are warranted, balancing the need for operational flexibility with borrower protection. As of now, RBI has not issued an official response to the industry's requests.

This evolving regulatory discussion highlights the tension between supporting MFI growth and ensuring responsible lending practices in India's microfinance sector.

## India's Fintech Sector bounces back with 66% YoY growth in Q3 of 2024



**NEW DELHI:** India's fintech ecosystem is experiencing a significant resurgence, posting a 66 per cent year-on-year (YoY) growth in funding to USD 778 million in Q3 2024, according to the latest report by Tracxn.

This is a notable leap from the USD 471 million raised during the same period in 2023, highlighting renewed investor confidence in the sector.

The report underscores India's emerging influence, stating, “India ranks 4th in all-time funding for the fintech sector, behind the US,

China, and the UK. However, in Q3 2024, India surged to the 2nd position globally in quarterly funding, only behind the United States.”

The momentum was fueled by a 165 per cent jump from the previous quarter, with fintech funding rising from USD 293 million in Q2 2024 to USD 778 million in Q3 2024. A major boost came from DMI Finance, which raised USD 334 million, specialising in loans for consumers and small businesses.

Alternative lending led the way, attracting USD 517 million, up 49 per cent from USD

348 million in Q3 2023. However, the investment technology segment saw a downturn, dropping 58 per cent to USD 109 million from USD 257 million last year.

The payments segment secured USD 93 million in Q3 2024, showing steady performance.

Despite the funding surge, the number of deals fell 25 per cent, with only 46 rounds in Q3 2024 compared to 62 rounds in Q3 2023, indicating a shift towards larger but fewer investments.

The report also highlights a 50 per cent decline in acquisitions, with only four fintech companies acquired in Q3 2024, compared to eight in the same quarter last year.

Additionally, RegTech and Insurance IT sectors struggled, with the former reporting no funding this quarter, in contrast to USD 238 million in Q3 2023. Insurance IT plummeted, receiving just USD 163,000 compared to USD 230 million last year.

## India's Bioeconomy Projected to Reach USD 300 Bn by 2030



**NEW DELHI:** India's bioeconomy has experienced significant growth, reaching over USD 150 billion in 2023, with projections indicating it could double to USD 300 billion by 2030, according to recent government statements.

This development was highlighted during the inauguration of India's first demonstration facility for biopolymers in Pune, a milestone event in the country's sustainable technology sector. Union Minister Jitendra Singh, who presided over the inauguration, emphasised the facility's role in developing indigenous technology for Poly(lactic acid) (PLA) bioplastic production. He described the initiative as a crucial step in India's commitment to sustainable solutions and its efforts to transition from fossil-based plastics to environmentally friendly alternatives. The minister noted India's rising global position in biotechnology, ranking 12th worldwide and 3rd in the Asia-Pacific region. He underscored India's status as the largest vaccine manufacturer and its position as the third-largest start-up ecosystem globally.

## India's retail inflation jumps 5.49 pc over high base effect, weather conditions



**NEW DELHI:** India's Consumer Price Index (CPI) inflation jumped 5.49 per cent in the month of September, up from 3.65 per cent in August, due to high base effect and weather conditions, the government said on Monday. The year-on-year inflation rate, based on the All India Consumer Price Index (CPI), for the month of September was 5.49 per cent. Corresponding inflation rates for rural and urban areas were 5.87 per cent and 5.05 per cent, respectively. The inflation rate based on the All India Consumer Food Price Index (CFPI) number was 9.24 per cent (provisional) for the month of September. The housing inflation rate was 2.78 per cent, up from 2.66 per cent in August, for the urban sector. According to the data provided by the Ministry of Statistics, the all-India electricity index and inflation for the month of September were 162.5 and 5.45 per cent, respectively.

## States for Merging GST Compensation Cess with Existing Tax Rates



**NEW DELHI:** The Group of Ministers (GoM) on GST compensation cess convened on Wednesday to deliberate on the potential merger of the compensation cess into the Goods and Services Tax (GST) structure.

The meeting, chaired by Minister of State for Finance Pankaj Chaudhary, marked the first of several planned discussions on this crucial matter. During the deliberations, state representatives put forth a key suggestion regarding the transition period. They proposed that once the decision to merge the cess with existing taxes is finalised, no new items should be added to the current list of luxury, sin, and demerit goods. The states' rationale stems from the fact that the compensation cess is set to expire in March 2026, leaving limited options for restructuring. The prevailing view among state officials is that the most viable path forward involves integrating the levy into the existing tax framework. This would necessitate the establishment of distinct tax rates for items currently subject to the cess. Minister Chaudhary, addressing the media post-meeting, emphasised the need for this discussion given the impending conclusion of the GST compensation cess.

## SBI to Boost MSME Credit with Enhanced Instant Loan Threshold & Network Expansion

**NEW DELHI:** In a bid to strengthen credit access for Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs), the State Bank of India (SBI) is planning to raise the loan threshold under its instant loan scheme from the current limit of Rs 5 crore.

The move aims to provide faster and hassle-free credit to MSMEs and encourage them to shift from informal credit sources to formal banking channels.

SBI's innovative lending platform, 'MSME Sahaj - End-to-End Digital Invoice Financing,' is at the forefront of this initiative. It offers a seamless digital process, enabling MSME customers to complete everything from loan applications to documentation and disbursements



within 15 minutes, without manual intervention.

“We introduced a data-based credit assessment system last year, which enables quick approvals based on PAN and GST data. Credit up to Rs 5 crore can be approved within 15 to 45 minutes,” SBI Chairman C.S.

Setty said in an interview with media. He added that simplifying MSME lending and making it cash-flow-based—with the backing of CGTMSE (Credit Guarantee Fund Trust for Micro and Small Enterprises)—is a key focus.

This shift reduces the need

for traditional collateral, thus opening doors for a broader segment of MSMEs to access formal credit. “We still see a significant portion of MSMEs relying on informal credit channels. We aim to bring them into the formal banking system through these simplified processes,” Setty remarked.

SBI is also committed to expanding its physical presence across India. The bank plans to open 600 new branches this financial year, focusing on emerging regions and underserved residential areas.

As of March 2024, SBI had 22,542 branches, 65,000 ATMs, and 85,000 business correspondents, serving more than 50 crore customers across the country.

## SIDBI Opens New Branch in Trichy to Support MSMEs and BHEL Ancillary Units



**TIRUCHIRAPPALLI:** In a significant move to bolster support for the micro, small and medium enterprise (MSME) sector, the Small Industries Development Bank of India (SIDBI) inaugurated a new branch in Thillai Nagar, Trichy on Monday.

This expansion is part of the Union government's initiative to enhance SIDBI's reach and services across major MSME clusters in the country. The newly established branch is strategically positioned to cater to various industrial clusters in the central region, including Trichy's prominent jewellery sector and the ancillary MSME units that support the Bharat Heavy Electricals Limited (BHEL) Trichy factory. This development aligns with the government's announcement in the Union budget to expand SIDBI's network, with plans to add 24 new branches by the end of 2024, ultimately serving 168 out of 242 major MSME clusters. SIDBI Chairman and Managing Director, Manoj Mittal, who presided over the inauguration, revealed that MSMEs in Trichy district have been provided with outstand-

ing credit facilities amounting to Rs 7,660 crore as of June 2024, primarily through the commercial banking network.

Mittal further announced plans to open additional branches in Karur, Tirunelveli, and Sivakasi later this year, emphasising the positive impact of BHEL's revival on ancillary units. The new Trichy branch is expected to play a crucial role in assisting and educating local MSME units, facilitating their adoption of cutting-edge technologies to enhance competitiveness. Mittal also noted that the printing and safety match industries cluster in Sivakasi and Virudhunagar would be served through the Trichy and Madurai offices until a dedicated branch is established in Sivakasi. Local MSME units have welcomed SIDBI's presence in Trichy, anticipating that it will aid in upgrading their infrastructure to secure more orders. This development comes at an opportune time, as BHEL Trichy has projected an annual requirement of 1.2 lakh metric tonnes of outsourced components, one of the highest in recent decades, due to orders for commissioning at least seven thermal power plants across India.

## SBI Mutual Fund launches SBI Nifty India Consumption Index Fund

**FW DESK Mumbai**

SBI Mutual Fund, India's largest fund house announces the launch of SBI Nifty India Consumption Index Fund, open-ended scheme replicating/tracking Nifty India Consumption Index. The New Fund Offer (NFO) period for the scheme is October 16 - 25, 2024.

The investment objective of the scheme is to provide returns that correspond to the total returns of the securities as represented by the underlying

index, subject to tracking error. However, there is no guarantee or assurance that the investment objective of the scheme will be achieved.

Shamsher Singh, MD & CEO, SBI Funds Management Limited said India's consumption growth is at a pivotal moment, driven by rising incomes, demographic shifts and structural changes like digitalization and urbanization. Key factors include a young and growing population, increasing discretionary spending, and the rise of premiumization in urban areas. As India becomes one



of the world's top consumer markets, sectors like consumer durables, retail, healthcare, luxury good, FMCG, aviation and e-commerce stand to benefit significantly. The SBI Nifty India Consumption Index Fund offers investors the opportunity to invest in a diversified port-

folio of companies within the domestic consumption sector, making it a solid option for those looking to benefit from India's consumption story. D P Singh, Deputy MD & Joint CEO, SBI Funds Management Limited, said “Domestic consumption has been India's primary economic growth engine, driving the nation to the next stage of its development. With rising incomes, spending on essential and discretionary items will boost industries like consumer durables, automobiles, healthcare, and retail.

## India will be in the middle income trap

**DR. P S VOHRA**



**T**he World Bank recently alerted India that it will take another 75 years to reach one-quarter of the current per capita income level of the United States. It also acknowledged that India seems to get stuck in the middle-income per capita range. The likelihood that India will achieve the status of a high-income country seems remote. Currently, India's per capita income stands at \$2,500, and it will take even longer than the 2047 deadline for becoming a developed nation to reach \$20,000. The challenges of increasing per capita income are expected to become even more severe in the future. According to global research and studies, the economic threshold for upper-middle-income status is \$13,845. The World Bank also noted that since 1990, only 34 countries have transitioned from middle-income to high-income per capita levels. This situation is becoming more complex globally, as these 34 countries, which collectively represent a population of just around 250 million, account for less than 20% of India's current population.

There has been a change in the way society views economic growth and advancement in the wake of the recent talks about the challenges and growth of the Indian economy. For instance, why is consistent GDP growth so important? Currently, among the top 10 GDP nations, India has the lowest per capita income. With a GDP of \$3.94 trillion, India is the world's 5th largest economy. In the context of India's economic growth, its large population is often viewed as a challenge, but what about China's larger population? India surpassed China in population last year, yet in terms of economic growth, China surpassed India in both GDP and per capita income nearly a decade and a half ago. Today, China's economy is six times larger than India's, though both countries had almost identical economic conditions

until the 1990s. Undoubtedly, India has made remarkable progress in the past three to four decades, leading to consistent increases in GDP and per capita income. Between 1960 and 1990, India's per capita income grew by less than two times, while after the economic reforms of the 1990s, it has grown nearly five times. However, according to a recent World Bank study, the current situation regarding India's per capita income growth is concerning, and India must undertake major structural reforms, or most of its population is likely to remain trapped in the middle-income range. India's economic growth rate is commendable, having maintained a growth rate of five per cent or more for the past 15 years. However, other countries like South Korea have sustained their economic growth rate for

over 50 years. Today, South Korea's per capita income is \$33,000, though in the 1960s, it did not even fall into the middle-income category. It is worth noting that South Korea lags far behind India in terms of GDP. Thus, India faces a challenge over the next 20 to 25 years: to maintain a minimum growth rate of five per cent or more at all costs.

In recent years, there has been significant progress in India's GDP growth and an improvement in the personal economic standards of its citizens. It is crucial to establish a logical connection between these two key dimensions. For instance, over the past three decades, a positive correlation has emerged in Indian society between GDP growth and individual economic life. In the early 2000s, for example, a person earning Rs 5,000 per month would take 3 to 5 years to afford the lowest-cost car available at that time. Today, with a monthly salary of Rs 60,000, that same person can make such a purchase in just 6 months. Another interesting trend is that families who have recently transitioned from lower-middle-class to middle-income status have begun to adopt air travel, as they can now afford its cost. Additionally, competition has kept air travel costs under control.

However, a striking reality presents itself in the fact that even today, only about 20% of India's population can afford to buy ready-made clothes produced by the domestic manufacturing sector, where prices start at Rs 3,000 or more. Meanwhile, a large section of society still wears shirts and trousers priced between Rs 300 and Rs 500, which are often imported from countries like Bangladesh, and Vietnam.

The market, the government, and society must now all proceed in the same direction. In this situation, the government had to place a higher priority on financial restraint and lessen its dependency on debt in order to enable private investors to obtain loans at more affordable rates. Instead of turning to luxury, society should consider the cost of education as an investment and concentrate on saving and making prudent financial decisions. In terms of the market, it needs to change its strategy from one of high margins with low volume to one of high volume with poor margins. In addition to attaining profitability, this will allow the market to take advantage of society's entire purchasing power.

*Dr. P S Vohra is a Writer, columnist and financial thinker. Views are personal.*

## Rising Gold and Oil Imports Push India's Inflation to 13-Month Peak: SBI Report

**NEW DELHI:** India's imported inflation surged to a 13-month high in September 2024, growing by 2 per cent, according to a report released by the State Bank of India (SBI).

The report warned that imported inflation is increasingly contributing to the country's overall inflation, posing new challenges for the economy.

Imported inflation refers to the rise in domestic prices due to the higher cost of imported goods and services. The report highlighted that surging prices of gold, oils and fats, and chemical products are driving this increase.

“The share of imported inflation in the overall inflation has risen significantly. At 2 per cent growth in September, this is the highest figure recorded in the past 13 months,” SBI's analysis noted.

One of the primary factors behind the rising imported inflation is India's spike in gold imports. Recent trade data shows that India imported gold worth USD 10.06 billion in September 2024, more than doubling from USD 4.94 billion in the same month last



year. This surge marks the highest gold import value for the January-September period this year.

The trend has been building for months. In August 2024, the value of gold imports increased by a staggering 103.7 per cent, and for the broader April-August 2024-25 period, gold imports grew by 25.2 per cent.

However, while August saw a 62.24 per cent rise in volume terms, gold imports for the April-August period fell slightly by 2.18 per cent, indicating fluctuating demand dynamics.

The report comes at a time when India is grappling with rising overall inflation. Retail

inflation hit a nine-month high of 5.5 per cent in September 2024, a sharp jump from 3.65 per cent in August.

This surge was largely driven by rising food prices, with food and beverages inflation climbing to 8.36 per cent from 5.3 per cent in the previous month. Notably, vegetable prices alone contributed 2.34 per cent to the overall inflation rate.

The combination of rising food inflation and imported inflation has intensified inflationary pressures on the Indian economy. With India heavily dependent on imports for commodities like gold and edible oils, global price fluctuations are feeding directly into domestic price levels.



# INTERNATIONAL

## US charges former RAW officer Vikash Yadav over plot to murder Pannun

**NEW YORK:** US prosecutors have charged a former Senior Field Officer of RAW, Vikash Yadav, in an alleged murder-for-hire plot against Khalistani activist Gurpatwant Singh Pannun residing in New York City.

In a strongly worded statement, Attorney General Merrick Garland said on Thursday, "Today's charges demonstrate that the Justice Department will not tolerate attempts to target and endanger Americans and to undermine the rights to which every US citizen is entitled".

Describing Yadav as "an Indian government employee", he said, "The Justice Department will be relentless in holding accountable any person -- regardless of their position or proximity to power -- who seeks to harm and silence American citizens".

Assistant Attorney General Matthew Olsen who heads the Justice Department's National Security Division, was more blunt: "To the governments around the world who may be considering such criminal activity and to the communities they would target, let there be no doubt that the Department of Justice is committed to disrupting and exposing these plots and to holding the wrongful actors accountable no matter who they

are or where they reside".

The charges filed against Yadav and his alleged co-conspirator Nikhil Gupta, were unsealed in the Federal Southern District of New York Court on Thursday.

The charges were framed by a grand jury, a panel of citizens that first decides if there is a prima facie case after the prosecution makes a preliminary presentation of the case.

Yadav faces three charges along with Gupta: conspiracy to hire a hitman, the actual "murder-for-hire" plot, and money laundering. The charging document filed by the prosecutors makes a reference to the killing of a Canada-based Sikh separatist, Hardeep Singh Nijjar, in British Columbia, that has led to a serious deterioration of relations between India and Canada. It says that Yadav told Gupta that "Nijjar was also the target" and "we have many targets", and sent him a video of Nijjar's body slumped in his car.

It appears that US law enforcement intercepted or had access to the electronic communications between Yadav and Gupta, even those on encrypted apps because extensive quotes from those are included in the court document. Gupta, who was arrested in the Czech



Republic at the request of the US, was extradited to the US in June and produced in court.

Many of the details in the court document filed by the prosecutors repeat the same narratives made in earlier documents filed against Gupta, but this time, Yadav is identified by name. The indictment presents Yadav as the alleged mastermind who recruited Gupta to carry out the plot in exchange for helping him get criminal cases against him dismissed, and directed him. It says that "Yadav recruited Gupta to or-

chestrate the assassination of the Victim in the United States" and that under Yadav's "directions," Gupta contacted a government "confidential source" who he thought was "a criminal associate". This person, in turn, put him in touch with the "purported hitman" who was, in fact, an undercover US law enforcement officer, unravelling the plot, according to the court document, which also included a photograph of Yadav dressed in military fatigues.

The charges were filed a day after an Indian Enquiry Com-

## Bangladesh's International Crimes Tribunal issues warrant against Hasina



**DHAKA:** Bangladesh's International Crimes Tribunal on Thursday issued arrest warrants against former prime minister Sheikh Hasina, who was ousted after massive anti-government protests, and 45 others for alleged crimes against humanity.

The tribunal directed the authorities to produce Hasina and the others before it by November 18, local media reported.

The arrest warrant against Hasina could -- technically -- open up the possibility of the country's interim government seeking her extradition from India, where she fled on August 5. The decision to approach India on this is likely to be a political call. Dhaka, however, has indicated earlier that this

## Singapore to maintain currency policy



**SINGAPORE:** The Singapore dollar will maintain the prevailing rate of appreciation when the economy picks up growth momentum and inflation steps down, the Monetary Authority of Singapore (MAS) announced on Monday.

The global economy remains broadly resilient. Singapore's growth is expected to be sustained by the ongoing upswing in the electronics and trade cycles and the easing in global financial conditions, MAS noted.

It expected the growth to come around the upper end of the 2 per cent to 3 per cent forecast range, Xinhua news agency reported.

Core inflation, which excludes private transport and accommodation costs to better reflect household expenses, has kept decreasing in recent months in Singapore. MAS said the core inflation momentum is expected to remain contained in the fourth quarter.

The core inflation should end the year around 2 per cent and average between 2.5 per cent to 3.0 per cent throughout this year, down from 4.2 per cent in 2023, MAS said.

For 2025, the core inflation is expected to average around the mid-point of 1.5 per cent to 2.5 per cent amid moderate underlying cost pressures, it adds.

Noting that the monetary policy settings are still consistent with medium-term price stability based on such outlooks, the MAS will maintain the appreciation rate of the Singapore dollar nominal effective exchange rate policy band.

## Advocate Dhami expresses concern over growing distance between India-Canada



**JAGMOHAN SINGH**  
Amritsar

The Shiromani Gurdwara Parbandhak Committee (SGPC) President Harjinder Singh Dhami has expressed concern over the growing distance between India and Canada and said that the two countries should adopt a sincere approach to solve the matter.

He said that a large number of Indians and especially Punjabis live in Canada, who are naturally affected by the deteriorating relations between the two countries. The SGPC president said that in the case of Hardeep Singh Nijjar's murder in the past, both the nations should adopt a decisive approach against each other in place of levelling allegations.

Dhmi said that there should be no politics on this serious issue. He appealed to the Government of India to conduct an impartial investigation in this matter, so that the situation can become clear.

## India-Canada rift worrying to Indians workers and students

**SATISH HANDA**

Information reveals, there are roughly 600,000 Indian students in Canada right now, which comprises the international student population of the country. The largest number of Indians either working or studying in Canada belongs to Punjab. The parents as well as family members of those staying in Canada are worried over the relations between India and Canada are worsening amidst the row regarding India's alleged involvement in the murder of Khalistani activist Hardeep Singh Nijjar in a gang war, although India has strongly refused Canada's allegations, accusing Prime Minister Justin Trudeau of engaging in Vote Bank politics and the situation now turning such, both countries have expelled six diplomats each with immediate effect.

The effects of this diplomatic flare up has been felt by Indian students currently studying in Canada, or aspire to do so in the future as well as those working there or their family members, since over a million Indian students have received study permits for Canada since 2015, which include more than 100,000 having done so in the current year alone. Information also reveals that according to data from the Immigration, Refugees, and Citizenship Canada



(IRCC), a total of approximately 1.3 million Indian students received study permits from 2015 to 2024. The data reveals, in 2015 there were some 31,920 Indian students holding study permits in Canada, out of a total of 219,035 international students, accounting for just 14.5% of the total international student population in the country. However, by 2023, the number of Indian students receiving study permits increased to 278,250, out of 682,060 international students, representing 40.7% of the total international student population.

According to information, till August this year, 137,445 Indian students have received study permits out of 374,060 international students accounting 36.7% thus witnessing nearly 4% drop as compared to previous 2023 year because of Canadian government has implemented new changes

## India labels Canada's latest allegations as 'preposterous imputations'

**NEW DELHI:** Labelling them as "preposterous imputations", India on Monday slammed the Canadian government led by Prime Minister Justin Trudeau, asserting once again that it has "consciously provided" space to violent extremists and terrorists to harass, threaten and intimidate Indian diplomats and community leaders in Canada.

"We have received a diplomatic communication from Canada yesterday suggesting that the Indian High Commissioner and other diplomats are 'persons of interest' in a matter related to an investigation in that country. The Government of India strongly rejects these preposterous imputations and ascribes them to the political agenda of the Trudeau Government that is centered around vote bank politics," read a strongly-worded statement issued by the Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) on Monday afternoon.

"Since Prime Minister Trudeau made certain allegations in September 2023, the Canadian Government has not shared a shred of evidence with the Government of India, despite many requests from our side. This latest step follows internal politics in December 2020 showed how far he was willing to go in this regard. That his Government was dependent on a political party, whose leader



strategy of smearing India for political gains," it added.

With Hindu temples in Canada being constantly vandalised with hateful graffiti by Khalistani activists in Canada and Hindu-Canadians also repeatedly targeted, India has time and again made it clear that any further deterioration in bilateral ties would eventually result in a big loss for Canada.

The MEA on Monday also detailed Canadian PM Trudeau's "hostility to India" which it said has long been in evidence.

"In 2018, his visit to India, which was aimed at currying favour with a vote bank, rebounded to his discomfort. His Cabinet has included individuals who have openly associated with an extremist and separatist agenda regarding India. His naked interference in Indian internal politics in December 2020 showed how far he was willing to go in this regard. That his Government was dependent on a political party, whose leader

## European Central Bank cuts rates again as economy lags



**FRANKFURT:** The European Central Bank cut interest rates for the third time this year on Thursday, saying inflation in the euro zone was increasingly under control while the outlook for the wider economy was worsening.

The first back-to-back rate cut in 13 years marks a shift in focus for the euro zone's central bank from bringing down inflation to protecting economic growth, which has lagged far behind that of the United States for two years straight.

## Trump reiterates he wants legal immigrants, promises strong action against illegal migrants

**NEW YORK:** Republican Presidential Candidate Donald Trump has reiterated that he wants immigrants as long as they come legally, but will take strong action against illegal migrants.

"We want to have people come into our country, but they have to come in legally", he said on Friday at a campaign rally in Aurora, Colorado. As for illegal immigrants, he said, "All across our nation I make this pledge and vow to you. November 5, 2024, will be Liberation Day in America, (there) will be liberation" from what he said was "the occupation" of the country.

According to the Customs and Border Protection agency, till August as many as 82, 610 Indian citizens were recorded crossing the borders illegally and 96, 917 last year. His opposition accuses him of being "anti-immigrant" -- a refrain taken up by most of the mainstream media -- but Trump makes a distinction between illegal and legal immigrants while most Democrats lump those who waited for years and went through rigorous scrutiny to legally immigrate with those sneaking in. He has promised Green Cards -- legal immigrant status -- for foreigners graduat-



ing from US colleges, going far beyond any Democrat proposals, which focus on legalising illegal immigrants.

"What I want to do and what I will do is, you graduate from a college, I think you should get automatically as part of your diploma, a green card to be able to stay in this country", he said in June. That policy would be difficult to implement, but in theory it sounds as good news for the nearly 269, 000 Indian students enrolled in US colleges and universities, according to statistics from the International Institute of Education covering 2022-23. Colorado, where Trump campaigned on Friday, is

## Man with shotgun arrested near Trump's California rally

**WASHINGTON:** A man in illegal possession of a shotgun and a loaded handgun was arrested at an intersection near former US President Donald Trump's rally in Coachella, California, the police said as per media reports. The 49-year-old suspect, Vem Miller, was driving a black SUV when he was stopped at a security checkpoint by deputies, who located the two firearms and a "high-capacity magazine," BBC reported. The US Secret Service said Trump "was not in any danger," adding that the incident did not impact protective operations.

Miller was then taken into custody "without incident", the Riverside County Sheriff's office said, and booked on possession of a loaded firearm and possession of a high-capacity magazine. A local sheriff called the suspect a "lunatic" and his office added

the encounter did not affect the safety of Trump or the rally's attendees. While Riverside County Sheriff Chad Bianco said it was impossible to speculate about what was in the mind of the suspect, he said he "truly believed" that his officers had prevented a third assassination attempt.

He added that it might be impossible to prove that this was the man's intent, BBC reported. A federal law enforcement official told CBS News that there was no indication of an assassination attempt connected to this incident. Federal authorities say they are still investigating the incident, and it would be up to them to pursue any additional charges. Bianco is an elected official and a Republican who has previously expressed support for Trump. He is also acting as a surrogate for Trump's re-election campaign.

criminal illegal immigrants through "open border" policies, asserting that she was the "Border Czar".

## Harris in excellent health, possesses physical & mental resilience: VP's physician

**WASHINGTON:** Joshua Simmons, US Vice President Kamala Harris's physician, said on Saturday that the Vice President is in excellent health and also possesses physical and mental resilience.

"Vice President Harris remains in excellent health. She possesses the physical and mental resilience to successfully execute the duties of the Presidency, including those as Chief Executive, Head of State and Commander in Chief," Joshua Simmons, the vice-president's physician, who is a US army doctor, wrote in the signed statement.

Nominees for president are not required to release their health information, but the Harris campaign has done so to draw a contrast between the Vice President who is 59 and former President Donald Trump, who is the oldest nominee for President at 78. Trump has previously said he will release his health report but has not done so yet.

According to the White House report, the findings are from a test conducted in April, when Harris was months away from ascending to the top of the Democratic ticket for president. She was President



Joe Biden's running mate.

Harris's blood pressure measures a normal 128/74, heart rate of 78 beats per minute. Although there is a family history of ovarian cancer on the maternal side -- her Indian-born mother Shyamala Gopalan Harris died of colon cancer -- the physician's report said she has no personal history of high blood pressure, diabetes, high cholesterol, cardiac disease, pulmonary disease, neurological disorders, cancer of osteoporosis.

About her allergies, the report said her symptoms primarily consist of allergic rhinitis and allergic conjunctivitis and have previously been well-managed with over-the-counter and prescription medications.

It added that the urticaria are sporadic and transient and not linked to specific triggers.

"The Vice President has been on Allergen Immunotherapy for the last three years and as a result, her allergy symptoms and urticaria have improved dramatically," the health report claimed.

It added that the Vice President suffers from "mild myopia". "She wears corrective contact lenses with 20/20 resultant vision. She is able to read comfortably, without contacts or glasses," it said. The report notes that the Vice President maintains a healthy, active lifestyle despite her busy schedule.



# Salman Khan: The man behind Baba Siddique's election win



**MUMBAI:** Baba Siddique, the NCP leader and former MLA from Bandra West constituency was shot dead on Saturday evening. His murder sent shockwaves in the political circle and film industry. It was Salman Khan whose

support led him to become MLA from Bandra West. Following his death, an old video of Salman Khan is going viral. In the video Salman can be seen appealing to people of Bandra to vote for Baba. Salman Khan can be heard

saying "Jo best man hai aap constituency ke andar, aap uske liye vote kijiye" (You should vote for the best man from your constituency). Salman continues "Aapke liye best man kaun hai yahan" (Who is the best man for

you here). The crowd screams "Modi". Salman further says "Aapke liye yahan best man Modi hain, Meri jo constituency hai Bandra, wahan par best man hai Baba Siddique aur Priya Dutt" (For you Modi is the best man here, but for my constituency Banda best man is Baba Siddique and Priya Dutt).

He elaborated "You have to vote for Modi saheb, I have to give my people the vote".

Baba Siddique is also known to play an important role in reconciling Salman and Shahrukh Khan after their famous fight at a club years ago. Baba called both of them at his iftaar party and played bridge between them. A picture of the same went viral thereafter. Chetan Dave, Promoter and CMD, Premium Plast Limited, said that the issue proceeds will be used for: Expansion of an existing manufacturing facility at Pithampur, Madhya Pradesh, and purchase of machineries; Funding of capital expenditure requirements towards setup of Rooftop on

# Premium Plast Limited coming out with Rs 26.20 crore IPO

DOMINICK RODRIGUES Ahmedabad



Premium Plast Limited, a Tier-1 supplier of automotive components - is coming out with its Initial Public Offering (IPO) comprising Issue of total 53,46,000 Equity Shares, priced at Rs 46 to Rs 49 -- aggregating upto Rs 26.20 crores.

The Issue will be opening on October 21, 2024 and closing on October 23, 2024. The company specializes in design, manufacture and supply of high-quality plastic parts to commercial vehicle OEMs. The company has three manufacturing facilities with total combined installed capacity of 1,975 MTPA.

Chetan Dave, Promoter and CMD, Premium Plast Limited, said that the issue proceeds will be used for: Expansion of an existing manufacturing facility at Pithampur, Madhya Pradesh, and purchase of machineries; Funding of capital expenditure requirements towards setup of Rooftop on

Grid Solar Power Plant at this existing facility; Prepayment/ Repayment of all or portion of certain outstanding borrowings availed by the company; General corporate purposes.

Replying to questions, he said the IPO was for increasing the company's business footprint, while also accelerating its growth alongside utilizing its expertise.

Noting that the company is increasing its manufacturing capacity through setting up of new plants, he said the Company produces a diverse range of automotive plastics, industrial components and packaging solutions. The Company partnered with clients to create customized products while enhancing the manufacturing processes for improved

quality and cost efficiency. The company is emphasizing on eco-friendly practices including plastics reuse and rooftop solar panels to reduce the environmental impact and energy costs, he added.

While the Company is exporting in a small way, the growth is expected to come from within India, he said, adding "We are bullish about getting solar and other verticals." In June 2024, the Company achieved a Revenue of Rs 1,212.81 lakhs, EBITDA of Rs 194.51 lakhs and PAT of Rs 141.16 lakhs.

The Equity Shares are proposed to be listed on the Emerge Platform of National Stock Exchange of India Limited. The Book Running Lead Manager is: Khandwala Securities Ltd.

# Mira Rajput gives sneak peek into 'annual' ritual with Shahid Kapoor



**MUMBAI:** Shahid Kapoor and Mira Rajput, married for nine years, continue to set relationship goals for their fans.

The couple often expresses their love for each other through affectionate social media posts, and their latest Instagram update is no exception. In a recent post, shared by Mira on her Instagram story, the couple can be seen all smiles as they hang out with friends. The snapshot captures the 'Kabir Singh' actor, flashing a radiant smile as he poses with Mira and their two friends. Mira, who holds the camera for the selfie, looks pretty in a black puffer jacket, while Shahid complements her in a matching black outfit. In the cozy click, the couple appears relaxed and happy, perfectly embodying their effortless bond.

Mira captioned the story, "Annual scene," offering a glimpse into their special moments together. In the next follow-up story, Mira posted a solo photo of her where she is seen posing while sitting on a couch. Another candid shot shows Mira holding ice-cream while posing for the camera. She captioned the photo, "Best friends click the worst pictures of you." Shahid Kapoor's wife also dropped an image of tempting vegan dishes. Shahid and Mira got married in a private ceremony in 2015. The couple is proud parents of their two children, daughter Misha and son Zain.

On the professional front, the 'Haider' actor is gearing up for the release of upcoming action thriller, 'Deva', directed by renowned Malayalam filmmaker Rosshan Andrews. The film features Pooja Hegde as the female lead and is slated for release on February 14, 2025, perfectly timed for Valentine's Day. In an interview, Shahid Kapoor also confirmed that 'Farzi 2' is in the works. He mentioned that the 2023 thriller series had an "open-ended" climax, leaving room to further explore the storyline. Kapoor was last seen in 'Teri Baaton Mein Aisa Uljha Jiya' with Kriti Sanon.

# Paralympic Gold Medallist Nitesh Kumar Honoured as Health Champion of the Year

ARUN KUMAR RAO Bengaluru

Happiest Health, a leader in health and wellness knowledge, launched its 'Health Champion' initiative in Bengaluru, setting the stage for future events aimed at identifying and celebrating individuals who have triumphed over serious health challenges. This initiative seeks to recognize not only those who have defied the odds but also the caregivers who support them, positioning these individuals as beacons of hope and inspiration for others. At the curtain-raiser event, Paralympic Gold medallist Nitesh Kumar was named the "Health Champion of the Year 2024". He, along with Happiest Health's Chairman, Ashok Soota, officially inaugurated the event, which was attended by senior management and media representatives.

Commenting on the launch, Ashok Soota said, "Happiest Health was founded on the belief that everyone deserves to live a life of dignity and good health, despite the many hurdles life presents. The 'Health Champion' initiative isn't just about personal triumphs but about



victories that inspire entire communities. This is more than an initiative; it's a movement, a revolution to reshape how we view health challenges."

Soota also highlighted plans for the 2025 Health Champion of the Year Awards, announcing that an esteemed jury led by renowned healthcare leader Dr. Devi Shetty would select the next awardee. "Dr. Shetty's unmatched contributions to healthcare, especially for the underprivileged, ensure that our selection process is grounded in both expertise and empathy."

Anindya Chowdhury, CEO of Happiest Health - Knowledge and Diagnostics, emphasized the broader vision of the 'Health Champion' initiative, saying, "This milestone allows us to further spread our message and create more opportunities for individuals to share their stories.

# Delaying knee Arthritis treatment can damage Spine too : Experts

OUR CORRESPONDENT New Delhi

On the Occasion of World Arthritis Day, experts highlighted that delaying treatment of knee arthritis can lead to damage of spine.

Delay in proper knee treatment, timely detection and ignoring knee arthritis symptoms can worsen the condition of knees and additionally damage the spine affecting the quality of life.

Knee arthritis, particularly osteoarthritis, is a degenerative joint condition that primarily affects adults. It causes pain, stiffness, and reduced mobility in the knees, often making everyday activities difficult. However, according to experts,

the repercussions of untreated or poorly managed knee arthritis extend far beyond the knee joint.

Dr. L Tomar, Principal Director and Head, Department of Orthopaedics and Joint Replacement, at Max Hospital said "In more than 70% cases osteoarthritis is the commonest reason for Knee Arthritis. Osteoarthritis causes more progressive damage to the medial (inner) joint compartment cartilage leading to reduction in the gap between the two bones. This produces a waddling gait causing disproportionate pressure changes in the pelvis and Lumbar spine. Patients with advanced Knee arthritis are often seen to have spinal deformity because when



patients continue to walk with a bow leg deformity it put more pressure on lumbar spine leading to its damage, such cases can be corrected with minimally invasive total knee replacement surgery."

In Osteoarthritis, multiple osteophytes form around the joint causing progressive limitation in knee movements. Patient with late stage Knee Arthritis often report with fixed deformity with very little

movement.

Dr. L Tomar Highlighted importance of early action and identifying signs and symptoms of arthritis 'Early cases of Knee Arthritis present with stiffness or mild pain while climbing stairs or sitting cross legged/ squatting/ kneeling.... As the disease progresses, it can cause pain during walking or exercises/ sports. Advanced Knee Arthritis patients find it difficult to walk more than few hundred meter, and report increasing stiffness with reduced knee movements. Knee locking episodes are also frequently reported with advanced changes'

Experts urged patients not to ignore early signs of arthritis, advising them to consult specialists for proper diagnosis

and treatment. Timely action, they stressed, can prevent long-term complications and improve overall quality of life.

Dr. Tomar further said that "More than 60% of the patients delay their knee treatment till last stage which damage their knees to maximum extent further worsens the situation. We routinely recommend Knee Replacement Surgery if Patient has marked limitation in walking or activities of daily living and the standing x ray shows complete or near complete loss of medial (inner) articular space."

With arthritis being a leading cause of disability, proactive treatment is key to preventing further deterioration of both joint and spinal health.

# GBMA urges for lifting AWBI ban on Rat glue traps

DOMINICK RODRIGUES Mumbai

India may soon require the services of the legendary "Pied Piper of Hamelin" to do away with the deadly nuisance of rats, that has presently become an issue between the Animal Welfare Board of India (AWBI) and the Glue Boards Manufacturers Association (GBMA).

The Glue Boards Manu-



facturers Association (GBMA) here recently criticized the "spread of misinformation

about use of glue boards for rodents' control, and urged the concerned authorities to note

the vital role of glue boards +maintaining public health (by controlling spread of diseases like leptospirosis and plague that is transmitted by rodents), food security and sustainability of various industries. +

Mukesh Patel, Secretary of GBMA, said that the GBMA was reacting to two 'circulars' (dated 4.8.2011 and 16.11.2020) sent by the Animal Welfare Board of India -- to Chief Secretaries across all

States and Union Territories, Directorate General of Foreign Trade, and Indian Pest Control Association -- to "issue strict directions to ban the use of Glue Traps." The AWBA circular stated that the Glue Trap method "inflicts unnecessary pain and suffering to the rodents and is against the spirit of the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act 1960, while there are many humane methods to control the rat population."

# Customise AI solutions "Realize Ai" for Indian market

OUR CORRESPONDENT New Delhi

Hoonartek, launches RealizeAI, an advanced suite for the Indian market, particularly the BFSI, telecom, media, retail, healthcare, and life sciences industries.

This innovative portfolio is designed to help these businesses, and many more, to quickly Realize the value of their AI investments in mission-critical functions and help them compete more effectively, both locally and globally.

Many organizations see the potential of AI but struggle to turn experiments into real business results. Hoonartek's RealizeAI addresses these challenges by providing tailored AI solutions that seamlessly fit into existing systems. With its proven expertise in data-driven transformation, the company helps businesses maximize the benefits of AI and achieve tangible out-



comes. RealizeAI is designed to meet the unique needs of various industries delivering customized solutions that are not just Proof of Concept (PoC) and which seamlessly integrate into existing systems.

"We are delighted to launch RealizeAI, a new portfolio that showcases our dedication to driving AI-powered innovation in the Indian market," said Peeyoosh Pan-

dey, CEO of Hoonartek. "As India's economy continues to grow, AI offers immense potential to enhance productivity, improve customer experiences, and create new business models. RealizeAI provides tailored solutions that address the unique challenges and opportunities facing Indian industries, from manufacturing and agriculture to healthcare and

finance."

RealizeAI incorporates cutting-edge AI technologies to enable businesses to identify patterns, predict future trends, and make smarter decisions. The portfolio utilizes leading machine learning (ML) models and built-in natural language processing (NLP) capabilities to generate insights in text, visuals, and synthetic data formats, empowering businesses to enhance decision-making and operational efficiency.

Hiren Thakkar, CTO of Hoonartek, commented, "RealizeAI represents years of experience in delivering impactful data products and AI-driven solutions tailored to the Indian market. Our focus has always been on developing scalable, powerful, and user-friendly tools that address the unique challenges and opportunities facing Indian industries. We are confident that RealizeAI will set a new benchmark for AI innovation in India."

# Bollywood Stars Vidya Balan, Kartik Aaryan attend grand opening of Pro Kabaddi League

KAVITA SHARMA Hyderabad

The Pro Kabaddi League (PKL) Season 11 kicked off on a star-studded note as Bollywood celebrities Vidya Balan and Kartik Aaryan graced the opening match between the Telugu Titans and the Bengaluru Bulls. The actors' presence to promote their upcoming movie 'Bhool Bhulaiya 3' added glamour to the already electrifying atmosphere at the GMCB Indoor Stadium in Hyderabad.



Kartik Aaryan, talking about his childhood, shared, "I used to play gali kabaddi' as a kid but not on a professional level the way it is being played here at the Pro Kabaddi League. It is a lot of fun to watch." Vidya Balan, the First Shero

of our time, expressed her excitement for the season, saying, "I have enjoyed watching kabaddi. Today we met Pawan (Sehrawat) and Pardeep (Nawal) who are fantastic players. Good luck to the teams for the first match. Pawan is a high-flyer and Pardeep is a record-breaker so I wish them luck for the season."

The opening night promises thrilling action, featuring star raiders Pawan and Pardeep, followed by a clash between U Mumba's Sunil Kumar - the most expensive Indian defender in PKL history at INR 1.015

Crores - and Dabang Delhi K.C.'s attacking powerhouse, Naveen Kumar.

PKL 11 made history even before the first whistle, with eight players crossing the INR 1 crore mark in the auction. The league is set to unfold across three cities, starting in Hyderabad, then moving to Noida, and concluding in Pune.

With its blend of celebrity glamour, record-breaking player valuations, and a focus on fan experiences, PKL 11 is set to take over the sporting excitement as the season rolls into the households for the next three months.

# Talking Points

Narvijay Yadav



As India's retail sector continues to evolve, the competition between e-commerce, quick commerce, large retail chains, and small shops will only intensify. The future of retail in India lies in coexistence.

In recent years, India's retail landscape has transformed dramatically. The emergence of e-commerce giants like Amazon India and Flipkart India, the rapid rise of quick commerce platforms such as BlinkIt, Instamart, and Zepto, and the dominance of large retail chains like D'mart, Vishal Mega Mart, Reliance Digital, and Smart Bazar have altered the traditional consumer behavior of visiting neighborhood kirana stores for daily needs. Meanwhile, the rise of direct-to-consumer (D2C) sales through big brands' websites adds another layer of competition. All these developments leave one major player in a precarious position: small corner shops and general stores.

Amazon and Flipkart have long been pioneers in e-commerce, offering consumers convenience, variety, and competitive pricing. Focusing on everything from electronics to groceries, these platforms have seen explosive growth. As of 2023, e-commerce contributed to 7-8% of India's total retail sales. However, even these giants are feeling the heat from a newer category: quick commerce.

Quick commerce companies like BlinkIt, Instamart, and Zepto cater to a different consumer need—instant gratification. These platforms promise deliveries of groceries and essentials in under 30 minutes, a far cry from the standard 2-3

day wait for e-commerce deliveries. Quick commerce has quickly become the go-to option for time-strapped consumers in urban areas, especially in metro cities like Delhi, Mumbai, and Bengaluru. According to a Red-seer report, quick commerce is expected to grow 10-15 times by 2025, potentially capturing a \$5.5 billion market.

With this growing traction, e-commerce platforms like Amazon and Flipkart are concerned. BlinkIt, for instance, reported delivering over 1.25 lakh orders daily across major Indian cities in 2023. Zepto, with its hyperlocal delivery model and dark stores, is expanding at a breakneck pace. These platforms are cutting into the grocery segment of e-commerce giants, forcing companies like Flipkart to revamp their grocery delivery services.

The competitive mix includes retail behemoths like D'mart, Vishal Mega Mart, Reliance Digital, More, and Smart Bazar, which offer massive product variety and low prices, targeting the value-conscious Indian shopper. D'mart, for example, operates on a low-margin, high-volume model, drawing customers from large cities and tier-2 and tier-3 towns. As of 2023, D'mart had over 300 stores nationwide and continues to grow, tapping into markets traditionally served by small kirana stores.

Another trend is the shift of big brands toward their own

# Battle for Retail



D2C websites. This trend allows consumers to buy directly from the brand, bypassing platforms like Amazon and Flipkart. For instance, brands like H&M, Nike, and Apple have successfully launched their e-commerce channels, offering exclusive deals and direct customer engagement. This poses another threat to both e-commerce platforms and traditional stores.

In the face of these developments, small kirana shops and general stores need help to compete. According to a survey by the Confederation of All India Traders (CAIT), over 40% of small retailers have reported a significant drop in foot traffic and sales since the rise of e-commerce and quick commerce. The situation has even attracted the attention of policymakers. Recently, Union Minister Nitin Gadkari spoke about the challenges posed by e-commerce to local shopkeep-

ers, urging better regulations to create a more level playing field. Gadkari highlighted the need for policies that protect small businesses from being wiped out by big players.

Despite the seemingly insurmountable competition, small stores can still find ways to survive and thrive in this new retail environment. They can adopt technology, focus on customer relationships, offer locally sourced goods that may not be available on large platforms, and engage in community activities to meet new buyers. The future of retail in India lies in coexistence. Big players will continue to grow, but small kirana stores, with their local charm and adaptability, will always have a place in the Indian consumer's heart—provided they adapt to the times.

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