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PUNJAB'S FARMERS SUFFER AS AAP GOVERNMENT FAILS TO PROCURE CROP : CAPT AMARINDER SINGH



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India's Private Sector Economy Demonstrates Strong Growth in Oct



NEW DELHI: India's private sector economy continues to thrive, reflecting robust growth as highlighted by the latest HSBC Flash PMI survey compiled by S&P Global.

In October, the composite output index registered a strong 58.6, indicating expansion for the thirty-ninth consecutive month. This figure marks an increase from September's final reading of 58.3, surpassing the long-run average of 54.7 and illustrating the resilience of the Indian economy amid global uncertainties.

The survey indicated a notable uptick in new work intakes, which spurred companies to ramp up business activities and enhance recruitment efforts. This surge in growth momen-

tum was not without challenges, as it also coincided with intensified price pressures across sectors. Manufacturers exhibited a stronger performance compared to service providers in terms of output and sales growth. However, they simultaneously faced sharper increases in input costs and selling prices. In the manufacturing sector, the HSBC Flash India Manufacturing PMI rose to 57.4 in October, recovering from a low of 56.5 in September. This robust figure, well above the series trend, signals a significant improvement in the sector's health, bolstered by increased factory production and enhanced business conditions. Companies reported a marked rise in new orders, which is crucial for sustaining this momentum. Conversely, the service sector demonstrated stronger hiring

trends, indicating a balanced approach to labor needs across different segments of the economy. As businesses respond to heightened demand, recruitment efforts are expected to continue, thereby supporting further economic growth. The comprehensive data from the HSBC Flash PMI underscores the dynamic nature of India's economy, where both manufacturing and services play pivotal roles in driving expansion. The continuous growth in the composite index suggests that businesses are adapting to market conditions, overcoming challenges while capitalizing on new opportunities. In summary, India's private sector showcased remarkable resilience in October, with strong growth signals emerging from both manufacturing and services. As companies gear up to meet increasing demand, the focus will likely remain on managing cost pressures while fostering employment and production capabilities. This growth trajectory not only reinforces India's economic prospects but also positions it as a vital player in the global market landscape.

SAD not to contest forthcoming by-elections to four assembly seats

CHANDIGARH: The Working Committee of the Shiromani Akali Dal today unanimously decided not to contest forthcoming by-elections to four assembly seats in Punjab in keeping with panthic interests and 'maan-maryada' of Sri Akal Takht Sahib. This unanimous decision was taken at an emergent meeting of the Working Committee of the party, district Presidents and constituency incharges which was presided over by SAD's Working President Balwinder Singh Bhunder. Briefing newsmen about the decision, party senior leader Dr Daljit Singh Cheema said "at today's meeting there was an overwhelming feeling that party president Sukhbir Singh Badal had taken moral responsibility for all acts of omission and commission during the erstwhile SAD government on behalf of the party. It was felt by the Working Committee, district presidents and constituency incharges that since the head of the family - party president Sukhbir Singh



Badal had been forbidden by Sri Akal Takht to participate in the by-elections, they too could not participate in the exercise. Everyone felt they should consider themselves as part of the SAD President's family and act accordingly". Asserting that the SAD was completely beholden to Sri Akal Takht Sahib and was resolute in its determination to obey all the directions of the supreme temporal seat of the Sikhs, Dr Daljit Cheema said "we also understand that the Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) in

the State, the central government and the BJP and RSS have hatched a conspiracy to make the SAD leaderless. This conspiracy, under which Sikh institutions like Sachkhand Sri Hazur Sahib Trust have been snatched from us and a separate Gurdwara body has been formed in Haryana, is ongoing with attempts being made to influence the forthcoming elections to the President and executive committee of the SGPC in favour of the Sudhar Lehar group". Asserting that the Working

Committee had decided to stand up to save Sikh institutions, Dr Cheema said "for us morality comes before any political activity. The SAD is not a political shop but represents a glorious heritage of sacrifices for the Panth. The party president has submitted himself completely to Sri Akal Takht Sahib in true 'Gurmat' tradition. This has been done to stop the false propaganda being spread against the party by the complainants in the case - Sudhar Lehar leaders who were part and parcel of erstwhile SAD governments as well as all decisions made by the government and party". The Working Committee also passed a resolution which detailed all the steps taken by the party president following the complaint filed against him by the Sudhar Lehar leaders as well as the meetings held by SAD delegations with the Singh Sahiban. The resolution also reiterated its utmost respect for Sri Akal Takht Sahib.

SAD can contest elections: Akal Takht



JAGMOHAN SINGH
Amritsar
Akal Takht Jathedar Giani Raghbir Singh on Thursday repeating his statement once again said that the President of the Party (SAD) can't be allowed to contest the bypolls being held in four assembly seats in the State. Jathedar in a video released to media here on Thursday said that there was no such restriction to contest bypoll for the party was imposed from Akal Takht. He said that the party's members can contest elections from anywhere or can take part in the ongoing elections activities in Punjab. He said different political parties fielding their candidates in the elections and SAD can also take part in the process. At the same time he made it clear while repeating his Wednesday statement that in the light of present circumstances, party president Sukhbir Singh Badal cannot be allowed to take part in any of the four assembly seats in Punjab since he was declared Tankhaiya from the Akal Takht. He said the party can take part in the elections in Punjab. However, on Wednesday, Jathedar had said Shiromani Akali Dal (SAD) chief Sukhbir Singh Badal will not get any temporary relief with Akal Takht Jathedar Giani Raghbir Singh on Wednesday saying someone guilty of religious misconduct remains one until punishment is awarded. The jathedar told that according to Sikh religious tenets, if somebody has been once declared 'tankhaiya' (guilty of religious misconduct) by the Akal Takht, he would remain so unless he undergoes punishment awarded by the five Sikh head priests. The Akal Takht, the highest temporal seat of Sikhs, on August 30 had declared Badal 'tankhaiya' for the "mistakes" committed by his party and the SAD government from 2007 to 2017. The jathedar's statement came a day after a delegation of the SAD met and urged him to exempt Badal and allow him to lead the party's poll campaign for the November 13 bypolls to four assembly segments in Punjab.

Central Govt okays 2 railways projects worth Rs 6,798 crore

NEW DELHI: The Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs (CCEA) on Thursday approved two railway projects with an estimated cost of Rs 6,798 crore. The projects will be completed in five years to provide connectivity, facilitate ease of travelling, minimise logistics costs, reduce oil imports, and lower CO2 emissions, said the CCEA, chaired by Prime Minister Narendra Modi. The approved projects are the doubling of the Narkatiaganj-Raxaul-Sitamari-Darbhanga and Sitamarhi-Muzaffarpur Sections covering 256 km, and the construction of a new line between Errupalem and Namburu via Amaravati covering 57 km. The projects will generate direct employment for about



106 lakh human days. Covering eight districts in three states -- Andhra Pradesh, Telangana and Bihar, the new rail projects will increase the existing network of Indian Railways by about 313 km. "These will improve logistical efficiency connecting the unconnected areas, increase the existing line capacity and enhance transportation networks, resulting in streamlined supply chains and accelerated economic growth," according to the Cabinet. The doubling of the Narkatiaganj-Raxaul-Sitamari-Darbhanga and

Sitamari-Muzaffarpur Sections will boost the connectivity to Nepal, northeast India and border areas, while facilitating the movement of passenger trains, along with goods trains, resulting in the socio-economic growth of the region. The multi-tracking project would enhance connectivity to two aspirational districts (Sitamarhi and Muzaffarpur), serving 388 villages and about 9 lakh population. "These are essential routes for transportation of commodities such as agriculture products, fertilizer, coal, iron ore, steel, cement, etc. The capacity augmentation works will result in additional freight traffic of magnitude 31 MTPA (million tonnes per annum)," said the CCEA.

Sizeable crowd of farmers led by SKM staged protest at District Mandi office

JAGMOHAN SINGH
Amritsar

A sizeable crowd of farmers led by the the Samyukta Kisan Morcha (SKM) today staged a protest in front of the office of District Mandi officer at Bhagatwala area here in the city. Comrade Rattan Randhawa, leader of SKM said that SKM held a statewide protest in Punjab today due to delays in paddy procurement. He blamed both the Punjab government and the BJP-led central government. Another SKM leader Balkar Singh Duhala said that farmers have also blocked the main highways at Kukrawala near the Ajnala town and similarly at Attari Wagah road which was completely blocked for heavy vehicles.

Farmers in Punjab block highways in protest due to Non-procurement of Paddy



CHANDIGARH: Activists of the Samyukta Kisan Morcha (SKM), a farmer outfit, on Friday blocked roads across Punjab for four hours to protest the tardy paddy procurement, leading to traffic disruptions and inconvenience to tens of thousands of commuters at many places. However, there was no report of violence from anywhere in both the state. Commuters are likely to face more inconvenience on Saturday with Kisan Mazdoor Morcha, led by Sarwan Singh Pandher, announcing a road blockade for an indefinite period at many places to protest against the "tardy" paddy procurement. The protesters criticised the state government's decision to reduce DAP (di-ammonium phosphate) fertiliser

stocks by 30 per cent. They demanded a steady supply of DAP. SKM leader Balbir Singh Rajewal blamed both the Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) government of Punjab and the BJP-led central government for the mess. He said they should not play the blame game at the cost of farmers and the economy of the state. Bharatiya Kisan Union (Ekta-Ugrahan) Ludhiana district president Charan Singh Noorpura said corporate entities are taking advantage of open market policies that undercut small-scale farmers. Protesting farmers belonging to different outfits started assembling along the highways, mainly in front of the toll plazas in both states, well before the blockade came into effect at 11 a.m.

Justice Sanjiv Khanna appointed as next Chief Justice of India

NEW DELHI: The Centre on Thursday cleared the appointment of Justice Sanjiv Khanna as the next Chief Justice of India (CJI). "In exercise of the powers conferred by clause (2) of Article 124 of the Constitution of India, the President is pleased to appoint Shri Justice Sanjiv Khanna, Judge of the Supreme Court, to be the Chief Justice of India with effect from 11 November 2024," a notification issued by the Union Ministry of Law and Justice said. Incumbent CJI D.Y. Chandrachud is due to retire on November 10 on attainment

of the age of 65 years. He had recommended Justice Khanna as his successor earlier this month. Justice Khanna will be the 51st CJI and will have around 6 month tenure in office. He held the post of Chairman, Supreme Court Legal Service Committee. He is presently the Executive Chairman of the National Legal Services Authority and a member of the Governing Council of the National Judicial Academy, Bhopal. Before elevation to the Supreme Court, Justice Khanna served as a judge in the Delhi



High Court till January 2019. As a judge of the Delhi HC, he held the position of Chairman/Judge-in-charge, Delhi Judicial Academy, Delhi International Arbitration Centre, and the District Court Mediation Centres. Justice Khanna, born in May 1960, obtained his law degree from the Campus Law Centre, Delhi University. He

enrolled as an advocate in the Bar Council of Delhi in 1983 and primarily practised taxation, arbitration, commercial law, environmental law, medical negligence law, and company law in the Delhi High Court. He had a long tenure as the Senior Standing Counsel for the Income Tax Department. In 2004, he was appointed as the Standing Counsel (Civil) for the Delhi government. He had also appeared and argued in a number of criminal cases at the Delhi High Court as an Additional Public Prosecutor and as an amicus curie (friend of the court).

Cyclone Dana spares Odisha, Bengal of major damage, brings heavy rain



Cyclone Dana spared Odisha and West Bengal of any severe damage to infrastructure while flight and rail operations resumed on Friday after the cyclonic storm completed landfall, triggering heavy rains and uprooting of trees and electric poles. Odisha Chief Minister Mohan Charan Majhi asserted that no fatality report has been received so far and the state achieved its 'zero casualty mission', while West Bengal CM Mamata Banerjee said one person died due to the natural calamity. The severe cyclonic

storm Dana completed its landfall around 8.30 am on Friday and the system took at least eight and half hours to enter the landmass, the IMD said. The landfall of 'Dana' started around 12.05 am on Friday between Bhitarkanika in Kendrapara and Dhamra in Bhadrak district of Odisha with wind speeds of around 110 kmph. Majhi, who reviewed the cyclone situation in Bhubaneswar this morning, announced that the state has achieved its "zero casualty mission" as there has been

"no report regarding any loss of human life or injury in the severe cyclonic storm". The chief minister said all the roads blocked by uprooted trees would be cleared during the day as the rescue team personnel had already started working as soon as the intensity of wind reduced on Thursday night. Majhi said many electrical installations like poles and transformers were damaged and were being repaired. "By 6 pm on Friday, electricity will be restored in all places including the worst-hit Kendrapara, Balasore and Bhadrak district," he said. The West Bengal CM on Friday said that one person died in the state in cyclone Dana even as the administration evacuated around 2.16 lakh people from the low-lying areas. Banerjee, who held a review meeting at the state secretariat Nabanna after spending the night there to monitor the situation, directed the officials to ensure that relief materials reach all those affected by the cyclone.

German Chancellor Scholz, PM Modi meet ahead of 18th Asia-Pacific Conference of German Business

NEW DELHI: German Chancellor Olaf Scholz met Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Friday at the PM's official residence, Lok Kalyan Marg, ahead of their participation in the 18th Asia-Pacific Conference of German Business (APK 2024). PM Modi and the German Chancellor will inaugurate the Asia-Pacific Conference of German Business 2024 on Friday. The event, which gathers around 650 business leaders and CEOs from Germany, India, and other nations, aims to bolster trade and investment relations between Germany and the Indo-Pacific region. After that, there will be a joint plenary session for all participants in government consultations chaired by the

heads of government. "Both leaders will hold bilateral talks to discuss enhanced security and Defence cooperation, greater opportunities for mobility of talent, deeper economic cooperation, Green and Sustainable Development Partnership and collaboration in the area of emerging and strategic technologies. Discussions will also focus on important regional and global developments," the Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) detailed, earlier this week. The German Chancellor will then travel to Goa on Saturday where the German naval frigate 'Baden-Wuerttemberg' and combat support ship 'Frankfurt am Main' are making a scheduled port call as part of Germany's Indo-Pacific deployment.



"India and Germany have had a strategic partnership since 2000. Over the years, this partnership has deepened and diversified across various sectors. The two countries are celebrating 50 years of Science and Technology collaboration this year. As we enter the 25th year of strategic partnership, the visit of Chancellor Scholz will pave the way for further strengthening of our bilateral ties," the MEA stated. During his 2023 visits, Scholz was quite impressed by India as a high-tech nation with great expertise in digitalisation and software development. "We want to and must take

advantage of the potential that exists here, which, among other things, will help us to boost the resilience of our own economy," he said following his business meetings in Bengaluru. He has also emphasised Germany's great interest in collaborating with India in other economic sectors such as renewable energies, wind power, solar energy, and biomass.

Captain's Mandi visit is just a "drama": Finance Minister Harpal Cheema

CHANDIGARH: Reacting to Captain Amarinder Singh's visit to Khanna grain market, senior leader of the Aam Aadmi Party and Punjab Finance Minister Harpal Singh Cheema said that Captain Amarinder Singh often meets with Home Minister Amit Shah and Prime Minister Narendra Modi, but why has he never raised the issues of Punjab's farmers and commission agents in front of them? Cheema stated that Captain's political career has ended. Since the public has rejected him, he is now pretending to show sympathy for farmers by visiting the mandis. He mentioned that the people of Punjab know that the entire problem has been created by the central government. The



central government has not lifted rice from warehouses on time and has not listened to the concerns of the millers and commission agents, causing distress to farmers and arthiyas in Punjab.

Captain Amarinder Singh's party (BJP) hates Punjab. They

hate the farmers and commission agents of Punjab, and that is why they are deliberately harassing them. He added that Captain knows that the central government has withheld thousands of crores from various funds meant for Punjab. The central government has

been holding back RDP, MDF, and NHM funds for years, but Captain has never raised these issues before the center.

Moreover, when the Modi government introduced the three controversial farm laws, Captain Amarinder Singh was supporting the center. At that time, the Aam Aadmi Party was in opposition, and we repeatedly stated that Captain was acting more as an agent of the BJP than as a Chief Minister of Punjab. That is why, as soon as he stepped down as Chief Minister, he joined the BJP. Even when he was in office, he never spoke about the farmers, millers, or commission agents of Punjab. Now, out of desperation to stay relevant, he is putting on this act.

Punjab's Farmers suffer as AAP Government fails to procure crop : Capt Amarinder Singh



Former CM Slams CM Bhagwant Mann for Inaction

KHANNA: Former Punjab Chief Minister and senior BJP leader Captain Amarinder Singh visited Asia's largest grain market, Khanna Anaj Mandi, to assess the ground situation and met with farmers, arthiyas, and laborers. Expressing deep concern over the plight of Punjab's farmers, he lambasted the AAP government for its failure to procure the PR126 paddy variety, leaving farmers in distress.

"The situation is alarming. During my tenure, no farmer had to sleep in the mandi even once. They would bring their produce, it would get procured, and they would get money in their accounts all in one day. Today, farmers are sitting with their crop in mandis for 10 days, and it's not even being procured at MSP," Captain Amarinder Singh said.

He questioned CM Bhag-

want Mann's absence from the mandis, saying, "Why hasn't the Chief Minister visited any mandi even once? Why isn't his Food and Agriculture Minister coming to address the concerns? The government encouraged farmers to sow PR126, but now they're running away from procuring it."

Captain Amarinder Singh pointed out that CM Bhagwant Mann lacks governance experience, and AAP leaders have no expertise. "Before the season began, the CM should have resolved issues by visiting the central government. The AAP government is ruining Punjab due to ego and power struggles."

Highlighting the stark contrast, Captain Amarinder Singh noted, "No CM, minister, or even MLA has visited mandis recently to address these concerns. During my 10-year tenure, we ensured seamless procurement. I fulfilled my CM

Anti-Panth forces interfering in SGPC's annual election: Dhami



JAGMOHAN SINGH Amritsar

After being announced as the candidate for the post of president for the annual election of office-bearers of the Shiromani Gurdwara Parbandhak Committee (SGPC), SGPC President Harjinder Singh Dhami thanked the Shiromani Akali Dal and all the SGPC members and strongly criticized the mischievous conspiracies to take control of the Sikh body by anti-Panth forces at the behest of the government.

Talking to the media, Dhami said that the anti-Panth forces are plotting to take control of the management of the Sikh body that came into existence after many sacrifices, which the Khalsa Panth needs to be aware of with unity.

Dhami said that Sikhs have seen very difficult times in history, but it has never happened that attempts are being made to bribe the SGPC members with money to influence the election of SGPC office-bearers. He said that the BJP, Congress, AAP, RSS and anti-Panth forces are making various efforts to make SGPC members vote against the candidate of Akali Dal by directly interfering in the SGPC office-bearers election. He said that people associated with BJP are also trying to help one faction. Giving examples of Sikh bodies such as Takht Sri Patna Sahib, Takht Sri Hazur Sahib, Delhi and Haryana Gurdwara committees, he said that these Sikh organizations are already being managed by the BJP and RSS with government intervention and now, efforts are being made by the opponents of Panth to control the Takhts in Punjab and representative Sikh body, SGPC, as per their own wish.

The SGPC President urged the Khalsa Panth and all the SGPC members to unite and be aware of the tactics of the anti-Panth forces. Reacting to being called a weak President in the past, Dhami said that he believes in serving under the fear and humility as blessed by the Guru and if anyone takes it as weakness, it may be their own intellectuality.

Amritsar police busts trans-border narcotic cartel headed by foreign based Harbhej Jawed ; 3 held with 2.15 kg heroin



JAGMOHAN SINGH Amritsar

In a major breakthrough against trans-border narcotic smuggling networks amidst the ongoing war against drugs, Amritsar Commissionerate Police has arrested three drug smugglers after recovering 2.15 kg Heroin from their possession, said Commissioner of Police Gurbhullar Singh Bhullar here on Thursday.

Arrested accused persons have been identified as Jagroop Singh alias Jupa, a resident of Village Ranike, Jagjit Singh and Jashanpreet Singh, both residents of Village Rangarh, Gharinda Amritsar Rural.

Bhullar said that preliminary investigations have revealed that accused Jagroop Singh alias Jupa, Jagjit and Jashanpreet were directly in touch with Pakistan-based drug smuggler Kaali, who were using drones to transport drugs across the border. The CP said that technical leads were developed in a professional investigation and an FIR has been registered under the NDPS Act.

Haryana election fact-finding committee report: Internal sabotage, groupism among senior leaders caused Congress defeat in Haryana assembly polls



SATISH HANDA Chandigarh

Congress's fact-finding panel to probe the reasons for Congress defeat due to EVM discrepancies have been denied by most of the contestants who blamed internal sabotage by the senior party leaders group as the prime reason for the unexpected results in recent assembly polls in Haryana state. The party's top leadership headed by Rahul Gandhi and its national president Mallikarjun Kharge held a review meeting to deliberate on the what the party calls 'unexpected' results in Haryana Assembly polls in spite of Congress wave and all media Exit Polls in favour of party, and also investigate the allegations of 'internal' sabotage caused shock loss in Haryana Assembly polls. The panel has also approached the Election Commission of India alleging discrepancies in some EVMs, and shared a list of seven Assembly constituencies as an example. The Congress party had won 37 of the 90 seats in Haryana election, the result of which was declared on October 8. Defying exit polls, opinion polls and beating anti-incumbency of ten years, the saffron party won 48 seats, two more than the majority mark.

Kaithal records extremely poor air, AQI identified 372 due to rising stubble burning cases

PARVESH HANDA Kaithal

In spite of the agriculture department efforts motivating farmers not to burn stubble in open, the number of such burning cases in Haryana state is continuously rising and recorded more than 650 cases thus spreading pollution in the air, in which Kaithal topped not only in Haryana but also in the country recording very poor air quality index (AQI) 372 on Saturday and Sunday.

Kurukshetra was ranked second in the state where AQI was recorded as 258. Among the 23 cities with 'poor' air quality on the Central Pollution Control Board's AQI list, nine including Kurukshetra (277), Jind (211), Panipat (236), Sonapat (256), Rohtak (247), Hisar (232), Fatehabad (207), Ballabgarh (204) and Bahadurgarh (218) were from Haryana. Whereas, the air quality index in the range of 0-50 is considered good, 51-100 satisfactory, 101-200 moderate, 201-300 poor, 301-400 very poor, and 401-500 severe.

With few fresh cases of farm fires in the state reported on Sunday morning, the number of farm fires in the state have increased to 653 in which



Kaithal has reported the had maximum 127 farm fires, Kurukshetra has reported 91 cases, followed by Ambala 74 cases, Karnal 68 cases, Jind 49 cases, Sonapat 40 cases, Fatehabad 40 cases, Faridabad 30 cases, Panipat 29 cases, Palwal 28 cases, Yamunanagar 24 cases, Hisar 18 cases, Sirsa 16 cases, Panchkula 14 cases, Rohtak 6. Environmental experts said that besides paddy stubble burning, the change in climatic condition is a major factor behind the current situation. Information revealed that fire was seen in about 450 places, whereas smoke was observed in about 200 places which affected the air quality.

A senior official in the pollution control board said the Agriculture Department

was making efforts to reduce stubble burning by motivating farmers and also issuing challans to them. He said that Haryana Chief Secretary TVSN Prasad while talking to media persons said that Supreme Court of India has taken a serious view about stubble burning in open fields as such Red Entry against those farmers burning stubble in open in which the alleged farmer will not be allowed to sell crop in grain markets for two seasons and crop will not be purchased from him on minimum support price, besides stern action will be taken against employees as many as about 100 on the hit list allegedly having no proper check over illegal activities.

There is internal conflict in the BJP Government of the State causing delay in the allocation of departments to ministers: Kumari Selja

SATISH HANDA Chandigarh

The General Secretary of the All India Congress Committee, former Union Minister, and MP from Sirsa, Kumari Selja said that there is nothing right within the BJP government of the state. It is simmering like a volcano from within, which could erupt like lava at any moment. From the activities so far, it is clear that the hands of the state government will remain tied, while the remote control of governance will be in the hands of the central government. Whatever button is



pressed there, the state government will move accordingly.

In a statement released to the media, Kumari Selja said that the delay in the formation of the state government and the allocation of departments to ministers indicates that there is an internal struggle

among ministers over supremacy and departments that generate revenue. Therefore, the Chief Minister is repeatedly having to make trips to the Delhi court. There is a game of win and lose among the government members. The former Union Minister said that due to the model code of conduct and now the delay in department allocation, the state is left to the mercy of God. No one in the government is concerned about the safety of the people of the state. This is why a businessman in Jind is being asked for a ransom of one crore rupees.

BJP is working to intimidate farmers, should withdraw draconian order in the interest of farmers: Selja

SATISH HANDA Chandigarh

The General Secretary of the All India Congress Committee, former Union Minister, and MP from Sirsa, Kumari Selja has said that the first step taken by the BJP government in the state after taking the oath was against farmers. The new order by the government is another attack on the farmers of Haryana. Filing FIRs and imposing "red entry" for stubble burning to prevent farmers from selling crops at MSP for the next two seasons is not only authoritarian but



also a direct blow to the livelihood of small farmers. Instead of punishing farmers struggling with financial difficulties, the government should provide a solution. Intimidating farmers will not solve the problem.

In a statement released to the

media, Kumari Selja said that action is being taken against stubble-burning farmers in Haryana, considering the increasing air pollution. An order issued by the government instructs filing FIRs against farmers who burn stubble. Not only this, such farmers will not be able to sell their crops for the next two seasons. Those involved will have a "red entry" recorded against them, preventing them from logging into the e-procurement portal. This order was issued on October 17, meaning that the government gave farmers their first "gift"

after taking the oath. The truth is that this decision is entirely anti-farmer. Kumari Selja said that the Director of the Department of Agriculture and Farmers' Welfare of the state has sent this order to all Deputy Commissioners and Nodal Officers of the state. She said that if the government is so alert and vigilant about pollution, then why does it not take action against those who release toxic water into the Yamuna River? If a farmer makes a mistake, the government is ready to stop purchasing his crops along with filing an FIR.

Only those officers who work will remain here, We have begun inspecting the ongoing development projects as soon as the elections over: Anil Vij

SATISH HANDA Ambala

Haryana Cabinet Minister Anil Vij today said that BJP government has been formed, and now the first thing we will do is inaugurate the escalator that has been installed at the Civil Hospital in Ambala Cantonment on Monday. Repeating his warning to officers, Vij said that only those officers who work will remain here. He was responding to questions asked by media persons today. He



arrived at Ambala's T-point in his usual style, where BJP workers expressed their happiness by distributing sweets to the public.

Vij stated that as soon as the elections ended, he began

inspecting the ongoing development projects and instructed officers to complete the tasks swiftly. He mentioned that for the first time, an escalator has been installed at the Ambala Cantonment Civil Hospital, which will be inaugurated on Monday. Reiterating his warning to officers, Vij said that his slogan has been "I have worked and will continue to work," and only those officials who align with this slogan will remain here.

Haryana CM Nayab Saini meets German Delegation for investment in Haryana

PARVESH HANDA Chandigarh

Haryana Chief Minister Nayab Singh Saini hosted a high-level delegation from Germany at his residence Sant Kabeer Kutir. The discussions focused on exploring collaborations in many critical sectors including automotive, pharmaceuticals, education, skill development, research and development (R&D), and climate change. The representatives of both sides expressed a shared commitment to advancing mutual interests through strategic partnerships that align with the economic aspirations of Haryana and Germany. Rajesh Khuller, Head Chief Secretary of CM was the main organizer of this important event. The German delegation led by Manfred Ockel Chairman for Investment and Mayor of Kelsterbach, along with the prominent figures such as Patrick Burghardt, Lord Mayor of



Rüsselsheim, David Rendel, Mayor of Raunheim, and Rahul Kumar Parliament Member of Frankfurt and Spokesperson for Digitalization were present in this meeting.

Chief Minister Nayab Singh Saini emphasized Haryana's 'Go Global Approach', aimed at fostering international partnerships and enhancing global competitiveness. He highlighted Haryana's robust industrial base, its leadership in sectors such as automobiles, pharmaceuticals, and electronics, and its vision to expand into new

markets by promoting foreign direct investment (FDI) and global trade. In this meeting, both Haryana and Germany reiterated their commitment to pursuing eco-friendly industrial policies and collaborating on projects that would advance sustainability and environmental protection. The German delegation expressed interest in working with Haryana on green technology initiatives and leveraging their expertise in energy efficiency and climate resilience. Both sides acknowledged the strong parallels in their devel-

opment trajectories. Haryana's rapid economic growth, supported by its thriving industrial sectors, mirrors the growth of the RheinMain region, which is recognized as one of Germany's leading hubs for innovation and technological advancement. The shared focus on sustainable growth, technological innovation, and skill development further highlighted the potential for a long-term partnership between the two governments. The Foreign Cooperation Department (FCD) laid out the state's ambitious goals to attract foreign direct investment (FDI), boost international trade, and position Haryana as a leading destination for global businesses. The FCD highlighted key initiatives such as the KMP Global Corridor, the Integrated Aviation Hub at Hisar, and Mega Food Parks, which are set to transform the industrial and logistics landscape of the state. The German delegation under-

scored Germany's leadership in high-tech manufacturing, digitalization, and sustainable development, offering valuable opportunities for Haryana to collaborate in these fields. Discussions centered around potential collaborations in the automotive sector, where Haryana's status as an industrial leader aligns with Germany's advanced capabilities in automotive manufacturing and Industry 4.0 technologies. The pharmaceutical industry was another key area of interest, with both regions keen to explore joint ventures and partnerships to drive innovation and development. The two sides also discussed enhancing educational exchange programs and launching new skill development initiatives that would prepare Haryana's workforce for global opportunities, particularly in sectors such as digitalization and applied sciences.

Police busted a spa centre running sex trade

SATISH HANDA Yamuna Nagar

The police raided The Royal Salon and Spa centre in Sector-17 and arrested a young man and a woman lying in an highly objectionable condition. The woman accused the spa operator of forcing the customers to be involved in prostitution. On her complaint, police registered a case against the salon operator Ajay, a resident of Chhachhrauli and a customer Dilbagh Singh after arresting both. The woman said in her complaint that she came to Jagadhri for work about a month ago and came in contact with Ajay through a woman. Ajay, the operator of The Royal Salon and Spa Centre hired her on a salary of Rs. 30,000 per month. The accused gave her Rs. 10,000 and said that he would give the rest amount on completion of the month. Police arrested four females and two male youths including the owner Anup Kumar resident of Ganouli, whereas an

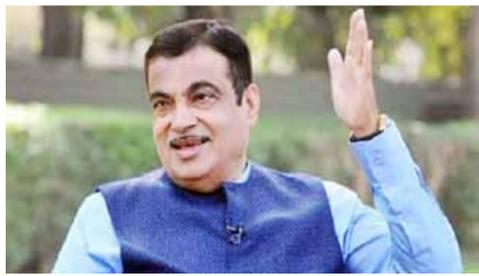


accused Vipin managed to flee by jumping out through a window.

Information reveals that there are several Spa centres and hotels in Sector 17. The complainant woman disclosed to police that Ajay was running sex trade in the spa centre. He threatened her that if she disclosed this to anyone about this, she would be thrown out from the job. He also compelled her to have sex relationship with the customers visiting the spa centre and about two days ago, a youth named Dilbagh Singh came to the spa centre when Ajay forcefully sent him to the massage room and she was sexually assaulted by him when in the meanwhile, the police raided and caught her alongwith Dilbagh Singh.

Advanced engineering solutions, AI must to ensure road safety: Gadkari

NEW DELHI: Road safety cannot be achieved without integrating advanced engineering solutions, enforcement of laws, and the adoption of cutting-edge technologies like artificial intelligence (AI), Union Minister of Road Transport and Highways, Nitin Gadkari, said on Thursday.



Addressing the 'Traffic InfraTech Expo' in the national capital, the minister emphasised the critical need to improve road safety and the adoption of advanced technologies in the transportation sector. "The country experiences around 5 lakh accidents each year, resulting in numerous fatalities. More than half of these casualties are in the age group of 18-36 years. The economic loss due to road accidents is estimated at 3 per cent of the country's GDP," he said.

The minister mentioned efforts to identify traffic violations through AI and other innovative methods, allowing authorities to enforce penalties accurately. Gadkari also outlined plans for upgrading toll collection methods, including the exploration of satellite toll systems, which would improve efficiency and ensure transparency in toll collection. Highlighting the approach to enhancing road safety, the minister further stated that the government has decided to appoint experts from the private sector to collaborate on developing technological solutions. "A dedicated expert committee will evaluate proposals from startups and industry leaders, ensuring that the best ideas are implemented. The committee has been directed to finalise its evaluations within three months, aiming for rapid improvements in the sector," Gadkari said.

The Road Transport Minister encouraged small firms with innovative technologies to participate in government tenders, stressing the importance of cost-effectiveness while maintaining profit margins without exploitation. "By using the best technologies, India can achieve transparency, reduce costs, and significantly enhance road safety," said Gadkari, calling upon all stakeholders - government, private sector, and startups - to come together in addressing the urgent issue of road safety in the country.

Wayanad is not ready to accept Priyanka Gandhi, says BJP candidate Navya Haridas



WAYANAD: Navya Haridas, the BJP candidate from Wayanad, on Thursday, expressed confidence in winning the upcoming Lok Sabha bypoll, asserting that the people of the constituency are "not ready to accept" Congress leader Priyanka Gandhi Vadra as their representative.

mother, brother, husband, and son. This clearly shows family domination." "The Nehru family is trying to capture a seat in Wayanad, but the people here are not ready to accept this," she added. Notably, Priyanka Gandhi's nomination affidavit reveals liabilities totalling Rs 15.75 lakh, connected to a reassessment proceeding initiated by the Income Tax Department for the year 2012-13. This case is still pending with the Commissioner of Income Tax (Appeals).

Navya Haridas (39), BJP parliamentary party leader and a two-time councillor in Kozhikode Corporation, also serves as the state General Secretary of the BJP Mahila Morcha. Speaking to media, she emphasised that this election holds significant importance for both her and the BJP. "I am fighting to win this very important election. The BJP is giving considerable attention to this contest," Haridas said.

Reacting to this, Haridas said, "This is why the AICC revolves around one family. The Nehru family wants every member of Parliament to avoid internal conflicts within Congress. They are trying to retain every seat in the Lok Sabha by ensuring a family member is the candidate."

"This is my first time contesting for the Lok Sabha. Before this, I participated in the corporate elections and legislative Assembly elections. I feel fortunate to have been given such an opportunity," she added. Slamming Congress for promoting dynastic politics, the BJP candidate said, "Priyanka Gandhi filed her nomination yesterday, accompanied by her family -- her

husband, Robert Vadra. "There are numerous allegations against Robert Vadra. I don't believe everything has been disclosed in her nomination form," she claimed. Further criticising the Leader of Opposition in the Lok Sabha, Rahul Gandhi, Haridas said, "He was absent during the floods. He

only visited Wayanad four days after the disaster. The people of Wayanad felt abandoned without a proper representative."

Haridas highlighted that warnings from the disaster management team to evacuate landslide-prone areas were ignored, and no action was taken by any representatives.

"Wayanad has always leaned towards Congress, voting for the symbol rather than the candidate. This is why Rahul Gandhi chose Wayanad last time, believing he wouldn't win any seats in North India. But this time, he is focused on retaining Rae Bareilly, leaving the people of Wayanad behind."

Commenting on the Congress alliance with the Indian Union Muslim League (IUM), Haridas said, "This alliance won't work. In the last Lok Sabha elections, we saw internal fights and splits wherever this alliance existed. It's not a viable strategy."

Haridas accused Congress of engaging in caste- and religion-based politics, following a "divide and rule" policy. In contrast, she said, the BJP is focused on "politics of development".

"Wayanad requires significant development in health, education, agriculture, and infrastructure. Compared to other states and districts, Wayanad is lagging behind. There's a clear communication gap between the representatives and the people, and their real needs have never been addressed in Parliament," Haridas said.

Arvind Kejriwal came with dreams of change but has become a 'Maafi Expert': Ravi Shankar Prasad



NEW DELHI: Senior BJP leader Ravi Shankar Prasad, while commenting on the Supreme Court's rejection of Arvind Kejriwal's petition in a defamation case, said that the former Delhi Chief Minister, who once promised to transform the country, has now become an expert on seeking apology (maafi expert). Prasad pointed out that Kejriwal has strayed far from the ideals he championed during the Anna Hazare movement. Speaking to media persons at the BJP's national headquarters here on Tuesday, Prasad referred to the Supreme Court's recent decision, which rejected Kejriwal's plea to stay a defamation case related to comments he made about Prime Minister Narendra Modi's educational qualifications. The defamation case was initiated by Gujarat University, following Kejriwal's public remarks questioning the PM's degree, which led to an RTI being filed. The Sessions Court and the Gujarat High Court have already dismissed Kejriwal's petition, and now, the Supreme Court has upheld those decisions. Prasad claimed that Kejriwal had even hinted during the court proceedings that he might apologise for his remarks, but the Supreme Court noted that such an apology should have been made earlier. Now, with his petition withdrawn, the criminal defamation case against him will proceed in Gujarat.

Aim to make India's century as the world's century: PM Modi



NEW DELHI: Stressing that there is no scope for rest for him as the government aims to fulfil its goals for a 'Viksit Bharat', Prime Minister Narendra Modi said on Monday that he aims to make India's century as the world's century.

BJP names 40 star campaigners for Bihar VS polls

PATNA: Intensifying its preparations, the BJP has named 40 star campaigners for the November 13 Bihar Assembly by-elections.



Bihar BJP chief Dilip Jaiswal, Deputy Chief Ministers Samrat Chaudhary and Vijay Kumar Sinha, and Union Ministers Giriraj Singh, (MoS) Nityanand Rai, (MoS) Satish Chandra Dubey and (MoS) Raj Bhushan Nishad have been named in the list of 40 star-campaigners for the bypolls to four assembly constituencies in the state.

Others named in the list include Vinod Tawde, Nagendra Nath Tripathi, Bhikhubhai Dalsania, Deepak Prakash, Radha Mohan Singh, Sanjay Jaiswal, Gopal Narayan Singh, Mangal Pandey, Rituraj Sinha, Rajiv Pratap Rudy, Ravi Shankar Prasad, Ashwini Kumar Choubey, Prem Kumar, Raj Kumar Singh, Syed Shah Nawaz Hussain, Amarendra Pratap Singh, Nitin Nabin, Tarkishore Prasad, Renu Devi, Neeraj Kumar Bablu, Santosh Singh, Hari Sahni, Janak Chamar, Kedar Prasad Gupta, Nitish Mishra, Vivek Thakur, Sushil Singh, Dharmshila Gupta, Bhim Singh, Anil Sharma, Mithilesh Tiwari, Shivshesh Ram, Rajesh Verma.

"We need stability and sustenance for growth and India is working on it. Our third term gives a message of stability. Initiatives taken by India are a solution towards world problems. We would aim to ensure that India's century is the world's century," PM Modi told the gathering at the 'NDTV World Summit 2024' in the national capital.

TRF claims responsibility for terror attack in Ganderbal of J&K



FW DESK

The Resistance Front (TRF), a Lashkar-e-Taiba offshoot, has claimed responsibility for a terrorist attack in Ganderbal on Sunday, killing seven people, including a doctor and six migrant labourers. The attack targeted a construction site for a military tunnel project in Gagangir, Sonamarg region. According to the TRF, the group had previously warned against participating in "illegal projects," referring to the ongoing tunnel construction. Two labourers were killed on the spot when terrorists opened fire on their camp, while the doctor and four others succumbed to injuries later. The attack comes shortly after Omar Abdullah assumed office as the new Chief Minister of Jammu and Kashmir following

the recent elections. Omar Abdullah condemned the attack, calling it a "cowardly assault" on migrant labourers. Former Chief Minister Mehbooba Mufti also expressed her condolences, saying on X (formerly Twitter), "Unequivocally condemn this senseless act of violence against two laborers in Ganderbal. Deepest condolences to their families."

The TRF, banned by the Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA) in January 2023 under the Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act, is classified as a terrorist organization for its links to Pakistan-based Lashkar-e-Taiba. The attack underscores rising security concerns in the region, particularly with new infrastructure projects underway. The incident also follows a recent attack in Shopian, where a laborer was killed by militants.

J&K Police counter-intelligence wing dismantles new militant group



FW DESK

The Counter-Intelligence Wing (CIW) of the Jammu and Kashmir Police launched a major operation on Tuesday, conducting raids across several districts in the Kashmir Valley. The raids were part of an effort to dismantle a newly formed militant group believed to be an offshoot of the banned Lashkar-e-Taiba (LeT), officials said. According to authorities, the raids took place in multiple districts, including Srinagar, Ganderbal, Bandipora, Kulgam, Budgam, Anantnag, and Pulwama. During the operation, a recruitment module associated with the new group was dismantled. The militant group is reportedly being directed by a Pakistani handler operating under the alias 'Baba Hamas'. The raids are ongoing, and further details are expected as the operation continues.

As Wayanad waits, Rahul Gandhi says none better than Priyanka to be constituency's voice

WAYANAD: With hours left for Priyanka Gandhi and her brother Rahul Gandhi to arrive in Wayanad, from where the former is fighting her debut election, the Congress party top brass is preparing to give the duo a huge welcome. Wayanad Lok Sabha constituency goes to the polls on November 13 and Priyanka



Gandhi will be filing her nomination on Wednesday morning.

The Congress party has put up numerous billboards and banners welcoming Priyanka Gandhi in most places. Leading from the front, Leader of Opposition in the Lok Sabha, Rahul Gandhi, who vacated the seat to hold on to the family constituency Raebareilly, took to his social media account on Tuesday just before the

duo started for Mysore, from where they will drive down to Wayanad. LoP Gandhi posted, "The people of Wayanad hold a special place in my heart, and I can't imagine a better representative for them than my sister. I'm confident she will be a passionate champion of Wayanad's needs and a powerful voice in Parliament."

Talking Points

Narvijay Yadav



In the face of the growing menace of disruptions and bomb hoaxes, rail and air transport is under threat. The return of underworld activities in Mumbai is also an emerging concern. Are our security preparations in place?

In recent weeks, India has witnessed disturbing disruptions to critical infrastructure, threatening the fabric of our daily lives. From railway tracks to airline operations and even Bollywood, the shadow of terrorism looms large. It began with bizarre obstacles placed on railway tracks - electric poles, gas cylinders, stones, motorcycle wheels, and iron pieces - to disrupt train movements. The consequences were devastating: several derailments and accidents, claiming precious lives and causing widespread destruction. Unfortunately, the focus has now shifted to air traffic also, with a surge in hoax bomb calls and messages on social media. In just one week, airlines received nearly 100 bomb threats, causing immense losses to Air India, Vistara, IndiGo, and others. Airlines are bearing the brunt of bomb hoaxes, incurring significant expenses ranging from fuel dumping and aircraft grounding to accommodating passengers and crew in hotels. According to estimates, a single hoax incident can result in losses exceeding Rs 3 crore. The government is currently assessing the threat messages, with the civil aviation minister suggesting that it may be the work of a prankster or minor every time using a new anonymous X account (earlier known as Twitter).

Enough is Enough



These disruptions have raised concerns about the identity and motives of those responsible. While investigations are ongoing, several possibilities emerge. Terrorist organizations, international or local outfits, may aim to create fear and disrupt critical infrastructure. Alternatively, anti-social elements seeking thrill or revenge may exploit vulnerabilities. Lone wolves, individuals with grievances or extremist ideologies, may also act alone. However, identifying and apprehending the culprits has proven challenging. One major hurdle is the lack of intelligence, which hampers investigations. Furthermore, perpetrators use sophisticated methods, including encrypted communication, proxy servers, and anonymous accounts, complicating tracking efforts. Limited resources, including manpower, technology, and expertise, constrain law enforcement agencies. Additionally, coordination issues between agencies and information-sharing gaps hinder progress.

Unraveling intricate plots and identifying culprits requires time and expertise, making investigations complex. To overcome these challenges, enhancing intelligence gathering and sharing is crucial. Leveraging technology, such as AI-powered tools, data analytics, and cyber forensics, can also aid investigations. Strengthening inter-agency coordination, increasing public awareness, and encouraging vigilant reporting are essential. Providing specialized training for investigators will also help.

By addressing these aspects, India can improve its response to disruptions and ensure safer transportation services. Effective collaboration between law enforcement agencies, intelligence units, and transportation authorities is vital. The government must prioritize investing in cutting-edge technology and training to combat these evolving threats. As terrorism evolves, so must our response. Enhanced coordination, technology integration, and public awareness are crucial to containing these disruptions. The intelligence community must adapt to stay ahead of these threats. We cannot afford to let terrorism disrupt our daily lives. The time to act is now!

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

280 companies register 1.27 lakh internship offers under PM Internship Scheme

NEW DELHI: About 280 companies participated in the PM Internship Scheme (PMIS) and offered 1.27 lakh internship opportunities, according to reports.



The Centre has now closed the onboarding window for corporates' participation in the Scheme, which opened on October 3 for corporates to register their internship offerings. However, the window for youth registration, which commenced on October 12 is expected to remain open until early November. The scheme was announced in the Union Budget 2024 by Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman with an outlay of Rs 800 crore for the pilot initiative. It will address youth unemployment by benefitting around 10 million young people over the next five years. It will also connect young people with companies that are seeking talent. Administered by the Ministry of Corporate Affairs (MCA), the PMIS scheme allows the top 500 corporates by average CSR spending over the last three fiscal years to participate, providing valuable internship opportunities for youth. Prominent companies participating in the scheme include Mahindra & Mahindra, Tata Consultancy Services, Larsen & Toubro, Reliance Industries, HDFC Bank, Maruti Suzuki, Tech Mahindra, ONGC, Bajaj Finance, Eicher Motors, Max Life Insurance, Muthoot Finance, and Jubilant Foodworks. Oil, gas, and energy; automotive; travel and hospitality; banking and financial services; and metals and mining are the sectors with the highest number of internship opportunities. Other key sectors offering internships are manufacturing, industrial, infrastructure and construction, IT and software development, FMCG, and telecom.

The internship opportunities are currently available in 737 districts across 28 States and 8 Union Territories. The selected youths will be eligible for internship in the top 500 companies in India for a year and also get an allowance of Rs 5,000 per month and Rs 6,000 as a one-time grant.

India and China relations need a cautious reset

China's confirmation on October 22, 2024, of an agreement to resolve its four-year military standoff with India marks a significant moment for bilateral relations. The announcement, following Indian Foreign Secretary Vikram Misri's statement a day earlier, signals a breakthrough in a strained relationship since the April 2020 transgressions along the Line of Actual Control (LAC). These incursions, followed by the tragic Galwan Valley clashes that claimed the lives of 20 Indian soldiers, had brought diplomatic ties to a standstill. While both countries managed disengagement at key friction points, the mistrust, particularly over China's willingness to revert to the "status quo ante," has lingered. External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar's assertion that China has agreed to restore troop positions to pre-2020 levels is a welcome development, but it requires verification. If true, this could be a crucial step towards rebuilding trust between the two nations. The timing of the agreement, ahead of the BRICS Summit in Russia, opens the possibility of a formal interaction between Prime Minister Narendra Modi and President Xi Jinping—an opportunity to rekindle dialogue, something absent since their last one-on-one meetings before 2020. However, the Indian government must proceed with caution. Transparency in the execution of the next steps, as referenced by Misri, is essential to address the domestic perception that Chinese troops may still control areas previously patrolled by Indian soldiers. The government's reluctance to fully brief Parliament or grant media access to forward areas has compounded suspicions. Lessons from past engagements, such as the post-Doklam scenario, must guide a measured response. Both nations should also revisit their existing border management frameworks to see if they remain viable for maintaining peace. Only a cautious and informed approach will ensure lasting stability along the LAC of the two countries.

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SHASHANK RANJAN SAYS THE REGISTER MUST EMBODY TRUTH AND RECONCILIATION EFFORTS IN BASTAR

Meaningful 'victims' register' please!

On September 20, 2024, the Union Home Minister met 55 people affected by Naxalite violence from the left-wing extremism-hit areas of Chhattisgarh, as highlighted in a report in this daily, "Surrender arms and join mainstream, or face action, Amit Shah tells Naxals". The ground zero of the current phase of left-wing extremism activities, where most of the recent and successful tactical operations by security forces have been conducted, is the Bastar division of Chhattisgarh. It comprises the districts of Bastar, Narayanpur, Bijapur, Kondagaon, Sukma, Dantewada and Kanker.

An indication of the government's approach

The Home Minister's meeting with the victims is encouraging indeed when seen through the prism of successes of the security forces in counter-Maoist operations over the last six months or so. The initiative indicates the seriousness of the government to address the challenges in a manner that is beyond the realm of law and order. The government's declared approach to deal with left-wing extremism has been to address the challenge in a holistic manner, in the areas of security, development, ensuring the rights of local communities, and with improvements in governance and public perception management. However, the parameters of success and performance on the ground have continued to be contextualised by the security bias of the approach.

In the context of addressing the conditions of victims, it may be relevant to invoke recent public statements by the Deputy Chief Minister and Home Minister of Chhattisgarh, Vijay Sharma. In May



this year, Mr. Sharma had said that the State was making efforts to bring in new features and have better implementation in maintaining the victims' register for people victimised due to violence in Bastar. An alignment in the thought processes of policymakers at the Centre and in the State bodes well for the resolution of the left-wing extremism challenge in the long run, wherein we move beyond our delusory race to kill the last Maoist.

Categories of those affected

However one needs to tread ahead with the policies and their implementation, with a caveat that victim identity is not a monolith in conflict zones — and Bastar is no different. Two main categories of victims among several, are, first the ones who have suffered at the hands of Maoists (and presumably these were the people who met the Home Minister). The second category of victims who cannot be ignored comprise those who have suffered at the hands of the state to include security forces and the criminal justice system; intentionally or otherwise.

Another agency that victimised the tribal community was the vigilante army called the Salwa Judum during the middle years of the first decade of this century. In this period, in addition to people who fled their villages to live in Salwa Judum camps (where they continue to live even after two decades), about 55,000 tribals fled Chhattisgarh to take shelter in then unified Andhra Pradesh. These internally displaced conflict victims yearn to return to Chhattisgarh but are yet to get redress from the respective State governments. In addition, there are numerous victims of structural violence churned up by the conflict since the 1980s, when Maoist cadres entered the forests of Dandakaranya, seeking safe haven. Dandakaranya covers an area of about 92,000 square kilometres and includes parts of Chhattisgarh, Odisha, Telangana, Andhra Pradesh and Maharashtra.

In fact the victimisation as a result of structural violence vis-à-vis tribal communities has been an ongoing process since colonial times and through the post-independence era. The Maoists, after entering Dandakaranya, sought to champion the tribal cause that was a manifestation of centuries of victimisation. Absent governance resulting from the policy of exclusion of tribal belts, gave tremendous elbow room to the Maoists to fill in the gap left by the state.

Making it work

The initiative to identify victims and register the details in the victims' register — talked about by Mr. Sharma — has tremendous potential to alleviate the plight of tribal communities who find themselves sandwiched between the Maoists and the state. The victims' register, as an experiment, has been tried in more than a dozen countries as a conflict resolution or peacebuilding effort. Such an effort played a major role in resolving the deep-rooted left-wing extremism insurgency in Colombia.

However, the exercise of identifying victims shall have to be in the spirit of truth and reconciliation and agnostic to the nature of the perpetrators who carried out victimisation. If otherwise, such a well-intentioned exercise may end up creating divides in the society, as another version of the haves versus the have-nots conflict. As far as the rules of the victims' register experiment are concerned, victims and their families need to be given a benefit of doubt when they tell their stories, as many versions cannot be cross-checked in a tangible manner. The ground rules of the exercise shall have to be based on trust. The said measure shall be an impactful confidence-building measure and is bound to expand the support base of the state against the Maoists. The time is ripe to embark on a journey to address tribal aspirations. And pitfalls in the journey may well be afforded in times of the Maoists being at their lowest.

Shashank Ranjan is a retired infantry officer (colonel) with rich experience of serving in conflict zones. He teaches at the O.P. Jindal Global University, Sonapat, Haryana. Views are personal.



RUCHI GUPTA EXPLAINS WHY UNEMPLOYMENT IS A CRITICAL ECONOMIC AND POLITICAL CHALLENGE

The job crisis undermines state legitimacy

India is not producing enough good quality jobs for its people. A good quality job provides dignity, adequate compensation, an opportunity for learning, and advancement for those who strive. Instead, many jobs are unpaid, informal, and dead end. Worse, the seemingly low unemployment rate masks the fact that to count as employed, a person needs to have reported working for only one month in an entire year.

The dearth of quality employment, particularly among the youth, is a ticking time bomb that threatens not just our economy, but the very legitimacy of our state. If the government fails to create avenues for social and economic participation for young people, it will inevitably breed frustration.

The political problem is twofold: how do we give people a sense of dignity and purpose, and the means for financial support? Traditionally, people have derived dignity and purpose through a combination of community, work, and political engagement. However, the package deal of liberalism and capitalism have deprivatised traditional sources of community and increased the importance of work in conferring social standing and belonging. As a result, work has become the dominant entry point into a broader sense of community and political engagement.

While the elite find purpose and status through their control over societal discourse and decision-making, which also bring them substantial financial rewards, large sections of our population feel they lack both dignity and financial security. This disparity is likely to worsen as technological advancements and capital concentration potentially displace large



numbers of workers, perhaps permanently. In a large democracy such as India, such concentration of purpose and financial gain among the elites can erode faith in the system and lead to political instability.

This challenge — how we structure our society, what we value, and how we include everyone — is fundamentally political. Yet, the political response has been inadequate, oscillating between deferring to market forces and resorting to short-term partisanship. The market-oriented approach is reflected in the superficial mantra of 'creative destruction', suggesting that old jobs and industries will be seamlessly replaced by new and better ones. Meanwhile, some politicians and capitalists have mooted universal basic income (UBI) as a solution. UBI is a minimum "income" received by all citizens of a given population as financial transfers from the government without having to work.

Setting aside the question of UBI's financial feasibility, it is important to recognise

that inequality and an assault on human dignity are inherent in the very concept. UBI implies that a significant portion of the population is no longer needed in the economy, with a smaller subset "paying" for the rest. Its very premise concedes that technology and capital will create outsized winners while the majority will merely survive on their largesse. This approach fails to address people's need to feel relevant and capable, and ignores the loss of dignity that comes from not contributing meaningfully to society. It does not, thus, account for the possibility that UBI might encourage more anger and populism because people want to contribute and thrive, not just survive on the sidelines.

There is a risk to democracy as a whole as well. UBI would shift focus from structural reforms to mere economic transfers and thus entrench elite power by insulating them from pressures to address fundamental inequities in the economy and labour markets. It risks recasting the state as a mere distributor of funds rather than the architect and arbitrator of societal processes required to create a just and participatory social and economic system.

The partisan response has been to lob the issue between parties for short-term electoral gains instead of responding to the ongoing structural transformation of our society. Some political leaders are mindful of the long term, but institution-

ally, parties have become too narrow in their scope to address larger questions such as unemployment and have reduced their ambitions to winning elections alone. However, divesting societal issues to civil society or government in order to function solely as election-winning machines jeopardises their long-term legitimacy. This is because democracy is about more than elections — it is about creating a social contract that works for everyone.

In fact, the failure to anticipate and address long-term structural issues is a key reason why people feel neglected by the political class and view politics as a cynical game. When people believe the political system is incapable of addressing pressing challenges, they lose faith in democratic institutions. Thus parties and institutions must find ways to address structural issues, including unemployment, inequality, and dignity; else, people will seek alternatives, rendering political parties irrelevant. We are witnessing this globally through the rise of populism, authoritarianism, and civic disengagement.

Political parties must provide meaningful leadership by addressing structural issues head-on without resorting to deflection or partisanship. The future of Indian democracy — and the continued relevance of our political institutions — hinges on our ability to restore a broader sense of public purpose and economic participation to the centre of our national dialogue.

Ruchi Gupta, Executive Director of the Future of India Foundation, which anchors an initiative to harness the political process to create aspirational employment opportunities for youth at the district level. Views are personal.

BOOKS: REVIEW

Beyond the Bell: Resilience and future of female boxers

Rita Bullwinkel's debut novel, *Headshot*, long-listed for the 2024 Booker Prize, offers an insightful and poignant exploration of young women competing in the traditionally male-dominated world of boxing. Though boxing is often seen as a celebration of masculinity, as depicted in popular culture through figures like Muhammad Ali and movies such as *Raging Bull*, *Headshot* delves into the untold stories of female boxers who fight for more than just victory in the ring. Bullwinkel's narrative focuses on eight teenage girls, each a finalist at the 12th annual Women's 18 and Under Dufferins of America Cup, painting a vivid portrait of their struggles both in and outside the boxing ring.

Set in Reno, Nevada, the novel's core strength lies in its characters, who come from diverse social, economic, and cultural backgrounds, and carry their personal traumas into their fights. Each girl has her

reasons for stepping into the ring, and Bullwinkel skillfully weaves their motivations into the narrative, making their battles feel as much about overcoming life's challenges as they are about winning the tournament.

The standout characters include Artemis Victor, who hails from a family of boxers, and her first-round opponent, Andi Taylor, a lifeguard struggling to keep her head above water in more ways than one. Bullwinkel doesn't merely depict the sport; she uses boxing as a metaphor for life's battles, with each girl's fighting style reflecting her personal history. For instance, Rachel Doricko, who witnessed her home burn down as a child, channels her trauma into both running and boxing as coping mechanisms. Similarly, the cousins Izzy and Iggy Lang, from Michigan, each struggle with familial expectations and self-worth as they try to carve out identities separate from their roots.

One of the novel's most compel-

ling elements is how Bullwinkel connects the girls to their pasts through seemingly innocuous childhood memories, such as hand-clapping games. Rose Mueller and Tanya Maw, two competitors from different regions, unknowingly share these playful traditions, and their synchronized punches during a fight echo the rhythm of those long-ago games. This blend of past and present creates a lyrical depth to the fights, illustrating how the girls' identities are intertwined with their experiences growing up.

Though the novel centers around the boxing tournament, it also provides glimpses into the futures of these young women, a device that adds emotional weight to the narrative. Bullwinkel's portrayal of their lives post-boxing brings a sense of closure to their stories, but it also evokes a bittersweet nostalgia for their youth and the fleeting nature of athletic glory. Andi, who takes a beating from Artemis, will eventu-



Headshot
By Rita Bullwinkel;
Pan Macmillan;
232 pages; Rs 499.

ally become a pharmacist. Artemis herself will become a wine distributor, although injuries from her time in the ring will prevent her from even holding a cup of tea when she reaches 60. Another character, Kate Heffer, whose eye swells to the size of a tennis ball during her match, will go on to become a successful wedding planner.

What makes *Headshot* stand out is Bullwinkel's ability to humanize these girls beyond the boxing ring. By mapping their futures, she emphasizes that while their boxing days may be forgotten, their lives are still full of purpose and light. The juxtaposition between the violent, bruising world of boxing and the quiet, often unremarkable futures these women face is handled with grace and tenderness.

However, the novel's final chapter, titled "The Future," feels somewhat dissonant from the rest of the narrative. Bullwinkel ends with a hopeful message about the endless cycle of girls taking up sports, noting that "girls are infinite backwards and forwards." While this sentiment is optimistic, it contrasts with the reality that none of her protagonists continue with boxing after the tournament. This disconnect between the narrative arc and the final message leaves the reader wondering if the conclusion fully aligns with the novel's deeper themes of transience and impermanence.

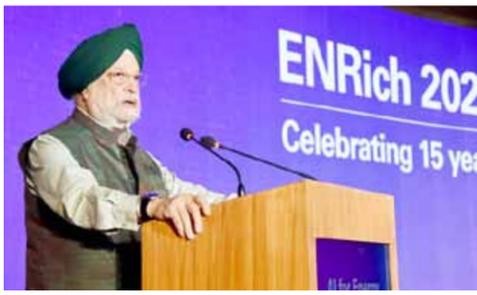
Despite this minor quibble, *Headshot* is a powerful and evocative novel that challenges conventional portrayals of both boxing and femininity. Bullwinkel shines a spotlight on the emotional and physical tolls of competition, while also celebrating the strength and resilience of her young protagonists. In *Headshot*, the ring is not just a place for punches—it's where these girls fight for their sense of self, their futures, and the recognition they deserve in a world that often overlooks them. Through her nuanced storytelling, Bullwinkel ensures that their voices are heard loud and clear.

Hardeep Puri advocates AI adoption as essential for India's Oil and Gas sector

NEW DELHI: In a significant address during the 15th edition of the Global Energy Conclave-ENRich 2024, Union Petroleum and Natural Gas Minister Hardeep Puri emphasised the critical role of artificial intelligence (AI) in optimizing operations within India's oil and gas sector.

As India navigates the complexities of global energy markets, the minister underscored that embracing AI is no longer a choice but a necessity for Indian public sector units (PSUs) in the industry. Minister Puri noted that Indian PSUs are increasingly leveraging AI and machine learning technologies to enhance various aspects of their operations.

«These technologies are pivotal in increasing security, operational efficiency, and demand forecasting,» he stated. By employing advanced AI-driven mechanisms, Indian oil and gas companies are not only improving operational effectiveness but also enriching the customer experience through custom pricing analytics.



One of the promising applications of AI in the upstream sector, according to Puri, involves the use of deep learning to analyze complex seismic data. This innovative approach allows companies to identify potential carbon reservoirs and detect patterns that traditional methods might overlook. «AI-enabled mechanisms are transforming how we explore and manage our natural resources,» he explained.

The minister also highlighted the government's commitment to modernising the National Data Repository for upstream oil and gas exploration.

This upgrade to an AI-based platform aims to provide instant access to seismic data, significantly enhancing the efficiency of exploration activities. Supporting this initiative, the government has earmarked an investment of approximately Rs 7,500 crore. On a broader economic scale, Minister Puri asserted that generative AI has the potential to elevate global GDP by \$7 to \$10 trillion within

the next three years. «AI could usher in a major productivity boom, further enhancing India's economic growth,» he noted. The minister also pointed to India's robust digital landscape, fueled by initiatives like Digital India, which have substantially improved internet access across the nation.

Citing remarkable growth in internet subscriptions—from 10.59 million to 954.20 million—Puri stated, «This connectivity is vital for driving innovation and supporting a vibrant startup ecosystem.»

He further mentioned that India ranks as the third-largest unicorn hub globally, following the United States and China, attributing this success to the country's entrepreneurial spirit. In conclusion, Puri called for continued collaboration towards a brighter and more sustainable energy future for India and the world, encapsulating the sentiment that AI is not just a technological advancement but a cornerstone for the country's energy strategy moving forward.

the next three years. «AI could usher in a major productivity boom, further enhancing India's economic growth,» he noted. The minister also pointed to India's robust digital landscape, fueled by initiatives like Digital India, which have substantially improved internet access across the nation.

SEBI to Release Discussion Paper on SME IPO Concerns Amid Unusual Market Activity



NEW DELHI: India's market regulator is preparing to release a discussion paper addressing mounting concerns over Small and Medium Enterprise (SME) Initial Public Offerings, following unusual patterns in subscription rates and listing gains.

The Securities and Exchange Board of India (SEBI) has expressed discomfort over current market practices and disclosure standards in the SME segment.

SEBI Wholtime Member Ashwani Bhatia, speaking at the Morningstar Investment

Conference, characterised recent developments in the SME IPO space as 'disturbing.'

The regulatory body has noted particular concerns regarding investor participation patterns, market-making mechanisms, and underwriting practices in these offerings.

The move comes amid unprecedented activity in the SME IPO market, with several issues in the current year witnessing subscription rates exceeding hundreds of times their original size, and some surpassing 1,000

times oversubscription.

This surge in interest has drawn significant retail investor participation, despite the segment's minimum trading lot size being set at Rs 1 lakh.

The SME IPO market has already achieved record-breaking fundraising figures in 2024. According to Prime Database, approximately 205 SME IPOs have been launched through September, raising Rs 7,016 crore, substantially surpassing the previous year's total of Rs 4,687 crore. While acknowledging the vital role of SMEs in the economy, Bhatia urged retail investors to exercise extreme caution when investing in this segment. The forthcoming regulatory framework aims to enhance transparency and standardise disclosure requirements.

Both stock exchanges and SEBI are maintaining close surveillance to prevent price manipulation and fraudulent trading practices in SME listings.

GoDaddy Eyes India as Key Growth Market with AI-Driven Solutions for Small Businesses



NEW DELHI: India has emerged as the largest market for GoDaddy International within its expanding global footprint, according to Laura Messerschmitt, President of GoDaddy International Independent.

The tech giant, known for its domain registration and web hosting services, reports that a significant 50 per cent of its new international customers, contributing to USD 400 million in revenue, hail from emerging markets.

Globally, GoDaddy boasts around 21 million customers and manages an impressive 82 million domains. In regions beyond the U.S., the company has successfully attracted 10 million customers, with India being a particularly crucial market.

Recently, GoDaddy launched Airo, an AI-powered tool designed to assist small business owners in establishing and enhancing their online presence.

«When we launched internationally in 2012, India was our first international market, where we also opened our first overseas office,» Messerschmitt said. «The Indian market is vital for us, both in terms of customer base and employee talent.»

Our AI solution was specifically tailored for India's landscape, which features approximately 48 million small businesses eager to go online.»

GoDaddy's research indicates that 94 per cent of Indian small business owners believe that integrating AI into their operations would positively impact their profitability.

However, obstacles remain, as many entrepreneurs cite a lack of awareness about available AI solutions, uncertainty about their benefits, and concerns over implementation costs and time.

Selina Bieber, VP of International Markets at GoDaddy, remarked, «We see immense opportunities for small businesses and entrepreneurs in India looking to harness digital platforms. The potential in emerging markets is vast, particularly as much of the population is yet to come online.»

The company is actively working to lower entry barriers for customers who may lack technical expertise and seek affordable solutions. «Making opportunities accessible to everyone is the core value proposition of our product,» Bieber added.

Adani Group's Ambuja Cements acquires 47 pc stake in Orient Cement for Rs 8,100 crore



NEW DELHI: Ambuja Cements, the cement and building material company of the diversified Adani Group, on Tuesday announced to acquire Orient Cement Ltd (OCL) at an equity value of Rs 8,100 crore.

Ambuja will acquire 46.8 per cent shares of OCL from its current promoters and certain public shareholders and the acquisition will be fully funded through internal accruals, the company said in a statement.

The acquisition of OCL complements Ambuja's existing cement footprint, reducing overall lead distances and logistics costs for the cement business and improving market share in our core markets, it said.

«This timed acquisition marks another significant step forward in Ambuja Cements' accelerated growth journey, increasing cement capacity by 30 million tonnes per annum (MTPA) within two years of Ambuja's acquisition,» said Karan Adani, Director of Ambuja Cements.

Adani Group's ACC Ltd clocks highest quarterly revenue at Rs 4,614 crore in Q2

AHMEDABAD: Cement and building materials leader ACC Ltd, part of the diversified Adani Group, on Thursday reported the highest quarterly revenue at Rs 4,614 crore, up 4 per cent (year-on-year).

The company clocked volume growth of 15 per cent (year-on-year), at 9.3 million tonnes – the highest volume in Q2 series in the last 5 years.

Operating EBITDA was at Rs 436 crore while net worth increased to Rs 16,725 crore, according to ACC Ltd, a subsidiary of Ambuja Cements.

«Our performance in Q2 re-



inforces our standing as a front-runner in the cement industry. Our financial results this quarter – fuelled by higher volumes, cost optimisation, increasing efficiencies, and agility – build the momentum for our growth

strategy for FY25 and beyond,» ACC Ltd Whole Time Director and CEO Ajay Kapur said.

«Our growth is being driven by robust demand for high-quality cement products across all markets, as well as our con-

tinuous efforts to optimise operations and lead on all ESG parameters,» he added.

Overall, the cement industry expects an improvement in demand in H2 FY25, which is likely to be driven by the post-monsoon pickup in construction and housing activity. The government's continued focus on infrastructure development – roads, highways, railways, and metros – will continue to remain the key demand driver.

«We expect cement demand to register growth of 4-5 per cent during FY 25,» said the company.

BSNL announces seven new initiatives to transform how India communicates

NEW DELHI: Bharat Sanchar Nigam Limited (BSNL) on Tuesday announced seven new initiatives aimed at revolutionising how India connects, communicates, and enhances its digital security.

The new initiatives are built on three key pillars: security, affordability and reliability.

BSNL also unveiled its new logo, which represents its renewed focus on delivering secure, affordable, and reliable connectivity to every corner of Bharat. The logo was launched by Union Minister of Communications Jyotiraditya M Scindia in the presence of Minister of State for Communications Dr Pemmasani Chandra Sekhar.



The bold tagline 'Connecting Bharat' highlights BSNL's unwavering mission to bridge the digital divide by offering a modern, reliable telecom network that connects both urban and rural India.

BSNL said its spam-blocking solution automatically

filter out phishing attempts and malicious SMS and creates a safer communication environment for users without the need to issue alerts to customers, ensuring seamless and secure communication for all users. «BSNL is launching a first-of-its-kind seamless

Wi-Fi roaming service for its FTTH customers, enabling high-speed internet access at BSNL hotspots at no extra charge, thus minimising data costs for users,» it added. BSNL's fibre-based intranet TV service offers more than 500 live channels and Pay TV through its FTTH network.

This service will be accessible for all BSNL FTTH subscribers without additional charges. The data used for the TV viewing will not be consuming the FTTH data pack, according to BSNL. BSNL has introduced reliable, low-latency, 5G connectivity for mining operations in partnership with C-DAC, leveraging made-in-India equipment and BSNL's technological expertise.

PAY GAP IN INDIAN PHARMACEUTICAL INDUSTRY

Remuneration of Managerial Personnel vis-à-vis Employees



DR. ANIL KUMAR ANGRISH
It is generally said that profits drive business, and remuneration & incentives drive the managers of business. The Nomination and Remuneration Committee (NRC) in any a listed company formulates the criteria relating to the remuneration for the directors, Key Managerial Personnel (KMP), and other employees.

Particulars of remuneration as per Section 197 (12) of the Companies Act, 2013 read with rule 5 (1) of the Companies (Appointment and Remuneration of Managerial Personnel) Rules, 2014 are given in the Annual Report of the company. These particulars include (a) the ratio of remuneration of each director to the median remuneration of the employees, (b) Percentage increase in remuneration of each director, Chief Financial Officer, Chief Executive Officer, and Company Secretary, (c) Percentage increase in the median remuneration of employees, etc. Details of remuneration/salary/wages are also provided in the specified format that has data regarding number of Board of Directors (BoD), Key Managerial Personnel (KMP), Employees



other than BoD and KMP and Workers along with Median remuneration/salary/wages of respective category, and bifurcation is given for male and female in each category.

Gender pay gap is found in developed as well as developing economies. For example, a Pew Research Center analysis of median hourly earnings of both full- and part-time workers found that in 2022, women earned an average of 82 per cent of what men earned which was 80 per cent in 2002. In UK, the Gender Pay Gap Service website was started for the companies to publish figures on the median pay gap. This showed a wage difference of 9.4 per cent in 2023, the same level in 2017/18. In this background, it becomes interesting to see this gap in Indian context for pharmaceutical sector.

Wide variation is found in the remuneration given to executive directors, e.g., in Divi's Labs, the highest remuneration given to one executive (Dr. Murali K. Divi, Managing Director) was

1,174 times of median remuneration given to permanent employees in that company. In the same company, a key managerial personnel got about 9 times of median remuneration to permanent employees. This variation was not huge in case of remuneration offered to Independent Directors. Wherever difference was there, it was attributable to different reasons. Huge difference was visible in case of Mankind Pharma for which the highest remuneration given to an executive was 634.89 times of median remuneration given to permanent employees whereas a KMP got about 20.51 times of median remuneration give to permanent employees. Executive role entails wider responsibilities.

There are many situations when the ratio of the remuneration of Directors (executive as well as Independent) to the median remuneration of the employees is not comparable, e.g., an executive director steps down from his/her position. For example, Ms. Samina Hamied

Table 1: Ratio of the remuneration of Directors to the Median Remuneration of the Employees in Top Listed Pharma Companies

Name of the Company	Ratio to median remuneration (Range)	
	Executive Directors	Independent Directors
Sun Pharma	30.37 – 101.5	4.72 – 12.55
Divi's Labs	9 – 1,174	5 – 6
Cipla	199 – 317	20 – 22
Torrent Pharma	79.65 – 381.13	3.81 – 9.82
Zydus Lifesciences	243.48 – 521.74	5.22
Dr. Reddy's Labs	190 – 304	5 – 31
Lupin	153 – 441	29.0
Mankind Pharma	20.51 – 634.89	5.01 – 8.35
Aurobindo Pharma	18 – 93	Not Available
Alkem Labs	4.2 – 69	6 – 72

Source: Compiled from Annual Reports of respective Companies (2023-24)

stepped down from the position of Executive Vice Chairman in Cipla and continued as a non-executive director later. Similarly, Dr. Peter Mugenyi resigned as an Independent Director in Cipla in May 2023. Further, the variation (percentage increase in remuneration) for the Non-Executive Directors and Independent Directors can also arise due to payment of sitting fees on account of higher number of meetings held/attended during the year as compared to last year.

Independent Directors may comprise those directors who are residing outside India and are entitled to get overseas travel compensation for travelling for Board Meetings within the overall commission approved by the shareholders so that results into variation, e.g., there were six Independent Di-

Table 2: Number of Permanent Employees and their Median Remuneration in Top Ten Listed Indian Pharmaceutical Companies

Name of the Company	Male		Female	
	Number	Median Remuneration	Number	Median Remuneration
Sun Pharma	13,325	Rs. 8,58,744	1,433	Rs. 6,91,576
Divi's Labs	8,239	Rs. 4,97,000	1,444	Rs. 3,89,000
Cipla	23,220	Rs. 6,38,191	4,111	Rs. 6,68,686
Torrent Pharma	13,163	Rs. 5,36,628	1,183	Rs. 3,97,704
Zydus Lifesciences	19,840	Rs. 6,51,972	1,809	Rs. 6,26,396
Dr. Reddy's Labs	21,114	Rs. 6,00,000	5,219	Rs. 9,00,000
Lupin	17,266	Rs. 5,78,174	987	Rs. 6,28,638
Mankind Pharma	17,997	Rs. 4,55,268	431	Rs. 6,50,004
Aurobindo Pharma	23,401	Rs. 10,60,000	2,614	Rs. 22,80,000
Alkem Labs	15,180	Rs. 2,58,018	420	Rs. 3,96,348

Source: Compiled from Annual Reports of respective Companies (2023-24)

rectors resident outside India in case of Dr. Reddy's Laboratories (DRL) in FY2024. Further, in DRL, at least four independent directors were paid for the part of the year as they joined during the year. Due to resignation of a director during the year, there will be payment for the part of the year only, e.g., Dr. Sivakumaran resigned in Aurobindo Pharma in August 2023. In absence of figures of Aurobindo Pharma, calculation has been worked out for sitting fees paid to Independent Directors and median salary given to male & female employees. It worked out to be in the range of 0.26x to 2.36x.

Difference is also found in median remuneration of male and female employees of pharmaceutical companies. Median remuneration of female employees is higher than

male employees in six out of top 10 pharmaceutical companies. Overall, in top ten pharmaceutical companies based on market capitalization, the number of female employees is very less as compared to their male counterparts.

In Sun Pharma, strength of permanent female employees is about 9.71 per cent of total permanent employees in the company. This percentage is higher for Divi's Labs in which strength of female employees is about 14.91 per cent of total permanent employees in that company. This percentage is 15.04 per cent for Cipla, 8.24 per cent for Torrent Pharma, 8.36 per cent for Zydus Lifesciences, 19.82 per cent for Dr. Reddy's Labs, 5.41 per cent for Lupin, 2.34 per cent for Mankind Pharma, 10.45 per

cent for Aurobindo Pharma, and 2.69 per cent for Alkem Labs.

Underlying reasons behind difference in the median pay of female employees and male employees vary. In Aurobindo Pharma, female employees' median salary is higher due to the female employee headcount and remuneration in international subsidiaries. Alkem Labs reported that the company is focusing on hiring more female candidates, specifically in Sales Team, and provide equal opportunity in various roles. Alkem Labs also launched SHINE – Women Excellence Program to groom its female employees from junior to mid-level to prepare them for future roles. Representation of female employees in different levels of

management relative to male employees in different geographies also influences the median values, e.g., Among New Hires in Lupin Limited for India, composition formed 5 female employees and 19 male employees in Senior Management, 66 female employees and 434 male employees in Middle Management, and 288 female employees and 4,041 male employees during 2023-24. In Rest of the World (ROW), new hires included 101 male employees and 124 female employees. Lupin's new hires in FY24 had 64 male employees and 50 female employees.

Pay Gap in the remuneration of executives vis-à-vis permanent employees in top ten pharmaceutical companies is higher. Difference in the median pay of female employees and male employees exist in top ten pharmaceutical companies but due to inclusivity initiatives, and job roles, females have higher median pay as compared to their counterparts in 6 out of top 10 Indian pharmaceutical companies.

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.

RBI Deputy Governor Projects India's Return to 8% Growth Path by 2026

NEW DELHI: Reserve Bank of India Deputy Governor Michael Debabrata Patra has projected India's return to its long-term growth trajectory of 8 percent, following anticipated growth rates of 7.2 percent in FY25 and 7 percent in FY26.

Speaking at the Federal Reserve Bank's New York Fed Central Banking Seminar on Monday, Patra described these intermediate figures as part of a cyclical correction following the pandemic rebound.

The deputy governor emphasised the critical importance of robust macroeconomic fundamentals and substantial financial buffers in safeguarding against global economic risks.

This strategy appears to be yielding results, as evidenced by India's foreign exchange reserves reaching a historic peak of USD 704.9 billion on September 27, before moderating to USD 690.4 billion by October 11.

These reserves now provide



coverage for 11.8 months of imports and exceed 101 percent of the nation's external debt as of June 2024. India's performance in building its foreign reserves has been particularly noteworthy in 2024, with a net increase of USD 68 billion through October 11, positioning the country as the second-largest accumulator of foreign reserves among major economies, surpassed only by China. Addressing inflation concerns, Patra acknowledged that price pressures are expected

to continue through October and November.

However, he anticipated that the headline inflation rate would align with the RBI's target by December and maintain stability throughout FY26.

While the RBI had initially projected inflation at 4.5 percent for FY25, recent data shows retail inflation reached a nine-month high of 5.49 percent in September, primarily due to escalating food prices and base effect factors.

Gold drops Rs 1,150 to Rs 80,050 per 10 grams; silver declines Rs 2,000

NEW DELHI: Gold price dropped Rs 1,150 to Rs 80,050 per 10 grams in the national capital on Friday on slackened demand from jewellers and retailers, according to All India Sarafa Association.

Silver also remained under selling pressure and slipped below the Rs 1 lakh mark by declining Rs 2,000 to Rs 99,000 per kg. The metal had closed at Rs 1.01 lakh per kg in the previous close on Thursday.

Additionally, gold of 99.5 per cent purity fell Rs 350 to Rs 80,450 per 10 grams against the previous close of Rs 80,800, while the precious metal of 99.9 per cent purity declined Rs 1,150 to Rs 80,050 per 10 grams against Rs 81,200 on Thursday.

Traders said tepid demand from jewellers and retailers in the local markets and a weak trend in the overseas markets weighed on gold prices.

In futures trade on the Multi Commodity Exchange (MCX), gold contracts for December



delivery declined Rs 406 or 0.52 per cent to trade at Rs 77,921 per 10 grams.

Silver contracts for December delivery plummeted Rs 1,134 or 1.17 per cent to Rs 95,898 per kg on the bourse.

In the global markets, Comex gold futures fell by USD 15.90 per ounce or 0.58 per cent to USD 2,733 per ounce.

"Gold declined on Friday as US macro data fuelled growing bets that the US Federal Reserve's rate-cutting cycle will be less aggressive than expected," Saumil Gandhi, Senior Analyst of Commodities at HDFC Securities, said. US unemployment claims declined for a second week, highlighting a resilient labour market, while a rise in the S&P PMI reinforced strong private sector momentum impacted gold prices, Gandhi added. However, the demand for a safe haven and the expectation of improving India's retail demand for upcoming festivities capped the heavy losses, he noted.

According to Praveen Singh - Associate VP, Fundamental Currencies and Commodities at Sharekhan by BNP Paribas, gold traded lower in delayed response to Thursday's US data. Further, the lack of specific details of alternate payment systems at the BRICS summit is also pressuring the metal.

GoM proposes GST rate changes on Cycles & 20-Litre bottles to be brought down

NEW DELHI: The Group of Ministers (GoM) has proposed a series of Goods and Services Tax (GST) rate adjustments expected to generate an additional Rs 22,000 crore in revenue.

The proposals, formulated during a meeting on Saturday, include both increases and reductions in tax rates across various product categories.

Led by Bihar Deputy Chief Minister Samrat Chaudhary, the GoM has recommended elevating the GST rate on luxury items. Notably, high-end wristwatches priced above Rs 25,000 and premium footwear exceeding Rs 15,000 may see their tax rates increase from 18 percent to 28 percent.

Conversely, the panel has suggested tax reductions on several everyday items. The GoM proposes lowering the GST rate on 20-litre packaged drinking water bottles and bicycles priced below Rs 10,000 from 18 percent and 12 percent, respectively, to 5 percent.

Exercise notebooks also may benefit from a tax reduction, with a proposed decrease from



12 percent to 5 percent.

The recommendations also include potential tax exemptions for term life insurance premiums and health insurance premiums paid by senior citizens, a move aimed at easing the financial burden on both insurers and policyholders.

These proposals follow recent GST Council decisions, headed by Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman, which saw rate reductions on cancer drugs and selected snack items in September.

The ministerial panel is expected to submit its comprehensive recommendations to the GST Council by October 31.

The final decisions on these proposed rate adjustments will be made during the next GST Council meeting, where the suggestions will be reviewed and potentially ratified.

Indian entertainment industry lost Rs 22,400 crore to piracy in 2023: A Report



NEW DELHI: The Indian entertainment industry suffered a staggering loss of Rs 22,400 crore in 2023 due to piracy, according to a report released on Wednesday.

According to "The Rob Report" by EY and the Internet and Mobile Association of India (IAMAI), 51 per cent of media consumers in India access content from pirated sources, with streaming services being the most significant contributor at 63 per cent. "The size of India's piracy economy was Rs 22,400 crore in 2023, ranking fourth against the segment-wise revenue generated by India's Media and Entertainment industry. Of this, Rs 13,700 crore was generated from movie theatres, while Rs 8,700 crore was generated from OTT platforms' content. It is estimated that this also led to potential GST losses of up to Rs 4,300 crore," it said.

The report also advocated for stronger regulations and collaborative efforts to effectively mitigate piracy risks.

EIB Global provides €300 million loan for Bengaluru suburban railway



BENGALURU: At a meeting in Gandhinagar, European Investment Bank (EIB) Vice-President Nicola Beer and Director of Finance of Karnataka Rail Infrastructure Development Company Ltd (KRIDE) Awadhesh Mehta formally announced a €300 million loan to build a new suburban railway network covering four dedicated rail corridors in Bengaluru. The network will stretch over a total of 149 km and include 58 stations and two depots.

Home to around 14 million people (expected to reach 20 million by 2030), Bengaluru is India's third most populous city. The EIB has already supported the city's transportation sector with a €500 million loan to build the 23 km Bengaluru Metro R6 line and purchase a fleet of about 96 metro cars.

The EIB's support for transport in India includes the fi-

ancing of metro investment in Agra, Bengaluru, Bhopal, Kanpur, Lucknow and Pune, with a total of €3.25 billion committed since 2016. This makes India the largest beneficiary of EIB transport financing outside Europe.

The Bengaluru suburban railway is expected to unlock significant synergy effects with the existing rail operation, as well as with the metro system, by creating multimodal transport hubs with several interconnecting stations to facilitate a seamless transfer between different public transport modes. The project promotes a modal shift from road to rail and addresses congestion, air and noise pollution, road safety and greenhouse gas emissions, while providing an affordable mobility solution to improve access to jobs and study opportunities.

Once the project is fully oper-

ational, the Bengaluru transport system will see a 43% drop in CO₂ emissions. Estimated daily ridership will be approximately 400,000 trips per day in 2029, the first year of full operation, and is expected to increase to about 1.4 million trips per day in 2040, largely aligned with the projected population growth.

EIB Vice-President Nicola Beer said: "The European Investment Bank is honoured to finance the Bengaluru suburban railway network with a €300 million loan. This funding complements the €500 million we allocated for the construction of the Bengaluru Metro R6 line, addressing Bengaluru's mobility challenges by developing a clean, modern and efficient public transport system. The two projects we are financing in Bengaluru aim to create India's most integrated rail network, providing seamless connectivity with all other modes of public transport in the city. The Bengaluru suburban railway network includes design features to enhance access, safety and security for women, and supports women's participation in construction works. The project is therefore expected to have a significant positive impact for women in Bengaluru, especially in terms of affordable, safe and secure access to economic and social functions."

India's GDP to grow at 7% in current fiscal, 6.5% in FY26 : IMF



NEW DELHI: India's GDP growth is likely to moderate from 8.2 per cent in FY24 to 7 per cent in FY25 and 6.5 per cent in FY26 because the pent-up demand accumulated during Covid has exhausted, as the economy reconnects with its potential, the International Monetary Fund (IMF) said on Tuesday.

About the global economy, the IMF said the battle against inflation has largely been won, even though price pressures persist in some countries.

After peaking at 9.4 per cent year over year in the third quarter of 2022, headline inflation rates are now projected to reach 3.5 per cent by the end of 2025, below the average level of 3.6 per cent between 2000 and 2019, it said.

The annual World Economic Outlook released here projected global economic growth to stay steady at 3.2 per cent in 2024 and 2025, even though a few countries, especially low-income developing countries, have seen sizable downside growth revisions.

Stock Markets decline after initial rally amid sharp fall in IndusInd Bank, unabated foreign fund outflow

MUMBAI: Stock markets gave up early gains and were trading lower on Friday amid sharp fall in IndusInd Bank shares and relentless foreign fund outflows.

The BSE Sensex climbed 130.56 points to 80,195.72 in early trade. The NSE Nifty went up by 36.9 points to 24,436.30.

However, the selling pressure soon dragged both the indices down. The BSE benchmark traded 197.47 points lower at 79,875.03 and the Nifty quoted with a cut of 89.20 points at 24,310.20.

From the 30 Sensex pack, IndusInd Bank plunged 15 per cent after the firm reported a 40 per cent decline in September quarter net profit at Rs 1,331 crore, pulled down majorly by concerns on asset quality.

NTPC, Mahindra & Mahindra, Larsen & Toubro, Tata Steel, and JSW Steel were also among the laggards.

From the blue-chip pack, ITC jumped over 3 per cent after the diversified entity reported a 1.8 per cent increase in its



consolidated net profit to Rs 5,054.43 crore in the second quarter ended September 2024. ITC's revenue from operations jumped 15.62 per cent to Rs 22,281.89 crore during the July-September period.

Axis Bank, Asian Paints, HCL Technologies, ICICI Bank and Kotak Mahindra Bank were the other big gainers.

In Asian markets, Seoul, Shanghai and Hong Kong traded higher while Tokyo quoted lower.

The US markets ended mostly higher on Thursday.

Foreign Institutional Investors offloaded equities worth Rs 5,062.45 crore on Thursday, according to exchange data, while Domestic Institutional Investors (DIIs) bought Rs 3,620.47 crore shares.

Global oil benchmark Brent crude climbed 0.24 per cent to USD 74.56 a barrel.

In an uninspiring trade, the BSE benchmark dipped 16.82 points or 0.02 per cent to settle at 80,065.16 on Thursday. The Nifty skidded 36.10 points or 0.15 per cent to 24,399.40 in a volatile trade.

The Glittering Gold in India



SATISH SINGH
The price of gold has increased by about 70 percent during March 2019 to March 2024. The price of gold has been continuously touching new heights for the last few years and its price is expected to increase further during the festive and wedding season. In the current scenario, it can cross the level of Rs.80,000 per 10 grams by December.



There has been no change in policy rates in India for a long time, due to which the interest rate on deposits in banks and other financial institutions is low, due to which investors are investing in gold for higher returns. The increase in the price of gold has also increased its returns. Those who invest in gold have got a return of 0.2 percent in a week, 0.4 percent in a month, 21 percent in 2024, 30 percent in a year and 62 percent in 3 years.

The Bureau of Indian Standards has been hallmarking jewellery made of 14 carats, 18 carats, 22 carats, 23 carats and 24 carats since 2022. Now from January 1, 2025, the Central Government is going to make hallmarking mandatory for gold bullion used in jewellery manufacturing, which is planned to be materialized across the country in a phased manner. The committee formed on hallmarking on gold bullion has submitted its report to the government in the matter. After hallmarking is made

mandatory for gold bullion, it will be possible to ensure the purity of the jewellery. This will also reveal how much the quality of gold has been affected before and after the making of jewellery, which will help investors get better returns on their investment. According to the World Gold Council, Switzerland bought the most gold worth Rs 2461 crore in the world in May 2024, while China bought gold worth Rs 2,109 crore. India stood third by buying gold worth Rs 722 crore. At the same time, Germany bought gold worth Rs 556 crore, South Africa bought gold worth Rs 459 crore, Ireland bought gold worth Rs 459 crore, Japan bought gold worth Rs 376 crore, France bought gold worth Rs 247 crore and Turkey bought gold worth Rs 107 crore.

In the last 5 financial years, India has increased its gold deposits by about 204 tonnes. In March 2019, 618.2 tonnes of gold were deposited in the Reserve Bank of India, which increased by 33 percent to

822.1 tonnes on March 31, 2024, out of which 408.3 tonnes were deposited in the country and 413.8 tonnes abroad. In March 2020, 661.4 tonnes of gold were deposited in the central bank, while in March 2021 it was 695.3 tonnes. At the same time, it was 760.3 tonnes in March 2022 and 794.6 tonnes in March 2023.

In terms of gold reserves, USA ranks first in the world with 8,133.46 tonnes of gold, while Germany ranks second with 3,352.65 tonnes of gold. At the same time, Italy is in third place with 2451.84 tonnes of gold. The Central Bank of France has 2436.88 tonnes of gold deposits and is ranked fourth. Russia has 2332.74 tonnes, China has 2262.45 tonnes, Switzerland has 1040.00 tonnes, Japan has 845.97 tonnes, India has 822.09 tonnes and Netherlands has 612.45 tonnes of gold deposits and are ranked fifth, sixth, seventh, eighth, ninth and tenth respectively globally.

The importance of gold is incomparable. If the currency of a country weakens internationally, the gold reserves help in maintaining the purchasing power of that country and its economic stability. In 1991, when the Indian economy was in crisis and it did not have enough dollar reserves to import, it raised money by pledging gold and was successful in coming out of a serious economic crisis.

If a country has adequate

gold reserves, then the economy of that country is considered strong. This also shows that the country is managing its economy well. Other countries and global financial institutions also trust such a country more. In this way, gold reserves provide a strong basis to support the price of the currency of any country.

The importance of gold in India has remained since time immemorial and in the current perspective and in the coming days, there is no possibility of its demand decreasing. The price of gold has also increased due to more purchase of gold by the Reserve Bank of India and the central banks of other countries. Due to the buying and selling of gold in the country and hallmarking of gold, the confidence of investors in investing in gold is increasing, which is also causing an increase in the price of gold.

In short, it can be said that in the current economic scenario of the country, gold is giving attractive returns to the investors and due to the slowdown in the economy of major countries at the global level, weakening of the dollar, persistence of geo-political crisis at the global level, no complete relief from inflation, continuous increase in the demand for gold, etc., the price of gold is not going to decrease in the near future.

Satish Singh, Ahmedabad Based Senior Columnist, views are personal

India's Overseas Direct Investments Surge 58% in First Half of FY 2024

NEW DELHI: Overseas investments from India demonstrated robust growth in the first half of fiscal year 2024, recording a significant increase of 58 percent, according to recent data released by the Finance Ministry.

The Overseas Direct Investment (ODI) reached USD 8.9 billion during April-September 2024, compared to USD 5.6 billion in the corresponding period of the previous fiscal year. September witnessed a moderation in investment flows, with outbound investments declining to USD 1.45 billion, marking a three-month low.

This figure represents a decrease from August's USD 1.79 billion and July's USD 2.47 billion. Market analysts, however, maintain that the underlying investment momentum remains strong de-



spite the monthly fluctuation.

Singapore emerged as the preferred destination for Indian investments, attracting approximately 25 percent of the total outflows. Together with the United States, United Kingdom, Netherlands, and Mauritius, these five nations accounted for more than two-thirds of India's overseas investments.

The financial, insurance,

and business services sector dominated the investment landscape, comprising 41 percent of the total overseas direct investment during this period. The geographical distribution of Indian investments spans 155 countries, reflecting the expanding global footprint of Indian enterprises in diverse markets.

This substantial increase in overseas investments indicates growing confidence among Indian businesses in international expansion, despite periodic variations in monthly flows.

Economists hail India's robust GDP growth projections by global financial institutions

NEW DELHI: Top economists on Wednesday hailed India's GDP projections from global financial institutions like the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and Deloitte, saying the surge in rural consumption was primarily driving the country's GDP growth story.

The International Monetary Fund (IMF) maintained its India growth rate projection at 7 per cent in the current fiscal year. According to Deloitte, India's annual GDP growth was projected to be between 7 and 7.2 per cent in FY 2024-2025, which was in line with the Reserve Bank of India's (RBI) prediction of the country witnessing real GDP growth at 7.2 per cent for FY25. Sanju Verma, an economist and national spokesperson of the BJP, told



were being driven by rural and semi-urban India, once again endorsing the fact that the rural growth story in India was firing on all cylinders. "she emphasised. It was not just the GDP growth trajectory, which under the leadership of Prime Minister Narendra Modi, was slated to be intact but the moot point here was that while GDP growth was moving upwards, inflation was slated to move southwards.

India-Russia ties so strong that PM Modi would understand me without translation says Putin

KAZAN: Highlighting the time-tested India-Russia partnership and his friendship with Prime Minister Narendra Modi, Russian President Vladimir Putin on Tuesday emphasised that the bond between the two countries is so strong that PM Modi would understand him without needing the help of any translator.

Putin made the remark as both leaders sat down for bilateral discussions in Kazan on the sidelines of the 16th BRICS Summit.

"Our relationship is so tight that you will understand me without any translation," said the Russian President, sparking laughter in the room at the Governor's Palace.

The Russian President recalled PM Modi's visit to Moscow in July, the "fruitful negotiations" that were held and thanked the Indian Prime Minister for accepting his invite and coming to Kazan for the BRICS summit.

"In Kazan we must make a



number of important decisions aimed at further improving the activities of the association and strengthening multifaceted cooperation within its framework. And we greatly value our cooperation in this area, I mean that our states stood at the origins of the association's creation," he highlighted.

Putin stated that Russian-Indian relations are characterised by a 'Special Privileged Strategic Partnership' and continue to develop actively. "Interaction between legis-

lative bodies is strengthening. Our foreign ministers are in constant contact. Trade turnover is in good condition. And the next meeting of the inter-governmental commission is scheduled for November 12 in New Delhi," he added.

India has maintained a steady relationship with Russia even during the current geopolitical crisis amid the ongoing conflict in the region - a fact that Putin acknowledged once again during his meeting with PM Modi on Tuesday.

"Major projects are being developed consistently, and we welcome your decision to open the Consulate General of India in Kazan. Expanding India's diplomatic presence in Russia will contribute to the further development of bilateral relations," said the Russian President.

In July, during PM Modi's visit to Russia - his first to the country since 2019 and first to Moscow after 2015 - Putin conferred the Indian PM with the Order of St. Andrew the Apostle the First-Called, Russia's highest civilian award.

On Monday, External Affairs Minister (EAM) S. Jaishankar had hailed the growing ties between the two countries.

"If you look at our history with Russia after Independence, Russia has never done anything to impact our interests negatively. Among the major countries, there are not many about whom you can say this," Jaishankar said at the NDTV World Summit.

Jobs are most pressing global issue: FM Sitharaman in United States



WASHINGTON: Jobs are the most pressing global issue, given the continued economic headwinds and rapid technological changes that are redefining the skills required for youth to enter the job market, Union Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman has stressed.

Speaking at the plenary lunch during the annual meetings of the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank in Washington, DC, she said the World Bank has previously conducted several studies on sectoral trends and their potential impact on employment,

covering areas like 'green jobs,' employment after AI, and shifts due to changing demographics.

However, FM Sitharaman stressed that the need of the hour is a more comprehensive, multi-sectoral analysis — one that examines how emerging trends interact and influence both job loss and job creation.

"This analysis should also consider factors like geopolitical fragmentation and its effects on sectors such as food production, exports, and related employment," FM Sitharaman added. In addition to the traditional manufacturing-led development

pathway, the Finance Minister highlighted the need to explore alternative growth strategies and the types of jobs they will generate. "The Union Finance Minister urged the @World-Bank to collaborate with countries in identifying high-priority skill sectors based on data, analysis, and knowledge work, with a focus on generating employment, skill matching, and labour retention," the Ministry of Finance posted on X social media platform.

FM Sitharaman also underscored the importance of an outcome-oriented road map with a clear implementation strategy to effectively put these plans into action. According to the ministry, FM Sitharaman also met UK Chancellor Rachel Reeves on the sidelines of the annual meetings in Washington DC and discussed bilateral issues. "The Finance Minister said that India looks forward to the next Economic and Financial Dialogue during the first half of next year in London," the minister said.

Had 'good agreements' with PM Modi on expanding Iran-India ties, says Pezeshkian



KAZAN (RUSSIA): Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian on Wednesday said that he had "good agreements" with Prime Minister Narendra Modi about expanding cooperation between Iran and India during Tuesday's bilateral meeting between the two leaders held in the Russian city of Kazan on the sidelines of the BRICS summit.

"We had good agreements about expanding cooperation between Iran and India, aiming to create prosperity and security for both countries and region, as well as the idea of creating a communication network between the countries of the region, the results of which will be seen in the economies of the two countries," Pezeshkian posted on X late Wednesday afternoon. During the meeting - the first since Pezeshkian's election as the ninth President of Iran in July following Ebrahim Raisi's death in a helicopter crash on May 19 - PM Modi had reaffirmed India's commitment to deepening the age-old bilateral ties with Iran.

The Iranian president, while referring to Israel's assassination of Hamas political leader Ismail Haniyeh in Tehran on July 30 - the day he took over as Iran's President - said that the killing had hampered the goals set by his government, including enhancing reconciliation inside Iran as well as boosting ties with neighbouring and regional countries. "We believe that war hampers the development of countries, and that is why we have been, and are, decisively seeking to prevent the spread of tension and conflict in the region," Pezeshkian said. Prime Minister Modi, meanwhile, expressed deep concern over the widening of the conflict in West Asia and reiterated India's call to de-escalate the situation. The two leaders reaffirmed Chabahar's significance for reconstruction and redevelopment of Afghanistan and enhancing trade and economic linkages with Central Asia. As India reckoned that the development of Chabahar Port is the biggest pillar of New Delhi's ongoing cooperation with Tehran, Pezeshkian expressed hope that the implementation of bilateral agreements, including the one to develop Chabahar Port, is accelerated.

are people openly threatening leaders and diplomats of India, their answer is "freedom of speech", the External Affairs Minister said, slamming the Canadian government for saying that issuing threats to air carriers was part of freedom of speech. Hinting that Canada's credibility was taking a hit due to its double speak on freedom of speech, the minister said the Canadian government can list out 20-25 Indian journalists saying they are interfering in my country because they have made social media posts and this is the same government that says threat to airlines is part of freedom of speech. He also shared the example of an objection raised by Ottawa when an Indian journalist said in a post that the Canadian envoy walked out of the South Block looking very grumpy and Ottawa called it foreign interference.

When we tell them that there

Global Sikh Council honours Lord Indarjit Singh with lifetime achievement award



LONDON: The Global Sikh Council (GSC), representing 32 national Sikh organizations, has awarded 'Lifetime Achievement Award' to Lord Indarjit Singh of Wimbledon, a distinguished member of the House of Lords, during its annual general meeting held in the committee room at the House of Lords, Westminster, London. The GSC President, Lady Kanwaljit Kaur Singh, and the members of the council also honoured Tony Matharu, a prominent London businessman, for his philanthropic contributions to society. During the ceremony, the GSC General Secretary Harsaran Singh highlighted that a portrait of Lord Indarjit Singh is being displayed in the gallery of the House of Lords, an achievement that is deeply commendable for the Sikh qaum. As the first turban-wearing Sikh member of the upper house of the UK Parliament, this recognition is a testament to his significant contributions to British society, the Sikh community, and interfaith harmony.

No country in the world can ignore India says Nirmala Sitharaman

WASHINGTON: Union Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman has said that India wants to enhance its influence in the world as one in every six persons is Indian and the world cannot ignore India's economy.

Union Minister Sitharaman said that no country, whether the US which is far away or China which is very close cannot ignore India. While participating in a panel discussion on the 'Bretton Woods Institutions at 80: Priorities for the Next Decade', organised by the Centre for Global Development on the sidelines of the World Bank and International Annual Meetings 2024 in Washington, D.C., the Union Minister said that India has always backed multilateral institutions and did not at any time seek to undermine any multilateral institution.

She said that expectations pinned on multilateral institutions are fussed away as no solutions are coming out of them.

When asked how nations like India and other big emerging markets step up and play a role that helps to take ownership of that process and drive the reform forward, Union Minister Sitharaman said, "Yes, absolutely possible. And on this, I just want to again start from where a thought of my



Prime Minister came in and this is well thought through. He once said India's priority is not to impose its dominance. In the sense we have the biggest democracy, we have in the world, and the largest population but to enhance its influence. Now why do we want to have our influence enhanced? It's only because of the fact that today one in every six people in the world is an Indian and you just cannot ignore our economy and how it is growing, that's the second."

"And third, the skilled manpower which today is in India and also everywhere else running large corporations which are for running institutions which are in large countries, developed countries. But yet that particular point that Larry mentioned, that in today's world, the course which devel-

oped countries took, starting from producing textiles, cycles, bicycles and something else, and reaching development, is no longer available. It is going to be something else," she added.

Stressing that no country can ignore India, the Union Finance Minister said, "Are we in a position to define that path? In that, one flag post which I want to draw your attention to about India and its role is leading on technology, servicing through technology, leveraging technology and that is where when you look at Indians everywhere you are saying that they are the ones before sitting and readily saying yes we will give you the systems which can run complex corporate whether it is a refining system, oil refining system, whether it is multilateral banking system or

anything else. So, you really can't ignore and also the geopolitical neighbourhood in which we live. No country, the US which is very far away from us or China which is very close to us, cannot ignore us."

Expressing India's support for multilateral institutions, the Union Minister said, "I think we have followed policies of strategic and peaceful multilateralism. The multilateralism of which you want us to speak about. India has always stood in favour of multilateral institutions. We didn't want any time undermining of any multilateral institution. But progressively we see the hope and the expectations which are pinned on multilateral institutions are fussed away because we think no solutions are coming out of them."

"So again, Larry said, these institutions now are not offering an alternative pathway. That is where one of my points is, the core competencies of these institutions, in that they look at so many different economies, look at the dynamism with which some economies are growing and some which are getting stunted, the information base that they have, they should be the first ones to share the information and they should be the first ones to also suggest without imposing," she added.

External Affairs Minister Jaishankar slams Canadian 'double standards'

NEW DELHI: External Affairs Minister (EAM) S. Jaishankar on October 21 slammed the "double standards" adopted by the Justin Trudeau-led government in Canada on the way it treats Indian envoys, and its expectations from New Delhi on Canadian diplomats' privileges.

Speaking on the topic, "The India Century - Diplomacy Redefined" at the two-day "NDTV World Summit 2024 - The India Century" event, EAM Jaishankar said: "The licence they give themselves is totally different from the restrictions they impose on diplomats in Canada." Referring to the troubled relations with Canada in recent times, S. Jaishankar said Canada has a problem with Indian diplomats trying to find out about what is happening there in relation to India, "but the Canadian diplomat in India will have no problem with collecting information on our military or police, profiling people, targeting people to be stopped in Canada."

He also took a swipe at Ottawa for interpreting freedom of expression as per its own convenience.

When we tell them that there



are people openly threatening leaders and diplomats of India, their answer is "freedom of speech", the External Affairs Minister said, slamming the Canadian government for saying that issuing threats to air carriers was part of freedom of speech. Hinting that Canada's credibility was taking a hit due to its double speak on freedom of speech, the minister said the Canadian government can list out 20-25 Indian journalists saying they are interfering in my country because they have made social media posts and this is the same government that says threat to airlines is part of freedom of speech. He also shared the example of an objection raised by Ottawa when an Indian journalist said in a post that the Canadian envoy walked out of the South Block looking very grumpy and Ottawa called it foreign interference.

YUAN TO REPLACE AMERICAN DOLLAR

BRICS initiative May Pave the Way for the Chinese Currency

GOPAL MISRA

With the conclusion of the recently held summit of the BRICS, the decks now appear to be cleared for a much larger acceptance of the Chinese currency, Yuan, as a valid instrument for exchange in the global trade.

Even before a new common currency was developed by the BRICS countries, Yuan appeared to be emerging on international trade as a replacement for the American dollar.

A close study of the details of the summit reveals that in this common venture of China and Russia, India is being persuaded to join this new initiative, which definitely undermines the global image of the US.

In bid to woo India in this anti-US programme, China quietly offers an olive branch to India that too without any commitments. Unfortunately, the stupid amidst the mainline media may be indulging in the rhetoric of the Hindi-Chini bhai bhai or soon be depicting it as a new success of the Modi regime.

Meanwhile, China already has recently been buying crude by paying in Yuan digital instead of using dollars. With the expansion of BRICS, now China appears to be ready to challenge the hegemony of the American dollar in world trade.

The international community, especially the US-led West, has quietly been watching the Chi-

nese President Xi Jinping's new diplomatic offensive. He, by just shaking hands with the Indian Prime Minister, Narendra Modi, has won the Indian support for his agenda.

The coverage of the Indian media of this historical occasion could not be called sufficient, especially when the two leaders met on October 23 on the sidelines of the summit held at a Russian city, Kazan.

In this group Iran, Egypt, Ethiopia, and the United Arab Emirates attended the summit for the first time as member states at the 2024 summit. Saudi Arabia is yet to officially join, but participates in the organization's activities as an invited guest.

The new members have been enrolled from 1 January 2024 in this group comprising Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa.

Reading Between the Lines

The summit despite the symbolism of peace and cooperation by relaxing the tensions at the India-Tibet borders in the eastern Ladakh, the outcome of this meeting could open unprecedented opportunities for the Chinese as well as Indian economy, but if the Indians continue in indulging false narratives just making it as a symbol of India's successful diplomacy in an attempt to give a macho look to Modi, it's impact could be disastrous for the country.

Xi Jinping was at his best, when he told the Indian delegation that it was in the fundamental interest of our two



countries and two peoples to keep to the trend of history and the right direction of bilateral relations. The two sides should strengthen communication and cooperation, enhance strategic mutual trust, and facilitate each other's pursuit of development aspirations. The two countries must also shoulder their international responsibility, set an example in boosting the strength and unity of developing countries, and contribute to promoting a multipolar world and greater democracy in international relations.

The response of Narendra Modi could also be described as cautious as well as befitting to these delicate negotiations. He stated "this meeting is constructive and carries great significance. They agreed to view and handle China-India relations

from a strategic height and long-term perspective, prevent specific disagreements from affecting the overall relationship, and contribute to maintaining regional and global peace and prosperity and to advancing multipolarity in the world."

It is quite natural that during such communications held at the highest level of the governments to skip the details. Modi and Jinping were not expected to spell out the details of the outcome, but it is for the media and Industries to assess the opportunities now opened again.

Interestingly, two events took place simultaneously, the first was the exodus of the Indian capital estimated to the tune of Rs. 84,000 crores during the current festive season in India. During this period,

China has also showcased its industrial products at the Canton fair.

Even an online visit to this ongoing exhibition will reveal that despite a little setback to its economic growth Chinese products remain unmatched across the continents.

The Myth and Reality

Since its inauguration a decade ago, the Modi regime has been indulging in unnecessary rhetoric and the media, including television channels and newspapers, with the pro-Modi social media platforms, have just been re-echoing the government's false propaganda. For example, the campaign for the 'make in India' is just one of such rhetoric claiming a range of products being manufactured in India,

the truth, perhaps, is that it might have been outsourced.

In spite of the government claims, Indian manufacturing continues to suffer due to the government's apathy, if not eclipsed by an overbearing tax system accompanied by political mafias active even in the states being ruled by the BJP.

In spite of a large number of engineering graduates in India, the financial institutions seldom support entrepreneurs, except a few claims in the pro-government media channels.

Restraining Chinese Companies

The recent statement of the Indian Financial Minister, Nirmala Sitharaman, has stated that the current restrictions on the Chinese companies in India would continue. The situation, however, especially after the Modi-Xi Jinping meeting, is quite different.

The Chinese companies might soon be setting up industrial units for exporting to the world markets. They would be enjoying tax benefits.

Therefore, it is not surprising that the bold statement of the Indian finance minister against the Chinese investments would soon be forgotten.

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

VCI Global Appoints Victor Lee as Executive Director

KUALA LUMPUR (MALAYSIA): VCI Global Limited (NASDAQ: VCI) (Frankfurt: HOT) ("VCI Global" or the "Company"), a diversified holding company with expertise in consulting, fintech, AI, robotics and cybersecurity, is pleased to announce the appointment of its new executive director, Victor Lee, starting November 1, 2024. This strategic transition is designed to strengthen the Company's leadership and better align with its evolving business landscape and go-forward strategy. VCI Global is pleased to welcome Mr. Victor Lee to the board as Executive Director, succeeding

Marco Baccanello. Mr. Victor Lee is a seasoned private equity professional with 28 years of experience across various asset classes, including private equity, growth capital, leveraged buyouts, distressed assets, venture capital, private credit and cryptocurrency. Mr. Lee spent the last 19 years at Franklin Templeton, a leading global asset management firm, where he held several senior roles in private equity and alternative strategies.

Pakistan's former Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif heads to UK for medical treatment

LAHORE: Pakistan's former Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif left for London on Friday for medical treatments, according to his party. The Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) supremo's visit to the UK comes a year after he returned to Pakistan from London following a four-year-old self-imposed exile.

The 74-year-old three-time former premier reached the Lahore Airport from his Jati Umra residence under high security and left for London via Dubai on a foreign airline, according to the PML-N. "He will stay in Dubai for one day and continue his journey to London. He may also go to the United States later," the party said. Nawaz will spend time with his sons in London and undergo medical treatment, it said. According to Samaa TV, he is also expected to hold important meetings there.



His daughter, Punjab Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz, will also likely travel to London in the first week of next month. Nawaz returned to the country in October 2023 after a four-year self-imposed exile in the UK. He was tipped to be the prime minister of Pakistan for the fourth consecutive time after the February 2024 general election, but the powerful military establishment put its weight behind his younger brother, Shehbaz Sharif, who has a better equation with it.

Alia Bhatt turns makeup artist, asks fans, "Kisko tutorial chahiye?"

MUMBAI: Alia Bhatt is not only a talented actress but also a style icon. Recently, she showcased a new talent that left her fans excited. In a fun and candid moment on social media, the actress turned makeup artist and playfully asked her followers, "Kisko tutorial chahiye?" (Who needs a tutorial?), hinting at sharing her beauty skills with her fans. Taking to her Instagram stories, the 'Raazi' actress posted a gorgeous photo where she is seen flaunting her flawless makeup. She wrote in the caption, "Makeup by me. Kisko tutorial chahiye???" In the selfie,



Alia is seen striking a perfect pose with her makeup and hair looking on point. Yesterday, the actress posted cherished memories with her mother-in-law Neetu Kapoor.

Bhatt shared several throwback candid images from her vacation in Paris and wrote, "mirrors & memories." In the first image, she exuded elegance in a stylish denim dress. In one of the photos, she was seen sitting and posing with Neetu. The 31-year-old actress was recently spotted at designer Manish Malhotra's star-studded Diwali party.

On the professional front, Bhatt will next be seen in the highly anticipated film 'Alpha', which she's been filming with Shrivari in the scenic landscapes of Kashmir. Directed by Shiv Rawail,

the film is produced by Aditya Chopra. Alpha is scheduled for a Christmas release on December 25, 2025. She was last seen in Vasan Bala's film 'Jigra', alongside Vedang Raina and Manoj Pahwa. Recently, the film found itself in the midst of controversy when a heated argument erupted between Divya Khosla Kumar and Karan Johar, with Divya accusing Alia of manipulating the box office figures for 'Jigra.' Addressing the issue, Arbaaz Khan recently shared his thoughts and emphasized the importance of solidarity in the film industry.



Relatives of slain Punjab Police personnel scatter flower petals to pay tribute to their loved ones during an event on the occasion of Police Commemoration Day, at a police station in Amritsar on October 21. PHOTO-PRAHJOT GILL

World Television Premiere of "Nigah Marda Aayi Ve", Premiering on Oct 27



KULBIR SINGH KALSI Chandigarh

As Diwali celebrations light up homes across India, Zee Punjabi adds to the festive cheer with an exciting gift for its viewers! For the first time, the much-loved Punjabi film Nigah Marda Aayi Ve will air on October 27 in a grand World Television Premiere.

Starring the sensational duo Gurnam Bhullar as Harman and Sargun Mehta as Scarlett, the film takes audiences on an unforgettable journey of love, heartbreak, and self-discovery. Set against a thrilling road trip backdrop, Harman and Scarlett's story isn't just about two individuals finding love—it's about overcoming life's unexpected challenges. With captivating landscapes, soulful music, and moments of high emotion, the film promises to keep viewers glued to their screens.

'Nigah Marda Aayi Ve' offers more than just romance; it's a tale of longing and connection, leaving fans wondering, "Will these star-crossed lovers reunite?"

Veterans of 4 Rajput celebrate rich legacy and camaraderie at "veterans get-together"



KULBIR SINGH KALSI Chandigarh

The spirit of camaraderie was festive during the congregation of old stalwarts of the 4th Rajput Battalion. The veterans and their spouses reunited to fondly reminisce about their days of service in the challenging conditions of war and peace. Hosted by Col. Ranbir Singh, Vir Chakra, and his wife Jasjit Kang at Mohali, the assemblage brought together as many as 50 ex officers, JCOs, and NCOs of the battalion.

Speaking on the occasion, Col Ranbir Singh said, "Reuniting with my veteran colleagues in arms is not only a celebration, but it is reaffirmation of their undying and enduring esprit de corps. Their association is a testament of weathering vagaries of war manifest in blood and sacrifice."

Col. Ranbir said, my wife and I were seized with the urge and compelling desire to organize a gala gathering of 4 Rajput veterans of all ranks at Mohali. This get-together would not have been possible, but for the overwhelming and positive response of my old comrades. Some of them have come from far off locations like Cochin, Bangalore and Jaipur.

Highlighting 4 Rajput history, Col Ranbir spoke of the rich legacy, valour and sacrifice of units' forefathers. This unit has earned the distinction of participating in World Wars I, II. The unit took part in 22 overseas campaigns from 1845 to 1946.

Politics in sports for self-vested interest at the cost of blaming innocents for sexual harassment

SATISH HANDA

Sakshi Malik, in her book 'Witness' published by Chiki Sarkar of Juggernaut Books reveals incidents of her wrestling career, a really honest account of her life—the highs, lows, and everything in between of her literary, professional, vinture great memoirs in this book, she said.

A recent controversy reveals that Babita Phogat wanted to become Wrestling Federation of India (WFI) chief, provoked wrestlers to protest against Brij Bhushan Sharan Singh sexually harassing the female wrestlers. The charges framed by a handful of wrestlers against Brij Bhushan Sharan Singh, WFI chief allegedly sexually harassing the female wrestlers, attracted headlines in the newspapers for a long time when allegations were imposed and a case was also registered against him. Olympic bronze medalist and former wrestler Sakshi Malik said that Vinesh Phogat and Bajrang Punia's decision to take exemption from Asian Games trials last year affected the image of their protest against Brij Bhushan Sharan Singh since it was made for selfish motives. Sakshi was also one of the three main wrestlers of this protest held at Jantar-Mantar New Delhi attracting not only



public attention but also headlines in the newspapers. Sakshi also accused former wrestler and now a political leader Babita Phogat of taking advantage of the protest for her own selfish interests claiming that she wanted to become WFI chief and encouraged wrestlers to protest.

Sakshi, Bajrang and Vinesh, the three had accused former WFI chief Brij Bhushan Sharan Singh of sexually harassing female wrestlers during his tenure and the case is still going on in a Delhi court. After the suspension of WFI, the ad-hoc committee started looking after the functioning of wrestling which gave Bajrang and Vinesh exemption in the trials for the 2023 Asian Games but Sakshi decided not to do so despite the suggestion of her colleagues. Ultimately Sakshi could not participate

in the Asian Games because Vinesh was injured before the Games and Bajrang failed to win a medal. However, Sakshi did not disclose the names of those who convinced Bajrang and Vinesh to join the game to tarnish someone's image for their own selfish interests. They started getting exemption from trials for the Games, which badly affected the image of protest thus leaving a situation in which many supporters protesting against WFI chief started thinking that they are protesting for someone's own selfish interests. Both Vinesh and Bajrang joined the Congress party ahead of the Haryana assembly elections earlier this month, and Vinesh won assembly polls from Julana constituency while Bajrang became the head of the party's national farmers' unit.

Sakshi Malik claimed that Bab-

ita Phogat had gathered wrestlers for a meeting, urging them to protest against WFI chief's alleged misconduct, aiming to take over his position as president of the Wrestling Federation under a conspiracy demanding arrest of Brij Bhushan Sharan Singh in alleged misconduct, including cases of molestation alleged misconduct, including cases of molestation in New Delhi on April 24, 2023, who disclosed while having a talk with a media house recently. She denied the rumours that Congress supported our protest, but that's false, rather two BJP leaders helped us secure permission to protest in Haryana, Babita Phogat added that the allegations by few, mainly three wrestlers that WFI chief Brij Bhushan, the former head of the Wrestling Federation of India, sexually harassed women wrestlers during his tenure the case is still undertrial is untrue, however there were few issues like sexual harassment and molestation within the federation and many female wrestlers believed that by having a woman in-charge there would be positive change for the female wrestlers in the Federation network, had extended support to this move without thinking such a big game going on in the Federation.

Akshay Kumar reunites with 'Chote Miyan' Tiger for 'Singham Again' promotions



MUMBAI: Akshay Kumar and Tiger Shroff, who are awaiting the release of their film 'Singham Again', stepped out to promote the Rohit Shetty directorial in Mumbai on Thursday.

Both actors happily posed for the shutterbugs. In a video that has surfaced online, Akshay and Tiger can be seen smiling while posing together. Khiladi Kumar also stopped to give his solo pho to the paparazzi. While the duo was posing together, one of the photographers who he heard saying, "Ajay sir ko bhi bulao na." Akshay exuded his signature charisma in a light pink t-shirt paired with black pants and shoes. The 'Heropanti' actor, on the other hand, sported a blue shirt with matching pants, completing his cool look with a hat. 'Singham Again' marks Akshay and Tiger's second collaboration after Ali Abbas Zafar's action drama 'Bade Miyan Chote Miyan'. The film also stars Prithviraj Sukumaran, Manushi Chhillar, Alaya F, Sonakshi Sinha, and Ronit Roy. In an earlier interview, Shroff

opened up about his experience working with Akshay, expressing his deep gratitude for the opportunity. He shared how he grew up watching Akshay's films and emphasized how much he learned from the actor during their time on the sets of Bade Miyan Chote Miyan. Calling Akshay Kumar "our very own Tom Cruise," the Baaghi actor stated, "I have grown up idolizing him, and now actually sharing the screen with him, I am very grateful. I have learned a lot from him, and there's a lot to learn from him. I got to see him up close and personal and spent a lot of time with him on and off the screen." In 'Singham Again', Tiger will be seen playing a role inspired by Lakshman, while Akshay's cameo is based on Jatayu.

According to the latest reports, Salman Khan has also been roped in to play a cameo in the upcoming cop drama. Also starring Ajay Devgn, Kareena Kapoor, Ranveer Singh, Tiger Shroff, Arjun Kapoor, Deepika Padukone, and Jackie Shroff, the film is set to release on November 1.

BankersKlub Expands to Markets in North India

BankersKlub aims to onboard 1,000+ retired bankers on the fintech platform by March 2025



& Kashmir. This expansion will be spearheaded by its first Co-Partner, Rajeev Puri, a seasoned

banking expert and a former Executive Director (ED) of Central Bank of India.

BankersKlub plans to strengthen its regional footprint significantly with a launch target of onboarding 100+ bankers from this region. As a part of its expansion plans, it estab-

lishes a new branch office in Chandigarh, located in the heart of the city in Sector 17. The office is set to become the central hub for the company's operations in this region. The aggregator platform facilitates a wide range of strategic corporate financial advisory services and solutions for small businesses, MSMEs, and start-ups by connecting them with skilled former bankers.

Transforming Healthcare: Haryana Government's Bold Move to Expand Free Dialysis Services

GULSHAN KUMAR YamunaNagar

In a landmark move aimed at transforming the healthcare landscape of the state, the Haryana government has announced that dialysis services, along with all required medications and injectables, will now be provided free of cost to all residents, regardless of socioeconomic status. This bold initiative underscores the government's unwavering commitment to delivering high-quality, accessible healthcare to every citizen.

Civil Hospital Jagadhri, a pivotal institution under the aegis of the Haryana state government, has been at the forefront of this endeavour. Since 2020, dialysis services at the hospital have operated under a Public-Private Partnership (PPP) model, offering life-saving treatments to key groups such as Below Poverty Line (BPL) families, Haryana government employees, persons with disabilities, and Ayushman Bharat beneficiaries. While these groups previously benefited from free dialysis sessions, others were left facing significant out-of-pocket expenses.

The recent policy overhaul by the Haryana government, which extends free dialysis to all residents and covers not just the procedure but also all necessary medications and injectables, represents a major leap forward in healthcare equity. By eliminating financial barriers to essential treatment, this initiative directly addresses the issue of medical impoverishment, which has long weighed heavily on families across the state.

With Civil Hospital Jagadhri currently conducting approximately 800 dialysis sessions each month for around 80 patients, this enhanced accessibility will undoubtedly ease the burden on countless households. The comprehensive nature of this policy ensures that patients are fully supported throughout their



treatment journey, without being overwhelmed by the costs of essential medical supplies.

In addition to this landmark reform, Civil Hospital Jagadhri has undergone a series of infrastructural and administrative improvements, guided by the leadership of Medical Superintendent Dr. Anuj Mangla. A key achievement has been the establishment of a Police Post within the hospital premises, a measure that enhances the safety and security of both healthcare workers and patients. Implemented in compliance with Supreme Court directives, this initiative underscores the government's commitment to maintaining a safe environment in healthcare institutions.

Dr. Mangla has also been instrumental in addressing the logistical needs of hospital staff, including the creation of a dedicated parking area for employees. This facility, though simple, is a crucial component of the hospital's efforts to improve the working environment for its healthcare personnel, ensuring they can focus on providing care without worrying about practical concerns.

These developments at Civil

Hospital Jagadhri are emblematic of the broader strides being made across Haryana's public health sector. By combining state-level policy innovations with localized improvements in hospital infrastructure and management, the Haryana government is setting new standards for public healthcare. As the state's healthcare ecosystem continues to evolve, the expansion of free dialysis services stands as a testament to Haryana's dedication to building a healthcare system that leaves no one behind. With leaders like Dr. Mangla at the helm of key institutions, the future of public health in the state is undoubtedly on a path to further excellence and accessibility.

This landmark initiative by the Haryana government not only brings immediate relief to thousands of patients but also reinforces the state's vision for a healthcare system that is both compassionate and equitable. The synergy between state policy and local healthcare delivery, as seen at Civil Hospital Jagadhri, offers a powerful model for other regions to emulate as they seek to advance public health for all.

Digital House Arrest a Menace

SATISH SINGH



and make audio or video calls to the target, scaring him so much that he or she transfers his or her entire life savings to the fraudster's account. To carry out the fraud, the fraudster uses all kinds of tricks, such as the target's account is being used for money laundering, or his or her close one has been arrested, or he or her is involved in drug smuggling or terrorist activities, etc.

The fraudsters are using Artificial Intelligence (AI) to give a concrete form to "digital house arrest". Through AI, they can convince the target that they are in serious trouble by imitating the voice of the target's relatives or by making a precise video of the target. The main reason for getting cheated is fear, lack of awareness, not being cautious, and in some cases, one's own involvement in corruption in the past. Since there is still a lack of strong laws and trained human resources to prevent "digital house arrest" or other cyber-crimes, it seems impossible to stop such fraud in India presently. At present, there is a huge shortage of trained cyber police in the country, which is being exploited by cyber fraudsters.

India is ranked 10th in the

world in the "World Cyber Crime Index". This index includes 100 countries, according to which Russia is at the top in terms of cyber-crime, while Ukraine is second, China third, USA fourth, Nigeria fifth, Romania sixth and North Korea seventh.

Nowadays, fraud or blackmailing is being done by brainwashing teenage girls & their parents through online chatting apps or selling their obscene/nude pictures in the porn market. Incidents of such kind of cheatings have increased with the help of new methods like online gaming, courier, threat of arrest of relative, friend, obscene videos etc. Snap Chat, Facebook and Instagram have also become means of cheating now. Such duplicitous is being done by creating fake profiles of friends or relatives.

In recent years, incidents of cyber-crime through call forwarding have increased significantly. Consumers use this facility when they are busy in a meeting or some important work, so that no important call is missed.

For the past few years, people are looking for answers to all their questions on Google search engine. Keeping such

psychology in mind, fraudsters are saving their numbers on the Internet in the name of famous payment apps like Google Pay, Phone Pay, Paytm, due to which people themselves get trapped in the deception of hackers. Cyber-crimes are also being committed through downloading browser extensions. This work is done through viruses. Online transactions done through browsers like Chrome, Mozilla etc. get saved in the browser's server, which need to be deleted by going to the settings, but due to ignorance people do not do so, which is taken advantage of by cyber fraudsters.

Under phishing, fake websites of some big or famous company are created and tempting mails are sent in which expensive things are promised for free. Hackers also send messages with offers through SMS or WhatsApp, which contain hyperlinks containing malware. The malware steals the financial information of the user such as debit or credit card details, their passwords, OTP, mobile number, address, bank account number, date of birth etc. and fraud is done by sending fake emails to others from his email account.

Nowadays, cyber criminals are extorting money from people by calling them debtors without taking any loan through phone calls or SMS. Such blackmailing is being done mostly for small amounts such as Rs 2000 to 5000, so that financially weak people do not complain to the police. The impostors threaten that you have taken a loan from us and if you do

not return the money, your offensive pictures will be made viral or will be shared with your relatives or colleagues and as proof those morphed pictures and videos are sent to the target. Taking loan from a mobile app is more dangerous than from a moneylender because the reach of such charlatans is beyond time and space, because most of the mobiles are made in China and their servers are outside India.

Be cautious of suspicious pop-ups during browsing sessions, ensure whether the URL has https://padlock symbol or not, do not share card information on websites or mobile or public laptop or desktop, delete attachments received from unknown numbers or email IDs immediately and ignore messages related to online lottery, casino, gaming, shopping or free downloads, then you can avoid the trap of suspicious hyperlinks forwarded through phishing mails or SMS or WhatsApp.

Also, never come under psychological pressure. Do not hesitate to seek police help if you receive a threat. Always be alert. Update the software of your phone, computer, tablet timely, use strong passwords, avoid opening unknown links, keep your personal information safe, be cautious while using public Wi-Fi, use antivirus and update it regularly, etc. Most importantly, avoid greed. In this case, caution is the only protection.

Satish Singh, Ahmedabad Based Senior Columnist, views are personal