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REGION



SUKHBIR BADAL, SUKHDEV DHINDSA PERFORM 'SEWADAR' DUTY AT THE **ENTRANCE OF GOLDEN TEMPLE WITH** PLAQUE HANGING AROUND THEIR NECK



INDIA'S MANUFACTURING SECTOR EXPERIENCES **MODERATE SLOWDOWN IN NOVEMBER**



MEMORANDUM SUBMITTED **TO SRI AKAL TAKHT FOR AMRITSAR TO BE 'HOLY CITY'**

Punjab CM Mann announces to develop Hussainiwala border as a tourist destination

HUSSAINIWALA BOR-DER: Punjab Chief Minister Bhagwant Singh Mann on Thursday announced to develop Hussainiwala border as a state of the art tourist destination.The Chief Minister who attended the retreat ceremony at Hussainiwala border said that he was overwhelmed to witness this ceremony for the maiden time. He asked the BSF officers to further submit a detailed proposal for giving a facelift to this historical place. Bhagwant Singh Mann said that the state government is committed for comprehensive development of this sacred place.

The Chief Minister said that this place will be developed on modren lines so that more and more tourists are attracted. He said that retreat ceremony was held at three places in Punjab

viz. Wagah, Hussainiwala and place has a huge potential of Sulemanki borders. Bhagwant tourist attraction so it will be it houses a museum where pistol which was used by legendary martyr to kill Sandraus has been displayed. Bhagwant Singh Mann said that patriotism is in the air at this place and more tourists can be attached to this sacred land.

The Chief Minister also hailed the Indian Armed forces who perform their duties despite of vagaries of weather in various parts of the country. He said that the state government is making strenuous efforts to perpetuate the legacy of martyrs in Punjab adding due to concerted efforts of the state government, the Mohali airport has been named after Shaheed Bhagat Singh. Likewise, Bhagwant Singh Mann

RBI Slashes Cash Reserve Ratio by 0.5 Pc to Spur Growth, Leaves Repo Rate Unchanged

MUMBAI: The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) on Friday slashed the cash reserve ratio (CRR) for banks by 0.5 per cent to make more funds available for lending to spur economic growth, but kept the key policy repo rate unchanged at 6.5 per cent with an eye on inflation.

The CRR has been reduced from 4.5 per cent to 4 per cent. This is the first time since March

2020 that the CRR has been cut. The CRR is the proportion of deposits that banks have to set aside as idle cash in the system. The CRR cut will infuse Rs 1.16 lakh crore into the banking system and bring down market interest rates. The monetary policy decision maintains a delicate balance between controlling inflation and pushing up the growth rate in a slowing economy,

RBI Governor Shaktikanta Das said that the decision had been taken by the monetary poli-



cv committee with a 4:2 majority after a detailed assessment of the macroeconomic outlook.

He said, "India's growth story is still intact. Inflation is on the declining path, but we cannot overlook the significant risks in outlook. This risk cannot be underestimated," The RBI Governor was optimistic on the outlook for the economy, observing that "the balance between inflation and growth is well poised. He also pointed out that the country's external sector is stable and foreign exchange reserves have scaled a new peak. Das said that the RBI would be nimble and flexible in managing the modity markets.

India as a bright spot and one

of the key reasons for this is the

country's growth story, which

is being driven by Prime Minis-

ter Narendra Modi's four-pillar

strategy, Union Minister Ash-

wini Vaishnaw said on Friday.

Ashwini Vaishnaw, who holds

the Railways, Information and

Broadcasting, and Electronics

and Information Technology

incidence that we are growing at

a sustained rate of 6-8 per cent."

"PM Modi's considered

Court gives three days Police remand for Narayan Singh Chaura for investigation



JAGMOHAN SINGH Amritsar

Three days police remand has been given to police by the court here today for Narayan Singh Chaura who was arrested on the spot on Wednesday when the assassination bid was made on Punjab Deputy Chief Minister Sukhbir Singh Badal outside the Golden Temple.

According to police, initially seven days remand was requested in the court but court has granted three days remand to continue and complete the ongoing investigation.

Police said that no doubt, weapon used in the crime was recovered on the spot but police wanted to know that where the weapon was procured by the accused Naryan Singh Chaura and who gave it to him.

Police also wanted to know about the motive of the accused to attack on Sukhbir Badal besides his accomplice which was still mystery for the Police.

However, yesterday on December 4, Punjab former Deputy Chief minister Sukhbir Singh Badal had a narrow escape when assailant fired gunshot at him from point blank range . Luckily Sukhbir Badal escaped unharmed as the assailant was overpowered well in time by his Punjab Police gunman.

Senior Akal leader had sahred details of the attacker Narayan Singh Chaura, the SAD leader said "Chaura is a dreaded militant from whom bombs, a MP-5 machine gun and an AK-47 have been recovered in past".

FDI in India's Food **Processing Sector Reaches USD 368 Mn** in H1 FY25



NEW DELHI: The Indian food processing sector has attracted substantial foreign direct investment (FDI) of USD 368.37 million during the first half of the current fiscal year, according to a parliamentary statement

released on Thursday. farmer leader Sarwan Singh Minister of State for Food Pandher told the media after Processing Industries Ravneet holding a meeting with officials Singh Bittu provided a detailed of the Haryana government at the protest site, "We have breakdown of the investment sources in a written reply to the Lok Sabha.

Ireland emerg

Singh Mann said that while developed as a hub of tourism. said that 30 feet high statue Wagah attracts huge tourists, He said that this place is asthe flow of tourists at two other sociated with Shaheed Bhagat of Shaheed Bhagat Singh was places is less. However, the Singh, Shaheed Rajguru and dedicated at Nishan-e-Inquilab Chief Minister said that as this Shaheed Sukhdev adding that Plaza in Mohali on Wednesday. Farmers from Punjab defer 'Delhi Chalo' protest march, say ready for talks with Centre

CHANDIGARH: Protesting farmers, mainly from Punjab, gathered at an interstate border of Haryana in support of the 'Delhi Chalo' foot march, on Friday deferred their march for a day as they claimed that six of them got injured in a clash Also they were ready for talks with the Centre over their demands, including a legal guarantee for minimum support price (MSP) for crops and loan waiver, without confrontation

farmers with animosity? Why till tomorrow. We want talks to happen. We do not want a stop farmers' peaceful protests? confrontation with the govern-Farmers are ready for talks with Centre, "Pandher said. ment, we will remain peaceful."

He questioned, "Why is the government behaving with us like an enemy country? We are called off 'jattha' and not the citizens of this country and have march to Delhi on Saturday. made a lot of sacrifices for the and cited a prohibitory order nation." Regarding the next clamped ui

Harvana on their way to Delhi. **NEW DELHI:** Amid global

Some of the farmers attempted to cross the makeshift barricade shed, heavily guarded by paramilitary and police personnel, by climbing on it. It was set up temporarily on the border to prevent the protesting farmers from moving ahead.

Just before the start of the march, mobile Internet and sending of bulk messages were suspended till December 9 in parts of Ambala district. District officials have already issued orders banning gatherings of five or more people, and government-run and private schools were shut for the day on the administration's order.

However, the first batch of 101 farmers removed barricades and barbed wires, concrete blocks and iron nails installed just ahead of the barricade shed ate inflation."

PM Modi's Four-Pillar Strategy Driving India's Growth Story: Ashwini Vaishnaw



economy. The monetary policy

committee to keep in sync with

the evolving economic outlook.

people because it impacts their

that ensuring "durable" price

stability is critical to ensuring

high growth in the economy.

Policy support may be needed

if the growth slowdown "lingers",

For now, the central bank sees

economic growth as resilient,

Das said. Notwithstanding the

recent aberrations in growth and

inflation, domestic conditions

are on a balanced path, he added.

Das also stated that there was no

role for complacency, especially

in the backdrop of current geo-

political conditions that trigger

uncertainty in financial and com-

Das said.

Price stability is important to

Delivering the keynote address a man from "one of the richest at the NDTV Indian of The Year, countries" at an international forum since India has moved so far ahead, when does it plan to do something for other nations that have been left behind. portfolios, said: "It is not a co-

"So, the feeling now is that India is a leader in several fields of technology, unlike the past, when it used to be a follower," Ashwini Vaishnaw said.

thought process and a clearly laid out plan, which rests on On innovation and manufacfour pillars, are behind India's turing, the Union Minister said consistent growth and moder-India has 1.2 lakh startups, up Union Minister from 300-400 ten years over 100 unicorns, which make Number of women the country one of the world's top filing income tax three startup ecosystems. The 'Make In India' scheme, returns in India surge he said, has impacted everything from the engineering goods sector to the defence sector. The third pillar of inclusive growth, Vaishnaw, said it was very im-

Harvana Police asked the

first batch of 101 farmers that were heading to the national capital not to proceed further

ing investor with USD 83.84 million, followed by Singapore at USD 48.45 million and Mauritius with USD 41.65 million. The United States, Australia,

and Mexico also contributed significantly, investing USD 38.60 million, USD 20.18 million, and USD 9.59 million respectively during the April-September period of fiscal year 2025.

This current investment follows a robust performance in JAGMOHAN SINGH the previous fiscal year, where the food processing sector garnered total foreign direct investment of USD 608.31 million.

The government continues to support and expand the sector through strategic initiatives such as the Pradhan Mantri Kisan Sampada Yojana, the Production Linked Incentive Scheme for Food Processing Industry, and the Pradhan Mantri Formalisation of Micro Food Processing Enterprises (PM-FME) scheme.

en injure They have faced the teargas. A lot of damage has been done." Central paramilitary forces have also been deployed on December 8 at 12 noon. Tomorthe Harvana side of the bor- row's day has been kept for talks

Punjab former Deputy Chief

minister Sukhbir Singh Badal

had a narrow escape when

assailant fired gunshot at

him from point blank range.

Luckily Sukhbir Badal escaped

unharmed as the assailant was

ing near the Sukhbir Badal

keeping hawk eyes on each

The alert courageous task

overpowered well in time.

Amritsa

with security forces.

with the government.

At the Shambhu border,

der along with the state police. with the central government. He said farmers have main-

"They have said that they are tained discipline. "Why treat ready for talks, so we will wait

the Bharatiya Nagarik Suraksha course of the protest, he said, "Now 'jattha' of 101 farmers Sanhita (BNSS). will march towards Delhi on Earlier in the day, security

forces used at least 50 teargas shells to disperse the protesting farmers when they tried to jump the specially erected barricades on the Shambhu border to enter

guarded by a heavy welded wire mesh. The protesting farmers began the march towards Parliament at 1 p.m. After a ruckus of two and a half hours, the farmers returned to their makeshift tents located in Punjab and

close to the Shambhu border.

Narrow escaped for Sukhbir Badal, gun fire was shot from point blank range

twisted the arm of the assail- a bullet fired by the assailant

belt. Task force member im- bir Badal was performing the

The assailant was nabbed on the spot by the task force member of the SGPC and was handed over to police which identified him as Naryan Singh Chaura resident of Dera Baba Nanak from Batala district of Punjab. Earlier he was arrested in numerous cases. He also remained a member of Babar Khalsa outfit in the past. Police ACP Harpal Singh

talking to the media said that police can't stop anyone from entering inside the Golden

Vaishnaw said.

Elaborating on the first pillar of investments, the Minister said India's capital expenditure has grown from roughly Rs 3.5 lakh crore 10 years ago to Rs 11 lakh crore in the current fiscal, which is "humongous and unheard of in Independent India".

"This is leading to productivity improvement and employment growth in practically every sector. Airports have doubled and 31,000 km of railway lines have been constructed, which is more than Germany's entire network. In the last year alone, 5,300 km of railway lines have been built, more than the network of Switzerland. AIIMS and IITs have also been doubled in the past ten years," Ashwini Vaishnaw pointed out.

Speaking about the democratisation of e-payments and how even street vendors use them, the Union Minister cited an ex-Temple especially as a visitor. ample, and said he was asked by

portant to address the economic inequality that arose because of the policies which were followed for 50-60 years. He said PM Modi made inclusive growth an integral part of every policy and this benefited everyone, especially those at the bottom of the pyramid. "As many as 54 crore bank accounts were opened, half of which are held by women. The number is significant because the entire population of Europe is 45 crore. So, bringing a population that is higher than the popula-

tion of Europe into the banking system was an unimaginable task but it was made possible,' the Minister pointed out.



NEW DELHI: The total number of women filing income tax returns in India has shot up by a robust 25.3 per cent in the last four years from 1.83 crore in assessment year (AY) 2019-20 to over 2.29 crore in AY 2023-24, according to figures compiled by the Income Tax Department.

This reflects the increasing number of women getting wellpaid jobs or running their own business ventures, a senior official said. The total number of income tax returns (ITRs), that include both individuals and corporates, in AY 2023-24 crossed 7.97 crore.

The data show that Maha rashtra accounted for the largest number of women ITRs with as many as 36, 83, 457 in AY24 registering a 23 per cent growth. Gujarat was ranked second with 22, 50, 098 women filing ITRs, registering a 24.4 per cent growth, while Uttar Pradesh came at the third spot with 20, 43, 794 ITRs and a strong growth of 29.2 per cent during this period. Similar growth trends have been recorded in other major states. The number of women ITR filers jumped by over 20 per cent in Tamil Nadu from 12, 92, 028 in AY20 to 15, 51, 769 while in the case of Karnataka there was an increase of 20 per cent from 11, 34, 903 to 14, 30, 345, during the four-year period. Punjab recorded a 36.23 per cent from 9, 70, 801 in AY20 to 13, 22, 580 AY24 and Rajasthan by 25.49 per cent to 13, 52, 202.

Govt Creating National Database for Accurate Count of the Disabled

visiting devotee, grabbed and mediately raised his hand and

NEW DELHI: There are an estimated 2.68 crore persons with disabilities in India, which is 2.21 per cent of the total population, and the government is creating a National Database for Persons with Disabilities (PwD) for a more accurate count, the Parliament was informed on Friday

The database would serve as a reliable platform to ascertain the estimate of PwD population in the country in due course, Minister of State for Health and Family Welfare Anupriya Patel told Lok Sabha.

She said that disability in movement, in hearing and in seeing are the three largest categories with 54.36 lakh, 50.72 lakh and 50.33 lakh persons, respectively. In reply to a question by Rani Srikumar of the DMK, MoS Patel said, the Department of Empowerment of Persons



with Disabilities (DEPwD), Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment (MoSJE), relies on Census 2011 for data on the population of persons with disabilities in the country.

According to the Census 2011, in India, out of 121 crore population, there are an estimated 2.68 crore persons with disabilities, which is 2.21 per cent of the total population, said the MoS.

As per the Rights of Persons DEPwD has launched the with Disabilities (RPwD) Act, 2016, there are 21 specified disabilities. The DEPwD has launched the Unique Disability ID (UDID) sub-scheme to create a National Database for Persons with Disabilities across the country, she said.

force member who was stand- ant the moment he took out hit the entrance pillar of the

the weapon from his waist

The government's data indicate that there are 19.98 lakh people with speech disability, 15.05 lakh have mental retardation and 7.22 lakh have mental

illness. There are 21.16 lakh people with multiple disabilities and 49.27 lakh are listed in the "Any Other" category of disability by the government, the Mos said.

Elaborating on the plan to create a database for PwD, MoS Patel said that as per the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (RPwD) Act 2016, there are 21 specified disabilities. "The

Unique Disability ID (UDID) sub-scheme with a view of creating a National Database for Persons with Disabilities across the country. Under the UDID project, certificates of disability and Unique Disability Identity cards are issued to Persons with Disabilities through competent medical authorities notified by respective State Governments/ Union Territories," she said.

Golden Temple where Sukh-

The project aims to encourage transparency, and efficiency in the system of delivering government benefits to persons with disabilities. As per the available record, almost 1.15 crore UDID cards have been issued since the launch of the project. The UDID database can be used as a reliable platform to ascertain the estimate of PwD population in the country in due course, the MoS said.

Jathedar Akal Takht and SGPC President condemn assassination bid on Sukhbir Singh Badal

JAGMOHAN SINGH

Amritsar

The highest Sikh temporal seat Akal Takht Jathedar Gyani Ragubir Singh strongly condemned assassination bid on Sukhbir Singh Badal made outside Golden Temple here in the morning. Jatehadar said that the in-

cident was not aimed at the political leader but at a sewadar (volunteer) performing sewa (religious service) at the holy shrine, since Sukhbir was performing Sewa as a Sewadar.

Gvani Raghbir Singh underlined the attack was a direct assault on a devotee who was whole heartedly performing his religious duties and not on any political figure. He defined this coward and act of violence,



urged the government to hold

Adding further he said that Sri Harmandhar Sahib should not be politicized, since Sukhbir Badal was doing Sewa at the main entrance of the Golden Temple which was given to him by the Akal Takht. He said that the attack on Harmandhar Sahib would not be tolerated

1rough probe.

by the Sikh community as the firing incident was at Golden Temple. It was a deliberate attempt to disrupt the sanctity of

the Sikh faith. However, the Shiromani Gurdwara Parbandhak Committee (SGPC) President Harjinder Singh Dhami has also strongly condemned the attack on Sukhbir Singh Badal outside Sri Harmandar Sahib today.

REGION

Langah, Hira Singh Gabria, acting president of the party

Balwinder Singh Bhundar,

Jagir Kaur, Prem Singh Chan-

dumajra, Mahesh Inder Singh

Grewal, Charanjit Singh Atwal and Sukhbir's brother-in-law

Adesh Pratap Singh Kairon

and Gulzar Singh Ranike to

clean washrooms at the Golden

Temple from 12 noon to 1 pm

on December 3, and then clean

utensils at the community

kitchen after taking a bath as

a part of religious punishment.

raising issues of high secu-

rity around the Sukhbir Badal

at the main entrance of the

Golden Temple since they were

allegedly creating inconve-

nience to visiting devotees to

However, pronouncing

'Tankhah' for Sukhbir Singh

Badal and other leaders for

the "mistakes" committed

by the Shiromani Akali Dal

2007 to 2017, the Sikh clergy

at the Akal Takht on Monday

to wash dishes and clean shoes

the holiest Sikh shrine.

Many visiting devotees were

Akal Takht announced punishment to Sukhbir Singh Badal

'Fakr-e-Kaum' award withdrawn from Prakash Singh Badal, Sukhbir removed as President of SAD

JAGMOHAN SINGH Amritsar

Sikh clergy led by Jathedar Akal Takht (highest Sikh temporal seat) Gyani Raghubir Singh have directed the SAD Working Committee of the party to remove Sukhbir Singh Badal as President of the party besides immediately accepting resignations of Sukhbir Singh Badal, NK Sharma and Sarbjit Singh who had earlier resigned from their posts.

Jatehdar Akal Takht Gyani Raghbir Singh while holding Sukhbir Badal and his cabinet colleagues accountable guilty for wrong doings for the Sikh Panth on the basis of their confession pronounced Tankha (religious punishment) here today from Akal Takht. During hearing, questions posed by Akal Takht Jathedar Giandi Raghubir Singh, Shiromani Akali Dal leader Sukhbir Singh Badal admitted mis-



committee, and cabinet leaders of takes committed during SAD led Akali Dal-BJP government the 2015 Akali Dal government. during 2007-2017.

Others Akali leaders who were Earlier, Jathedar directed held equally guilty with Sukhbir Sukhbir Singh Badal and his Badal were his cabinet colleagues from the period of 2015 SAD BJp cabinet colleagues to answer only in YES or NO and in majority of regime in Punjab Pronouncing questions Sukhbir Singh Badal religious punishment Jathedar admitted mistakes by saying YES Raghubir Singh announced the but also added that a lot of misdirectives for Sukhbir Singh Badal and other core members takes were done during Akali Dal led government's tenure. Akal to clean bathrooms of Sri Dar-Takht has delivered its verdict on bar Sahib from 12 noon to 1 pm. the controversial pardon granted Thereafter they will do SEWA in to Dera Sacha Sauda chief Ram the in the langar (community kitchen besides washing used Rahim during the Shiromani Akali Dal (SAD) government. The utensils of devotees. They were punishment includes symbolic also told to recite Sri Sukhmani acts of repentance for Sukhbir Sahib as part of their repentance. Singh Badal, members of the core Talking about particularly

for Sukhbir Singh Badal and senior Akali leader Sukhdev Singh Dhindsa who were unable to stand or walk without the help of wheel chair due to their fatal injuries were asked to sit at the threshold (entrance point) the Sri Darbar Sahib with spear and wear a placard acknowledging their misdeeds. Jatehdar also directed them in verdict to donate Rs 11,000 in Guru ki Golak (religious donation box). Besides to plant and maintain 1.5 lakh saplings, with immediate instructions to plant 1.25 lakh trees. Jathedar strictly asked them to return the misused funds spent on advertisements during the SAD government is to be returned to the SGPC account with interest Sukhbir Singh Badal and other involved leaders will be held responsible for ensuring the repayment. Sikh clergy led by Jatehdar Akal Takht didn't hesitate to withdraw the title Fakhr-e-Qaum (Pride of the Community) awarded to former Chief Minister Parkash Singh Badal in 2011 was also revoked posthumously.



JAGMOHAN SINGH Amritsar

A day after the Sikh clergy pronounced the 'Tankhah' (religious punishment) to Sukhbir Singh Badal, the Shiromani Akali Dal leader on Tuesday along with others performed the duty of a 'sewadar' at the main entrance point of the Golden Temple.

Sukhbir was seen sitting on the wheel chair with fractured foot cladding the blue colored (shirt) uniform of Sewadar with plaque hanging around his neck acknowledging their misdeeds besides holding a spear in one hand and keeping his eyes down. It was a part of his punishment awarded by the Sikh clergy.

Sukhbir Badal, Sukhdev Dhindsa perform 'sewadar' duty at the entrance of Golden Temple with plaque hanging around their neck

Another senior Akali leader, octogenarian Sukhdev Singh Dhindsa accompanied Badal on another side of the entrance point of the Golden Temple. He was also seen sitting in a wheelchair due to ill health, performing the Sewa of Guard duty which was the part of religious punishment.

However, other Akali leaders Bikram Singh Majithia, government in Punjab from Daljit Singh Cheema were seen cleaning the washrooms of devotees and utensils in the community Kitchen of the directed the senior Akali leader Golden Temple.

Sikh clergy had also directat the Golden Temple in Amed Akali leaders Sucha Singh ritsar as a 'sewadar'.

Aam Aadmi Party Appeals to Election Commission: **Municipal Elections** Should Not Be Held During Shaheedi Week



The Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) appealed to the State Election Commission not to hold municipal elections during Shaheedi Week. AAP Punjab President Aman Arora stated that Shaheedi Week is a matter deeply connected to the emotions of the people of Punjab, and the Election Commission should take this into account before announcing the elec-

tion dates. Arora mentioned that the party has expressed its concerns on this matter to the Chief Electoral Officer of the state. Various political parties and religious organizations have also raised this issue. It is a matter of respecting the religious sentiments of the people, and AAP believes that elections should not be held during Shaheedi Week.

Arora said that the sacri fice of Guru Gobind Singh Ji's younger sons, Sahibzada Fateh Singh and Sahibzada Zorawar Singh Ji, is not just significant for Sikhism but holds a vital place in the history of the entire nation. Their martyrdom is an inspiration for all of us. He added that at such a young age, the sacrifice they made for religion and society is unparalleled in the history of the world.

The Punjab President of AAP explained that during Shaheedi Week, there is an atmosphere of mourning throughout Punjab. Remembering the martyrdom of the younger Sahibzadas fills people with sadness. During this time, people even sleep on the ground despite the severe cold. No auspicious events or celebrations take place during this period. Therefore, the **Election Commission should** give special consideration to these aspects and respect the sentiments of the Sangat while deciding the election dates.

Lawrence Bishnoi's name is Get solar mapping done

16 drug de-addiction centres in Haryana functioning merely as white elephants



PARVESH HANDA Chandigarh/Ambala

While talking to media persons AICC General Secretary Kumari Selja expressing deep concern over fast expanding cases of drug smuggling as well as drug addiction among youths in Harvana state said that all 16 drug de-addiction centres opened in 22 districts in the state are functioning merely as white elephants, since most of them are having no buildings, SATISH HANDA no doctors, for the treatment. no staff and are functioning Chandigarh only in papers without assistance provided by the ruling state government. She said that drug smuggling and its addice state is the biggest enemy not only for the society but also for the country, and the government should take stern action to wipe out the same from the state. Kumari Selja said, the drug deaddiction centre at Kurukshetra has not been provided financial budget since 2016 as a result 11 employees working in this centre became jobless and lying closed since 2020. Former Union Minister and present Sirsa MP said, Sirsa district in Haryana state is worst due to increasing cases of drug smuggling from adjoining states and its severe addiction among youths since state government as well as police has completely failed to stop this evil practice as a result large number of youths in the area die every year due to excessive use of drugs.

Punjab Governor launches Nasha Mukt- Rangla Punjab Campaign to Tackle Drug Abuse under Nasha Mukat Bharat Abhiyan Governor Highlights Role of Women and Grassroots Movements in Building a

Drug-Free Punjab JAGMOHAN SINGH Amritsar/Baba Bakala

The Governor of Punjab and Administrator of UT Chandigarh today inaugurated the Nasha Mukt- Rangla Punjab Campaign on the occasion of Guruparab, marking the martyrdom day of Guru Teg

Bahadur. nificantly influence the fight Speaking on the occasion. against drug addiction," he the Governor highlighted the indispensable role of women in stated. By fostering open comfostering a drug-free society. munication and trust with mitigated through the pro-"Women are the backbone of their children, women can active engagement of women



every household, and their guide them towards healthactive involvement can sigier choices and help prevent addictive behaviors. Studies

in families

The Governor also drew attention to the root causes of drug addiction, including unemployment stress, academic failures, and emotional challenges faced by adolescents. He urged parents to prioritize building stronger relationships with their children, spend quality time together, and maintain open dialogues to identify and address early signs of distress

Recognizing the devastating impact of drug abuse on society, the Governor stressed the need for a multi-pronged approach involving both governmental and community

Punjab International Trade expo kicks off



Lawrence Bishnoi luring students turned

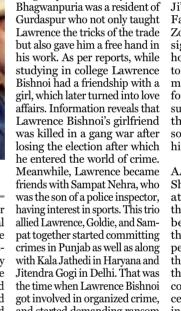
joined the gang of gangsters Jaggu Bhagwanpuria and Rocky Fazilka. SATISH HANDA Chandigarh

The preliminary life of gangster Lawrence Bishnoi whose real name is Satwinder Singh, one of the leading gangsters at present was born on 12th February 1993 in Fazilka son of a police constable. He was very active and sporty since childhood and used to wrestle, but his father dreamed that his son should become an IAS officer. After completing his 12th from Abohar, Lawrence went to Chandigarh and took admission

and started demanding ransom from the liquor mafia, drug smugglers and businessmen. In 2012-13, when cases were registered against him, he left home and in DAV College, when gradually started living in different cities he started taking an interest in with the group. student politics and during his

ain grabbing head

to a gangster and lead luxurious life



indicate that up to 80% of drug-related issues can be efforts. 1089 AIDS/HIV patients reported died in five Northern states in a year

56,578 patients in Haryana, 64

patients died out of total num-

ber of 7,883 patients in 137 pa-

tients died out of total number

of 6,689 patients and 17 patients

died out of total number of 2596

HIV as a global public health problem. AIDS's full form is Acquired Immunodeficiency Syndrome - a chronic and lifethreatening condition caused by Human Immunodeficiency Virus (HIV) damages the immune system of the human being and the ability of the body to fight against disease is hampered. HIV is a sexually transmitted infection (STI). The campaigns started to make people aware of AIDS and since 1988, every year December 1 is celebrated as World AIDS Day. During pregnancy, it spread through contact with infected blood from mother to child during childbirth or breastfeeding. Till now, there is no cure for HIV/AIDS but

World AIDS Day is observed

every year on 1 December to

spread awareness, educate and

elop an understanding o

be slowed down. The number of CD4 cells in a healthy human is between 500 and 1600 per cubic millimeter. In a patient suffering from AIDS, the number of these cells decreases to less than 500 per cubic millimeter, and hence the infection of the human body due to bacteria, viruses, fungi, or protozoa occurs.

According to National AIDS control organization (NACO) report, in past one year 1089 patients suffering from AIDS disease have been reported died in five Northern state Haryana, Punjab, Himachal, Jammu-Kashmir and Chandigarh (UT) identified as 566 patients died out of total number of 1,05 lakh patients in Punjab, 305 patients with the help of medicines, the progression of the disease can died out of total number of

ease. Information by this report also revealed that during 2023, Punjab had 9103 new patients, Haryana had 2898 new patients, Hinachal had 209 new patients, Jammu-Kashmir had 175 new patients and Chandigarh had 81 new patients suffering from dreaded disease AIDS. According to the World

s suffering from this dis-

Health Organization (WHO) report for the year 2022 there were nearly 3.6 crore patients identified HIV positive in the world. According to the State of National AIDS response report, nearly 62,967 fresh cases of patients suffering from AIDS are being reported every year which includes a maximum number of patients between age 15 to 49 which include 69% male and 78% females.

jab International Trade Expo (PITEX) is an annual exhibition and one of Punjab's largest and most popular fairs which is organized by PHD Chamber of Commerce and Industry. This vear renowned companies of the country are coming to Amritsar. On the demand of the Punjabis, this time many changes have been made in the programs and efforts have been made to promote the tourism.

Naveen Seth Deputy Secretary General PHD Chamber of Commerce and Industry and Regional Director Bharti Sood talking to media said that the Ministry of Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises (MSME) will organize MSME Conclave on the first day of PITEX on December 5.

with Goldie Brar, working for the Lawrence Bishnoi gang while sitting abroad. In 2011, Lawrence formed an organization to contest elections: 'Student Organization of Punjab University' i.e. SOPU. & underworld don Dawood Ibra-He contested the elections under him. Lawrence Bishnoi's name this banner, but lost. After the is again attracting headlines in defeat, Lawrence started feeling newspapers after his gang took humiliated and decided to take responsibility for NCP leader revenge over this. The same year Baba Siddique's murder in the recent past. His gang stated that he bought a revolver and clashed whoever would help Salman Khan with the gang at whose hands he had lost the election. and the Dawood Gang would

time at college had friendship

There was an argument and scuffle between the two gangs. Meanwhile, Lawrence opened fire. Then the Punjab Police registered a case of attempted murder against him. This was the first case against Lawrence. After his arrest, he started getting involved in illegal activities and

in all villages of state, gang took responsibility for NCP leader Baba Siddique's murder. **Anil Vij tells officials** Lawrence Bishnoi has now turned out to be the most fearsome gangster in India after terrorist



GULSHAN KUMAR Chandigarh

Haryana Energy Minister Anil Vij directed to get solar mapping done in all the villages of the state, giving priority to farmers. He said that the use of solar energy will help in providing cheap and sustainable energy in rural areas along with environmental protection and this will promote solar energy. This will also reduce the problem of power cuts. For this, the minister asked officials to prepare a comprehensive action plan. He held an important meeting with the officers of the Electricity

Department today. Ânil Vij directed to implement the system of surcharge waiver and taking the outstanding amount in installments to provide relief to the consumers. He emphasized on ensuring that no consumer

To improve the power distribution system, the minister ordered immediate upgradation of transformers and conductors in areas where it is

To prevent incidents of power theft, Anil Vij said that the use of armed cable should be given priority. This step will be helpful in reducing the departmental losses and curbing power theft.

Additional Chief Secretary A.K. Singh, UHBVN Managing Director Ashok Meena and other senior officers were present in the meeting.

Haryana Govt constitutes High Powered Lohgarh Project Development Committee

CM Nayab Singh Saini gives nod to the proposal

GULSHAN KUMAR Chandigarh

Haryana Government has constituted a High Powered committee namely Lohgarh Project Development Committee to monitor the progress of work on the Baba Banda Singh Bahadur Memorial Centre at Logarh in district Yamunanagar.

While giving this information here, an official spokesman said that Chief Minister, Nayab Singh Saini has approved a proposal in this regard. Union Minister Manohar Lal will serve as the Chief Patron of the Committee and Chief Minister, Nayab Singh Saini as Chairman

He said that while Union Minister of Power, Housing and Urban Affairs, Manohar



Lal will serve as the Chief Patron of the Committee, Chief Minister, Nayab Singh Saini will be the Chairman. OSD Dr Prabhleen Singh will be the Member Secretary of the Committee. He said that the other mem-

bers of the Committee included Tourism Minister, Arvind Deputy Commissioner, Yamu-Sharma, former Cabinet Minister, Kanwar Pal, Chief Principal Secretary to Chief and Chairman Sigma Group Minister, Sh Rajesh Khullar, Jagdip Singh Chadha

SATISH HANDA Dabwali (Sirsa)

Addressing media persons Siddhant Jain SP Dabwali said that the police have arrested two accused of a most wanted gang of eight involved in the case of 'Nilgai' animals killing in village Gindarkheda in a joint operation by six teams: CIA Dabwali, CIA Kalanwali, Anti Narcotik cell Dabwali, Cyber Cell and and Sadar police station Dabwali. The accused are residents of Naya village of Hanumangarh district in Rajasthan. They have former Member of Parliament been identified as Arf Ali and Tarlochan Singh, Sikh Histo-Imdad and police registered a rian and Former Vice Chancelcase against the arrested and vet lor, Punjabi University, Patiala absconding accused under Hary-Dr Jaspal Singh, Principal Secana Gauseva Sanrakshan Act and Gausvandhar Act. The arrested retary, Heritage and Tourism Department, Chairman, accused are having several cases Haryana State Biodiversity of kidnapping, rape, theft, robbery and wild animal killing reg-Board, Randeep Singh Jauhar, istered against them in Haryana nanagar, Managing Director, and Rajasthan. They used to kill Haryana Tourism Corporation 'Nilgai' by firing, slaughter the animals, put them in bags on bikes and take them to Rajasthan



through unpaved roads. They were selling the meat to their family members and relatives. The accused were chasing the animals on the basis of closed canals and drains, throwing the light of a torch in their eyes, killing them by firing and then cutting the dead animals with illegal sharp-edged weapons. Superintendent of Police

Siddhant Jain said that on November 30, Gurjinder Singh had lodged a complaint in Sadar Police Station Dabwali after the remains of Nilgai and Nandi were found in the fields of village Ganga and Gindarkheda. The complainant said that on November 30, he had gone to the field with his father early in the

morning to see the wheat crop and saw that pieces of 'Nilgai' and 'Nandi' meat were scattered everywhere in his field. On receiving the complaint, six teams including CIA, Kalanwali and Anti Narcotics Cell of Dabwali were formed to investigate this matter. While investigating, the teams arrested two accused along with a bike from Hanumangarh on Monday morning. The process of presenting both the accused in the court is going on to be taken on remand and questioned about the remaining accused of the gang

Both arrested accused were illiterate and used to mark the place before committing the crime and during interroga-

Busted a gang of 7 to 8 persons with 2 arrests allegedly killing, slaughtering 'Nilgai

be their target. By saying this,

Lawrence Bishnoi has declared a

war against the D-Company run

by underworld Don and terror-

ist Dawood Ibrahim. Lawrence

Bishnoi's animosity with Salman

Khan is widely known. However,

he has become the country's most

fearsome gangster at present.

commit the crime in the Haryana border along with village Kikaranwali and Nava village where 'Nilgai' and stray animals are found in large numbers in the villages along the border. They used to take special care that there is no water in the canal in the area. When there is no water in the canal. farmers used to mark these places. They said that when they used to shine the battery light in the eyes of the wild animal or animal, the animal would become still. In the meantime, the other person would shoot the animal with a .12 bore gun. After this, they

used to slaughter the animal with sharp-edged weapons at the spot, to take out the meat and fill it in bags tied to the bike.

tion, they said that they used to faces financial inconvenience. required.

NATION

Govt plans to invest Rs 1.08 lakh cr in new tunnel projects: Nitin Gadkari

NEW DELHI: The government is planning to invest an-other Rs 1.08 lakh crore in 78 upcoming tunnel projects in the country covering a distance of 285 km as part of its plans to develop world-class infrastructure, Union Minister of Road, Transport and Highways Nitin Gadkari said.

Addressing the World Tunnel Day 2024 Conference on Safe & amp; Sustainable Tunnelling' on Wednesday, the Minister for Road, Transport and Highways emphasised that there is a huge potential in the tunnel sector in India and NHAI has already completed 35 tunnel projects covering 49 km with an investment of Rs 20, 000 crore.

"Around 75 tunnel projects covering 146 km are ongoing in the country at a cost of Rs

We are the only country that recorded a 3-digit growth in patents last year: Prof. (Dr.) Unnat Pandit



FW DESK New Delhi

About 92,000 patent applications were filed in the last fiscal year stated Prof. (Dr.) Unnat P. Pandit, Controller General of Patents, Designs and Trademarks (CGPDTM), Government of India, speaking at the ASSOCHAM IP Excellence Awards and Summit in New Delhi

While speaking at an ASSO-CHAM event, Pandit said that every six minutes, a new invention that sees promise in the Indian economy seeks intellectual property protection in India. India is an IP-friendly nation that values intellectual property and promotes IP-driven solutions to expand businesses and meet societal demands. For the protection of IP across many industries, we are updating the

IP guidelines. He went on to say that IP regulations are crucial to robust IP



49,000 core, "he added.

Our Prime Minister has a dream to make India the world's third-largest economy. For this target, we need to have an international standard of infrastructure in the country. Our government has given the highest priority for the development of good infrastructure in the country, " the minister remetro, railway everywhere, "he observed. Minister Gadkari also said that the government was fine-

for roads but for hydro projects,

tuning the system to tap the best expertise for constructing tunnels as the terrain in India varied according to different regions. The geology and water levels vary across various parts of the country and this requires different types of expertise. He also emphasised the need for closer coordination between construction companies and various departments of the government to ensure that the quality of the work is of the highest standards. The Minister also underlined the need to rope in IIT experts who could research the latest technology available in the world which could be used in India to match global best practices.

Raghav Chadha demands Bharat Ratna for Shaheed-e-Azam Bhagat Singh in Parliament

said that he met Assam Chief

Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma

this week and discussed plans

to construct a tunnel under the

consultants related to this in-

dustry, I feel that there is huge

potential. Today, tunnels are a

very important factor not only

"So, for all contractors and

Brahmaputra river.

Honoring with Bharat Ratna to Bhagat Singh will enhance Award's prestige

NEWDELHI: A demand has been made to honor Shaheede-Azam Bhagat Singh with the Bharat Ratna, the country's highest civilian honor, in recognition of his supreme sacrifice and contribution to the freedom struggle by Aam Aadmi Party MP Raghav Chadha on Wednesday and he urged the government in Parliament to



During his speech in Parliament, senior AAP leader and Rajya Sabha MP Raghav Chadha stated, "Bhagat Singh dedicated his youth, dreams, and life to India's freedom confer the Bharat Ratna on struggle. Even 93 years after his Bhagat Singh, remembering martyrdom, we have not given his sacrifice and contribution him the respect he deserves." "At the age of just 23, he laid

down his life for the nation. His courage shook the foundations of the British Empire and inspired generations to fight for freedom. Honoring him will not only be a tribute to his sacrifice but will also elevate the dignity of the Bharat Ratna award itself," Raghav Chadha emphasized. Raghav Chadha

described Bhagat Singh's contribution as invaluable, saying, "I consider Shaheed-e-Azam Bhagat Singh ji as my idol. He was a true son of Mother India. His revolutionary thinking and unwavering courage not only challenged British rule but also inspired future generations to fight for freedom.'

India in advantageous position for relations with Trump 2.0 term: EAM Jaishankar



FW DESK New Delhi

India is in a "much more advantageous position" than many other countries of the world to build "deeper" relations with the incoming Donald Trump 2.0 administration in the US, External Affairs Minister Dr Subrahmanyam Jaishankar said at an ASSO-CHAM Conference on Viksit Bharat Summit today.

In a comprehensive discussion with the ASSOCHAM President Sanjay Nayar on India's positioning and relations with major parts of the world, Dr Jaishankar said, the way important economies look at India has undergone a tremendous change in the last 10 years. He said, the third back-to-back term of the Narendra Modi Government has impressed most nations and political leaders of the world.

Asked about the prospects of India-US relations under Γrump 2.0 , the External Affairs Minister said, "there are countries which are looking at Trump 2.0 as a political challenge; we are not. That separates us from a very large number of countries; so we are in a much more advantageous position to translate 2.0 into a deeper relationship".

He said India would also have to work out a political equation with America under Donald Trump. "That is one area where we score because we have always had positive balance here. For the last four

and half years, our political



political relations with Trump and Trump always had a posi-

tive view of India". However, it would not automatically translate into every transaction." Like everybody else we may also have some issues; we will deal with those issues".

Dr Jaishankar said the US would need India in many areas where they would like to take technology leads. The two countries would have to build an understanding of mutual benefits and relationships in several areas like emerging and critical technologies as

trusted partners. When the ASSOCHAM President asked him about the evolving relations with China, Dr Jaishankar said, with that country accounting for 32-33 per cent of global manufacturing, it is logical that several supply chains will have to go through China. "We have to factor (that)into our calculations but it is also a fact that if you become excessively dependent on a single supply chain or in the name of supply chain you open up your market that is no longer a supply chain but your sectors are getting hollowed out, you have to be careful"

The External Affairs Minister said, India would not want to end up as a market for another economy and not being able to compete with their products which are dumped in our country.

Employment, wage arowth will drive consumption says CEA Nageswaran at ÁSSOCHAM Bharat@100 summit

FW DESK

New Delhi

Chief Economic Adviser Dr. V.

Anantha Nageswaran, in an

engaging conversation with

ASSOCHAM President Sanjay

Nayyar, charted India's path for

growth in an uncertain global

economic environment at the

Bharat@100 Summit organised

by ASSOCHAM on Thursday.

Acknowledging past successes,

the CEA mapped out strategies

for improvement that call for

the public, private sectors and

the academia to work in concert.

ter GDP numbers, Nageswaran

stressed that India's underlining

growth story is intact. This, he

said, is important as the country

aspires to be a developed nation

at a time when the global eco-

nomic and political uncertainty

poses a challenge. In contrast, he

said, East Asian economies had

it easier when they charted their

growth in a largely bipolar world.

performance, Nageswaran said

that policy reforms over the past

decade have begun bearing fruit.

He said that unlike past cycles

of growth. India has been able

to sustain its economic trajec-

tory because of supply side im-

provements that kept pace with

demand growth. To illustrate

this, the CEA touched upon the

vast improvements in logistics

space, India's substantive jump

in the global innovation index, the

rapid financial coverage under

PMJDY (Pradhan Mantri Jan

Dhan Yojana), and the better

Central to the CEA's economic

vision was his emphasis on pri-

vate sector large heartedness and

the role corporates can play in

propping up consumption. "If

consumption has to drive eco-

nomic growth, then we must look

outcomes in education.

Giving a snapshot of India's

Addressing the second quar-

relations have not been good but things have improved a little bit ; we have managed to make some progress there. we have to sit down with the Chinese what we do further" Dr Jaishankar also touched upon relations with Russia and the geo-political situation in the Middle East.

He said in the last two years 'people generally know that we have been importing more oil from Russia; what people do not know we have been importing from Russia other natural resources coking coal is a very good example, fertiliser, it is shift, which I hope is long term because it is in interest of India".

He shared concerns with SSOCHAM Secretary General Deepak Sood about the challenging geo-political situation, especially in the Middle East. Dr Jaishankar particularly talked about the shipping challenges in the Red Sea and how the situation there is of direct consequences to India's

economic interest. Talking about the MSMEs and their role in manufacturing, the External Affairs Minister said It is one of the top priorities of the Modi Government that we have to push manufacturing in this country. "We have to create more manufacturing zones, improve logistics and make ourselves more competitive. I think we have made progress but there is a lot we will have to do"

MSMEs have to deal with unfair competition and the government has to be protecting their interest, especially when negotiating free trade agreements. He said the Modi Government has been careful in this regard and has even sought review of FTA with ASEAN as the existing agreement has been leaving "We have to find the right a negative impact on India's agriculture and MSMEs.

> the government has failed to provide jobs, education, good hospitals and roads to the people and is diverting the attention of the people by tar-

geting mosques on the pretext of finding temples beneath. "This is exactly what is happening in the country. Four

at the post-Covid hiring trends, where there has been a shift to contractual labour. While these contracts are formal in nature the workers receive employee benefits like provident fund and health insurance etc - but the wage growth for contract employees have not kept up with iflation." CEA N Noting that corporate profitability was at a 15-year high in FY24, Nageswaran said that much of this income was being diverted by companies to reduce their leverage. "While it is good to improve balance sheets, corporate profitability and workers' income growth has to be balanced," he said, adding that, "without this parity, there will not be adequate demand in the economy for cor-

Rahul and Priyanka thank people of Wayanad for record win Priyanka promises people to

be their voice in Parliament

to the country's freedom.

MUKKAM: Leader of Opposition in Lok Sabha, Rahul Gandhi and Congress general secretary and newly elected member of parliament from Wavanad Ms Privanka Gandhi Vadra thanked the people here for reposing their faith and trust in her.

Addressing a largely attended public rally to thank the people every way possible. of Wayanad, both Rahul Gandhi l battl



businessman Gautam Adani Rahul Gandhi said it was despite his indictment by the tment of Justice ir

'I don't find any difference between India and B'desh': Mehbooba Mufti's remark on minorities sparks row FW DESK

PDP Leader and Former Jammu and Kashmir Chief Minister Mehbooba Mufti said on Sunday that when minorities in India were also facing the onslaught like Hindus were doing in Bangladesh, then what rence b



in India.

Dr Pandit highlighted the IP system building the future of India and its time we nurture the knowledge driven technology and scientific solution design. The research addresses the grassroot level reality and reaching the goal for Viksit Bharat, we are already on the path of amplifying our IP impact in global platforms. We need to create an IP system which is vibrant and addresses the need of the remotest. We are working towards efficient IP filings. This rapid growth in granted patents underscores the efficiency of India's patent office in processing applications and granting IP rights.

to the divisive and hate filled politics being played by the BJP at the centre. Both leaders reiterated their commitment to affection, the BJP talked about the welfare of Wayanad, pledg- hatred, anger, violence and diing to continue their work in viding people. He criticised the strengthening the constituency Prime Minister Narendra Modi and supporting its people in for shielding and protecting prosecuted, he observed.

fighting against the BJP. He said, while the Congress believed in love, harmony, feelings and

United States. Prime Minister Modi says Adani is going to be treated differently than other Indians and it doesn't matter if he (Adani) has been indicted in the US and has been called a criminal; in India he will not be

Kashmir's Mirwaiz expresses concern over surveys of Muslim religious places

FW DESK Srinagar

Privank

and

Moderate Hurriyat Conference Chairman and Kashmir's chief cleric, Mirwaiz Umar Farooq, has expressed serious concern over the surveys of religious places in India, tions, citing recent examples such as calling it a deeply troubling issue



pattern in these acthe surveys of the 500-year-old Shahi

Jama Masjid in Uttar Pradesh, the Ajmer Sharif Dargah in Rajasthan, and the ongoing Gyanvapi Mosque case. "Five Muslim youth were killed during the survey of Shahi Jama Masjid in Sambhal, ordered by a court. Now, similar orders have been issued for the Ajmer Sharif Dargah, a shrine revered globally," he said.

two countries

"Our Hindu brothers are facing oppression in Bangladesh but if we do the same thing with minorities here (in India), then what is the difference? We have such a great country, known worldwide for its secular character," she said.

Mehbooba Mufti said it was former Prime Minister Indira Gandhi who helped Bangladesh to achieve independence.

She urged the secular Hindus in the country to stand up against polarization, and join a united fight against the forces trying to divide the people on religious lines, warning against a repeat of the 1947-like



"The situation in the country is not good. Leaders like Mahatma Gandhi, Pandit Jawahar Lal Nehru, Maulana Abdul Kalam Azad, Sardar (Vallabhbhai) Patel, (B R) Ambedkar made this country home for Hindus, Muslims, Sikhs and Christians. Gandhi even sacrificed his life for it," she said.

"However, people are being pitted against each other (on the basis of religion) and I am afraid we are being pushed towards the 1947-like situation," Mehbooba, president of People's Democratic Party said.

Attacking the BJP, she said

killed in Sambhal (UP) but who will speak for them," Mehbooba said. "Anyone doing so will be put in jail like Umar Khalid who is behind the bars for the last four years. In the prevailing conditions, there is no one to listen."

vouth were

ecently

The PDP leader referred to a petition claiming that the Ajmer Sharif Dargah was built over a Shiva temple and said people of different faiths including Hindus and Sikhs visit the 800-year-old shrine which is a glaring example of 'Ganga-Jamuni' culture.

"They also want to dig up this shrine in search of a temple... For how long will this continue?" she said

porate products to be purchased." On the question whether India can become a manufacturing hub without China, Nageswaran was of the opinion that the right question to ask was - how to integrate China into our supply chains rather than how to integrate India into global supply chains.

Mission Successful': ISRO Launches European Lowest GDP cause of concern says Congress Sun-Observation Satellite Proba-3 Into Orbit **KAVITA SHARMA** New Delhi

BY ARUN KUMAR RAO Sriharikota

On a crisp afternoon, the skies above Sriharikota witnessed a defining moment in international space collaboration. The Indian Space Research Organisation's (ISRO) Polar Satellite Launch Vehicle, PSLV-C59, soared into space at 4:04 PM on December 5, carrying the European Space Agency's (ESA) Proba-3 mission. This milestone, delayed by just a day due to a technical snag, has set the stage for groundbreaking advancements in space weather research and solar studies

A Mission to Unveil the Mysteries of the Sun

At the heart of this mission is Proba-3, a trailblazing dualsatellite mission designed to observe the Sun's corona – the enigmatic outer layer of our star. The mission's name, derived from the Latin word 'Probas' meaning "Let's try,"

aptly reflects humanity's relentless curiosity to explore

the universe. Proba-3's two spacecraft, Coronagraph and Occulter, will perform a cosmic dance in space, maintaining an extraordinary precision of one millimeter between them as they simulate the dynamics of a single giant telescope. This innovative approach will block the Sun's blinding light, allowing scientists to study its corona in unprecedented detail.

vital for understanding space weather, which can significantly impact Earth's technological infrastructure, from GPS systems to power grids. By observing and analyzing solar storms and eruptions, Proba-3 aims to enhance our ability to predict and mitigate the risks posed by solar activity to satellites and other critical technologies

A Rocket, A Partnership, A Triumph

The PSLV-C59, ISRO's flagship rocket, stood tall at 44.5



The study of the corona is meters as it ignited its engines and lifted off from the First Launch Pad at the Satish Dhawan Space Centre. This launch marked a critical collaboration between ISRO, ESA, and NewSpace India Ltd. (NSIL), ISRO's commercial arm, which secured the contract for this ambitious project. The Proba-3 mission is a continuation of the successful partnership between ISRO and ESA, which dates back to the

launch of Proba-1 in 2001. ISRO's Chairman celebrated

the moment, emphasizing that

the precision achieved in deploying Proba-3's satellites into their designated orbit is a testament to PSLV's reliability and India's growing stature in the global space community.

Rising Above Challenges

The road to Proba-3's launch was not without its challenges. Initially scheduled for December 4, the mission faced a lastminute delay due to an anomaly detected in the satellite propulsion system. ESA's request to address this issue led to a

meticulous 8.5-hour countdown on December 5, ensuring a flawless launch. This collaborative spirit underpins the success of the mission, exemplifying how international teamwork can overcome hurdles in the pursuit of scientific progress.

Looking Ahead

Proba-3 is more than just a mission; it is a bold step toward unlocking the secrets of the Sun and safeguarding our planet from the hazards of space weather. By demonstrating precise formation flying and advancing solar research, Proba-3 represents a fusion of cutting-edge technology, international cooperation, and human ingenuity.

through space, perfectly aligned in their cosmic choreography, they carry the aspirations of scientists, engineers, and dreamers worldwide, reminding us of the power of collaboration in exploring the vast, uncharted expanse of the universe.

The Congress party expressed grave concern over the low GDP growth rate that has fallen to a record low of 5.4 percent, lowest in last 21 months.

Addressing media persons in New Delhi, party spokesperson and the Chairperson Social Media and Digital Platforms, Supriya Shrinate highlighted alarming economic realities under the Modi Government. She remarked, "Modi government is presiding over India's economic ruin". She said, Indian economy was witnessing a toxic concoction of low growth and low wages. "A slowdown in GDP can't be dismissed just because the numbers are uncomfortable for the BJP. India's Q2 GDP growth for the current financial year has plummeted to its lowest level in 21 months. And this raises a lot of concern", she observed, while pointing out, "it means: economic activity is sluggish, investments are not being made, consumption has been dampened, exports have



crashed, jobs are not being created". The Congress leader noted that 5.4% GDP growth has come in as a rude shock. "It should send alarm bells ringing among policy makers but instead there is complete denial even dismissal of the harsh reality", she observed, while adding, "however what comes as a bigger disappointment is that policymakers are completely clueless"

She pointed out, the RBI in its last monetary policy, which was as late as October 6, had estimated a GDP growth for Q2 at 7%. The government meanwhile had projected the same at 6.5%, she added. "With all the high frequency and macro economic indicators at their disposal - how do they read the tea leaves so wrong?" she asked. Referring to 'Private Consumption', she said, "the engine of growth which accounts for nearly 60% of GDP has slowed down quite significantly, indicating a slump in demand both in urban and rural India. In Quarter 2 private consump-tion growth dropped to merely 5.9%. A dip in consumption means people are spending less which in turn means corporates will manufacture less, so lower investments and fewer jobs are

inevitable".

As the two satellites glide

Slump calls for a bold reset of economic goals

he recent GDP estimates for the July-September quarter have sent shockwaves through India's economic landscape. Even the most cautious forecasters did not predict such a sharp deceleration in economic momentum. Contrary to expectations of a modest slowdown to around 6.5% growth – down from the first quarter's 6.7% – the actual GDP growth plummeted to a mere 5.4%, the slowest since Q3 of 2022-23. This significant drop not only deviates from the Reserve Bank of India's (RBI) optimistic projections but also casts doubt on the possibility of achieving over 7% growth in 2024-25. The implications of this downturn are multifaceted. The Monetary Policy Committee of the RBI faces the daunting task of reassessing its 7.2% growth forecast for the year. Balancing the dual objectives of controlling inflation and stimulating growth has become increasingly complex. With inflation hitting a 15-month high of 6.2% in October, the RBI is under pressure to maintain a tight monetary stance. However, recent appeals from government ministers to reduce interest rates highlight the growing concern over weakening growth impulses and stagnant investments. While government officials attempt to downplay the alarming GDP figures as a 'one-off' occurrence attributed to temporary urban demand slackness, such optimism may be misplaced. The assumption that rural demand will naturally revive the economy in the second half of the year overlooks the persistent challenges. Factors such as inadequate wage growth and sustained price increases have strained urban consumers, dampening the likelihood of a spontaneous rebound in urban consumption. It is imperative for the government to move beyond a complacent 'all is well' narrative. Proactive fiscal measures are needed to rejuvenate the economy. This includes reconsidering high fuel taxes and GST rates on certain items to alleviate living costs and stimulate demand. The current economic indicators signal not just a temporary hiccup but a call to action for policymakers to implement strategic interventions that can steer the economy back on a robust growth path.

SIDHARTH DEB INSISTS INDIA'S AI SAFETY INSTITUTE MUST LEVERAGE GLOBAL COLLABORATIONS

October, the Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology (MeitY) convened meetings with industry and experts to discuss setting up an AI Safety Institute under the IndiaAI Mission. Curiously, this came on the heels of Prime Minister Narendra Modi's visit to the U.S., the Quad Leaders' Summit, and the United Nations Summit of the Future. AI appeared high on the agenda in the run up to the Summit of the Future, with a high-level UN advisory panel producing a report on Governing AI for Humanity.

Policymakers should build on India's recent leadership at the G20 and the GPAI, and position it as a unifying voice for the global majority in AI governance. The design of the Safety Institute should prioritise raising domestic capacity, capitalising on India's comparative advantages, and plugging into international initiatives.

Notably, the Summit of the Future yielded the Global Digital Compact that identifies multi-stakeholder collaboration, humancentric oversight, and inclusive participation of developing countries as essential pillars of AI governance and safety. As a follow up, the UN will now commence a Global Dialogue on AI. It would be timely for India to establish an AI Safety Institute which engages with the Bletchley Process on AI Safety. If executed correctly, India can deepen the global dialogue on AI safety and bring global majority perspectives on human centric safety to the forefront of discussions.

Institutional reform

In designing the institute, India should learn from concerns stemming from MeitY's AI Advisory in March 2024, which proposed that there be government approvals before the public roll-out of experimental AI sys-



tems. Some asked what kind of institutional capability the Indian government had to suitably determine the safety of novel AI deployments. Other provisions on bias, discrimination, and the one-size-fits-all treatment of all AI deployments indicated that the advisory was not based on technical evidence

Similarly, India should be cautious and avoid prescriptive regulatory controls which have been proposed in the European Union (EU) and China. The threat of regulatory sanction in a rapidly evolving technologi cal ecosystem quells proactive information sharing between businesses, governments, and the wider ecosystem. It nudges labs to only undertake the minimum steps towards compliance. Yet each jurisdiction demonstrates a recurring recognition of establishing pecialised agencies — for example, China's Algorithm Registry and the EU's AI Office. However, to maximise the promise of institutional reform. India should decouple institution building from regulation making. The Bletchley process is underscored

by the U.K. Safety India with an opportunity to collaborate Summit in Nowith governments and stakeholders from vember 2023 and across the world. Shared expertise will the South Korea be essential to keep up with AI's rapid Safety Summit in innovation trajectories. May 2024. The **Charting India's approach** next summit is set for France and this India should establish an AI Safety Inprocess is yielding stitute which integrates into the Bletchley an international

network of AI

The U.S. and the

U.K. were the first

two to set up these

institutes and have

already signed an

MoU to exchange knowledge, resources,

and expertise. Both institutions are also

signing MoUs with AI labs and receiving

early access to large foundation models.

They have installed mechanisms to share

technical inputs with the AI labs before

their public roll outs. These Safety In-

stitutes facilitate proactive information

sharing without being regulators. They

are positioned as technical government

institutions that leverage multi-stakeholder

consortiums and partnerships to assess

the risk of frontier AI models to public

safety. However, they largely consider AI

safety through the lens of cybersecurity,

infrastructure security, safety of the bio-

sphere, and other national security threats.

government capacity and mainstream

the idea of external third-party testing

and risk mitigations and assessments.

Government-led AI safety institutes aim

to deliver insights which can transform

AI governance into an evidence-based

discipline. The Bletchley process presents

These safety institutes aim to improve

Safety Institutes.

EDITORIAL

SOPINION

network of safety institutes. For now, it should be independent from rulemaking and enforcement authorities and, instead, operate exclusively as a technical research, testing, and standardisation agency. It would allow India's domestic institutions to tap into the expertise of other governments local multi-stakeholder communities, and international businesses. While upscaling its AI oversight capabilities, India can also use the Bletchley network to advance the global majority's concerns with AI's individual centric risks

The institute could champion perspectives on risks relating to bias, discrimination, social exclusion, gendered risks, labour markets, data collection and individual privacy. Consequently, it could deepen the global dialogue around harm identification, big picture AI risks, mitigations, redteaming, and standardisation. If done right, India may become a global steward for forward-thinking AI governance which embraces many stakeholders and government collaboration. The AI Safety Institute can demonstrate India's scientific temper and willingness to implement globally compatible, evidence-based and proportionate policy solutions.

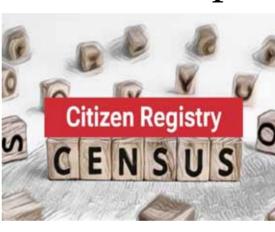
Sidharth Deb, Manager, Public Policy at The Quantum Hub, a public policy firm based in Delhi. Views are personal

C. CHANDRAMOULI BELIEVES THE KEY GOAL IS TO ESTABLISH NRIC, BUT UNDERSTANDING IMPLICATIONS IS CRUCIAL

Census 2025 is a comprehensive citizen registry

e 2025 Census includes an exercise to update the National Population Register (NPR), which is the first step for the establishment of the National Register of Indian Citizens (NRIC). Grasping the full scope and implications of this initiative is essential.

The NRIC draws its mandate from the Citizenship Act 1955. Initially conceptualised after the 1951 Census, the NRIC gained renewed significance following recommendations by the Subrahmanyam Committee in the aftermath of the Kargil war (1999), which highlighted the need for a robust database that includes both citizens and non-citizens. These recommendations eventually led to the addition of Section 14A to the Act, mandating the compulsory registration of all Indian citizens and authorising the issuance of identity cards to officially document their citizenship status. Several pilot projects ti-Purpose National such as the Mu Card (MNIC) and fishermen identity card have since been implemented with varying degrees of success.



This multi-phase process includes several key steps. First, a comprehensive database is created by compiling demographic data

socio-economic indicators were collected. The 2025 Census is anticipated to follow a similar pattern. Biometric data collection. however, will probably be excluded, as this information is already available in the Aadhaar database.

Aadhaar versus NRIC

A question often raised in this connection is the need for this exercise when the Aadhaar already exists. It is essential to note that the Aadhaar and the NRIC

serve distinct purposes. Aadhaar is a 12-digit unique identification number issued by the Unique Identification Authority of India (UIDAI) to residents of s of citizenship. It primarily

serves as a biometric-based identity verifica-

tion tool, linking residents to services such as banking, subsidies, and digital identity.

The NRIC aims to establish a comprehensive

citizen registry. While Aadhaar is focused

on identity verification and can be held by any resident, the NRIC is a citizenship

verification system, mandating proof of citi-

zenship. Thus, Aadhaar is broadly inclusive

for all residents, whereas the NRIC serves

as a definitive record for citizens. They play

complementary but distinct roles in India's

The Assam exercise and privacy concerns

tional Register of Citizens (NRC) has

Assam is the only state where the Na-

governance and security infrastructure.

been updated (2019). Intended to identify illegal immigrants, particularly from Bangladesh, the process raised concerns over its accuracy and fairness due to stringent documentation requirements that left many rural and less-educated residents unable to meet the criteria. Unlike the proposed national NRIC, Assam's NRC was guided by the Assam Accord, which imposed unique conditions. However, Assam's experience highlights the significant humanitarian and administrative challenges that could arise from implementing a nationwide NRIC.

Concerns about data privacy and the potential misuse of demographic and biometric information persist, despite the Supreme Court's guidelines in the Aadhaar case. The need for robust data protection remains critical. Exclusion fears, particularly for communities with limited documentation, must also be addressed Verifying cit such a large scale poses significant logistical and administrative challenges, underscoring the importance of streamlined procedures and targeted public awareness campaigns. The NRIC initiative calls for citizens to stay vigilant and actively engaged throughout the process. Given the scale of this effort, transparency and fairness depend on citizens being well-informed, proactive, and diligent in verifying their records. By understanding their rights, providing accurate information, and voicing concerns, citizens can help ensure that the NRIC is inclusive, equitable, and effective.

LETTERBOX

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In the business world, everyone is paid in two coins: cash and experience. Take the experience first; the cash will come later.

THE FINANCIAL WORLD

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EDITOR* ABDUL WASEY

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As a verified registry with more benefits

The NRIC aims primarily to enhance national security by maintaining a verified citizen registry but also offers additional benefits, such as streamlining identity verification, reducing identity fraud and duplication, and enabling targeted welfare programmes that ensure benefits reach only eligible recipients. The NPR serves as the initial step in achieving these objectives by differentiating citizens from non-citizens through a multi-phase process that collects demographic and biometric data on all usual residents.

sus. Next, biometric data is collected to eliminate duplicate records. Public claims and objections are then invited to ensure transparency, followed by a verification and appeals process allowing residents to challenge records, thereby enhancing accuracy and authenticity. Detailed inquiries into citizenship status are conducted to finalize the National Register of Citizens (NRIC), which distinguishes citizens from non-citizens. The process culminates in the issuance of identity cards as mandated by the Citizenship Act.

In the 2011 Census details about individuals, including name, gender, date of birth, marital status, place of birth, nationality, family relationships, residency, and

LAHU BOLTA BHI HAI



lood Speaks Too by Syed Shahnawaz Ah-

mad Qadri is a power-

ful and deeply impact-

ful book that brings to light the

often-overlooked contributions

of Muslim freedom fighters in

India's struggle for indepen-

dence. Launched in Hyderabad

on December 5, 2024, this

English edition expands upon

the Hindi and Urdu versions

(Lahu Bolta Bhi Hai), provid-

ing a meticulously researched

account that spans nearly two

centuries of resistance and sac-

rifice. It challenges prevailing biases in historical narratives

and celebrates the pluralistic

ethos of India's independence

ously marginalized narratives,

particularly the contributions

of freedom fighters from South

India, whose efforts have been

overshadowed in mainstream history. By including a compre-

hensive list of these revolution-

This edition delves into previ-

movement.

New book highlights contributions of Muslims in India's independence

Blood Speaks Too: The Role of Muslims in India' Independence By Syed Shahnawas Ahmad Qadri; 504 pages; Rs 800.

listic picture of their involvement. From grassroots fighters to prominent leaders, the stories reveal the depth of Muslim contributions and their critical role in the collective fight for independence. Qadri's analysis also extends to the ideological shifts, alliances, and conflicts that defined the movement between 1857 and 1947, offering readers a nuanced understanding of the political dynamics of the time. Through meticulous use of rare archival materials and personal accounts, the author validates these narratives, challenging the systematic marginalization of Muslim contributions in mainstream historiography.

Written in an accessible and engaging style, the book strikes a balance between scholarly rigor and readability, making it suit-

C. Chandramouli is the former Registrar General and Census Commissioner, India, Views are personal.

> able for both researchers and general readers. Its narrative

style is reminiscent of a historical novel, making complex events and figures approachable and relatable, particularly for younger audiences. By restoring these overlooked stories to their rightful place, Blood Speaks Too not only fills a critical gap in India's historiography but also fosters a sense of unity and mutual respect, emphasizing

> dependence movement. Qadri's work serves as a reminder of the diverse forces that shaped India's freedom and underscores the importance of preserving an inclusive historical memory. By shining a light on the sacrifices of Muslim freedom fighters, the book inspires future generations to uphold the pluralistic ideals that form the foundation of modern India. Blood Speaks Too is an essential read for anyone seeking to understand the full breadth of India's independence movement and stands as a testament to the power of unity in the face of adversity. It is not just a book but a movement to preserve the collective spirit of İndia's past.

the collective nature of the in-

hances the reading experience,

aries, the book ensures a broader geographic representation. Additionally, it offers enriched details on pivotal moments such as the Quit India Movement and the Jallianwala Bagh Massacre, providing new perspectives and insights into these historical events. The inclusion of nearly 150 rare photographs further enoffering a visual journey through India's freedom struggle.

The book, translated in English by Pervez Alam Siddiqui and edited by Abdul Wasey, stands out for its comprehensive documentation of over 2,400 individual accounts of Muslim revolutionaries, creating a ho-

CORPORATE **GINDUSTRY**

India's Manufacturing Sector Experiences Moderate Slowdown in November

NEW DELHI: India's manufacturing sector showed signs of deceleration in November, with the Purchasing Managers' Index (PMI) declining to 56.5, down from October's 57.5, according to the HSBC Final India Manufacturing PMI compiled by S&P Global.

The November figure represents an 11-month low, though remaining firmly within expansionary territory.

Initial flash PMI surveys had projected slightly higher numbers, with an early estimate of 57.6 for November, which was subsequently revised to 57.3.

The final data revealed a more modest reading, indicating a subtle but notable moderation in manufacturing activity.



Pranjul Bhandari, Chief Inexpansion is decelerating, india economist, HSBC, highfluenced by intensifying price lighted the sector's nuanced pressures across the manufacperformance. turing landscape The economic context un-

Despite the slight downturn, international demand derscores additional chalremained robust, with new lenges. Input prices for intermediate goods, including export orders reaching a fourchemicals, cotton, leather, and month high. However, the rate of output rubber, experienced increases

NEW DELHI: Proposals to

increase steel import duties by

According to Federation

of Indian Micro and Small &

Medium Enterprises (FISME)

the lobby led protectionist tariff

and non-tariff measures against

import of steel including anti-

dumping, safeguard duties, qual-

ity standards etc, play out in a

triple whammy for MSMEs in

experts

in November.

Simultaneously, output prices reached an eleven-year peak, reflecting manufacturers' efforts to pass rising input, labour, and transportation costs onto consumers.

This manufacturing slowdown coincides with broader economic trends, as India's real GDP growth declined to 5.4 percent in the July-September 2024 quarter-a seven-quarter low.

This represents a significant reduction from the 6.7 percent growth in the previous quarter and the 8.1 percent recorded in the same period of 2023, primarily attributed to weakened manufacturing growth and contractions in mining and quarrying sectors.

NEWDELHI: In a significant move to enhance safety standards and modernise boiler regulations, the Rajya Sabha on Wednesday cleared the Boilers Bill, 2024.

The bill, which seeks to replace the century-old Boilers Act, 1923, was passed with a voice vote. It aims to address critical issues related to boiler safety, the protection of life and property from explosions, and the uniformity of registration processes across the country.

Boilers Bill 2024 Cleared by Rajya Sabha to Enhance Safety and Modernise Regulations



provisions to ensure the safety of individuals working inside boilers and mandates that all boiler repairs be carried out by qualified and competent professionals. By doing so, the bill seeks to minimise risks associated with boiler operations, ensuring a higher level of safety for workers and the surrounding community.

One of the key highlights of the Boilers Bill, 2024, is its focus on decriminalising several offenses related to boiler operations. According to the Commerce Ministry, this move will benefit a wide range of boiler users, especially those in the micro, small, and medium enterprises (MSME) sector. Under the new framework, the number of criminal offenses has been reduced from seven to four, with penalties for

The new legislation introduces violations focused primarily on severe incidents that result in loss of life or property. The legislation marks a progressive step in the modernisation of India's indusrial safetv laws By updating boiler regula-

tions that have largely remained unchanged for over a century, the government aims to balance safety concerns with the operational realities of industries ostering an environment that is both secure and conducive to economic growth.

The bill's passage in the Rajya Sabha represents a crucial step toward ensuring boiler safety across various sectors, enhancing protection for workers, and aligning with international safety standards. It is now expected to move forward to the Lok Sabha for further deliberation.

Holland's MODIFI fintech **Rs 50 crore financing for Indian SMEs**



DOMINICK RODRIGUES Mumbai MODIFI, a global leader in

cross-border B2B trade finance and payments solutions, announced bold expansion plans for India in reinforcing its strategic commitment to one of its fastest-growing markets.

MODIFI has earmarked Rs 50 crore to finance over 5,000 SMEs across India in the next 2-3 years, with these efforts being bolstered by partnerships with prominent organisations like the SME Chamber of India and the Maharashtra Industry Development Association (MIDA).

With an impressive 38% yo-y growth, the Amsterdamheadquartered fintech is eyeng a significant increase in its India business in 2025 where, as part of its strategy, MODIFI will invest a significant part of its recently-raised \$15 million Series C funding to fuel this growth with focus on deepening local operations, said Matthias Hendrichs, Chief Commercial Officer, MODIFI Global.

Having facilitated over \$3 billion in global trade across 1,800+ trading partners in 55+ countries since its inception, India remains pivotal to MODIFI's global expansion journey since opening here in 2019 -- making it the first international market outside Europe, Hendrichs said.

He said that in alignment with the government's "Make in India" initiative, MODIFI's digital financing solutions address the working capital challenges faced by SMEs, and eliminate the need for collateral, streamline access to global markets, and enable businesses to compete internationally with

confidence. "India has always been the cornerstone of our international operations and our remarkable growth here is a testament to the resilience of Indian SMEs and their critical role in the global supply chain. With our latest funding, we are doubling down on our India operations to meet the increasing demand for flexible, digital trade finance solutions," Hendrichs noted.

Replying to questions, Hendrichs said that while India. China and the Middle East re

Hyundai Motor's union to hold partial strike in protest against President Yoon



SEOUL: Unionised workers at Hyundai Motor will stage a partial strike this week in solidarity with an umbrella labour union's walkout against President Yoon Suk Yeol's short-lived martial law declaration, according to the company's union on Thursday.

Hyundai's 43,000-strong union will hold a four-hour strike each on Thursday and Friday under the guidelines of the Korean Metal Workers' Union (KMWU), a union spokesperson said over the phone. The KMWU is part of the militant Korean Confederation of Trade Unions (KCTU). GM Korea Co.'s 7,300-member union also decided to hold a four-hour walkout on Thursday and Friday, respectively, reports Yonhap news agency. Meanwhile, Bank of Korea (BOK) Gov. Rhee Chang-yong said on Thursday the current political climate surrounding the opposition's move to impeach President Yoon Suk Yeol is unlikely to affect South Korea's sovereign ratings and growth momentum given the country's solid market

fundamentals Rhee made the point during a press briefing in Seoul, two days ter Yoon declared martial law ofa in a surprise late-night address, which was lifted about six hours later after the National Assembly voted to reject it.

India. "Firstly, the steel productic market. Secondly, although ers increase the cost of domestic MSMEs can technically import steel by similar measure as extra duty free inputs for exports, their small volumes make imports protection, increasing cost of the Bombay High Court Rules in Favor of Arbitration, Dismisses Objection in Loan Default Case

place their produce from domes-

NEWDELHI: In a significant ruling, the Bombay High Court reaffirmed that the role of a referral court under Section 11 of the Arbitration and Conciliation Act, 1996, is limited to verifying the existence of an arbitration agreement.

The court emphasised that is not within the referral court's purview to delve into the substantive validity of the arbitration agreement. This decision came in response to an application filed by Aditya Birla Finance Limited, seeking the appointment of a sole arbitrator agreement exists and that its involving a sanctioned loan of to resolve a dispute arising out formal validity is in order. The Rs. 6.75 crore. loan agreement with



Proposed 25% Steel Duty Hike Faces Criticism for Ignoring MSME Woes

produce of MSMEs. As MSME unviable, rendering them unproducts do not enjoy a similar competitive for exports also", higher tariff/ non-tariff wall imsays Anil Bhardwaj, Secretary ports become cheaper and dis-General, FISME.

Due to imports restrictions steel producers face little competition from imports (both on quality and price) they export best quality material and sell

poor quality material in domestic market elbowing out MSMEs from quality conscious supply chains also, he added.

Pankaj Chadha, Chairman of the Engineering Export Promotion Council (EEPC) of India, cautioned that such a move would severely impact micro, small, and medium enterprises (MSMEs), which are already grappling with numerous challenges. "MSMEs are excluded from consultations on traderelated issues in the steel sector,"

Chadha said. "If we're protecting steel producers, we must also safeguard the 8 lakh MSMEs that depend on steel. Ignoring their plight will hurt the downstream industry.

Freshworks Appoints Srinivasan Raghavan as **Chief Product Officer**

vasan Raghavan as its new Chief Product Officer (CPO) with over two decades of leadership ex-

strategy and vision for its people-first AI service software used to deliver exceptional customer experiences (CX) and employee experiences (EX)

Amazon India to Provide Complex Logistics Services and POD Payment Options to D2C Brands

NEW DELHI: In a significant move to support small businesses and Direct-to-Consumer (D2C) brands, Amazon India has announced an expanded Multi-Channel Fulfilment (MCF) service offering, introducing advanced automation capabilities and flexible payment options.

The enhancement, unveiled on Monday, includes a comprehensive Integrations API suite and a Pay-on-Delivery (POD) payment option, now available to businesses across India following a successful pilot earlier in 2024. Originally launched at Amazon Smbhav 2023, the Multi-Channel Fulfilment service enables entrepreneurs to leverage Amazon's robust fulfilment network for orders from diverse sales channels, including their personal websites.

The service simplifies complex logistics by consolidating order processing, tracking, and shipping from a single inventory pool, allowing business owners to concentrate on core operational strategies. Currently, over 1,000 entrepreneurs and D2C brands, including notable names like Himalayan Organics, DermaTouch, and Satthwa, are utilising these MCF services

The newly introduced MCF Integrations API suite represents a technological breakthrough, automating order fulfilment processes for D2C sellers and Independent Software Vendors (ISVs). This He highlighted the company's innovation facilitates seamless vision of levelling the playing field egration with Amazon's fulfilfor businesses of ment infrastructure across muluting to the broader growth of Intiple sales platforms, enabling dia's digital economy by providing businesses to directly connect world-class fulfilment networks their online storefronts with the and cutting-edge technology.

amazon

company's logistics network.

Early adopters such as Webbee and ShipTurtle have already implemented this integrated solution, demonstrating its potential to streamline operations and minimise logistical errors.

A particularly noteworthy addition is the Pay-on-Delivery (POD) option, which addresses a critical market need in India's e-commerce ecosystem. Recognising that approximately 70 per cent of D2C orders in the country are cash-based, this feature allows customers to complete purchases on websites and social media stores with the flexibility of paying upon delivery. Industry experts anticipate this option will significantly enhance conversion rates and drive sales growth for MCF users. Vivek Somareddy, Vice President, Seller Experience, Emerging Markets and India Global Trade at Amazon, emphasised the strategic importance of this expansion. "We're committed to empowering small businesses and D2C brands with tools to thrive in today's e-commerce landscape," Somareddy stated.

. contrib

FW DESK

San Mateo (Calif) Freshworks Inc. (NASDAQ: FRSH) today announced Srini-

perience in the enterprise SaaS industry. Srini will lead and

Aditya Birla Finance Limited scale the Freshentered into a loan agreement works' product with Paul Packaging Private Limited on September 13, 2018,

Packaging Private Limited. The court's ruling aligns with the Supreme Court's established

jurisprudence, particularly its

sues regarding the agreement's effectiveness are to be decided by the arbitral tribunal itself.

substantive val

interpretation of Section 11(6)

of the Arbitration Act. The re-

ferral court is tasked only with

ensuring that an arbitration

dity or any is-

payments initially, it later defaulted on its equated monthly instalments (EMIs), breaching The dispute began when the terms of the loan agreement.

Freshworks executive management team, reporting directly to Chief Executive Officer and President Dennis Woodside.

mained the three focus markets for MODIFI, "India is our first and key export global market outside of Europe.'

AI-focused Partnerships of Global Pharmaceutical Companies



DR. ANIL **KRITIKA** KUMAR ANGRISH

arious digital tools, including Artificial Intelligence (AI), Real World Evidence (RWE), Blockchain, interconnected big data, Virtual Reality (VR), Augmented Reality (AR), among others are making significant impact across various sectors. Pharmaceutical sector is not companies have either partan exception in this regard.

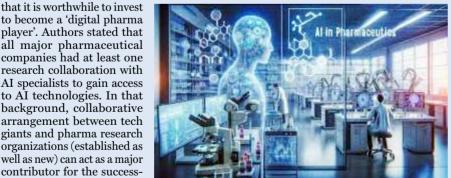
and Healthcare domain, e.g., Subrat et al. (2023) provided and Healthcare sector has athave deep expertise in the pharmaceutical and healthcare sectors. Schuhmacher et al. (2020) in the study titled

to become a 'digital pharma player'. Authors stated that all major pharmaceutical companies had at least one research collaboration with AI specialists to gain access to AI technologies. In that background, collaborative arrangement between tech giants and pharma research organizations (established as

well as new) can act as a major contributor for the successful implementation of digital tools

Almost all largest pharmaceutical companies have AI partnerships and collaborations. To leverage the potential of AI, these pharmaceutical nered with or acquired AI In recent years, multiple companies. By June 2023, studies have explored the Novartis had AI partnerships use of AI in Pharmaceutical with organizations such as IBM, Microsoft, MIT, Intel, Quantum black, Benevolent in-depth reviews of the use AI and XtaPi. Some of these of AI in disease diagnosis, AI firms/organizations had digital therapy, individualized collaboration with other phartreatment, drug development, maceutical companies as well, and epidemic or pandemic e.g., Microsoft and Benevolent forecasting. Pharmaceutical AI had AI partnerships with AstraZeneca whereas IBM, tracted the attention of Big MIT and XtaPI had AI part-Tech like Apple, Amazon, Al- nerships with Pfizer. At the phabet, Microsoft, and Meta same time, AstraZeneca had as these companies already AI partnerships with Berg, Illumina, Tencent and Schdigital sector. Schuhmacher rodinger. Same was the case et al. (2023) observed that for Pfizer that had AI part-Big Tech is expanding into nerships with other AI firms namely CytoReason, Tempus, Iktos, Atomwise and InSilico.

By June 2023, Merck had



Aera, Tencent. Roche, another prominent pharmaceutical company had multiple AI collaborations with organizations such as Owkin, Flatiron, Synapse, EarlySign, PathAI in addition to pharma/healthcare companies such as BMS and GNS Healthcare. GSK had AI partnerships with Insilico, Tempus, PathAI, Exscientia in addition to Cloud Pharmaceuticals. Johnson & Johnson had AI partnerships with Iktos, XtaPi, InSilico, Winterlight Labs and Benevolent AI. Bayer collaborated with Exscientia, Cyclica, Atomwise, Sensyne Health for leveraging opportunity in AI. Moderna's AI partnership with IBM, Amgen's collaboration with Generate Biomedicine and Owkin, Novo Nordisk's AI partnership with Microsoft and InSilico, and AbbVie's AI partnership with AiCure, Atomwise, Anima Biotech and HotSpot were other notable AI partnerships.

An interesting theme is that - The upside of being a digital AI partnerships with Cyclica, Big Tech companies have AI pharma player' demonstrated Iktos, Schrodinger, AbSci, partnerships with top global

pharmaceutical companies, and at the same time, those global pharmaceutical companies have AI partnerships with many other AI firms/organizations. Notable AI partnerships of Big Tech with top global pharmaceutical companies include Sanofi and Google, Novo Nordisk and Microsoft, Moderna and IBM in addition to earlier listed AI partnerships of Microsoft and IBM with Novartis, Microsoft and AstraZeneca, and IBM with Pfizer, to name a few. AI is being leveraged by

top global pharmaceutical companies across the value chain. For example, Pfizer partnered with various AI companies for drug discovery and the list of collaborators include MIT in the year 2014, IBM (2016), XtaPi (2018), Insilico Medicine (2020), Iktos (2021), Atomwise (2022) and CytoReason (2022). Pfizer collaborated with Concerto healthAi in 2017 for collecting and analyzing clinical data using advanced analytics and

therapies. For clinical development, Pfizer collaborated with Saama in 2020 and tempus in 2022. Pfizer partnered with Catalia Health and Complexica in 2019 and 2021 respectively for patient monitoring and support.

From 2011 to 2021, Novartis had multiple AI-based partnerships and collaborations which included partnering companies like Microsoft, MIT, Intel and Dyno Therapeutics for drug discovery. Novartis collaborated with Quantumblack to develop advanced analytics tools to help unlock insights from complex data sets, new targets for drug development, and streamline clinical trials. With Tencent, Novartis collaborated to develop and deploy innovative digital health tools, including disease management and patient monitoring solutions. BenevolentAI and Novartis came together in which AI and Machine Learning (ML) technologies were to be used to stratify patients and for better understanding of patient and disease heterogeneity, thereby allowing for more precise drug targeting for individuals who

AstraZeneca opted for the multitude of partnerships and collaborations in different phases of drug development process. In 2018, AstraZeneca collaborated with Alibaba.com to capitalize on their expertise in AI and the internet to focus on smart health services which

require it.

of chronic diseases. Astra-Microsoft to launch the AI Factory for Health for servwas positioned as a collaborative innovation hub to bring

together startups, research entities, and various industry stakeholders. Partnerships of AstraZeneca mainly focused on drug discovery, clinical development, commercialization, and patient monitoring & support.

Roche partnered with Syapse to use AI technology to identify potential therapeutic targets in the field of precision oncology using Real world data. Roche acquired Flatiron health which became a standalone unit later. This allowed Roche to cache of more than 2 million cancer patients' electronic health records, an information trove to help the company gain regulatory and payer approval for drugs among other uses. Medial EarlySign, a pioneering company developing AI based clinical predictive analytics had announced the signing of a parton innovative, evidence-based solutions for early detection of lung cancer.

ous AI companies across the value chain. In 2017, GSK collaborated with Exscientia to utilize its AI-driven platform in conjunction with own expertise to identify new and development. AI algorithms to accelerate included patient education, specific small molecules for up

Insilico medicine to leverage Zeneca also partnered with the target identification of multitude of therapy area and Cloud Pharmaceuticals ing as a robust accelerator to design novel small-molecule program for startups. This agents to GSK-specified targets. GSK collaborated with Tempus to enhance the design of clinical trials, accelerate patient enrolment, and identify potential drug targets. GSK also collaborated with PathAI to draw new insights which can be rapidly integrated into clinical trials. The company collaborated with NVIDA that was expected to contribute its deep expertise in GPU optimization and high-performance computational pipeline de-

velopment. Johnson & Johnson, another prominent pharmaceutical company, partnered with different AI companies, e.g., partnership with Iktos in 2019 to incorporate Iktos's virtual design technology into multiple small molecule drug discovery projects. Collaboration of J&J with BenevolentAI aimed at providing tailored solutions for Parkinson drug development. Partnership with XtaPi was aimed to nership with Roche to focus utilize its advanced end-toend platform called Inclusive Digital Drug Discovery & Development (ID4) that GSK partnered with vari- combined cloud-based computations and cutting-edge wet lab capabilities. Main aim was to reduce the time taken for the Design-Make-Test-Analyze (DMTA) cycle in drug

Eli Lilly collaborated with

the development of targeted prevention and management to 10 disease-related targets, specialists in AI such as Atomwise, Schrodinger, Genesis Therapeutics and Biolojic Design to use to use AI algorithms and softwares for drug discovery. Collaborators of AbbVie include Atomwise, AnimaBiotech, Hotspot and AiCure for target areas such as drug design and therapy adherence. The collaboration between Novo Nordisk and Microsoft combined Microsoft's computational services, Cloud, and AI capabilities with Novo Nordisk's expertise in drug development and data science.

> Most of these AI-partnerships of prominent pharmaceutical companies reveal that there is a growing recognition of the potential synergy between AI technologies and the pharmaceutical industry. From AI partnerships of top global pharmaceutical companies, it gets reflected that there is widespread adoption of multiple AI solutions at various stages of the drug discovery and clinical development, manufacturing and supply chain, commercialization, and patient support.

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

BANKING **S**FINANCE

RBI Raises Limit of Collateral-Free Agriculture Loans to Rs 2 Lakh Share Market Ends Flat, Sensex Settles

MUMBAI: The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) has decided to raise the limit for collateralfree agriculture loans from Rs 1.6 lakh to Rs 2 lakh to enhance coverage of small and marginal farmers and permit small finance banks to extend pre-sanctioned credit lines through UPI to small borrowers to ensure greater financial inclusion.

The two decisions were announced after the Monetary Policy meeting held here on Friday.

At present, banks are required to extend collateral-free agriculture loans up to Rs 1.6 lakh per borrower. This limit was enhanced from Rs 1 lakh, set in the year 2010 to Rs 1.6 lakh in the year 2019.

"Keeping in view the overall inflation and rise in ag-



ricultural input costs since said in a statement

then, it has been decided to In order to ensure greater raise the limit for collateralfinancial inclusion, the RBI free agriculture loans from has also decided to permit Rs 1.6 lakh to Rs 2 lakh. This small financial banks (SFBs) will enhance the coverage of to extend pre-sanctioned credit small and marginal farmers lines through the UPI. In September 2023, the in the formal credit system.

scope of the Unified Pay-The circular to this effect will be issued shortly," the RBI ments Interface (UPI) was

expanded by enabling pre-sanctioned credit lines to be linked through UPI and used as a funding account by Scheduled Commercial Banks but Payments Banks, Small Finance Banks (SFBs) and Regional Rural Banks were excluded from this ambit.

"Credit line on UPI has the potential to make available low-ticket, low-tenor products to 'new-to-credit' customers. SFBs leverage a high-tech, lowcost model to reach the last mile customer and can play an enabling role in expanding the reach of credit on UPI, the RBI said.

"It is, therefore, proposed to permit SFBs to extend presanctioned credit lines through the UPI. Necessary guidelines will be issued shortly," the RBI statement added.

at 81,709 after RBI MPC Decisions **MUMBAI**: The Indian stock

market closed flat on Friday after the announcement of the **RBI's Monetary Policy Com**mittee (MPC) decisions on repo and CRR rates, as selling was seen in IT, financial services, and pharma sectors and buying was seen in auto and metal stocks. At closing,

Sensex settled at 81,709.12, down by 56.74 points, or 0.07 per cent, and Nifty ended at 24,677.80, down by 30.60 points, or 0.12 per cent.

The result of the RBI MPC meeting saw the repo rate kept steady but a 50 basis point cut in CRR was seen as a major highlight. By maintaining the repo rate at 6.5 per cent and implementing a 50 bps CRR cut to 4 per cent, the central



bank has infused Rs 1.16 lakh crore into the banking system.

Nifty Bank ended at 53,509.50, down by 94.05 points or 0.18 per cent. The Nifty Midcap 100 index closed at 58,704.60 at the end of trading after gaining 263.05 points or 0.45 per cent. Nifty Smallcap 100 index closed at 19,492.10 after rising 158.55 points or 0.82 per cent.

In the Sensex pack, Bharti Airtel, Asian Paints, IndusInd Bank, Bajaj Finserv, Reliance,

Infosys, and UltraTech Cement were the top losers, whereas, Tata Motors, Axis Bank, Maruti, L&T and ITC were the top gainers.

Krishna Appala of Capitalmind Research said the broader markets witnessed a good recovery this week, with the Nifty 50 gaining 3.2 per cent, while the Midcap and Smallcap indices rose by 3.5 per cent and 3.3 per cent, respectively.

"FIIs also signalled a slow return, as data from the first week of December revealed a net cash market inflow of approximately Rs 14,000 crore. This comes as a welcome relief after the relentless selling pressure witnessed in November." Appala added.

UPI transactions may touch 25 billion a month towards 2025 end



NEW DELHI: The mega success story of Unified Payments Interface (UPI) continues, and t would be no surprise if the number of UPI transactions touches 25 billion a month towards the end of 2025, industry experts said on Monday.

After reaching a record high in October 2024 of 16.58 billion transactions and a value of Rs 23.50 lakh crore, UPI transactions in November stood at 15.48 billion transactions (38 per cent year-onear growth) with a value of Rs 21.55 lakh crore (24 per cent YoY growth).

According to Sunil Rongala SVP, Head–Strategy, Innova-tion and Analytics, Worldline India, October being the festive season saw a spike in transactions, which is usually seen across all spending channels.

'The number to consider is September 2024 transactions which was 15.04 billion indicating that UPI transactions are generally on a secular rise month-on-month," he said.

Given the trend and increased smartphone penetration, new use cases and the UPI on feature phones, "it will be no surprise if the number of UPI transactions touches 25 billion a month towards the end of 2025, "Rongala predicted.

The number of daily transactions stood at 516 million in November with Rs 71, 840 crore in daily transaction value. According to the NPCI data, the Immediate Payment Service (IMPS) transactions stood at 408 million with a total transaction amount of Rs

5.58 lakh crore in November. According to the government, UPI has not only made financial transactions fast, secure, and effortless, but it has also empowered individuals, small businesses, and merchants, driving the country's shift toward a cashless economy. This remarkable achievement highlights India's commitment to leveraging technology for inclusive growth and economic progress. UPI has transformed digital payments in India with its unparalleled ease, security, and ersatility The integr marks another revolutionary step in the digital payment landscape.

SBI Mutual Fund launches SBI Quant Fund



MUMBAI: SBI Mutual Fund is pleased to announce the launch of the SBI Quant Fund, an open-ended equity scheme that follows a quant-based investing theme. The scheme aims to generate long-term capital appreciation by investing in equity and equity-related instruments selected based on an in-house quant model. However, there can be no assurance that the investment objective of the Scheme will be realised. The fund's benchmark is the BSE 200 TRI

Nand Kishore, Managing Director & Chief Executive Officer, SBI Funds Management Limited, said, "As the largest fund house in the country we are committed to offering innovative investment solutions to our investors. The evolving landscape of factor-based investing presents significant opportunities for diversification and better risk-adjusted returns. Multi-factor investing combines various factors rather than focusing on a single one, helping to smooth out the cyclicality of returns and reduce behavioural biases in factor selection. Our SBI Quant Fund, based on an in-house multi-factor model incorporating Momentum, Value, Quality, and Growth factors for investors to diversify their superior risk-adjusted returns."



outflows. FCNR(B) deposits are deposits. Accordingly, with efaccounts where Non-Resident Indians (NRIs) can hold their fect from today (December 6, 2024), banks are permitted to earnings in foreign currencies like USD or GBP, protecting raise fresh FCNR(B) deposits of them from exchange rate fluc-1 year to less than 3 years matutuations. "In order to attract rity at rates not exceeding ARR more capital inflows, RBI has plus 400 bps and deposits with decided to increase the intermaturity between 3 to 5 years at est rate ceilings on FCNR (B) rates not exceeding ARR plus

500 bps. This relaxation will be available till March 31, 2025," an RBI statement said.

Until now, interest rates on Foreign Currency Non-Resident Bank (FCNR(B)) deposits were subject to ceilings of **Overnight Alternative Reference** Rate (ARR) for the respective

less than 3 years maturity and overnight ARR plus 350 basis points for deposits of 3 years and above and up to 5 years maturity, according to an RBI

The RBI has also decided to

Financial Benchmarks India Ltd (FBIL) is being requested to take the proposal forward.

up in line with the recommenon the MIBOR Benchmark.

SIDBI opens new branch in Karnal to boost MSME

Chandigarh

Micro, Small, and Medium Enter-Bank, Sarv Haryana Grameen

India records 45 pc surge in FDI to \$29.79 billion in April-Sept currency/swap, plus 250 basis points for deposits of 1 year to

statement. Banks have now been allowed to offer higher interest across the tenors.

move ahead with the introduction of the Secured Overnight Rupee Rate (SORR), a benchmark based on the secured money markets.

The proposal is being taken

dation of the RBI's Committee

India surged by a robust 45 per September during the current financial year compared to \$20.5 billion in the same period during 2023-24, according to figures compiled by the Department for Promotion of Industry and Internal Trade (DPIIT).

The main sectors of the economy that benefited from the FDI include services, automobile, computer software, IT hardware, telecom and pharmaceuticals and chemicals.

FDI inflows lead to higher investments and job creation in the economy along with better technology.

FDI in services has increased to \$5.69 billion during the first half of the current financial year as against \$3.85 billion in the same period last year. The data also show that FDI

inflows in non-conventional energy stood at \$2 billion. FDI inflows for the Julyber quarter iump

NEWDELHI: Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) inflows into cent to \$29.79 billion in April-

include equity investments, reinvested earnings and other

> State-wise the figures show that that Maharashtra received the highest inflow of 13.55 billion during April-September 2024-25.

(about \$4 billion).

The countries from which the FDI equity inflows took place during April-Sept of the current financial year include Mauritius (\$7.53 bil-lion against \$5.22 billion), the US (\$2.57 billion against \$2 billion), the Netherlands (\$3.58 billion against \$1.92 billion), the UAE (\$3.47 billion lavman against \$1.1 billion) 43 per cent to \$13.6 billion dur- Islands (\$235 million against RuPay credit cards with UPI ing the current financial year \$145 million) and Cyprus compared to \$9.52 billion in (\$808 million against \$35

Federal Bank Celebrates the Opening of its 200th Branch in Bangalore Zone

NEWDELHI: Federal Bank one of India's leading private sector banks, proudly announces the opening of its 200th branch in its Bangalore Zone. This milestone marks a significant achievement in the Bank's ongoing efforts to expand its footprint and enhance its services to customers across the region. With this, the Bank has more than 1530 branches across the country.

on their savings.

The new branch, located at Bangalore/Rama Murthy Nagar, was inaugurated by Mr B A Basavaraj, Former Institutions, Shalini War-Minister of Urban Develop- rier, ED Federal Bank and delighted to inaugurate the ment, Karnataka and Hon'ble other esteemed guests. The 200th branch of Federal Bank event was a grand celebra-Krishnarajanuram provides a strategic opportunity Constituency, in the pres- tion, reflecting the Bank>s new branch is a testament to associations. An MSME Cluster ence of Dr Santosh Koshy, commitment to providing our dedication to serving our portfolios with an aim to achieve MBBS, MD Paediatrician exceptional banking services customers with the highest nized, where speakers shared their



Director Little Flower and munity relationships. Koshy's Hospital Pvt Ltd and

Speaking at the inauguration, Dileep B, Senior Vice President chairman Koshy's group of and Zonal Head said, «We are in the Bangalore Zone.

growth in Haryana KULBIR SINGH KALSI

SIDBI inaugurated its new branch in Karnal, Harvana to enhance access to financial services and promote the growth of prises (MSMEs) in the industrial clusters of the region. The branch was inaugurated by Ajit Nath Jha, CGM, in the presence of senior officials from state and central governments, Punjab National

Bank, and representatives of varidustrial cluster bodies and

In the preceding April-June quarter, the country recorded a

47.8 per cent to \$16.17 billion. Total FDI inflows, which

capital, grew by 28 per cent to \$42.1 billion during the first half of the current fiscal year from \$33.12 billion in April-September 2023-24.

It was followed by Karnataka (\$3.54 billion), Telangana (\$1.54 billion) and Gujarat

& Neonatologist, Medical and fostering strong com- standards of banking services.

the PMI is 0.01 lower in No-

vember than in October, it

and August. PMI being above

50 indicates that the manu-

facturing and service sectors

a comparative study shows

that the performance of the

growth rate is the sluggishness

its average growth rate is just

GDP growth rate.

Outreach Program was also orgavision with local entrepreneurs.

the same quarter of 2023-24. million).

Inflation, an obstacle in cutting the repo rate

SATISH SINGH



cember 2024, in which the crude oil at the international most important issue of discussion will be the reduction inflation was at a 14-month in the repo rate, because the high of 6.21 percent, while repo rate has remained at 6.5 in September 2024 it was at which the loan rate of banks age inflation rate in the last 2 remains at a high level and months has been 5.9 percent. the loan uptake is low due to Companies are short of capislowed down

of the current financial year, the reported by 0.40 percent (GDP) stood at 5.4 percent, first quarter was 6.7 percent, while the GDP growth rate 8.1 percent.

in its latest forecast has pro- the calendar year 2024 to 7.1 jected GDP growth rate at percent from 6.8 percent and 7.2 per cent for FY 2024-25, 6.1 percent earlier. Although

per cent in the fourth quarter. At present, the inflation rate remains at a high level,

the reasons for which are glob-The Mone- al uncertainty, continuation of L tary Policy geopolitical crisis, unfavour-Committee able monsoon, high prices meeting run from 4 to 6 De- of food items, high prices of level, etc. In October 2024, percent for a long time, due to 5.5 percent. Thus, the aver-

The Reserve Bank of India borrowing at expensive rates. last increased the reportate by 0.25 basis points in February tal and due to these economic 2023, taking the reportate activities in the country have to 6.50. Before the Corona epidemic, the repo rate was During July to September at 5.15 percent on 6 February 2024 or the second quarter 2020. The Reserve Bank cut

the gross domestic product during 27 March 2020 to 9 October 2020. Subsequently, which is the lowest level in the Monetary Policy Committhe last 7 quarters. The main tee increased the reportate reason for the decline is the 5 times in its 10 meetings, significant decrease in the while keeping the repo rate growth rate in the manufac- unchanged 4 times and once turing and mining sectors. cutting the repo rate by 0.50 The GDP growth rate in the basis points in August 2022.

Even though the GDP growth rate has declined in the in the second quarter of the second quarter of the current financial year 2023-24 was financial year, global rating agency Moody's has raised In-The Reserve Bank of India dia's GDP growth forecast for pace

7 per cent for the third quarter Moody's has kept India's GDP and 7.4 per cent for the last growth forecast for 2025 unquarter, while inflation has changed at 6.5 percent, while been projected at 4.5 per cent the GDP growth rate forecast in FY 2024-25, 4.8 per cent for 2026 is 6.6 percent, but September and 57.5 in the



than many developed countries of the world.

Moody's has projected inflation in India to be 4.5 percent and 4.1 percent in 2025 and 2026. Inflation plays an important role in determining one's purchasing power. When inflation increases, the prices of both goods and services increase, which reduces the purchasing power of a person and reduces the demand for goods and services. Then, their sales decrease, their production decreases, the company suffers losses, workers are laid off, employment generation decreases, etc. As a result, economic activities slow down, and the pace of development is hampered. In such a situation, it would be appropriate to say that only by reducing inflation can the vehicle of development move forward at a fast

The HSBC manufacturing PMI prepared by global rating agency S&P was 58.4 in November 2024, which was 58.5 in the month of October. At the same time, it was at the level of 56.7 in the month of cantly during this period and in the third quarter and 4.2 these growth rates are better month of August. Although 6.7 percent since March. To

compensate for the reduction in bank deposits, banks are redeeming government bonds before the maturity date. Due to the shortage of capital, the borrowing has also come down significantly, as the bank is facing difficulty in lending due to lack of capital. At present, GDP growth

rate has declined, and inflation has increased. Inflation is expected to remain within the tolerance limit set by the Reserve Bank of India in FY is higher than in September 2025 and FY 2026, but due to many adverse effects of inflation, the Monetary Policy Committee is refraining from are on a bullish trend. Also, cutting the repo rate.

Due to the repo rate remaining at a high level, the manufacturing and service lending rate also remains at sectors has declined in August a high level, due to which retail and corporate loans and September. This is the reason why the GDP growth are not able to increase and rate has been low in the sececonomic activities remain ond quarter of the current stagnant due to lack of capital, financial year, because the which is negatively affecting reason for the decline in GDP the growth rate. This is an important reason for the decline in the manufacturing sector in GDP growth rate in the and the manufacturing sector second quarter of the current contributes significantly to the financial year

The central bank is keeping The repo rate has remained a close eye on the movement at 6.5 percent since February of inflation, as it is the biggest obstacle in the path of 2023, due to which the lending rate has also remained development, and it is also high. As of November 15, the cause of many types of 2024, the loan uptake has adverse effects. Therefore, come down to 11.1 percent, this time also the Monetary which was 20.6 percent in Policy Committee can keep the corresponding period last the repo rate unchanged at 6.5 percent. year. The deposit growth rate has also come down signifi-

Satish Singh, Ahmedabad Based Senior Columnist, views are personal

CRR cut to support growth, repo rate decision on expected lines: Industry

NEWDELHI: The BBI's decision to cut the cash reserve ratio (CRR) by 50 bps would help support growth, after the revision in the GDP forecast for FY25, industry experts said on Friday

The Central Bank's monetary policy committee (MPC) slashed the CRR for banks by 0.5 per cent to make more funds available for lending to spur economic growth.

The CRR is the proportion of deposits that banks have to set aside as idle cash in the system.

"The MPC's decision to keep the repo rate unchanged was along expected lines, with the CPI inflation exceeding the MPC's upper threshold of 6.0 per cent. However, the cut in the CRR by 50 bps would help support growth, after the downward revision in the forecast for FY2025, " said Aditi Nayar, Chief Economist at ICRA.

"If the CPI inflation retraces to below 5.0 per cent by the December 2024 print, the likelihood of a repo cut in February 2025 will rise

sharply, "Nayar added. The CRR cut aims to inject additional liquidity into the banking system, enabling banks to lower lending rates and increase credit availability, particularly for sectors struggling with subdued demand.

"This move reflects the central bank's nuanced approach to addressing India's economic challenges, bal- Head-Research and REIS,



ancing the need to stimulate India, JLL, the RBI's decigrowth while managing persistent inflationary pressures, said Narinder Wadhwa, Managing Director of SKI Capital.

The CRR reduction will likely benefit rate-sensitive sectors such as real estate, automobiles, and consumer durables by lowering borrowing costs and enhancing liquidity.

However, the RBI remains cautious about creating excess liquidity, which could lead to asset bubbles or speculative activity in overvalued markets, said experts.

The policy decision signals the RBI's intent to adopt a calibrated approach, using liquidity measures to support growth while maintaining vigilance over inflation and fiscal discipline.

According to Dr Samantak Das, Chief Economist and

sion to maintain the repo rate unchanged for the 11th consecutive time reflects a prudent approach to monetary policy with durable disinflation being the primary mandate.

"Inflation is seasonal in nature and is expected to reduce in the next quarter suggesting potential for future rate cuts, he said.

By maintaining the repo rate at 6.5 per cent and implementing a 50 bps CRR cut to 4 per cent, the central bank has infused Rs 1.16 lakh crore into the banking system.

"The RBI's December MPC decision reflects a delicate balancing act between addressing domestic liquidity challenges and managing external vulnerabilities, " said Arsh Mogre, Economist Institutional Equities, PL Capital - Prabhudas Lilladher.

INTERNATIONAL

B'desh removes Sheikh Mujib Rahman from banknotes, bans Hasina's speeches

Bangladesh's International Crimes Tribunal on Thursday ordered a ban on disseminating deposed Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina's "hate speeches" in the mainstream media and social media networks

DHAKA: Bangladesh's International Crimes Tribunal on Thursday ordered a ban on disseminating deposed prime minister Sheikh Hasina's "hate speeches" in the mainstream media and social media networks as the tribunal is set to try her on numerous charges of crimes against humanity.

The order follows Hasina's recent speech, her first public address after fleeing to India publishing and spreading any ing of the country — from its on August 5, in which she hate speech by ousted PM in currency notes. Bangladesh



mounted a stinging attack on all types of mass and social media," an said.

The country has also be-Muhammad Yunus, accusing him of perpetrating "genocide" gun the process of erasing and failing to protect minorithe image of Sheikh Mujibur ties including Hindus. "The Rahman -- her father and the ICT has banned broadcasting, iconic figure behind the found-

Bank is printing new notes including in them features of the July uprising, the Dhaka Tribune reported Thursday, referring to the student-led protests that forced Hasina to flee. Banknotes of Taka 20, 100, 500, and 1,000 are being printed on the instructions of the interim government.

Religious structures, Bengali traditions and "graffiti" drawn during the July uprising will be included, it said. "I hope the new note could be released in the market within the next six months," it quoted Bangladesh Bank executive director Husneara Shikha as saying.

Initially, the design of four notes is being changed and the others will be redesigned in phases, it read.

UN allocates \$5 Million for Sudanese Refugees in Chad amid Escalating Crisis

UNITED NATIONS: The UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) has announced the release of \$5 million in emergency funding to support Sudanese refugees in Chad, as the ongoing conflict in Sudan continues to displace thousands

Humanitarian Assistance for **Refugees and Host Communities**

UN Emergency Relief Coordinator Tom Fletcher allocated the funds from the UN Central **Emergency Response Fund** (CERF) to assist both refugees and local communities in Chad. The funding will help provide

- essential services, including: Healthcare Clean water Food assistance
- Shelter support OCHA highlighted that the

At least 30 Injured as 5.6 Magnitude Quake Shakes Iran



TEHRAN: At least 30 people India. were injured as an earthquake with a magnitude of 5.6 jolted the southwestern Iranian province of Khuzestan, the semi-offiial Fars news agency reported The quake, which occurred at Russia and India. 7:32 a.m. local time at a depth of Key Highlights of Putin's Address 10 km with its epicentre at Haft-Praise for 'Make in India' kel County, also shook Masjed Soleyman County and was felt Putin compared India's Make in the provincial capital Ahvaz, in India initiative with Russia's Xinhua news agency reported strategy to reduce reliance on quoting Fars. All the injured, imports and promote domestic except a child who had suffered manufacturing. a leg fracture, were released He commended the Indian government for fostering stable from the hospital after receiving outpatient treatments. Fars conditions conducive to investquoted Khuzestan Governor ment, particularly for small Mohammad Reza Mavalizadeh and medium-sized enterprises as saying. Mavalizadeh said that (SMEs) 296 residential units in Masjed Investment in India Solevman suffered damage in



Sudan to Chad, intensifying escalating violence in Sudan's the humanitarian crisis in the Darfur region has significantly increased the influx of refugees region into Chad, with over 70, 000

environment.

the country.

Putin highlighted the success

Violence in Sudan's Zamzam Camp new arrivals recorded in Sep-

Meanwhile, in Sudan, Clemtember and October alone. entine Nkweta-Salami, the UN Since the start of the conflict in April 2023, more than Resident and Humanitarian 700, 000 people have fled from Coordinator, expressed grave

concern over the ongoing violence near the Zamzam camp in El Fasher, western Sudan. Zamzam camp is Sudan's

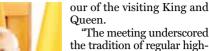
largest camp for internally displaced persons (IDPs), sheltering over 500, 000 people. The camp came under attack on Sunday and Monday, resulting in at least five deaths and 18 injuries, according to aid organizations. Nkweta-Salami emphasized the urgent need to protect civilians and called attention to the 232-day-long siege of El Fasher, urging the international community to respond swiftly to the deteriorating situation. The UN's latest funding underscores the growing urgency to address the humanitarian needs of both Sudanese refugees in Chad and

internally displaced popula-

tions in Sudan amid escalating

violence.

PM Modi and Bhutan King **Strengthen Bilateral Ties**



level exchanges between India and Bhutan, reflecting the spirit of mutual trust, cooperation and profound understanding that underpins the bilateral relations between the two countries, "the PMO stated. Earlier this year, during

his visit to Bhutan, PM Modi had appreciated the Bhutanese King's vision of the Gelephu Mindfulness City, which will the progress in enhancing lead to economic prosperity economic connectivity beand development in Bhutan tween the two countries, and in the region in a susand exchanged ideas on the tainable manner, and further Gelephu Mindfulness City strengthen economic and ininitiative, a visionary project vestment linkages between spearheaded by His Majesty India and Bhutan. "Be it a new airport for bet-

to catalyse Bhutan's development and strengthen linkages ter air connectivity, be it new rail links between Gelephu with adjoining border areas in India, " read a statement issued by the PMO reaffirmto Kokrajhar and Samtse to Banarhat, be it operations of ing New Delhi's commitment waterways through the Brahto further strengthening the maputra, we will soon see these exemplary partnership across projects completed swiftly. Inegrated Check Posts will also be built to strengthen trade It mentioned that the Bhuinfrastructure, " PM Modi had said while being contan King expressed gratitude to the Prime Minister and the ferred with Bhutan's highest people of India for steadfast National Award the 'Order of support of Bhutan's aspirations for happiness, progress the Druk Gyalpo' by the King of Bhutan in Thimphu on March

While welcoming Jigme 22, 2024. Khesar Namgyel Wangchuck The two sides had also and the Queen of Bhutan, Jetnoted the progress towards sun Pema Wangchuck, PM establishment of two rail-Modi also fondly recalled the links -- Banarhat (West "exceptionally warm hospital-Bengal)-Samtse (Bhutan) ity" accorded by the governand Kokrajhar (Assam)ment and the people of Bhutan Gelephu (Bhutan) -- as the during his State visit in March Northeast Frontier Railway (NFR) undertook the Final The discussions were fol-Location Survey (FLS) of the lowed by a lunch hosted by two rail-links in consultation with the Bhutanese side.

UNITED NATIONS: The United Nations has called on the Taliban to reconsider a reported directive that restricts women and girls from attending medical training programs in Afghanistan, warning of the dire consequences for the country's healthcare system and overall development.

UN Urges Taliban to

Reconsider Ban on

Women's Access to

Medical Training

UN Expresses Concern- Stephane Dujarric, spokesperson for the UN Secretary-General, addressed the issue at a press briefing, highlighting the serious implications of the Taliban's actions:

"We are concerned indeed about a reported directive from the de facto Taliban authorities that is preventing women and girls from attending classes at private medical institutions, " Dujarric said.

Reports indicate that both private and public institutions have been ordered to halt medical courses for women and girls, with several institutions already shutting down.

Impact on Healthcare and Rights : The directive, if enforced, would- Further restrict women's rights to education and professional training. Undermine Afghanistan's healthcare system, reducing the number of female healthcare workers critical to serving women and children, particularly in conservative regions where women prefer female medical professionals.

Hinder Afghanistan's development, as the exclusion of women from key sectors like healthcare limits the country's progress.

"This directive would have a detrimental impact not only on Afghan women and girls but on the entire population of Afghanistan, Dujarric warned, urging aliban to reco

Putin Lauds PM Modi's 'Make in India' Policy, **Expresses Russia's Willingness to Invest**

MOSCOW: Russian President Vladimir Putin praised Prime Minister Narendra Modi's 'Make in India' initiative, emphasizing its alignment with Russia's own import substitution program, and expressed Russia's readiness to establish manufacturing operations in

Speaking at the 15th VTB Russia Calling Investment Forum in Moscow, Putin highlighted the potential for deeper operation



Five people injured in Philippine Navy helicopter crash

NEW DELHI: Prime Minister

Narendra Modi has reiterated

India's strong commitment to

Bhutan's economic develop-

ment, highlighting the dou-

bling of India's development

support to the neighbouring

country for its 13th Five-Year

Plan period during his meeting

with Jigme Khesar Namgyel

Wangchuck in New Delhi, on

"Delighted to welcome Their

Majesties, the King and Queen

of Bhutan, to India. Admire

His Majesty Jigme Khesar Namgyel Wangchuck's vi-

sion for Bhutan's progress

and regional development. We

remain committed to advanc-

ing the unique and enduring

partnership between India and

Bhutan, "PM Modi posted on

X after his meeting with the

The PMO detailed that PM

Modi and the visiting Bhuta-

nese King expressed satisfac-

tion at the "excellent state of

bilateral relations", encompass-

ing development cooperation,

clean energy partnership, trade

and investment, space and

technology cooperation, and

King of Bhutan.

Thursday



MANILA: A Philippine Navy AgustaWestland AW 109 helicopter crashed on Thursday

spokesman for Civil Defence in crisis due to fuel shortage in the za told Xinhua news agen humanita ian are that the raid killed 15 people, that the continued prevention of including children and women. fuel supply threatens the lives of thousands of displaced people. The Israeli army has not commented on this incident, Xinhua Israel has been launching a large-scale offensive against news agency reported. Also on Thursday, the General Direc-Hamas in Gaza to retaliate torate of Civil Defence in Gaza against a Hamas rampage warned of a possible suspension through the southern Israeli of services and humanitarian border on October 7, 2023, durinterventions it provides to dising which about 1,200 people were killed and around 250 placed citizens residing in what others taken hostage. was designated by the Israeli The Palestinian death toll army as a "humanitarian area' in southern Gaza. Muhammad from ongoing Israeli attacks in the Gaza Strip has risen to Al-Mughair, director of supply for Civil Defence in Gaza, said 44,580, Gaza-based health auin a press statement that the thorities said in a statement on Civil Defence is suffering from a Thursday.





people-to-people ties. "The leaders reviewed the Prime Minister in hon-Israeli Airstrike kills 15

GAZA: At least 15 Palestinians were killed in

an Israeli airstrike on Israeli warplanes

2024.

the northern Gaza Strip, Palestinian sources said. targeted a residential house in the town of Beit Lahia, according to local sources and eye-

all sectors.

and prosperity.

witnesses on Thursday Mahmoud Basal,

Putin revealed that Rus- like consumer goods, IT, high-

sian oil giant Rosneft has retech, and agriculture.

cently invested \$20 billion He underscored the need in India, showcasing Russia's for greater cooperation confidence in India's economic among BRICS nations to support SME growth and He emphasized that investfacilitate smooth business ing in India is profitable and transactions

that Russia is keen to expand Putin called for the development of a rapid dispute resoluits manufacturing footprint in tion mechanism to enhance business operations within SME Growth and BRICS Collaboration **BRICS**+ countries

Future of BRICS Cooperation

of Russian SMEs in replacing Western brands that exited the Putin urged BRICS nations to Russian market due to geopolitiidentify key areas of collaboracal tensions, especially in sectors tion for the upcoming BRICS summit in Brazil next year.

port in Cavite province, south of Manila, injuring five people, including two pilots, according to naval spokesperson Commander John Percie Alcos. Details of the Incident

The helicopter was conducting a functional check flight after a maintenance inspection when it crashed.

Injuries : Two pilots and three crew members sustained minor cuts, bruises, and a minor fracture.

All injured personnel were conscious and have been transported to a military hospital for medical evaluation.

Continued International Pressure- The UN and other international bodies continue to advocate for the rights of Afghan women and girls, emphasizing that their access to education and healthcare is essential for the country's stability and prosperity. This latest restriction

adds to a series of measures imposed by the Taliban since their return to power in 2021, severely curtailing women's rights and freedoms across various sectors.

US President Behaves Like the Blind King Dhritarashtra of Mahabharata Period

BIDEN PARDONS HUNTER



the quake.

he lame duck US in India

dent, Joe Biden, has finally pardoned his son Hunter facing criminal charges, including drug abuse and tax evasion cases

Dhritarashtra being blind criminal activities. In spite since birth, was replaced by of being the son of President his younger brother, Paandu, to rule the kingdom of Hastinapur, now a part of NCR. His ambitious eldest son, Duryodhana, and his younger brothers tutored by their maternal hishthir, the eldest brother of the five sons of the king, Paandu.

should be the king. For this,

epic war fought at the Kurukshetra, a historical place in the present state of Haryana Similarly, Hunter is known

for indulging in vices, including in shady nbusiness deals in Ukraine and China. However, he has never been prosecuted for his activities in China and Ukraine, but he could not es-It may be recollected that cape from the law in other

Biden Administration, he was being prosecuted for tax evasion and also obtaining firearms

He had been scheduled to face sentencing on Dec. 12 uncle, Shakuni, were either for gun charges and Dec. 16 indulging in luxuries and ac- for tax charges, but these fitivities unbecoming of a prince nal hearings for sending him or conspiring against Yud- to jail might never take the place following the presidential pardon.

The sudden decision of Durvodhana was keen that Biden to you pardon his son instead of Yudhishthir, he reminds civil society across the continents that the funhe always had been hatching damentals of governance, conspiracies, which finally which depend upon fair play led to the Mahabharata, the and the ethical values, are



being violated in the world's most powerful democracy. Few are ready to go accept Biden's claim that his son, Hunter, was being selectively targeted; on the other hand hand, it is also being being

believed that the decision of the President -elect Donald Trump is to appoint Kas Patel as. the new FBI chief might have panicked the outgoing call president.

special counsel, David Weiss, who is prosecuting Hunter in the courts of Delaware and California, has contradicted the President under the spell

of his fatherly love, perhaps is imitating llegendary king Dhritarashtra, whose blind love for his notorious son had finally scripted the Mahabharata War.

In his statement Biden had stated that he was reversing his previous pledge that not to invoke the Presidential authority for his son, but he had to take this decision because all president. his son, Hunter, was being On December 3, 2024, the targeted by those opposed to his Administration. Interestingly, even a few judges, including those appointed by the outgoing president do not endorse his claim. They don't rocket, Space-X. Since the

agree that the ongoing criminal cases against Biden should be closed.

Meanwhile, the ongoing political conflict between Biden and Trump appears to be continuing despite the stunning defeat of the Democratic Party nominee, Kamala Harris, presently Vice Presi-

dent of the USA. Instead of accepting the people's verdict gracefully, the Biden proxies are continuing to implicate Trump's trusted men in dif-

ferent cases. On December four, a federal district court judge, Jacqueline Scott Corley,

delivered a three-page verdict refusing to impose sanctions against Elon Musk for not appearing before the court. In a case against Musk, the Security Exchange Board has asked for imposing sanctions against Musk for not being present before the previous hearing. It, however, was claimed that Musk was present far off on the eastern coast for launching his

launch was solely dependent upon the obtaining weather conditions, he could not be

present during the hearing before the court.

It appears that the judiciary and even the FBI are reluctant to serve Biden's political as well as personal interests. It will not be surprising if Biden's pardon could be diluted during the forthcoming judicial process

It is yet to be ascertained whether Biden's agenda of further humouring the military-industrial complex by funding Ukraine with more financial assistance could succeed before he finally demits his office on January 20, 2025. It, however, cannot be denied that Biden's last minute activities are being closely watched across the continents.

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

UN General Assembly Reaffirms Two-State Solution as Path to Middle East Peace

UNITED NATIONS: The UN General Assembly (UNGA) adopted two significant resolutions, reaffirming the two-state solution as the only viable path to lasting peace between Israel and Palestine, and calling for Israel's withdrawal from occupied territories, including the Palestinian territories and the Syrian Golan Heights.

Resolution on Palestinian Territories

With 157 votes in favour, eight against, and seven abstentions, the UNGA:

Demanded Israel cease settlement activities and evacuate settlers from the occupied Palestinian territories.

Reaffirmed "unwavering support" for a two-state solution based on international law.

Urged a renewed commitment to the Middle East peace process to resolve the longstanding conflict.

Resolution on the Syrian Golan Heights

A second resolution declared Israel's jurisdiction over the Syrian Golan as "null and void" and called for compli-



ance with UN Security Council Resolution 497 (1981), which demands Israel's withdrawal from the region.

It also urged Israel to resume peace talks with Syria and Lebanon.

UNGA President's Appeal for Peace

UNGA President Philemon Yang emphasized the urgency of achieving peace, stating:

"Peace and security will never be achieved through force or occupation.'

He called for: An immediate ceasefire in

Gaza. The unconditional release

of all hostages. A collective effort to end hostilities and pursue peace, saying, "Now is the time for all to bury the hatchet for once and for all.'



POTPOURRI



An Sikh priest carries the Guru Granth Sahib (Sikh holy book) during a religious procession on the eve of Sikh Guru Tegh Bahadur's martyrdom day, at Sri Darbar Sahib on Thursday **PHOTO : PRABHJOT GILL**

Diljit Dosanjh shares his hilarious schedule from 'a day in Punjab'

MUMBAI: Punjabi sensation Diljit Dosanjh has shared a glimpse of "a day in Punjab", where he was seen making food and playing cricket.

Diljit took to Instagram, where he shared a reel video. In the clip, he is first seen starting his day with exercise, having paranthas for breakfast, gorging on fresh fruits, playing cricket and then making chicken in an earthen pot on a "chulha". What makes the video special is the hilarious commentary by Diljit in Punjabi.

For the caption, he wrote: "Day in PANJAB (sic)."

He will be performing in Bengaluru, Indore and Chandigarh. His tour will conclude on December 29 in Guwahati. On November 30, Diljit

was in Kolkata and took to Instagram to share pictures from his visit to Kolkata. In the pictures, Diljit can be seen roaming around Kolkata, buy-

GULSHAN KUMAR

Chandigarh



ambassador taxis of Kolkata, pants and a yellow coloured which was once an English turban presidency.

He wrote in the caption, Diljit paused his performance "Kolkata 24". after he spotted the fans Diljit was seen dressed in a watching the show from the

balcony of the hotel. A video which went viral on the Internet showed Diljit questioning those fans watching his show from a hotel balcony without tickets.

He then asked his team to stop playing the music. He then pointed in the front, and said, "Yeh jo hotel ki balcony mein baithe hai, aap ka toh bada accha bhi hoya. Yeh hotel waale game kar gaye (Those who are sitting in the hotel balcony this is good for you. The hotel outsmarted us). Without tickets, huh?"

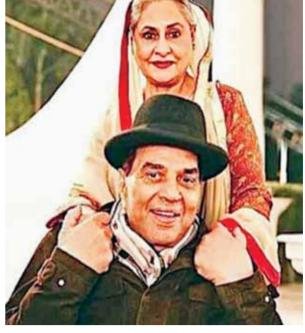
Talking about his acting, Diljit was last seen in the romantic comedy film "Jatt & amp; Juliet 3" directed by Jagdeep Sidhu. It is a spiritual successor to Jatt &Juliet and Jatt & Juliet 2. It also stars Neeru Bajwa, reprising their Prior to this, in Ahmedabad, roles from the previous films, alongside, Jasmin Bajwa, Rana Ranbir, B. N. Sharma, and Nasir Chinvoti

Dharmendra shares fond memory with 'Guddi' Jaya Bachchan

MUMBAI: Veteran actor Dharmendra recently took to social media to share a cherished memory with Java Bachchan, fondly addressing her as "Guddi."

The heartwarming post featured a photograph of the two icons together. On Sunday, he shared a photo of himself and Jaya posing together. In the caption, he referred to the actress as his "loving doll" and a "worldclass artist." Sharing the image, Dharmendra wrote, "Guddi will always be my loving doll. She is a world-class artist, and she always talks highly about me. (From Guddi to Rocky Aur Rani Ki Prem Kahani).'

In the photo, the actor is seen sitting while Jaya stands behind him. Their bond has stood the test of time, evolving beautifully over the decades. Dharmendra's reference to "Rocky Aur Rani Ki Prem Kahani, "their recent collaboration, highlights the continuity of their connection as the two reunited on-screen to deliver memorable perfor-



the post, celebrating the legacy cially @jaya_bhaduri ji, "while of the two icons who continue to inspire generations with their artistry. One fan com-Fans quickly responded to mented, "I love Guddi, espe-

another wrote, "Super jodi." 1971 Indian Hindi drama

THE STATE GOVERNMENT

FROM TIME TO TIME HIS

PUT PRESSURE ON THE

PUNJAB GOVT THROUGH

THE NATIONAL MINORITY

ATTITUDE OF THE GOVT IN

THIS REGARD HAS BEEN

shops should be opened

on alternative days. In this

regard, the commission has

also issued a notice to the

Punjab Govt, on which the

Govt has not given any re-

ply. On March 29 last year,

Raju had filed a petition in

Mann government had also

given an undertaking that

the proposal is under con-

sideration. On the basis of

the undertaking, the court

take any action for the last

contempt petition against

the Govt. The High Court

Govt to file a compliance

also disposed of the case.

When the Govt did not

the Punjab and Ĥaryana

on which the Bhagwant

DISAPPOINTING

COMMISSION, BUT THE

EFFORTS HAVE BEEN FAILED.

HE SAID THAT HE HAS ALSO

Speaking of "Guddi, " the

was directed by Hrishikesh

Memorandum submitted to Sri Akal Takht for Amritsar to be **'Holy City'**

ਅੱਜ ਨਹੀਂ ਤੇ ਕਦ ਸ੍ਰੀ ਅੰਮ੍ਰਿਤਸਰ ਸਾਹਿਬ ਜੀ ਨੂੰ ਮਵਿੱਤਰ ਸ਼ਹਿਰ ਦਾ ਦਰਜਾ ਦਿਵਾਉਣ ਲਈ ਮੇਰੀਅ

Harmandir Sahib with former IAS officer Dr. Raju

FW DESK Amritsar

The former IAS officer and member of the National Minority Commission, Dr. Jagmohan Singh Raju who is striving to get the status of 'Holy City' (Dharam Nagari) for Guru Amritsar intensified his efforts along with hundred of supporters outside Harmandir Sahib on Saturday. Nearly 400 supporters and devotees strengthened this mission folk artistes from various vil- and affirmed that they will nut pressure on the S

matter of utter disappointment for Sikhism and city residents that the sanctity of the world famous Amritsar has not been recognized High Court in this matter, as a holy city. On the lines of Vatican, Jerusalem, Mecca, the pilgrimage of the Sikhs, Amritsar should also be given this status. Despite reminding the state government from time to time his efforts have been failed. He said 16 months, Dr. Raju filed a that he has also put pressure on the Punjab Govt through the National Minority Commission, but has directed the Punjab the attitude of the Govt in this regard has been disappointing. In the recomons given to the mendat commission, he advocated for the holy city that there should be a complete ban on the consumption and sale of alcohol and tobacco within a radius of about one mile of the historic Gurudwaras of the city. Smoking and drinking alcohol should be banned in public areas. Like October 2, holy days like Gurpurab should be declared dry days. He also demanded that liquor

Mukherjee and written by Gulzar. It starred Dharmendra, Jaya Bachchan, and Utpal Dutt. The film was Jaya's debut and career-defining project, featuring her as a schoolgirl harbouring a crush on and an obsession with actor Dharmendra, who portrayed himself.

Dharmendra and Jaya have also worked together in iconic films, including "Sholay." Most recently, they appeared in Karan Johar's "Rocky Aur Rani Ki Prem Kahani." The film featured Ranveer Singh and Alia Bhatt as the lead couple, with Dharmendra, Jaya, Shabana Azmi, Tota Roy Chowdhury, Churni Ganguly, Aamir Bashir, and Kshitee Jog playing supporting roles.

In the movie, Jaya Bachchan portrayed Dhanlakshmi Randhawa, Rocky's grandmother, while Dharmendra played Kanwal Lund, Rocky's grandfather. Produced under Dharma Productions and Viacom18 Studios. the film marked Johar's directorial comeback after "Ae Dil Hai Mushkil" in 2016.

Uber launches app for Shikara booking service on famous Dal lake



FW DESK Srinagar

> Uber has introduced a water transport service on the famous Dal Lake in Srinagar, Jammu & Kashmir, enabling tourists and locals to book rides on the region's iconic shikaras through its app. This marks Uber's first vater transport venture in India, joining similar services it operates in cities like London. Travelers can reserve rides on the traditional vooden boats, known for their vibrant canopies and intricate decorations, at least 12 hours and up to 15 days

in advance. Dal Lake is home to around 4,000 shikaras, which have long been a staple for both local commutes and tourism. While Uber will facilitate bookings, it will not charge a fee, ensurng that operators receive the full fare paid by passengers. The move has received mixed reactions from shikara operators. Wali Mohammad Bhatt, president of the Shikara Owners Association, welcomed the development, and convenience for custom ers as key benefits. However, some operators were skeptical, believing it would have little impact on their established customer base. Srinagar's Dal Lake, surrounded by houseboats and the Himalayas, remains one of Kashmir's most prominent attractions, and Uber's new service may further boost the region's recover-

ing tourism industry.

report before December 10. Raju reiterated that the Fovt will have to clarify its stand in this regard. If the Govt ignores this issue, then he will strengthen his campaign with public support. Amritsar can also be given

showcase Haryana's vanishing folk arts

Gita Mahotsav becomes a platform to

in traditional costumes. The state government is continuously working to provide platforms like International Gita Mahotsav to encourage such artistes. On the seventh day of the Shilp and Saras Mela, res of Harvana made the

Public support gathered outside Sri



Folk arts like Dheru Gayan Gatha, Baazigar Kala and Kachhi Ghodi are being performed on the banks of the Brahma Sarovar. Through this festival, not only is the government trying to keep the folk culture alive, employment opportunities are also being provided to folk artistes.

The International Gita Ma-

hotsav has become a platform

to preserve many genres of

folk art and culture of Hary-

ana which are on the verge of

The North Zone Cultural Art Centre, Patiala, Harvana Art International Gita Mahotsav. and Cultural Affairs Department, Haryana Arts Council



and Kurukshetra Development Board along with the state government are working to preserve the folk culture of not just Haryana but also of other states and provide a platform to the artists through the

and Khanjari.

He said the fellow artistes in his group are also working with him to keep this art alive. All of them are entertaining people by playing Been, Tum-A folk artiste said only a few of ba, Dholak, Khanjari dressed them are left in Haryana who

Dheru Gatha singing on the northern bank of the Brahma Sarovar. These folk artistes praised the saga of Guru Goare carrying forward the Jogi Nath Been Sapera tradition by playing Been, Tumba, Dholak rakh Nath ji and of Jahveer Gugga Peer through Dheru Gatha singing. Expressing gratitude to the government and administration, an artiste said through the International Gita Mahotsav, an effort is

arts alive.

Govt favouring the Amritsar tourists dance by presenting for the status of Holy City like other religious cities in the country. Earlier, while leading this campaign, Dr. Raju submitted a memorandum to office of the Shri Akal Takht's Jathedar Sahib wherein he put forward his demands to which he also consented for this noble cause being made to keep the folk

Addressing the media, Dr. Raju said that it is a

the status of Holy City on the lines of Haridwar, Ayodhya, Dwarka in the country, where smoking and alcohol can be completely banned around religious places. The state Govt and the municipal corporation can issue an ordinance for this execution.

Sonia Mann Arrested for Speaking Out Against Industrial Waste in Sutlej River



KULBIR SINGH KALS Ludhiana

Renowned actress and social activist Sonia Mann was arrested on Tuesday during a protest against the alarming industrial pollution affecting Budha Nallah and the Sutlej River. The protest highlighted the hazardous release of untreated wastewater from Ludhiana's industries into Budha Nallah, leading to widespread environmental and health crises. Sonia Mann, known for her

outspoken stance on social issues, joined concerned citizens in demanding immediate action against the contamination. Protesters accused industries of discharging untreated waste immediate action to stop this directly into water bodies, a

practice that has severely polluted drinking water sources, spread skin diseases and even contributed to cases of skin cancer in nearby communities.

The protest turned intense as activists raised slogans demanding government accountability. Police intervened, detaining Sonia Mann and others at Dogri police station for an entire day, citing disruption of public order.

Before her arrest, Sonia Mann stated, "The pollution of Budha Nallah is not just an environmental issue-it's a humanitarian crisis. The contaminated water flowing into the Sutlej River is poisoning our people and future generations. We need accountability and

catastrophe.

Jalandhar Players Shine at Punjab **Badminton Championship**

DC Himanshu Aggarwal Honors Winners, Urges Youth to Prioritize Sports

FW DESK Jalandhar

The Punjab State Senior Badminton Championship concluded on a high note at the Raizada Hansraj Badminton Stadium in Jalandhar, with local players dominating the event. Jalandhar's Manya Ralhan and Mridul Jha emerged as standout performers, each claiming double crowns in their respective categories. Ralhan triumphed in both the Women's Singles and Doubles, while Jha secured victories in the Men's Singles and Mixed Doubles. Additionally, Adhyan Kakkar from Amritsar earned titles in both the Men's Doubles and Mixed Doubles, making it a memorable competition for the region.

DBA Secretary Ritin Khanna shared that approximately 200 players participated in five events, including Singles, Doubles and Mixed Doubles. This year's championship marked a milestone for the Punjab Badminton Association as it intro-



duced cash prizes totaling Rs. 2 lakhs for the first time in its history. The winners were presented with their awards by the Chief Guest, Dr. Himanshu Aggarwal, IAS, Deputy Commissioner of Jalandhar. In addition, Inayat Gulati from Jalandhar and Jagshar Khangura from Patiala were recognized with cash prizes of Rs. 11,000 each for their exceptional achievements.

The victorious players will represent Punjab at the upcoming National Championship in Bengaluru later this month. Speaking at the ceremony, Dr.

Aggarwal encouraged the youth to make sports an integral part of their lives, highlighting the physical, mental, and personal development benefits it offers. He emphasized that success in sports fosters key life skills such as perseverance, teamwork, and focus, all of which are essential for success in any field.

The event was attended by several dignitaries, including PBA Secretary Anupam Kumaria, Rakesh Khanna, Naresh Budhia, Anil Bhatti, A.K. Kaushal, Dheeraj Sharma, Mayank Behl, and Parminder Sharma.

Himachali singers Kaku Thakur & Geeta Bhardwaj steal show

KULBIR SINGH KALSI Chandigarh

Undeterrd by the traffic restrictions imposed by the Chandigarh Administration, ahead of PM Narindra Modi's visit to city, thousands of Mela enthusiasts on Tuesday thronged the Crafts Mela and enjoyed the haunting folk tunes of various regions. In the regular morning and evening sessions of the high-octave event, the stage formances included Rajasthani folk singing by Murli Rajasthani, which was followed by folk dances, including Jhoomar (Pb), Sirmauri Naati (HP), Badhai (MP), Rakhi pada (Arunachal), Panthi bhapang badan by by Yusuf Khan. Jaabro (Ladakh), Balti (Ladakh) Kalbelia (Rajasthan), and Dhamaali (J&K). The star performers of the day were Sukhi Brar and Naqqal Goni Khan, who took the stage by storm. 'Kachi Ghori (Raj), Behurupiyas, Nachar and Baajigar (Pb) Nagada and Been

Jogis(Har) were the regu-





lar ground performances. The daily quiz contest for children attracted more than 200 participants. The On-the-spot photog-

raphy competition on the theme "Glimpses from Crafts Mela" orgaised by the Chandigarh Lalit Kala Akademy also elicited an overwhelming resposponse from the participants. The star singers of the evening were well-known singers of Himachal Pradesh, Kaku Ram Thakur and the reigning queen of Pahadi folk singing, Geeta Bhardwaj, brought live the divine folk music from the hills.