

NEW DELHI • CHANDIGARH • WEEKLY • SATURDAY • JANUARY 11, 2025 • VOLUME 14, ISSUE 41 • Rs 5

REGION



DELHI POLLS AN OPPORTUNITY TO CHOOSE BETWEEN AAP'S CORRUPTION AND BJP'S DEVELOPMENT, SAYS JP NADDA

BANKING & FINANCE



CENTRE RELEASES OVER RS 1.73 LAKH CRORE TO STATES AS SHARE IN TAXES

POTPOURRI



SURAKSHA REALTY TO CONTINUE MAINTAINENCE OF KOSMOS, AMAN SAYS NOIDA AUTHORITY

Delhi L-G Saxena issues gazette notification for Assembly elections



NEW DELHI: Lieutenant Governor VK Saxena on Friday issued a gazette notification for the Assembly elections in the Capital, following recommendations from the Election Commission (EC).

According to the official accordance with the provinotification dated January sions outlined in Section 15 10, the election schedule had of the Representation of the been announced in accor- People Act, 1951, and subdance with the Representa- section (2) of the same section, tion of the People Act, 1951. the Lieutenant Governor has The notification read, "In called upon all the Assembly

constituencies within Delhi to conduct elections for the Legislative Assembly."

"The Lieutenant Governor of the National Capital Territory of Delhi is hereby pleased to call upon all Assembly constituencies in the National Capital Territory of Delhi, to elect members to the Legislative Assembly of the National Capital Territory of Delhi, in accordance with the provisions of the said Act and of the rules and orders made thereunder," it added.

The Election Commission had announced the election schedule for the ninth Delhi Assembly election on January 7. Voting will occur on February 5 from 7 am to 6 pm and the results will be declared on February 8, while the election process will conclude by February 10. The current Assembly will stand dissolved on February 23, paving the way for the formation of a new government, the notification said further.

India to Continue as Fastest-Growing Major Economy Globally: Report



NEW DELHI: India will continue to stand out as the fastest-growing major economy dia's vibrant digital economy globally in the coming years with growth momentum to improve in 2025 as government spending is picking up again and consumer sentiment stays resilient, according to a Franklin Templeton report.

The structural growth outlook for India's economy remains very much intact, with various signs indicating that the slowdown in 2024 will be transitory, the report said. "All in all, we believe India

can comfortably maintain its position as the world's fastestgrowing major economy, with GDP growth of around 6.5 per cent until at least 2029. people in India's wealthiest class could grow three-fold,"

the report said. "We also stay positive on Inand its beneficiaries, as well as the structural growth potential in the healthcare sector," it said.

India's economic growth slowed in 2024, with gross domestic product (GDP) year-onyear growth of just 5.4 per cent in the fiscal second quarter (July-September), the lowest in seven quarters. As a result, growth for the full fiscal year ending March 2025 will likely be 6.6 per cent, moderating from 8.2 per cent from a year earlier, based on Reserve Bank of India (RBI) forecasts.

The report said the slowdown is temporary, with deferred government spending in a general election year the primary cause. Heavy monsoon rainfall during the summer also proved disruptive to economic activities. Several high-frequency data points are showing improving underlying conditions for a recovery in growth.

DENSE FOG GRIPS DELHI-NCR IMD predicts light rain, temperature drop



and engineering projects will

bolster company confidence to

invest and hire more actively.

a major driver for India's

economy and it is showing

stronger growth momentum

in the second half of this year.

Consumer sentiment also re-

mains resilient and year-ahead

optimism has held firm, indi-

cating a post-election recovery.

Consumption growth should

find further support if inflation

cools in 2025. The Consumer

Price Index (CPI) inflation rate

will moderate from 5.7 per

cent in the October-December

quarter of 2024 to 4 per cent in

the July-September quarter of

2025, based on RBI forecasts,

The resumption of govern-

ment spending, private sector

capex growth and the resil-

ience of domestic consump-

tion, among other factors, may

help India's economy return to

normalcy in 2025. As growth

accelerates again, the stage is

set for earnings recovery, the

the report said.

report added.

Private consumption is

skies and light rain in the region. The cold conditions are expected to persist, offering no immediate relief from dense fog and cold waves.

The IMD has forecast cloudy skies with light rain or drizzle during the morning hours on January 11 and 12. Over the past 24 hours, the city experienced a sharp drop in temperature, with readings dipping as low as 1 degree Celsius. Maximum and minimum temperatures were recorded between 18-22 degrees Celsius and 6-8 degrees Celsius, respectively. Although the fog is expected to clear gradually as the day progresses, light rain could prolong its impact. The minimum temperature in the capital is predicted to drop further to around 5 degrees Celsius in the coming days. Visibility conditions in Safdarjung initially dropped to 50 meters at 1:30 am but improved to 200 meters later. In Palam, visibility dropped to zero for three hours until 2 am, with easterly winds blowing at 6-8 km/h. Conditions improved gradually, reaching 500 meters by 7 am as winds shifted to the east-southeast at speeds of 15-18 km/h.

Union Budget Falls on Saturday this Year, **Stock Exchanges to Remain Open**



NEW DELHI: As the preparations for the Union Budget 2025-26, which generally comes on February 1, are in full swing, all eyes are now on the official confirmation from the government about presenting the bud-

There have been occasions in the past when the Union Budget tic stock markets e domest were open. On February 1, 2020, and February 28, 2015, the markets were open on Saturday due to the presentation of the Union Budget. In a circular dated December 23, the National Stock Exchange (NSE), has already said that due to the presentation of the Union Budget, a special trading session has been kept for Saturday, February 1, 2025.

Kejriwal targets Centre, demands inclusion of Delhi's Jat community in Central OBC list



NEW DELHI: As Assembly ing to deliver on its promises. "In 2015, the BJP invited elections draw closer in Delhi, get over the weekend this year. AAP convener and former Jat leaders to the prime minchief minister Arvind Kejriister's residence and assured wal on Thursday accused the them that Delhi's Jat com- OBC list to ensure they receive was presented on Saturdays BJP-led Central government munity would be included in reservations in Central governthe Central OBC list. Union s promise Home Minister Amit Shah promised the same in 2019. However, nothing has been done to fulfil these promises," Keiriwal said. Drawing comparisons, he questioned why Jat students from Rajasthan benefit from reservations in Delhi University (DU), while Jat students from Delhi are denied the

"Thousands of children from the Jat community in Delhi are unable to secure admission in DU because they are not part of the Central OBC list," he said.

Kejriwal also alleged that despite Delhi's Jats being recognised under the OBC category in the state, the Central government has refused to extend the benefits to them.

"This is nothing but betrayal. The Centre must include Delhi's Jat community in the ment institutions, in uding

President Murmu urges Indian diaspora to contribute towards Viksit Bharat mission BHUBANESWAR: President a developed India." She also said that the Indian

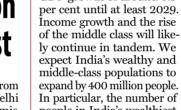
Droupadi Murmu on Friday said that the Indian diaspora can make significant contributions towards the realisation of India's mission of Viksit Bharat a developed India by 2047, when the country will celebrate 100 years of its Independence. Speaking at the valedictory

on of the three-day Pray

ideas converge, collaborations are forged, and the bonds bediaspora represents the best of tween India and its diaspora are strengthened.

our country. The President also noted that the Indian diaspora have carried with them not just the knowledge and skills acquired in this sacred land but also the values and ethos that have been not only meets our needs, but the foundation of Indian civili-

Referring to India's timeless philosophy of Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam, the President said that this vision is about creating an ecosystem that also contributes to global well



of renegi ing on to provide reservation to the capital's Jat community. Speaking at a press confer-

ence, Kejriwal said he wrote to Prime Minister Narendra Modi, demanding the inclusion of Delhi's Jat community in the Central OBC list.

He also accused the Centre of misleading the community for the past decade, and fail-

sions," the AAP supremo said. Central agencies like the MCD, DDA, and PWD operate extensively in Delhi, and including Jats in the OBC list would open up significant opportunities for them, Kejriwal said, as he vowed to continue the fight until the community's demands are met.

Bharatiya Convention here on for jobs and college admis-Friday, President Murmu said: "Our nation today is marching towards Viksit Bharat - a developed India – by the year 2047. It is a National Mission that requires proactive and enthusiastic participation of every Indian, including those living abroad. The Indian Diaspora is an integral part of this vi-

sion. Their global presence gives them a unique perspective, and their achievements place them in a position to significantly contribute to the realization of

sation for millennia. being.

President Murmu said that the Indian diaspora has made a mark in the fields of technology, medicine, arts, or entrepreneurship, which the world acknowledges and respects.

She expressed happiness over the fact that the Pravasi Bharatiya Divas convention has turned into a platform where

President Murmu said that India seeks to be a nation that balances economic progress with social justice and environmental stewardship, ensuring a bright future for generations

to come. She stated that the Indian Diaspora would play an essential role in achieving this vision.

Platform to Propel India's Indigenous **Cleantech Manufacturing Growth** NEW DELHI: India marked a

significant milestone in its journey toward achieving climate goals and economic self-reliance with the launch of the Bharat Climate Forum on Fridav here.

A national platform dedicated to unifying stakeholders from policy, industry, finance, and research to accelerate cleantech manufacturing in India, the Bharat Climate Forum aims to drive sustainable economic growth and innovation. Hosted by the Centre for Indigenous Economic Understanding (CIEU) and Dalberg Advisors, the Bharat Climate Forum is supported by the Ministry of New and Renewable Energy (MNRE), NITI Aayog, and International Solar Alliance (ISA).

Addressing the launch of the forum, Minister for Railways Ashwini Vaishnaw said: "Atmanirbhar Bharat embodies India's drive for economic sovereignty and technological leadership through innovation and collaboration. Our 4G-5G telecom stack showcases this spirit which the cleantech sector can imbibe, with public-private partnerships enabling world-class, competitive solutions. I thank the Bharat Climate Forum organizers for highlighting India's commitment to cleantech innovation for a sustainable future.

The forum comes at a time when India is pursuing ambitious climate targets, including



achieving net-zero emissions by



2070 and scaling up non-fossil fuel capacity to 500 GW by 2030. Despite progress in renewables, challenges such as reliance on imports for solar and wind infrastructure persist. Ashwani Mahajan, National Co-Convener of Swadeshi Jagran Manch and Member-Secretary of the Bharat Climate Forum, emphasised the need for a comprehensive manufacturing policy to address these challenges.

"India's cleantech manufacturing sector holds immense poten- A home is often believed as just tial to reduce import dependencies, stabilise energy transitions, and create millions of jobs. A robust policy framework is crucial in ensuring economic growth aligns with sustainability goals. By advancing solar, wind,

and EV technologies, India is boldly pursuing Atmanirbhar Bharat, reinforcing the ethos of self-reliance and charting a roadmap to tackle the climate crisis for global benefit," he said.

Digital Personal Data Protection Rules prioritise India's Forex Reserves Decline USD 4.11 Billion amid RBI Interventions India's citizen-centric governance: PM Modi

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NEW DELHI: India's foreign exchange reserves have continued their downward trajectory, marking the twelfth decline in thirteen weeks, according to the latest data released by the Reserve Bank of India (RBI).

The reserves decreased by USD 4.112 billion to reach USD 640.279 billion in the week ending December 27, reflecting the central bank's active involvement in currency market stabilisation.

The recent decline represents significant shift from September's all-time high of USD 704.89 billion, with reserves



falling approximately 10 percent since then.

The RBI's strategic intervention in currency markets, involving both buying and selling of dollars to manage the rupee's volatility, has been identified as the primary factor behind this reduction.

Current figures show that foreign currency assets, the largest component of the reserves,

while gold reserves are valued at USD 66.268 billion.

Despite the recent downturn, India's foreign exchange position remains robust, with current reserves sufficient to cover nearly a year's worth of projected imports.

The country's reserve management has shown mixed patterns over recent years, with an addition of approximately USD 58 billion in 2023, contrasting with a USD 71 billion decline in 2022. The reserves had gained over USD 20 billion in 2024 before the current decline began.

caste, religion and nation.

Statistics reveal that 45% of Indian women are facing domestic violence

SATISH HANDA New Delhi

a heaven, a safe place where all family members live peacefully, but facts reveals that many times it also become a center of violence and becomes a dangerous place for the family, especially for female members live in anxiety, terror, stress and in great danger in their so called own house. Their human rights are violated and the couples live by facing threat of sexual, physical

and psychological violence occurring against women which include epidemic and disaster-related tension, insecurity and fear, along with social exclusion and movement constraints, which is a matter of concerns due to increase in gender-based violence result-

stand at USD 551.921 billion, **NEW DELHI:** Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Tuesday said the Draft Digital Personal

Data Protection Rules, 2025, prioritise India's commitment to citizen-centric governance as they aim to safeguard personal data while driving growth and inclusivity.

The Prime Minister, in his comments on X, referred to Minister for Electronics and IT Ashwani Vaishnaw's explanation on the draft rules which seek to protect personal data of individuals and empower citizens. Union Minister Vaishnaw highlighted that the Draft Digital Personal Data Protection Rules reflect India's leadership in shaping global data governance norms.

'Unlike some international ing large number of cases of models that lean heavily tobreak in the family. Domestic wards regulation, our approach Violence' includes any act that is pragmatic and growth-orientcauses harm to women by her ed. This balance ensures that intimate partner or a fam- citizens are protected without ily member affecting women stifling the innovative spirit that physically as well as mentally. drives our startups and busi-The United Nation Declaranesses. Small businesses and tion defined domestic violence startups will face lower complias 'any act of gender-based vioance burdens, " the Minister lence that results in. or is likely observed.

When we talk about the globto result in, physical, sexual or psychological harm or sufferal future, then human-centric ing to a woman. It has become approaches should be foremost."

a public health menace for These words by Prime Minissociety which never sees the ter Narendra Modi at the recent United Nations Summit of the



Future reflect India's vision of putting people first.

"This philosophy has guided our efforts in shaping the Draft Digital Personal Data Protection (DPDP) Rules. The rules, after being finalised, would operationalise the Digital Personal Data Protection Act, 2023, bringing to life our commitment to safeguarding citizens' right to personal data protection," the Minister further stated.

The rules are designed with simplicity and clarity, ensuring that every Indian, regardless of their technical know-how, can understand and exercise their rights, he added. The Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology on Friday released the draft rules for the Digital Personal Data Protection Act which make it mandatory for a Data Fiduciary to ensure the verifiable consent of a parent before processing any personal data of a child. The Act was passed in Parliament in August 2023 and the government is

seeking feedback on the draft rules through the MyGov portal till February 18, 2025.

According to the draft rules, Data Fiduciary shall adopt appropriate technical and organisational measures to ensure that verifiable consent of the parent is obtained before the processing of any personal data of a child and shall observe due diligence, for checking that the individual identifying herself as the parent is an adult who is identifiable". The identity

must be established through government-issued IDs or digital tokens linked to identity services like Digital lockers. This is aimed at ensuring the privacy of a child on various social media platforms such as Google, Meta's Facebook and WhatsApp and X. The rules also make it mandatory for the Data Fiduciary to immediately inform any personal data breach 'to each affected Data Principal, in a concise, clear and plain manner and without delay".



REGION

Verma has defied all restrictions related to the Model Code of

Conduct that came into effect

after the poll panel announced

the dates for the February 5

elections in the national Capital.

"Parvesh Verma's home should be raided. There should be a ban

on his contesting the elections.

He is openly declaring things

on social media and adopting

unfair means, " said Kejriwal.

However, Verma denied any

wrongdoing and said Kejriwal

and his party leaders were look-

ing at a big defeat in the upcom-

ing elections and making wild

He said his 'selfless' efforts

to help the youths get job calls

from companies and his NGO's

efforts to financially help poor

women were being blown out

of proportion. Earlier, Kejri-

wal led a team of party leaders

Delhi Chief Minister Atishi,

Punjab Chief Minister Bhag-

want Singh Mann and AAP MP

Sanjay Singh – and met Elec-

tion Commissioners Sukhbir

Singh Sandhu and Gyanesh Ku-

mar and sought action against

allegations due to panic.

Delhi polls an opportunity to choose between AAP's corruption and BJP's development, says JP Nadda Parvesh Verma's illegal acts will reduce polls to farce: Kejriwal tells ECI Uddhav Thackeray's Shiv sena bats for Kejriwal, accuses Delhi L-G of BJP corruption and BJP's development, says JP Nadda

NEW DELHI: BJP President J P Nadda has reviewed preparations for the upcoming Delhi Assembly polls, asking party leaders to reach out to new groups of people from various social segments and areas for better electoral impact, adding that "this election offers an opportunity to choose between Arvind Kejriwal's "falsehoods and corruption" and the BJP's "truth and development".

Nadda on Thursday visited the BJP's Delhi unit office and spent more than four hours meeting the in-charges and members of various poll panels, state functionaries and frontal organisations. He reviewed the preparations for the elections to 70-member Delhi Assembly scheduled on February 5. Nadda said the BJP will form the government in Delhi with a full majority, according to a BJP statement. "The BJP President said the party unit's outreach programmes and campaigns should focus on meeting new people and convincing them to support the BJP for better electoral results. He said interacting with the same set of people who



support the party does not bear fruit, " said a senior Delhi BJP functionary.

Nadda was informed during the course of the review meetings that more than one lakh women have been contacted through various campaigns and programmes so far. The BJP Chief asked the party's Mahila Morcha (women's wing) to reach out to more women ahead of the polls. He sought to boost the morale of the BJP leaders, saying the entire party needs to jump into the elections as a unified force to ensure the party's victory, the functionary said. Some functionaries present in party statement

The meetings, chaired by Delhi BJP President Virendra Sachdeva, were attended by Delhi election in-charge Baijayant Panda, co-in-charge Atul Garg, State General Secretary (Organisation) Pawan Rana, poll coordination committee head and Union Minister Harsh Malhotra and co-head Manoj Tiwari, among others. Responding to Nadda's allegation against party convener Arvind Kejriwal, AAP, in a press statement, said, The people of Delhi know that the meeting said Nadda told the all corrupt leaders of the country have joined the BJP, while leaders that there are a limited number of tickets in elections Arvind Kejriwal is a staunchly and everyone cannot get one. honest leader who has worked tirelessly for them." "Kejriwal has He said a real leader does not get disheartened if he fails to provided free electricity, worldget a chance to contest the elecclass health and education model tions. "A leader will remain a among others, achievements the leader even if she or he does BJP has failed to replicate in not get a ticket, " he said. In any of its 20 states, " said AAP. two separate meetings, Nadda The BJP has so far announced interacted with members of the candidates on 29 of the 70 seats. Election Coordination Com-The remaining candidates are mittee and the Election Manlikely to be announced soon as agement Committee to gather the Central Election Committee updates on poll arrangements (CEC) of the party is meeting on Friday. The BJP is making and provided guidance for improvement, according to the all-out efforts to return to power after over 26 years



NEW DELHI: Seeking a ban on Assembly seat, where he is pit-BJP nominee Parvesh Verma for Model Code of Conduct violation, the AAP's National Convenor and former Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal on Thursday reiterated allegations of manipulation in the electoral rolls of New Delhi constituency, claiming the electoral process may be reduced to a "big farce" if the Election Commission of India (ECI) fails to intervene. Hitting back, Verma said the AAP's allegations against him and poll panel officials were a sign of Kejriwal conceding defeat even before voting on February 5. After leading a party delegation to the Election Commis-

sion, Kejriwal alleged wrongdoing in addition of 13, 000 voters and deletion of 5, 500 voters' name between December

15-January 7 in the New Delhi

ted against Verma and Congress nominee Sandeep Dikshit. "We have given an application to the ECI... the practices which are going on are going to render the election process a big farce. However, we have full faith in the Election Commission and hope strict action will be taken to bring the entire process on track," Kejriwal said. The AAP leader sought the removal of the District Election officer and Electoral Registration Officer of the seat, alleging that the officials have not taken any action against the "corrupt practices" of Verma who is openly conducting job fairs, distributing spectacles and giving money to women.

Kejriwal accused his BJP Verma for violating the Model rival of getting illegal support Code of Conduct.

RRTS rapid rail's 13km stretch operational,

Meerut to Anand Vihar in 30 mins

accuses Delhi L-G of BJP bias, nudges Cong from election officials and said



on Thursday raised questions about the neutrality of the Delhi Lieutenant Governor (L-G) during the election season, alleging that he was favouring the BJP. It has also attacked the Congress party for attacking AAP instead of BJP. Uddhav Thackerary's party though its mouthpiece Saamana has alleged that the L-G's actions favour a particular political narrative. The hardnitting editorial titled 'Haryana, Maharashtra and now Delhi', said: "Delhi is a union territory where L-G is supreme. But he is now working as the Union Home Ministry's agent. After the Model Code of Conduct for the upcoming Delhi Assembly election came into force, the L-G withdrew the powers of the chief minister and all ministers. He is working for the BJP which is quite dangerous. Even though the Election Commission is singing a tune of transparency in conducting the election, behind the curtains, a lot of things in favour of the BJP are happening. The BJP will stoop to any low to win the Delhi Assembly election. People should remain alert and careful." The Saamana editorial attacks the Prime Minister, Home Minister and BJP's central ministers, saying that they have swung into action for the party's victory. It says that the BJP has set the goal of defeating Arvind Kejriwal and capturing the Delhi Assembly and can go to any extent to defeat the Aam Aadmi Party in Delhi

1,217 FIRs lodged, 4000 arrests made under PCPNDT Act in Haryana to take action against doctors and touts involved in illegal activities

which is not appropriate.

PARVESH HANDA

Rohtak

New Ashok Nagar station,

Punjab Congress seeks Bharat Ratna for Dr. Manmohan Singh



NEW DELHI/CHANDIGARH: Leader of the Opposition in the Punjab Assembly and Congress leader, Partap Singh Bajwa, has written to all political parties in the state Assembly, urging them to collectively honour former Prime Minister Dr. Manmohan Singh by recommending him for the Bharat Ratna, India's highest civilian honour. In an appeal, Bajwa addressed Punjab Chief Minister Bhagwant Mann, Speaker Kultar Singh Sadhwan, and other prominent leaders, including Manpreet Singh Ayali of the Shiromani Akali Dal (SAD), Ashwani Sharma of the BJP and Nachhatar Pal of the BSP, proposing a joint resolution in the Assembly to recognise Dr. Singh's "unparalleled contributions to the nation and his deep-rooted

formative role as the architect of India's economic liberalisation in

1991, which not only revived the

Indian economy but also positioned

the country as a global economic

powerhouse. As Prime Minister, Dr.

brought pride to our state but has

also addressed critical issues in

agriculture, rural development,

and education, leaving a lasting

impact on Punjab and the nation

NEW DELHI: Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Sunday launched a sharp critique of the AAP government in Delhi, calling it an "AAPda government" that lacks vision for the city's progress.

Speaking at a mega rally in Rohini ahead of the Delhi Assembly elections, the Prime Minister asserted that all significant developmental projects in the national capital have been undertaken by the BJP-led central government.

Amid chants of "Delhi mei bahane nahi, badlav chahiye; BJP ki sarkaar chahiye" (Delhi needs change, not excuses; it wants a BJP government), the crowd welcomed the Prime

Minister enthusiastically. PM Modi emphasised the importance of the next 25 years for India and Delhi, stating, "The coming 25 years are crucial for India's journey to becoming a 'Viksit Bharat' (developed nation). For India to achieve this, it is vital that change)." connection to Punjab". Bajwa's Delhi progresses in tandem."

He urged the people of Delh



AAP govt lacks vision to drive Delhi's

to give the BJP a chance for a brighter future, stressing that only the BJP can bring real evelopment to the capital.

development says PM Modi

Highlighting the BJP's governance record, PM Modi said, In the last decade, Delhi has experienced a government that is nothing short of an 'AAPda' (disaster). Today, the people of Delhi are demanding change, saying, 'AAPda nahi sahenge; badal ke rahenge' (We won't tolerate disaster; we will bring

PM Modi praised the BJP a party o

for health and development projects in Delhi. We want to make Delhi a capital that reflects India's heritage and pride, "he said. The Prime Minister pointed

out that Delhi's metro expansion, including the Namo Bharat Train, Delhi Metro Phase-IV's Janakpuri-Krishna Park stretch, and the Rithala-Kundli corridor, are all Centredriven initiatives. He highlighted the PM Awas Yojana, mentioning the Swabhimaan Apartment in Ashok Nagar as a "Modi ki guarantee" for affordable housing. PM Modi also listed achieve-

ments like Bharat Mandapam, Yashobhoomi, Kartavya Path, and the National War Memorial, which have become symbols of pride for Delhi, attributing their creation to the Centre's efforts.

He slammed the AAP government for wasting a decade, accusing it of mismanagement in areas like sanitation, public transportation, and law and

Starting Sunday at 5 PM, rains will operate every 15

KEY FEATURES:

- Travel from Anand Vihar to Meerut South in
- Separate entry/exit gates and FOB facilities ensure commuter convenience.
- ous enamel panels and equipped with escalators, lifts, and stairs.

Serves areas like Shrestha Vihar, Ramprastha, and

New Ashok Nagar: Elevated Engineering Marvel

New Delhi Prime Minister Narendra existing metro lines. Modi is all set to inaugurate a 13-km stretch of the Delhi-

Meerut Namo Bharat Corridor between Sahibabad and New Ashok Nagar. This significant development marks the arrival of high-speed Namo Bharat trains in Delhi, enhancing regional connectivity.

YOGESH KANT

With the new section operational, the corridor's total stretch will expand to 55 km, connecting 11 stations. Currently, a 42-km section from Sahibabad to Meerut South with nine stations is operational. The newly added stretch includes six kilometers of underground track and features stations at Anand Vihar and New Ashok Nagar.

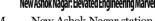
bus stand. Special engineering techniques were employed to construct this station beneath

35 minutes.

Three bridges over the Ghazipur drain cater to vehicle and pedestrian movement.

Designed with vitre-

Brij Vihar.



s trans-

New railway division to boost Jammu's economy says CM Omar Abdullah

FW DESK New Delhi

Singh consistently prioritized inclusive growth, economic stability, Chief Minister Jammu & Kashand social justice, impacting milmir Omar Abdullah assured that lions across India. "Dr. Manmohan the upcoming train connectivity to Kashmir and the newly inau-Singh is a proud son of Puniab, and gurated Jammu Railway Divihis journey is an inspiration to all, Bajwa wrote. "Born in Punjab, his sion would enhance the region's life exemplifies resilience, humility, economy and bolster tourism. and selfless service. He has not only

Speaking at the inauguration ceremony of the Jammu Railway Division, held virtually by Prime Minister Narendra Modi, Abdullah expressed gratitude for the fulfillment of a long-standing demand of the people of Jammu and



Kashmir. "This is a historic milestone for J&K." the chief minister said, emphasizing that the new rail division would bring administrative control closer to Jammu, reduce reliance on Firozpur, and create local job opportunities. The Udhampur-Srinagar-Baramulla Railway Link (USBRL) project, including the world's highest

Chenab Rail Bridge, has been a transformative initiative to improve connectivity in the region. The recent trial run of the train between Srinagar and Katra signals further progress, with full operations expected soon.

ing its successes in states like

Odisha, Maharashtra, and the

Northeast, and at the Centre.

to connect with Delhi resi-

dents and showcase the party's

commitment to development,

calling this election a "golden

opportunity to win the hearts

of making Delhi one of the

world's top cities with world-

He reiterated his vision

"Last year, the Centre al-

of Delhi.'

class facilities.

cated over R

He encouraged BJP workers

Abdullah also addressed concerns about potential economic losses for Jammu due to direct rail connectivity to Kashmir. He assured residents that the project would bring significant benefits, including increased trade, tourism, and industrial growth. "Despite challenges, the benefits will far outweigh any disadvantages," he stated. The

chief minister highlighted ongoing infrastructure development projects, such as the Zojila and Z Morh tunnels and the expansion of Jammu and Srinagar airports, which are expected to complement the enhanced rail connectivity.

The event was attended by Lieutenant Governor Manoj Sinha, Union Railway Minister Ashwini Vaishnaw (virtually), and several other dignitaries. Abdullah extended his thanks to Prime Minister Modi, Railway Minister Vaishnaw, and others for their efforts in making this project a reality

minutes. The fare from New Ashok Nagar to Meerut South is Rs 150 for standard coaches and Rs 225 for premium coaches. Commuters can now travel from New Ashok Nagar to Meerut South in under 40 minutes, reducing travel time by one-third.

Anand Vihar: A Key Underground Station

Anand Vihar station, one of the largest on the corridor, is located just 8 meters below ground. It offers seamless integration with six public transport modes, including the Pink and Blue Metro lines, Anand Vihar Railway Station, two ISBTs (Swami Vivekananda and Kaushambi), and a city

station in Delhi, is constructed 20 meters above the existing Blue Line metro station. This feat was achieved without disrupting metro services. The station is connected to the metro via a 90-meter-long FOB and features two parking lots with a combined capacity of over 500 vehicles.

KEY FEATURES:

- Strategically located to serve New Ashok Nagar, Mayur Vihar, and Vasundhara.
- Planned commercial center for commuter convenience.
- Reserved spaces for women, elderly, and Divyaangjans in trains.

Health department, Haryana has intensified its efforts to combat female foeticide and enforce strict adherence to the provisions of the Pre-Conception and Pre-Natal Diagnostic Techniques (PCPNDT) Act. According to available data since 2014, the state has registered a total of 1,217 FIRs under the PCPNDT Act including 397 FIRs through raids in neighbouring states, in which action was taken led to more than 4.000 arrests wich included doctors involved in illegal practices, quacks and touts involved in sex determination and female foeticide.

Union Minister Gadkari praised Haryana Transport Minister **Textile export sees 100 percent increase** Anil Vij's suggestions to reduce 80 % of vehicle accidents due to political disturbance in Bangladesh

SATISH HANDA Panipat

as a whole.

Apart from China, Bangladesh is another major country in the world ranking at second place in export of textile and handloom products, followed by India ranking at third place in export in the world. Production as well as export of textile and handloom products in Bangladesh has been worst affected due to political disturbance in the country since the past more than a year. According to information, there are more than 3500 small, medium and large manufacturers producing textile and handloom products in Bangladesh having nearly 85 percent export of goods manufactured in the country. Information also reveals that textile and handloom manufacturers in Panipat have witnessed more than 45% increase in exports in the past sometime due to political disturbance in Bangladesh. Information reveals, Panipat



textile and handloom industry lar) during year 2022-23 and Rs 58.15 lakh crore (nearly 62,000 in the country did total business of value worth over Rs 58 lakh dollar) during year 2024-25 crore (nearly 62,000 dollar) (till December, 2024). Infortill 31st December during year mation reveals that textile and Handloom industry in Bangla-2024, which was recorded as over Rs 30 lakh crore (nearly desh is facing a severe crisis at 35,000 dollar) during year present where the majority of 2019-20, over Rs 17.15 lakh industrial units have turned sick crore (nearly 20,000 dollar) and most of the buyers across during year 2020-21, Rs 21.43 the world have switched over lakh crore (nearly 25,000 dollar) their procurements for textile during year 2021-22, Rs 34.29 and handloom products from lakh crore (nearly 40,000 dol-India manufacturers

PARVESH HANDA New Delhi

Union Minister for Road Transport and Highways, Nitin Gadkari praised the suggestions made by Haryana's Transport Minister Anil Vij to reduce human error in vehicle accidents. He welcomed Vij's proposals and emphasized that the Union ministry is planning various measures to address human error in accidents while improving the convenience of passengers and drivers.

Vij presented these suggestions on Tuesday at the 42nd meeting of the Transport Development Council and a meeting of Transport Ministers of all states and Union Territories, chaired by Sh. Nitin Gadkari at Bharat Mandapam in New Delhi. Harvana's Additional Chief Secretary for Transport Ashok Khemka was also present at the meeting. During the meeting, Anil Vij stated that 80% of ac-



cidents in the country are caused by human error. He stressed the need to develop systems to minimize human errors and reduce the loss of life and property. He highlighted that drivers should have access to hygienic food and comfortable rest stops to avoid accidents caused by fatigue and unrest.

Vij mentioned that since assuming office as Transport

Minister, he has directed that all bus stands in Harvana provide clean food and beverages to passengers. He noted that Haryana Tourism has been tie-up to ensure safe and hygienic food for passengers and drivers. He suggested studying a system akin to food services in railways to provide similar facilities for vehicle drivers, including fruits and

other healthy options.

The Union Minister welcomed Anil Vij's suggestions and announced plans to focus on clean and accessible toilet facilities, particularly for women, as part of a broader initiative. Vij shared that Haryana's Dial 112 emergency vehicles are equipped with facility to load stretchers to ensure immediate care for accident victims.

Transport Minister Anil Vij addressed the country's transport associations, emphasizing the shared responsibility of bringing discipline to the transport sector. He acknowledged the hard work of transport workers, who operate in all conditions—day or night, heat or cold—and highlighted their significant contribution to the nation's economy. However, he stressed that maintaining discipline in the sector is a

collective responsibility. He urged transporters to monitor critical issues such

as driver and cleaner working hours, overloading, and oversizing, as these practices often lead to corruption. He stated that "We must work towards a corruption-free society, and this cannot be achieved without the active participation of transporters.'

Citing an example, Vij shared his experience in Jaipur, where he observed that no stalls were placed outside a market. He learned that this was a decision made by the market association, which benefited everyone involved. He concluded by emphasizing the need for self-imposed discipline, the creation of rules and regulations, and proactive steps to achieve positive outcomes.

The Union Ministry also lauded Haryana's implementation of Registered vehicle scrapping facilities during the meeting, noting that the state has made significant progress

In today's meeting, Haryana



NATION

Record 2.79 crore registrations for 'Pariksha Pe Charcha'

NEW DELHI: With just five days left for the closure of registration, a record 2.79 crore students, teachers, and parents across India and abroad have already registered for Prime Minister Narendra Modi's 'Pariksha Pe Charcha' (PPC) 2025 - an initiative to foster students' positive outlook towards examinations.

In 2024, 2.26 crore participants (2.06 crore students, 14.93 lakh teachers, and 5.69 lakh parents) took part in the programme. The latest 8th edition of Pariksha Pe Charcha is scheduled to take place this month or early February just before annual examinations commence across the country. In the previous edition held

on January 29, last year, PM Modi had advised the students: "Do not waste time watching reels, get adequate sleep". The seventh edition of PPC was

Threat: Two HMPV Cases

HMP

The Indian Council of Medical

Research (ICMR) has confirmed

two cases of Human Metapneu-

movirus (HMPV) in Karnataka as

part of its routine surveillance of

respiratory pathogens. The Union

Health Ministry highlighted that

while HMPV is not new, its pres-

ence in these cases underscores

the need for vigilance. The cases

involve two infants admitted

to Bengaluru's Baptist Hospi-

tal with bronchopneumonia. A

is currently recovering. Neither

child has a history of international

travel, pointing to local circulation

of the virus. HMPV, a globally

prevalent respiratory virus, has

been linked to illnesses resembling

influenza. However, the Health

Ministry reassured the public,

stating that data from the ICMR

and Integrated Disease Surveil-

ARUN KUMAR RAO

Bengaluru

Detected in Karnataka

held at Bharat Mandapam, Pragati Maidan, New Delhi, **Monitoring the Silent**



of education.

in a town hall format and reised annually by the Department of School Education and ceived widespread acclaim. The online registration for Literacy under the Ministry this year's PPC 2025 comof Education, has become a

menced on December 14, last vear and will remain open till January 14, 2025.

The programme's immense popularity highlights its success in addressing the mental well-being of students and fostering a positive outlook towards examinations. The interactive event, organ-

NEW DELHI: Uncrewed Ga-

ganyaan and GSLV launches are

among ISRO's 2025 space mis-

sions, said Dr Jitendra Singh,

Union Minister of State (In-

and Technology. Singh said this while chairing

a high-level review of ISRO's

major upcoming space missions

for 2025, alongside outgoing

Chairman Dr. S. Somnath, his

successor Dr. V. Narayanan, and

other senior officials, including

Pawan Kumar Goenka, Chair-

man of IN-SPACe. With ambi-

tious projects on the horizon

including the first "uncrewed"

orbital mission under "Gagan-

yaan", India's space exploration

efforts are poised for ground-

breaking achievements.

lependent Charge) for Science

ter holistic development and inspire students to celebrate examinations as an Utsav. These activities include: Indigenous games sessions. marathon runs, meme competitions, nukkad natak. Yoga-cum-meditation sessions, poster-making competitions, inspirational film screenings, mental health workshops and counselling sessions and poetry/song performances.

Through these activities, PPC 2025 aims to reinforce its message of resilience, positivity, and joy in learning, ensuring that education is celebrated as a journey rather much-anticipated celebration than a pressure-driven task. For PPC 2025, two students

In line with the spirit of (classes 9 to 12) and a teacher PPC, a series of engaging from each State/UT, along school-level activities are with winners of Kala Utsav, scheduled from January 12, and participants from Veer Gatha, Prenana alumni, and 2025 (National Youth Day) to January 23, 2025 (Netaji Sub-PM SHRI schools will be inhash Chandra Bose Jayanti). vited as special guests for the The activities aim to fosmain event

NEW DELHI: The Supreme Court on Friday remarked that the decision of the Allahabad High Court to consolidate all suits pertaining to the Krishna Janmabhoomi-Shahi Idgah dispute of Mathura should benefit both sides.

"Why should we intervene in the issue of consolidation of suits? It doesn't make a difference. It is to the benefit of both sides, so multiple proceedings are avoided," remarked a bench of CJI Sanjiv Khanna and Justice Sanjay

Kumar as it heard a plea filed by the management committee of the Shahi Masjid Eidgah against an order passed by the Allahabad High Court in January last year "in the interest of justice" directing that all 15 suits filed by the Hindu side

Consolidation of Suit Should Benefit Both Sides

be consolidated. In the course of the hearing, the counsel appearing on behalf of the mosque management committee submitted that suits not similar in nature were also consolidated and the impugned decision will

RSS Chief to be SC : Krishna Janmabhoomi-Shahi Eidgah Dispute: on 10-day visit to **Bengal in February**



KOLKATA: Rashtriya Sway amsevak Sangh (RSS) Chief Mohan Bhagwat will be on a 10-day visit to West Bengal next month and hold meetings with the Sangh functionaries in the state during that period, sources said.

He will be accompanied by eight other RSS functionaries, including the RSS Sarkaryawah or General Secretary Dattatreya Hosabale.

Sources said that this is for the first time that so many top functionaries of RSS will be visiting the state at the same time, therefore making it clear how seriously West Bengal is being viewed at by the Sangh authorities before the crucial state Assembly elections next year. The tour will start from February 9 and continue till February 16. Sources added that for the first three days, Mohan Bhagwat and the other top RSS functionaries will hold several rounds of meetings focussing on the Sangh's activities in different districts in the southern sector of West Bengal. On February 11, Mohan Bhagwat and the other national functionaries of RSS

will move to Burdwan in the East Burdwan district of West Bengal. They will be holding a series of meetings there with a focus on districts located in central Bengal. In this session in Burdwan, Bhagwat is expected to focus on RSS's activities in the tribal-dominated pockets in the different central Bengal districts. On February 16, the RSS Chief will be addressing a public rally at Burdwan which will mark the end of the 10-day tour.

three-month-old female infant Unexpected : Fasting Dallewal gets rival body's support ...! 18th Pravasi Bharatiya Divas was diagnosed with HMPV and discharged after treatment, while an eight-month-old male infant, who tested positive on January 3,

RAJU WILLIAM Chandigarh

Fasting veteran farmer leader Jagjit Singh Dallewa has received unexpected voice of support from opposing farmer body Bhartiya Singh Mann.

lance Programme (IDSP) show ef and Chairman. All Mann)



ISRO's 2025 Space Missions: Jitendra Singh

In 2025, the Indian space sector has major projects lined up including the Gaganyaan human spaceflight, said Singh. The launch of Gaganyaan's uncrewed orbital test mission will pave the way for India's human spaceflight programme. This

will validate systems for crew safety and recovery. Other key plans include two GSLV missions, a commercial launch of LVM3, and the much-anticipated ISRO-NASA collaboration on the NISAR satellite. In January, the GSLV-F15

mission will carry the NVS-02 navigation satellite to augment the NavIC constellation. It will bolster India's positioning and navigation capabilities with indigenously developed atomic clocks. In February, the GSLV-F16 mission will launch NISAR - a sophisticated Earth observation satellite co-developed with NASA. NISAR is equipped with

advanced radar imaging technology. It aims to provide critical data on agriculture, natural disasters, and climate monitoring. In March, the commercial LVM3-M5 mission will deploy BlueBird Block-2 satellites under a contract with the US-based AST SpaceMobile. This underscores ISRO's growing stature in the global space market.

BHUBANESWAR: External Affairs Minister (EAM) S. Jaishankar highlighted that hosting the 18th Pravasi Bharatiya Divas (PBD) Convention in Odisha "reflects the Modi Sarkar's 'Poorvudaya' policy, " emphasising the development and prominence of eastern India. Prime Minister Narendra

Modi inaugurated the 18th PBD Convention on Thursday in Bhubaneswar, Odisha, in the presence of EAM Jaishankar, Odisha Governor Hari Babu Kambhampati, Chief Minister Mohan Charan Majhi, Union Ministers Dharmendra Pradhan and Ashwini Vaishnaw, among other dignitaries.

The event commenced with a performance by three-time

kicks off in Bhubaneswar



Dallewal told the committee constituted by the Supreme Court. In a statement today, Mann quoted Dallewal Kisan Union (BKU) led by former as saying "Agriculture reforms

Rajya Sabha member Bhupinder priority, my health secondary". What Dallewal said is in line Monday, January 7, 2024 BKU with our understanding that only need access to technology and reforms and liberalization is

ets and

requesting Dallewal to call off his fast.

Having requested so and while urging Dallewal to initiate the process of dialogue with all the stakeholders, the ex-MP came down heavily on those farmer leaders who have been creating hurdles in letting this process of dialogue take place.

e bound

legal shackles, said Mann while interests but not stopped, he maintained.

Joining Mann, Shetkari leader Gunvant Patil referred to key recommendations of the much talked about Swaminathan Report which, he alleged, "is being read in convenient bits and pieces by few farmer leaders to misguide the farmers at large."

National Commission for

ji and the Union Govern-

ment towards the deteriorating

health of Farm Leader Jagjit

Singh Dallewal Ji is a testament

@narendramodi

to @BJP4India

Grammy Award winner Ricky Addressing the gathering, EAM Jaishan-

bring complications in trial

disapproval with the submis-

sion, the CJI Khanna-led

Bench adjourned the proceed-

ings and posted the matter for

agement committee had pe-

titioned the top court against

another order passed by the Allahabad High Court trans-

ferring to itself a clutch of pe-

titions seeking various reliefs

with respect to the Krishna

Janmabhoomi-Shahi Eidgah

The Supreme Court had

then remarked that it was

"difficult" to accept the con-

tention raised by the mosque

management committee that

all the parties do not have the

wherewithal to travel to the

that you can come to Delhi but

could not go to Allahabad," the

"It is not acceptable to us

Allahabad High Court.

hearing in April 2025. Earlier, the mosque man-

Expressing its prima facie

proceedings.

kar expressed pride in the achievements of the Indian diaspora. "You all not only feel proud of your achievements but also enhance India's global respect."

"In a globalised era, the diaspora becomes more important with each passing year. Whether it is technology, best practices or resources, be it tourism, trade or investment, the two-way flows you enable are invaluable. As we strive to make a global workspace, this will be even more so in the times to come, "he said.



Kej.

dispute.

o unusual surge uenza

like illness (ILI) or severe acute India Kisan Coordination Com- solution to bring agriculture farmers need to be freed from the in every sphere of life. These can, Commission as it called suggested respiratory illness (SARI) in India. mittee (AIKCC) welcomed what sector out of distress. Farmers regulatory, constitutional and at best, be delayed by the vested the following measures:

Bhubaneswar

The 18th Pravasi Bharatiya Divas (PBD) kicked off here on Wednesday with the first day being devoted to the youth and aptly titled Youth Pravasi Bharatiya Divas 2025. Prime Minister Narendra Modi will formally inaugurate this congregation of non-resident Indians (NRIs) and People of Indian Origin (PIOs) tomorrow.

Addressing the convention at the sprawling Janata Maidan Union Minister for External Affairs S Jaishankar y said his government's Look East policy had a historical connect with Odisha where Bali Yata (Voyage to Bali) is celebrated every year recalling the sea voyages to Bali, Sumatra and Borneo undertaken by Odia traders in the past. He also highlighted Odisha's potential in 3Ts- Trade, Technology

The minister also ointed to the Modi government's commitment to Purvodaya, the renaissance, revival and rejuvenation of the East. "India was historically at the greatest point when the eastern parts of India were at the height of glory and I will tell you one of the earliest commitments in this third term of Modi Government was to take practical decisions to enable the Purvodaya to happen, and a crucial fulcrum of that in many ways is the state of Odisha," Jaishankar said.

Pointing out that the potential for trade based from Odisha is enormous, Jaishankar said "What a blessing Odisha has in terms of resources, but resources do not automatically translate into trade. Resources need investments, resources need facility,

resources need connectivity and today how to increase, how to do the value add, so that what you trade is not the just resources but the value add from it and how the leverage the location of Odisha because one looks ahead, the eastern seaboard of India is going to become crucial exposure. connect of India to the world."

Chief minister Mohan Charan Majhi pointed out how the Odisha government is striving hard to achieve the goal of Samruddha Odisha by 2036 and Viksit Bharat by 2047. "A key component of the Prime Minister's vision of Viksit Bharat is Purvodaya development of the Eastern Indian States. Odisha is the front runner of this effort," he said. The latest edition of PBD, a biennial event, is being held in Odisha for the first time, marking the Purvodaya Mission and Act East policy of Prime Minister Narendra Modi. Highlighting the significance of the three-day event and the spotlight on Odisha at a media conference here Secretray (CPV&OIA) in the Ministry of External Affairs Arun Kumar Chatterjee said the central government decided to organise the convention in Odisha under its Puvodaya initiative to showcase the potential the state holds in the field of culture, economy and commerce. "Odisha has been recognised as a leader in various sectors including mining, marine economy, sports, skilled manpower and knowledge economy. With its abundant mineral and other natural resources, the state is also rich in culture, history, religious sites and spiritual heritage. The Pravasi Bharatiya

A farmer leader's life at stake: Why the Indian Government so adamant?



common cause. Whether he will survive or not, but a stigma will stick forever on the face of the present government, the o save the life democratic institutions and of the the people responsible for turn-

farmer leader Jagjit Singh Dallewal, who is on fast unto death since November 26 last year, central govt should hold talks with struggling farmers Singh Dallewal is on fastorganizations; raising the de- unto-death since November mand Samyukta Kisan Morcha 26 for the lifeline demands of (SKM) Maha Panchayat held at Moga, Punjab on Thursday said black Farm Laws and it should be withdrawn immediately.

Noticing that the central government is not heeding towards on a thread, and any untoward the major farmers' unions under Morcha (SKM) have decided to launch an agitational program.

SKM strongly asserted that it is the central govt, especially Prime Minister Narendra Modi, Home Minister Amit Shah and Agriculture Minister Shivraj Chauhan who are responsible for the present impasse and condition of farmer leader Jagjit Singh Dallewal, who is on a fast unto death. SKM appealed to the central govt that to save the life of Dallewal struggling organizations. The Morcha warned the central happens to Sri Dallewal, it will take strong action.

Having no personal inter-

ing no ear towards the issue, if something untoward happens with his life. The farmer leader, Jagiit the farmers, including MSP; more than one and half month

that the draft National Policy has gone past, but the central Framework for Agriculture government, the only capable Marketing is a dangerous form authority to fulfil the demands of re-enforcing the repealed 3 of the farmers, is behaving like a deaf and dumb clay sculpture. Not to talk about the accep-

tance of the demands, the BJP led government not even exthe life of the farmer leader, tending hand to start a dialogue whose breath line is hanging to resolve the issue. It seems to be taking the cover of the incident may happen any time, supreme court, as is evident that its union minister, Shivraj the banner of Samyukta Kisan Singh Chauhan says that they will follow the court directions.

Media reports quote that Union agriculture minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan on January 1 said the government will abide by the Supreme Court's decision on the ongoing farmers protest at Punjab-Haryana border and will take steps accordingly.

Here arises a question— Whether the government is not competent to take decisions on such issues or the court will have they should hold talks with the to take notice and decision in each and every executive work? However, keeping in mind

govt that if anything untoward the stack of a precious life, the honourable supreme court is monitoring the Dallewal's health issue and constituted a



on January 6 met the fasting fast since November 26, would farmer leader Jagjit Singh Dallewal, but the farmer leader declined the medical aid.

Rather, the farmer leader Dallewal, who is camping at the Khanauri border between Punjab and Haryana, as per media reports, requested that the committee should press the Supreme Court for a direction to the Centre: "I respect Justice Surva Kant but how do I ask him why he does not give any direction to the Centre, when our issue is to be sorted by Centre? When the Punjab Advocate General (AG) asks him to direct the Centre, then Surya Kant ji does not listen. The Union Minister (Shivraj Singh Chouhan) says if the SC tells them, they will comply with orders. If SC is not ready to give this direction to the Centre,

then we do not have hope from anywhere. The farmer unions associated with Dallewal are clearly

demanding that Dallewal will be ready to accept the medical aid, if the central government starts a dialogue.

India Today web portal on 31st December reported that the Punjab government on Tuesday informed the Supreme Court of a proposal that farmer est, Dallewal is fighting for the high-power committee, which who has been on an indefinite dialogue? Shouldn't the Prime ring, PPCC president on his

accept medical aid if the Centre spoke to the protesting farmers.

Shouldn't the supreme court, as requested by Dallewal, direct the central government to have a dialogue with the agitating farmers?

Doesn't the response of the fasting leader to the high-power committee appeal to the court - "I respect Justice Surya Kant but how do I ask him why he does not give any direction to the Centre, when our issue is to be sorted by Centre?" Will the court heed towards the feeble but logical voice of the farmer leader?

Why is the centre not taking the agitation of the farmers seriously?

The farmers under the banner of Samyukta Kisan Morcha (Non-Political) and Kisan Majdoor Morcha (KMM) are agitating at Punjab-Haryana border at two places since February 13, 2024 and the farmer leader Dallewal is on hunger strike since November 26, but the central government is not heeding the voice of the farmers. Why it is not holding a dialogue with the agitating farmers, when it is clearly visible that the life of the fasting farmer leader Jagjit Singh Dallewal, can be saved by just holding a

Minister himself come into the fore? Shouldn't he intervene?

The Indian express web portal on January 6, 2025 quotes the case of hunger strike of Mamta Banerjee back in 2006, wherein to resolve the issue the then President and Prime Minister both appealed Mamta Banerjee to call off the fast.

mohan Singh, and the Tatas eventually withdrew from the state. The incident proved to be a turning point for Bengal politics and catapulted Mamata to power five years later in the 2011 Assembly polls, which ended the Left's rule of over three decades.

Shouldn't the present constitutional and executive heads of the nation follow the example and set another example? Punjab Chief Minister, Bhag-

want Mann, in his tweet on January 2, has also advised the Prime Minister Narender Modi to leave the stubborn attitude and talk to the farmers. "Punjab is a part of the country. Punjab contributes the most in terms of agriculture. Modi Sahab, you are the Prime Minister of the country, farmers are also a part of the country. You should leave your stubborn attitude and talk

to the farmers.' Amarinder Singh Raja War-

's disregard for farming issues. One cannot help but "In 2006, Trinamool Conwonder if they would have regress chief Mamata Banerjee sponded similarly if it were a used a hunger strike to protest prominent businessman like Adani demanding tax cuts or against alleged forcible land acquisition by the Left governloan relaxation.' ment in West Bengal for the The Shiromani Akali Dal (SAD) senior leader Dr Daljit Tata Group's Nano factory. She called off her 25-day hunger Singh Cheema, in a statement strike following appeals by then on January 7, said it was shock-President A P J Abdul Kalam ing that even though the Suand Prime Minister Manpreme Court was monitoring

the fast unto death of the Kisan leader almost on a daily basis, both the union government as well as the State government in Punjab were resorting to a blame game and playing poli-

try when the Prime Minister withdrew the three agricultural laws which led to the end of the Kisan Andolan" Will PM Modi listen to the advice of the Punjab political leader?

> Jag Mohan Thaken is a Senior Journalist, Columnist & Political Analyst, views are personal

Divas will provide an opportunity to Odisha to showcase its potential as a key tourism destination," Chatterjee said.

tics on such a sensitive issue. Dr Daljit Cheema appealed and Tourism. to P M Modi to take the lead

and create an atmosphere which could lead to the end of Jagjit Singh Dallewal's fast. "For this to take place the Prime Minister should notify the guarantee on Minimum Support Price (MSP) immediately. This is in keeping with the assurance made to the people of the coun-

Economic red flags call for urgent action

he past week's economic data delivers a sobering message to the Finance Ministry and the Reserve Bank of India (RBI), complicating their aspirations for a robust growth rebound in the latter half of 2024-25. GDP growth has tapered to 5.4` in the second quarter, prompting reassurances that it is merely a transient dip. However, the slowdown in consumption demand, exacerbated by restrained urban spending, raises serious questions about the depth of recovery expected in the October-December quarter. While policymakers hope for a festive-season boost and resilient rural demand, the latest data paints a less optimistic picture. Bank credit growth has decelerated for the fifth consecutive month in November, casting a shadow over investment and consumption prospects. Meanwhile, core infrastructure sectors, despite recording a four-month high expansion of 4.3 per cent, reported production levels 3.3 per cent below October's output, with six of eight sectors operating below capacity. The Purchasing Managers' Index reveals factory activity has slumped to its worst levels in 2024, compounded by rising input costs that threaten to stifle demand further.

Adding to these challenges are dismal Goods and Services Tax (GST) receipts for December, which stood at a three-month low of

1.77 lakh crore. With year-to-date revenue growth at just 8.6 per cent, meeting the 11 per cent growth target set in the Union Budget appears increasingly unlikely. Particularly concerning are sluggish revenue upticks in major consumer states such as Uttar Pradesh (1 per cent) and Gujarat (4 per cent), alongside contractions in Andhra Pradesh and northeastern states.

As the government prepares the Union Budget for 2025-26, it must scrutinize these indicators and address the underly ing pain points. High inflation, tightening credit flows, and uneven consumption trends need targeted interventions to reinvigorate growth and ensure economic momentum is sustained across regions and sectors. Bold, well-calibrated measures are imperative for turning the tide.

VIBODH PARTHASARATHI TELLS HOW PLATFORMS AMPLIFY PUBLISHERS TO SUSTAIN THEIR ENGAGEMENT CYCLES

ast month, The Australia Today's coverage of External Affairs Minster S. Jaishankar's visit was discussed less for its substance and more for being inaccessible on Facebook in Canada. Coming on the back of diplomatic tensions between India and Canada, were Mr. Jaishankar's interview and joint press conference, covered in The Australia Today, inaccessible in Canada due to a nudge by the Trudeau government? Or was it part of Meta's strategy to block news on social media platforms in Canada?

Some argue that this is a casualty of Canada's approach to mitigate asymmetries between all-pervasive platforms, such as Facebook and Google, and news publishers, such as The Australia Today. The blackout has less to do with the politics of foreign policy and more to do with the politics of Meta's corporate strategy. Mostly, it has to do with the geopolitical ramifications of developments in Canada's media policy.

Let's start with the actors involved. Platforms facilitate publishers to reach a very large audience, and publishers offer platforms a stream of content to incessantly engage users. In this seemingly symbiotic relationship, only platforms know the true popularity of the news distributed to their users and therefore, the incremental advertising revenues trickling in from the content produced by publishers. Platforms are also known to change the metrics to gauge popularity and audience preference. These problems raise questions about transparency, accountability, and parity in the dealings between platforms and publishers.

Governing frenemies

In June 2023, Canada devised a bargaining framework for platforms to duly remunerate news outlets. The resultant



Online News Act (ONA) sought to protect publishers from losing income that is justifiably due to them from Meta and Alphabet. These platforms are legally obliged to fashion commercial agreements with one or a group of publishers. If either party disagrees, a bargaining process ensues with the involvement of a mediator. If no agreement is arrived at despite this, each party can propose a final offer, and an arbitration panel is empowered to choose which offer becomes binding.

Canada was the second country to move on this matter, after the Australian initiative of 2021, known as the 'Bargaining Code'. While concerns over the financial health of local news websites led to the enactment of the ONA, the Bargaining Code has been criticised for legitimising a mechanism that safeguards the interests of giants in the news business. After initial opposition, Meta and Google negotiated deals with many, but not all, Australian news outlets.

In Canada, Google complied with the ONA by agreeing to pay publishers and journalist associations. Meta adopted a contrary route: from August 2023, it foreclosed news

offerings on its platforms, Facebook and Instagram, in Canada. However, web pages of journalists can still be accessed on both platforms. Since the ONA

does not define a news website, Meta decides which is a news site and which is an opinion or community site. For instance, Baaz, a Canadabased news outlet catering to the Punjabi

and Sikh diaspora, was inaccessible for a

while on Facebook and Instagram. After it

switched to Substack, a subscription-based

platform, and rechristened defined itself a

'community page', Baaz became visible on

Following the uproar over Mr. Jaishan-

kar's interview, Meta maintained that it

blocks news in Canada, irrespective of its

geographical origins. However, the editor

of The Australia Today pointed out that

prior to the interview, the content of the site

was visible, suggesting that Meta restricted

the site around the time the interview was

posted. Such experiences render Meta vul-

nerable to criticism of selective compliance

The unavailability of the Jaishankar inter-

view on Facebook in Canada also uncorks the

geopolitical ramifications of national media

policy. Regulations in Australia, Canada,

and Indonesia have tackled the imbalances

between platforms and publishers, as seen in

both platforms.

with the ONA.

Interrupting global flows

they vary in normative considerations, policy priorities, and institutional design. Recently, Australia disincentivised platforms which refrain from, or do not renew, agreements with publishers. Its News Bargaining Incentive (NBI) policy proposes to penalise platforms harvesting revenue of \$250 million and more and failing to finalise agreements. This is to ensure, inter alia, that Meta does not replay its Canadian strategy in Australia, since earlier this year, it had announced plans to discontinue paying news outlets there. What is interesting is that the NBI also incentivises platforms by offsetting payments to publishers against some of

their respective news markets. Consequently,

EDITORIAL

SOPINION

their fiscal liabilities in Australia. How is India tackling publisher-platform asymmetries? Since 2022, the Competition Commission has been inquiring into the conduct of platforms, following pleas by news associations. We don't know if their efforts factor in geopolitical dimensions of the matter. If the policy paralysis continues, India's news outlets will continue to be devoid of fair shares of online advertising revenues, and vulnerable to the whims of the Alphabet-Meta duopoly.

Meanwhile, structural censorship, seen in the Jaishankar interview case, could recur. It will proliferate if Meta replicates its Canadian strategy in the U.K., South Africa, and Germany, where fair compensation regulations are being evolved. If so, interviews by Indian Ministers to news outlets in those countries will be inaccessible on Meta's platforms there. Therefore, policy pundits must weigh in urgently on air compensation.

Vibodh Parthasarathi teaches media policy at the Centre for Culture, Media and Governance, Jamia Millia Islamia. Views are personal.

MUKUL SANWAL EXPLAINS HOW DISCONNECT ENABLES G7 DOMINANCE IN CLIMATE GOVERNANCE

ne climate conference in Baku in 2024 turned the climate treaty on its head by scrapping the defining feature of the post-colonial world

divided between 'donors' and 'recipients' and suggesting the need for an alternate global sustainability forum. The shift requires that developing countries take charge of their own destiny.

The purpose of the climate treaty in 1992 was to collectively deal with a common concern. In an unequal world, this was defined by the G7 reducing future emissions of carbon dioxide despite the treaty acknowledging cumulative emissions alone matter. Developing countries agreed to take on a problem they did not create in exchange for technology transfer and funds, not realising that the imbalance in research capacity had set the stage for shifting the burden.

The backbone of the current arrangethe disconnect treatment and rules and practice, providing continuing advantage to the G7. The way global concerns have been selected, agenda defined, and rules implemented - all the time dealing with the symptoms rather than the causes of problems — provides continu-ing advantages to the G7. The pressure to provide incentives for private finance and dealing with trade restrictions at the same time was never part of the 'grand bargain'. The G7 have now absolved themselves of any responsibility for climate change with, in India's words, the "optical illusion" of providing financial support by 2035.



reduction in emissions of carbon dioxide is only for the G7 who have overused their fair share of the common atmospheric resource. For the others, the greatest challenge is sustainable development, that is, modifying pathways, lifestyles and energy transition. ay the agenda was set ma tice within the climate crisis and the extent it is underestimated. The impact of the Global South, representing four-fifths of the global population and half the GDP, no longer following the lead of the G7 has been felt most significantly in climate change with growing calls for climate justice. The Nationally Determined Contributions of 72 countries explicitly include the concept of a "just transition", reflecting recognition of the social dimensions of climate action.

also solutions such as carbon pricing and trade restrictions that widen the income gap and increase inequality. Current global rules do not reflect the interests of the Global South. These views reflect conflicting visions of how society is

organised and what constitutes progress. Distinguishing between total emissions of countries and trends, drivers, and patterns of natural resource use as causes of climate change masks the impact of the most

stable global trend of urbanisation covering three-quarters of global emissions and natural resource use. A middle class and more equal world is adopting opinions, pathways, and actions distinct from those who developed earlier.

being followed by the Global South. The G7

with one-fifth the population was consuming

three-quarters of global resources in 1950,

with the U.S. alone consuming 40%. By the

The found tional fac

principles of sustainability with justice at its centre. India would have to match the strategic thinking of the U.S. in setting up interlinked voluntary arrangements of the 'rules-based order', with the rules determined by the G7, for a new order for 'shared prosperity' seeking comparable levels of well-being within ecological limits.

Global governance

With global cooperation itself in danger, three initiatives are suggested. First, BRICS and partner countries should take the strategic leap for an alternate sustainability forum to support each other in the urban energy transition. This would not be an anti-G7 forum, but focused on units located in member countries in different continents researching sustainability science, urbanisation, monitoring G7 climate policy and supporting exchange

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You don't build a business, you build people, then people build the business.

66



THE FINANCIAL WORLD

RNI NO. DELENG/2011/38860 PRINTED & PUBLISHED BY SWINDER PALSINGH BAJWA ON BEHALF OF FW MEDIA PRINTED AT JAGJIT PUBLISHING CO. PVT LTD D-12, INDUSTRIAL AREA, PHASE-1, MOHALI, PUNJAB 160059

PRINTER & PUBLISHER SWINDER PAL SINGH BAJWA **OWNER :** FW MEDIA PUBLISHED AT: BUILDING NO-23, NEHRU PLACE NEW DELHI 110019; PHONE: 9888040061

EDITOR* ABDUL WASEY

(*RESPONSIBLE FOR SELECTION OF NEWS UNDER THE PRB ACT)

Two world views

The former colonial powers morphed into the G7 in 1973. Climate change with its

BOOKS: REVIEW

Climate justice is not about perceptions of fairness of specific policies. It questions the framing of existing distinctions between global and local levels and between mitigation and adaptation. It is not just the disproportionate continuing levels of emissions but

1970s, three-quarters of the population of the G7 had shifted to cities and their lifestyles based on commodity prices kept low by the former colonial powers directly led to climate change. The real price of the most traded commodity, oil, was not allowed to increase over a century, leading to its wasteful use. In 2050, the G7 will account for 25% of global emissions with a 10% share of the global population, while Asia is expected to account for 55% of the world's emissions equal to its share of the global population.

The time is ripe for new foundational

urban natural resource use of the G7 are not

Second, the UN Climate negotiations should be limited to reviewing emissions reductions in the G7 and grants in the \$300 billion to the most vulnerable — Small Island States and Least Developed Countries.

Third, international fora should be seen as what they are: annual stocktaking that helps the world assess its position and decide course-correction accordingly. The World Trade Organization with its dysfunctional dispute settlement could also be allowed to wither away.

The BRICS playing a bridging role in the new multilateralism will entitle them to their rightful place in the UN Security Council.

> Mukul Sanwal is a Former U.N. diplomat. Views are personal.

New book explores pandemic's art, anxiety and resilience

arth Greenwell's Small Rain is a deeply introspective and evocative exploration of the human condition amid the unprecedented uncertainty of the COVID-19 pandemic. Set in the tumultuous year of 2020, the novel captures the pervasive anxiety of the time through the eyes of a nameless narrator, whose emergency trip to a hospital becomes a catalyst for profound personal transformation. Through its poetic prose and emotional depth, Small Rain is a remarkable meditation on art, relationships, and resilience in the face of collective and individual crises

A Mirror to Collective Anxieties

Greenwell's narrator embodies the fears and uncertainties that defined the pandemic era. A sharp pain forces him to seek medical care, plunging him into what he perceives as the most dangerous place amid a global health crisis-the hospital. This internal struggle mirrors the larger societal disarray, as he reflects on decisions like reopening colleges despite surging COVID-19 cases: "It's like watching a car drive straight off a cliff, a friend said, but slowly, deliberately, a slow-motion suicide." Such observations encapsulate the collective unease of a world grappling with its fragility.

The hospital setting is not just a backdrop for the narrator's physical ordeal but also a stage for his emotional and intellectual revelations. In a time when human connections are fraught with fear and separation, the narrator turns to art as a sanctuary. The medieval song 'Westron Wynde,' which inspires the book's title, becomes a bridge between him and Alivia, a compassionate nurse. This shared appreciation for art transcends their roles as patient and caregiver, offering a poignant commentary on the redemptive power of shared humanity.

The Role of Art in Survival

Art, particularly poetry, emerges as the narrator's anchor in Small Rain. Greenwell portrays the nar-

rator as someone who has devoted his life to art, which in turn sustains him through his isolation and fear. Poetry becomes not merely a form of expression but an object of contemplation and devotion. The narrator muses, "All art is a message, we want to communicate something but not entirely graspable something, maybe there's a kind of sense only non-sense can convey." This sentiment underscores how art can provide solace and meaning when life feels incomprehensible.

Greenwell masterfully illustrates how art shapes the narrator's relationships and self-perception. Longing for his partner, L., the narrator channels his emotions through artistic reflection, rediscovering the depth of his connection. As he navigates the challenges of his hospital stay, art becomes a spiritual lens through which he reimagines his body, his work, and his relationships.

Layers of Brokenness

The narrative unfolds against



Small Rain By Garth Sarth Greenwell; Picador; Greenwell 320 pages; Rs 750

a backdrop of multi-layered brokenness-physical, emotional, and societal. The narrator resides in a damaged house with his partner, in a country fracturing under the weight of the pandemic and racial tensions. Beyond these personal and national struggles lies a world devastated by climate change, where even the natural order is collapsing with the disappearance of bird species. This intricate layering of brokenness reflects the interconnected fragility of human existence

and the planet Greenwell delves into the asymmetry of relationships, particularly the dynamic between patients and caregivers. The narrator becomes emotionally attached to Alivia, whose acts of care hold profound significance for him. Yet, for Alivia, he is just one among many patients. This asymmetry poignantly illus-

trates the inherent vulnerability and subjectivity in human connections.

Transformation and Redemption

The narrator's hospital experience becomes a crucible for transformation. By the end of his stay, he begins to care for the body he once loathed and appreciates the small but vital joys of his romantic relationship. His longing to reunite with his partner, L., signifies a rekindled appreciation for love and connection. Greenwell's portrayal of this journey is tender and compassionate, reminding readers of the resilience of the human spirit.

Conclusion

Small Rain is a profound and poetic exploration of life, love, and art in the shadow of a global crisis. Greenwell's lyrical prose and introspective narrative invite readers to reflect on their own experiences of isolation, connection, and renewal The novel is not just a testament to the power of art but also a compassionate chronicle of humanity's enduring quest for meaning in times of turmoil. By blending the personal and the universal, Greenwell crafts a literary work that resonates deeply with the anxieties and hopes of our time.

CORPORATE **GINDUSTRY**

Private Equity Investments in India Surge India Strengthens Global Trade Strategy to \$15 Billion in 2024, a 46.2 Pc Growth with Focus on 20 Key Nations

NEW DELHI: Driven by sec tors such as healthcare and pharmaceuticals, consumerrelated industries and technology – amid stable political scenario and favourable policy environment - private equity (PE) investments in India surged to \$15 billion in 2024, marking a 46.2 per cent increase from the previous year, according to a report on Wednesday.

India's expanding middle-class population, robust startup ecosystem, and strong IPO market provided ample opportunities for investors, according to the data shared by LSEG, a global financial markets infrastructure and data provider.

"India remains one of the top markets in the Asia Pacific for financial sponsor activity, accounting for at least 28 per cent of the region's total equity investments during this period, up from a 15 per cent

market share the previous year," said Elaine Tan, senior manager, LSEG Deals Intelligence. The total PE funds raised

over the last three years reached approximately \$23 billion, earmarked for deployment in India

Favourable government initiatives, anticipated global monetary easing, diverse sector opportunities, and a rising interest in integrating ESG into growth strategies are some

of the key factors expected to drive private equity activity in India in 2025," according to the report. Stable political scenario, favourable policy, infra push to drive Indian

economy in 2025 According to recent projections by global brokerages and financial institutions, the Indian economy is poised to be supported by a stable political scenario, favourable policy environments, the effects of production-linked incentive

SAIL strengthens Maha Kumbh with 45,000 tonnes of steel

(PLI) programmes, possibilities brought about by changes in the global supply chain and government emphasis on infrastructure spending.

The Indian macro remains strong among large markets except for the growth part. The Current Account Deficit (CAD) has improved significantly and is expected to be 1 per cent for FY25.

Moreover, robust services exports and healthy remittances flow should help keep the country's CAD in the safe zone during the current financial year (FY 2024-25), according to a Crisil report.

Most domestic macro and micro indicators remain steady. Given these aspects, the domestic equity market remains focused on earnings, according to industry experts. Government spending has resumed, employment is on the rise, and supply bottlenecks are lessening

of India's trade.

The ministry aims to tap into

this potential by promoting

exports of products like engi-

neering goods and electronics

while boosting services in IT/

ITeS, tourism, and other prior-

ity sectors. The meeting gains

importance amidst fluctuating

export trends. After recording

robust growth in October 2024,

India's merchandise exports

contracted by 4.85 per cent year-

on-year in November, reaching

USD 32.11 billion. However,

services exports have shown

resilience, achieving a record

USD 34.31 billion in October,

up 22.3 per cent year-on-year.

Cumulatively, India's exports

during April-November of this

USD 170.98 billion during the

"With the blessings of Maa

enced the power of dedication

towards seva. In the true sense,

seva is the highest form of pa-

He also elaborated on col-

laboration with ISKCON.

to strengthen India's global leadership and foster deeper international collaborations," Goyal shared on X, summarising the event's significance.

Discussions centred on overcoming nontariff barriers, logistics challenges, WTO-related matters, sentatives from the commercial and leveraging the Market Access Initiative (MAI) to expand India's global reach. Officials highlighted six key focus sectors, covering both goods and services, for enhanced export strategies targeting 20 major countries, including the US, Australia, China, Russia, and France. These nations, which include prominent EU members and economic hubs such as Japan and South Korea, account for a substantial portion same period last year.

'Genome India Project' a key biotechnology revolution towards Viksit Bharat: PM Modi

NEW DELHI: The 'Genome India Project' marks a defining moment in the country's biotechnology landscape and the combination of biotechnology and biomass is an important part of the foundation for 'Viksit Bharat', Prime Minister Narendra Modi said on Thursday.

Addressing experts and scientists via video message, PM Modi said the project was

approved 5 years ago and our scientists have diligently worked and completed the project, despite the challenges posed by the Covid-19 pandemic. More than 20 research insti-

fiscal year rose by 2.17% to USD tutions such as IISc, IITs, CSIR 284.31 billion, while imports surged by 8.35 per cent to USD and DBT-BRIC have played a 486.73 billion. major role in this research. The This widened the trade deficit to USD 202.42 billion from

data consisting of the genome sequences of 10, 000 Indians is now available at the Indian Biological Data Centre.

Parmeshwar Metal Makes Strong Market Debut at BSE SME **Platform With 38%** Premium



NEW DELHI: Parmeshwar Metal Ltd. made a debut on the BSE SME platform on January 9, with its shares listing at Rs 84.50, marking a 38.52 percent premium over its initial public offering (IPO) price. The company's market capitalisation reached Rs 129.34 crore following the listing. The successful IPO, which was priced between Rs 57 and Rs 61 per share, raised Rs 25 crore and garnered ex-

traordinary investor interest, achieving a subscription rate of over 563 times during its three-day bidding period from January 2 to January 6. The Gujarat-based manufacturer has outlined strategic plans for utilising the IPO proceeds, primarily focusing on expanding its production capabilities. The report. company intends to establish a

facturing facility in

Dehgam for the production of structure demand, the rating agency said in the report. For India's oil marketing ences between crude varieties, on profitability.



PRAYAGRAJ: Steel Authority 2013, demonstrating the comof India Limited (SAIL), a Mapany's consistent support for the haratna, has supplied approxinotable public event. mately 45,000 tonnes of steel

The steel supplied by SAIL for the upcoming Mahakumbh will play a crucial role in supporting the construction of Ministry of Steel said in a various temporary structures release that the total quantity of steel supplied includes cheessential for the smooth and successful conduct of the Maquered plates, hot strip mill hakumbh Mela 2025.

plates, mild steel plates, angles These include pontoon bridges, passages, temporary steel SAIL had supplied steel dur- bridges, substations and flying the Mahakumbh Mela of overs. Major customers for this

steel supply include the Public Works Department (PWD), Uttar Pradesh State Bridges Corporation, the Electricity Board and their suppliers.

tribute steel for such a largescale event, a symbol of the nation's rich cultural heritage.

mitted to contributing to national projects that enhance the country's infrastructure and promote its cultural and social

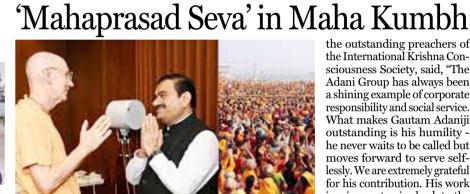
The Maha Kumbh Mela, one of the largest spiritual gatherings in the world, serves as a confluence not only of rivers but also of cultures, traditions, and artistic expressions.

every twelve years, transcends the boundaries of religion and spirituality, offering a platform to showcase India's rich cultural heritage.

sends notice to Ola **Electric for violating** disclosure norms



NEW DELHI: Electric vehicle (EV) company Ola Electric Mobility Limited has received an administrative warning from the markets regulator, the Securities and Exchange Board of India (SEBI), for violating disclosure norms. The reason cited is that Ola Electric announced its e-scooter expansion plans first on social media instead of announcing it on the stock exchanges. In an administrative warning, sent via email on January 7 for violating various sections of the SEBI (Listing Obligations and Disclosure Requirements) Regulations, 2015, the regulator asked the EV firm to ensure "equal, timely, cost-efficient access to relevant information for all investors" via stock exchanges. "By failing to



AHMEDABAD: The Adani with ISKCON." Group and the International Society for Krishna Consciousness Annapurna, free food will be (ISKCON) have joined hands to provided to lakhs of devotees. serve meals to devotees at the Today, I got the opportunity to Mahakumbh Mela in Prayagraj. meet Guru Prasad Swamiji of ISKCON and I deeply experi-

The Mahaprasad Seva will be offered for the entire duration of the Mahakumbh Mela, from January 13 to February 26.

triotism. Seva is meditation, To thank ISKCON for this initiative, Adani Group Chairseva is praver and seva is God.' man Gautam Adani met Guru he added. Prasad Swami, the Chairman of ISKCON Governing Body Commission (GBC), on Thursday.

"We have a wonderful ex-Speaking about ISKCON's perience and attachment with support in offering the Mahap-ISKCON. And even when we are rasad Seva, Gautam Adani said, thinking, what we can do from "Kumbh is a sacred place of a Kumbh Mela standpoint, and seva, where every devotee gets when it was about the Prasainstead announcing it on social involved in the name of seva to dam, then immediately, the first God. It is my good fortune that thought was that the institution Stable) will face greater pressure cess to information to all inves- Seva' for the devotees at the ner is ISKCON,'

the outstanding preachers of the International Krishna Consciousness Society, said, "The Adani Group has always been a shining example of corporate responsibility and social service. What makes Gautam Adaniji outstanding is his humility. he never waits to be called but moves forward to serve selflessly. We are extremely grateful for his contribution. His work inspires us to give back to the society and unite in the service of humanity." He cited ancient texts and

said it duty of every person to undertake tasks which assist others.

"According to our shastras, this is the most wonderful thing that one can do....with our life with our energy, with our wealth and with our words, we should serve the Supreme, and we are all part of that Supreme," he said.

The Mahaprasad Seva will be offered to 50 lakh devotees and the meals would be prepared in two kitchens in and outside the Mela area. The Mahaprasad will be distributed at 40 places in the Mahakumbh area and 2,500 volunteers will be involved in this initiative.

Golf carts have been arranged for the differently abled, elderly and mothers with children. Five lakh copies of Geeta Saar will also be distributed among the devotees

SAIL said it is proud to con-"The company remains com-

well-being," the release said.

The grand event, celebrated

India's demand for petroleum products expected to rise by 4 pc

NEW DELHI: India's demand for petroleum products such as petrol, diesel and LPG is expected to rise by three to four per cent in the current financial year ending on March 31, 2025, according to a Fitch Ratings

Mela in Prayagraj.

and joists.

The growth is driven by rising below their mid-cycle levels ing companies, although pure insumer, industrial and infra- in FY25 amid lower product refiners like HPCL-Mittal En-



companies (OMCs), refinery

Import

5845

6242

8540

7492

8188

2293

2532

2923

3391

3785

product development in medi-

cal devices industry (MDI).

Participation of companies

like Philips Global Business

Services LLP, Siemens Health-

care in PLI Scheme is a posi-

To encourage 'Make in

several interventions have

been made. For example, in

January 2016 import duty on

medical devices used for surgi-

cal, dental and veterinary use

was increased from 5.0 per

cent to 7.5 per cent. Special

Additional Duty (SAD) of 4.0

per cent was also imposed

time, basic customs duty was

reduced to 2.5 per cent on

raw materials, parts and ac-

mestic production of medical

devices. At the same time, it

has been highlighted by vari-

as a whole. Production Linked

tive move.

the report states. However, marketing margins

would be better than FY 24 due to lower Brent crude oil prices in the current financial year, the report states. "This will mitigate the pressures from lower refinmargins are expected to fall ing margins for the oil market-

Adani Group, ISKCON to start **Markets regulator SEBI**

"Together, we explored ways

NEW DELHI: Senior officials

from the Ministry of Commerce

and Industry, along with repre-

wings of Indian Missions in 20

countries, wrapped up a crucial

meeting on Wednesday, aimed

at boosting India's exports of

The deliberations, chaired

by Commerce and Industry

Minister Piyush Goyal, ad-

dressed country-specific and

sector-specific opportunities in

trade, technology, investment,

goods and services.

and tourism.



bunched copper wire and 1.6 MM copper wire rod.

lower benefits from price differ-

cracks, regional oversupply, and ergy Limited's (HMEL, BB+/ to provide equal and timely ac- we are starting the 'Mahaprasad

tors," read the SEBI warning. Maha Kumbh in collaboration

ave failed

first disseminate the informa-

tion on the stock exchanges and

media platforms voi

which can do it in the best man-

Guru Prasad Swamiji, one of

Make in India and a Sunrise Sector - Medical Devices



in India is valued at about \$14 bn and it is expected to grow to \$30 bn by 2030. Market size was around \$11 bn (approx. Rs 90,000 Cr in 2020 and at that time, its share in the global of exports of medical devices medical devices market was estimated to be 1.5 per cent. There are 6,000 plus different kinds of medical devices and the number is increasing day

by day. India is considered among top 20 global medical devices market in the world, and the 4th largest market in Asia after Japan, China, and South Korea. Indian Medical Devices sector is recognized as a sunrise sector due to its Committee on Chemicals and 2262 manufacturing units licenses have been issued from January 1, 2018, till February 2024 out of 3413 applications. The report further mentioned that India's import dependency in medical devices sector is about 80 per cent of its put import dependency at higher level, e.g., the Medical Technology Association of

India highlighted more than ment (FDI) was approved import duty on components is 86 per cent dependency in the in medical devices sector much higher as compared to 50th Report of the Standing via automatic route in both finished product/equipment Committee as cited above.

Medical Devices falls under of medical devices. This move some of these components as five segments namely Con- gave impetus and capital to applicants were selected who of medical devices.

sumables & Disposables, Table 1: India's Import & Export of Electro-Medical equipment, **Medical Devices** Implants, In-Vitro Diagnos-In USD Millio

tics, and Surgical Instruments. Financial Year Export Compounded Annual Growth 2019-20 Rate (CAGR) of imports for 2020-21 these five segments was 8.79 2021-22 per cent between FY 2019-2022-23 20 and FY 2023-24 whereas CAGR of exports stood at 13.35 2023-24 per cent during the same pe-Source: Directorate General of Commercial riod. Therefore, growth rate Intelligence & Statistics (DGCI&S), Ministry of Commerce and Industry

was higher in comparison to focus on capacity building and growth of imports. In absolute terms as measured in dollar terms, import was 2.16 times of exports in FY 2023-24 alone. Pharmaceuticals and Medi-

cal Devices have been recognized as prominent sectors in the category of Manufacturing Sectors under the 'Make India' for Medical Devices, in India' initiative that was launched on September 25, 2014. Multi-pronged strategy growth potential. As per the to encourage manufacturing 50th Report of the Standing of medical devices in India during last decade included Fertilizers (2024, February), permitting FDI up to 100 per cent, discouraging imports, boost to domestic production, notification of Medical Devices Rules, promotion of Medical Devices Parks, launch of Production Linked Incentive Scheme, establishment of cessories of these items. This dedicated Export Promotion was done to encourage dorequirements. Many reports Council and other supporting mechanism.

In December 2014, 100 per cent Foreign Direct Invest-Greenfield and Brownfield Import-Export data of projects for manufacturing Incentive Scheme dealt with

Table 2: Major destinations for export of Medical Devices from India

n oso million					
Country	FY 2019-20	FY 2020-21	FY 2021-22	FY 2022-23	FY 2023-24
USA	521.85	600.01	631.48	714.12	714.30

Country	FY 2019-20	FY 2020-21	FY 2021-22	FY 2022-23	FY 2023-24
USA	521.85	600.01	631.48	714.12	714.30
Germany	123.74	133.7	127.29	176.63	199
China	130.27	133	146.94	144.57	166
Netherlands	33.78	43.87	93.68	110.44	145
Japan	30.63	27.21	31.84	38	42.17

Source: DGCI&S, Ministry of Commerce and Industry



were manufacturing key components constituting major part of medical devices.

Medical Devices Rules, 2017 were notified on January 31, 2017, which came into force on these items. At the same on January 1, 2018. Under these rules, medical devices were classified as Class A (low risk), Class B (low moderate risk), Class C (moderate high risk) and Class D (high risk). Global Harmonisation Task Force (GHTF) was following this classification. GHTF was ous industry associations that founded in 1993 by the governments and industry representatives of the USA, European Union (EU), Japan, Canada and Australia. This Task Force provided guidelines to meet standards for safety and quality

devices have been included in the National List of Essential Medicines (NLEM) and in the Schedule-I of the Drugs (Prices Control) Order, 2013 to bring these devices under price control. The National Pharmaceutical Pricing Authority (NPPA) also put a price cap on trade margins at Price to Distributors (PTD) at 70 per cent of devices such as Pulse Oximeter, Glucometer, Nebulizer, Blood Pressure Monitor, Digital Thermometer, and Oxygen Concentrator. related notification dated

Table 3: India's Import of Medical Devices

In USD Million

_							
24	Country	FY 2019-20	FY 2020-21	FY 2021-22	FY 2022-23	FY 2023-2	
	USA	1190.08	984.08	1464.73	1418	1519	
	China	622.2	1110.92	1657.67	1246.82	1332	
	Germany	732.07	668.5	782.35	797.49	908	
	Netherlands	347.51	228.51	398	416	460	
	Japan	280.08	236.99	343.08	321.77	372	
	Course DCCIRC Ministry of Commons and Industry						

Source: DGCI&S, Ministry of Commerce and Industry

infrastructure facilities to medical device units located in the parks. Approvals were infrastructure facilities in the proposed medical device parks Madhya Pradesh and Himachal Pradesh.

Production Linked Incentive Scheme (PLI) for promoting Domestic Manufacturing of Medical Devices was notified on July 21, 2020. Target Segments of medical devices comprised Target Segment 1 (Cancer Care/Radiotherapy medical devices), Target Segment 2 (Radiology & Imaging medical devices and Nuclear Cardio-respiratory medical of Cardio-Respiratory Category & Renal Care Medical like Pacemakers). Production Linked Incentive Scheme (PLI) for Pharmaceuticals and innovation.

On March 20, 2020, the March 3, 2021, covered phar-Scheme – Promotion of maceutical goods under three Medical Device Parks was categories, and Category 3 approved to provide easy ac- included in-vitro diagnostic cess to world-class common devices. Overall incentive allocated for this category was Rs. 1,750 Cr. The rate of incentive on incremental sales (over given for creation of common base year) for pharmaceutical goods covered in Category 3 was kept 5 per cent for FY in Uttar Pradesh, Tamil Nadu, 2022-23 to FY 2025-26, 4 per cent for 2026-27 and 3 per cent for 2027-28. This Scheme is in early phase of implementation.

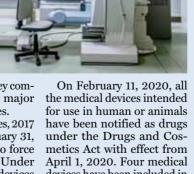
On September 21, 2022, the Department of Commerce approved the establishment of a separate Export Promotion Council (EPC) for Medical Devices (EPC-MD) at YEIDA, Uttar Pradesh to give the boost to the Medical Devices Sector. EPC-MD was launched Imaging Devices), Target on May 26, 2023. National Segment 3 (Anaesthetics & Medical Devices Policy, 2023 was also unveiled on the same devices including Catheters day. The Union Cabinet had approved the National Medical Devices Policy, 2023 in devices), and Target Segment April 2023 to facilitate an 4 (all implants including im- orderly growth of the mediplantable electronic devices cal device sector to meet the public health objectives of access, affordability, quality

By September 30, 2024,

there were almost 300 surgical items sold through 13.822 Janaushadhi Kendras under Pradhan Mantri Bhartiya Janaushadhi Pariyojana (PM-BJP). This is a key growth driver along with other growth drivers such as higher government health expenditure, rising income levels, growth in medical tourism, a growing burden of chronic diseases, expansion in healthcare insur-

ance coverage, etc. Most recently, on November 8, 2024, a new Scheme namely 'Strengthening of Medical Device Industry' has been launched with five subschemes – 'Common Facilities for Medical Devices Clusters'. 'Marginal Investment Scheme for Reducing Import Dependence', 'Capacity Building and Skill Development for Medical Devices', 'Medical Device Clinical Studies Support Scheme', and 'Medical Device Promotion Scheme'. From policy initiatives and recent data, it appears that 'Make in India' is showing results but still we have trade deficit with respect to all major five countries with which India has maximum Import or Export of Medical Devices. Positive outcome of policy initiatives is likely to materialize in next few years.

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



BANKING **G**FINANCE

Centre releases over Rs 1.73 Lakh Crore to states as Share in Taxes of gold in Nov as safe-haven asserted another 8 tonnes of gold in Nov as safe-haven asserted to the Reserve Bank MUMBAI: The Reserve Bank

NEW DELHI: The Union Government released a tax devolution of Rs 1,73,030 crore to state governments on Friday, up from the devolution of Rs 89,086 crore in December 2024.

A higher amount is being devolved this month to enable states to accelerate capital spending and finance their development and welfarerelated expenditures, the Finance Ministry said.

As many as 26 states have been listed in the package announced on Friday.

The funds released include Rs 13,017.06 crore for West Bengal, Rs 7,002.52 crore for Andhra Pradesh. Rs 6.310.40 crore for Karnataka. Rs 5.412.38 crore for Assam, Rs 5,895.13 crore for Chhattisgarh, Rs 1,436.16 crore for Himachal Pradesh, Rs 3.330.83 crore for Kerala.



Rs 3,126.65 crore for Punjab, Rs 1,238.9 crore, and Meghaand Rs 7,057.89 crore for laya 1,327.13 crore. The tax devolution is the Tamil Nadu.

Among the other states, process of distributing the net Uttar Pradesh has got Rs proceeds of taxes collected by the Union government to the 31,039.84 crore, Maharashtra Rs 10,930.31 crore, Gujarat Rs states. The Union government 6,017.99 crore, Madya Pradesh distributes taxes to states in Rs 13,582.86 crore, Manipur regular instalments based on

the recommendations of the Finance Commission.

The Finance Commission recommends the share of states in the total net proceeds of all taxes, including corporation tax, personal income tax, and central GST.

The 15th Finance Commission recommended that 41 per cent of the Central government's divisible tax pool be allocated to states for the period 2021-26. This is known as vertical devolution.

It also recommended criteria for distributing the funds among states, known as horizontal devolution. These criteria included "income distance" which reflects the difference in a state's income from the state with the highest per capita income, the size of the population of the state as per the 2011 Census, and the share of dense forest in each state

of gold in Nov as safe-haven asset month's largest seller, reducing

of India (RBI) bought another eight tonnes of gold in November 2024 as Central banks around the world continued their buying spree with a collective purchase of 53 tonnes of the precious metal during the month, according to the latest World Gold Council (WGC) report.

The decline in gold prices during November, following the US election, may have provided some central banks with the added impetus to accumulate the precious metal, the report pointed out.

RBI has, like other central banks, been buying gold as a safe-haven asset. The strategy of holding gold is primarily aimed at hedging against inflation and reducing foreign currency risks, especially in times of uncertainty triggered by geopolitical tensions.

With the addition of eight



it added.

WGC figures.

According to WGC, the cen-

These large purchases of

gold by central banks have

also been driving up prices

tonnes of gold to its reserves in November, the RBI has increased its buying to 73 tonnes in the first 11 months of 2024 and its total gold holdings to 876 tonnes, maintaining its position as the second largest buyer during the year after Poland.

The People's Bank of China in India (PBoC) has resumed gold purchases after a six-month gap, tral banks that bought gold adding five tonnes of gold to during the month are those of Poland adding 21 tonnes its reserves, increasing its yearto-date net purchases to 34 and Uzbekistan buying nine tonnes and its total reported tonnes. gold holdings to 2, 264 tonnes 5 per cent of total reserves), the report said.

Meanwhile, the Monetary of the precious metal in the Authority of Singapore was the global market.

India Plans New Credit Guarantee Scheme for MSMEs, Covering Loans Up to Rs 100 Crore its gold reserves by 5 tonnes,



NEW DELHI: Financial Services Secretary M Nagaraju announced on Thursday that the government is preparing to launch a comprehensive credit guarantee scheme for the Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises (MSME) sector, which will cover loans up to Rs 100 crore.

Speaking at the concluding session of Grameen Bharat Mahotsav, Nagaraju revealed that existing enterprises would be eligible for loans without requiring traditional guarantees under this new initiative.

The scheme, originally unveiled by Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman in the 2024-25 Budget, is awaiting Cabinet approval. According to the Finance Minister's budget announcement, the program will operate through a pooling mechanism for credit risks and will be managed by a selffinancing guarantee fund.

This initiative aims to facilitate term loans for MSMEs to purchase machinery and equipment without requiring collateral or third-party guarantees, though borrowers will need to pay both an upfront guarantee fee and an annual fee based on the declining loan balance.

The MSME sector has demonstrated remarkable growth and resilience in recent years, with exports surging from Rs 3.95 lakh crore in 2020-21 to Rs 12.39 lakh crore in 2024-

The sector currently employs 50 million people and has maintained a significant contribution to India's GDP. with its Gross Value Added (GVA) increasing from 29.7 percent in 2017-18 to 30.1 percent in 2022-23. Nagaraju emphasised the government's commitment to rural entrepreneurship through various lending schemes. He outlined four key focus areas for the country's progress including quality improvement, export elonment

Higher Govt Spending, Robust Investment to **Credit Bureau Records** to Be Updated Every Boost IIP Growth in H2 FY25: Economists 15 Days: RBI **NEW DELHI:** Given the ex-



NEW DELHI : The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) has announced new regulations requiring all lenders to update credit bureau records every 15 days, starting January 1, 2025, marking a significant shift from the current monthly reporting system. This initiative aims to create a more dynamic and accurate credit information framework. The new directive is designed to establish standardised protocols for credit information reporting and dissemination while ensuring the confidentiality and security of sensitive financial data. The framework also includes provisions for consumers to access their credit information and seek redress for credit reporting-related grievances. Under the current monthly reporting system, missed payments or defaults can take up to 40 days to appear in credit records, potentially leading to outdated

pectation of higher government spending followed by improvement in investment in the second half (H2), the Index of Industrial Production (IIP) growth is likely to be higher in H2 FY25, economists said on Friday The attention will now shift towards upcoming Budget and

the RBI policy which is expected to be growth conducive, said Jahnavi Prabhakar, economist, Bank of Baroda. IIP growth registered a robust growth of 5.2 per cent in November 2024 against a growth of 3.7 per cent in October. "This was supported by improvement across all the sectors. Manufacturing sector expanded by 5.8 per cent, with over 15 sub-sectors registering stronger growth than last year. Both mining and electricity sector registered strong growth in

November," said Prabhakar. Within use-based classifica-



registered a healthy increase in November. "A festival push during this period, supported the production. In the coming months, we expect a steady pick up in production level. This has been reflected by high frequency indicators," Prabhakar added.

Dharmakirti Joshi, Chief Economist at Crisil, said the festive season led to a sharp rise

cretionary products. "Consumer durables saw the strongest rise in the index (13.1 per cent in November) among major production sectors. The rise was seen across low and high value items, including clothing, electronics, furniture and automobiles," said Joshi. The resumption of government capital expenditure (capex) also boosted production of infrastructure and construction goods (10 per cent IIP in production of consumer dis- growth), and capital goods (9

per cent) in November.

IIP growth has been better in the third quarter so far. Further, the first advance estimate for gross domestic product (GDP) pencils in higher overall economic growth in the second half of this fiscal (6.8 per cent) than in the first half (6 per cent).

"The effects of good agricultural output, easing food inflation and improving government capex are expected to support growth in the second half of this fiscal," according to Joshi. Arsh Mogre, Economist In-stitutional Equities, PL Capital-

Prabhudas Lilladher, said the manufacturing sector recorded the fastest pace of expansion, driven by infrastructure emphasis and construction demand. "On net basis, the November

IIP data is an encouraging sign, but decisive action will be critical and all eyes will be on Union Budget 2025-26," Mogre noted.

NEW DELHI: State-owned Punjab & Sind Bank is set to unveil an instant loan scheme of up to Rs 25 lakh for the MSME sector this month, reinforcing its commitment

The move follows the successful launch of its digital home loan and vehicle loan schemes

Speaking about the initiative, Punjab & Sind Bank Executive Director Ravi Mehra stated, "Our digital journey is transformative. The instant MSME loan scheme is another step to provide faster and more efficient services

Under the bank's existing offerings-PSB e-Apna Ghar and PSB e-Apna Vahan, introduced last month-applicants can receive in-principle approvals within 15 minutes.

Lakh Instant Loan Scheme for MSMEs पंजाब एण्ड सिंध वेंक 👩 Punjab & Sind Bank

Punjab & Sind Bank Launching Rs 25



to leveraging digital platforms

to enhance credit delivery.

Additionally, the bank is set to digitise its Kisan Credit Card (KCC) renewal process next month, allowing farmers to secure loans up to Rs 2 lakh without collateral. A simple missed call or online application will suffice for instant renewal, provided to our customers."

> criteria are met. Further, the bank plans to introduce collateral-free loans under the Pradhan Mantri MUDRA Yojana (PMMY), offering up to Rs

Small Restaurants Demand 12-18 Pc GST with ITC

NEW DELHI: The National Restaurant Association of India (NRAI) has submitted key recommendations to Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman, seeking support for the restaurant sector in the forthcoming timely payments and defaults in Union Budget.

ings, and GST reduction on eco-friendly packaging materials. The association, representing over 500.000 restaurants

with a 5 percent duty highlighted the industry's role credit on forex earnas a major employer, currently providing direct employment to

more than 8.50 million Indians. The association stressed that the sector not only contributes substantially to direct and indirect tax revenues but also drives

These schemes employ a

swift and accurate. "With this approach, we can ensure loan approvals even on holidays, enhancing customer convenience while

employ a similar STP model. Loans will be assessed based on cash flow analysis, digital account statements, and GST returns, making the process

maintaining low default risks,' Mehra added.

make decisions based on more current financial behavior. The RBI has also addressed concerns regarding Credit Information Companies (CICs) sharing for restaurants not located in credit information with non-Specified Users (SUs) based on individual consent.

information and imprecise cred-

itworthiness assessments. The

new 15-day reporting cycle will

enable faster reflection of both

s, allowing lenders to

dations, NRAI proposed the restoration of GST input tax credit, suggesting a new GST slab of 12-18 percent with ITC premium hotels.

on commercial leases through RCM, citing inflationary pressure on smaller establishments and MSME owners.

Additional proposals includ-The association also request- ed the reinstatement of the Sered a review of GST notification vice Export from India Scheme

sised the industry's

significant economic contribution, with an annual turnover of INR 5.69 lakh crores, making it the third-largest segment in the services sector after retail and insurance.

In its submission, NRAI

onsumption, promote ism, and supports numerous allied industries.

NRAI President Sagar Daryani emphasised the need for structural reforms, including the establishment of a dedicated ministry or department for the

restaurant industry.

(STP) powered by a pre-de-

fined Business Rule Engine (BRE), ensuring seamless, automated processing without manual intervention.

The MSME scheme, which farmers, and small entrepreis in its final testing phase, will neurs.

50.000 hrough Straight Through Process platform.

building, and support mechanisms to achieve the vision of Vikshit Bharat.

These initiatives align with the government's broader strategy to strengthen India's MSME sector and enhance its global competitiveness.

Boosting Revenue by GST



he Goods and Services Tax

(GST) Council has increased the GST rate on the profit margin of the sale of old and the business used vehicles, including electric vehicles, to 18 percent. istered vehicle dealer claims After this announcement of the GST Council, there is confusion among the public Income Tax Act, 1961, then regarding its recovery. People also he will have to pay GST are confused, will they have on the profit margin. Here to pay GST at the rate of 18 margin means (Selling price percent on selling their old vehicle or will this tax be levied only on the profit margin of dealer on selling of old & used clarify that only the registered their profit margin. If a person another person or to a vehicle to pay GST on it.

This can be understood then he will not have to pay GST on the sale price. Simiamount. However, when the at the rate of 18 percent GST



18.000 as GST.

been levied till 2017.

depreciation on the vehicle sold under section 32 of the - Remaining price after depreciation). If this margin is

negative then the dealer will the registered vehicle seller or not have to pay GST, but if it is positive then he will have vehicles? Here, I would like to to pay GST on the difference between the selling price and vehicle dealer will pay GST on the purchase price margin.

This can be understood sells his old or used vehicle to with an example. The price of a vehicle is Rs 20 lakh and dealer, then he will not have the seller claims a depreciation of Rs 9 lakh and fixes the selling price of the vehicle at by an example. If a person Rs 10 lakh. In such a case, buys a car for Rs 15 lakh and subtracting the selling price uses it for 3 years, then sells of the vehicle, which is Rs 10 it to someone for Rs 10 lakh, lakh, from the price after depreciation, which is Rs 11 lakh, results in a negative margin, larly, if a person sells his old so no GST will have to be paid and used car to a registered on it, but if the vehicle is sold vehicle dealer at the same for Rs 12 lakh instead of Rs 10 price, then also he will not lakh, then a positive margin have to pay GST on the sale of Rs 1 lakh will come out and

& dealer will have to pay Rs the purchase and sale of all old vehicles, including elec-

It is pertinent to mention tric vehicles, which can be that Taxing margin is not a called a commendable and new thing. Even during the praiseworthy initiative of the government. UPA regime, tax was levied

on margin in the process of The used car market in buying and selling old or used India is growing continuvehicles, which was known ously. Obviously, the expanas 'Service Tax'. It is worth sion of the market will also mentioning that this tax has increase the revenue of the government. According to

Before this decision of the the Indian Blue Book (IBB) GST Council, old vehicles with 2023 report, the used car engine capacity of 1200 CC market in India was US\$ or more, which were running 31.33 billion in FY 2022on petrol, LPG or CNG and 23, which is estimated to diesel vehicles with engine grow to US\$ 70.48 billion capacity of 1500 CC or more by FY 2027-28. The report were being charged GST at also states that the average growth rate of the used vethe rate of 18 percent since 2018. Not only this, GST is hicle market was 6 percent also being charged at the rate during FY 2017 and FY 2022, of 12 percent on old electric but the market is expected to grow at a rate of 16 percent vehicles. Therefore, there is no during the period between need to create a ruckus over the latest decision of the GST FY 2023 and FY 2028. In Council. Infect, through this comparison, the new car initiative, the government has market is expected to grow worked to bring uniformity at a rate of just 1 percent to dealer sells the same car to a will be levied on car dealer in the collection of GST on 6 percent during this period.

Today's youth want to live their life in a luxurious way. Earlier people used to buy a car in middle age after working for 20 or 25 years, but now as soon as they get a job, even if it is through a loan, the youth are buying a car and a house immediately. When money is short, the youth are not even averse to buying old vehicles. In such a situation. there is immense possibility of expansion of the old vehicle market, which the government cannot ignore at all.

It can be said that the collection of GST at the rate of 18 percent on the profit margin on the sale of all types

of old and used vehicles for the second or third time will increase the government's revenue. This decision of the GST Council will not put any tax burden on the common man. It is also appropriate to say here that tax was already being collected on old or used vehicles in the name of GST or some other name.

If seen, the latest initiative of the government has brought uniformity in tax structure. In such a situation, it must be said that due to the increase in revenue, the government will be able to spend on developmental works, which will ultimately benefit the common people.

Satish Singh, Ahmedabad Based Senior Columnist,

Indian Stock Market Ends Lower, IT Sector Shines

These initiatives under-

score Punjab & Sind Bank's

commitment to streamlin-

ing credit access for diverse

sectors, particularly MSMEs,

MUMBAI: India's domestic benchmark indices closed lower on Friday as the IT sector closed in the green after a gain of 3.44 per cent.

Sensex ended at 77,378.91, down by 241.30 points, or 0.31 per cent, and Nifty settled at 23,431.50, down by 95 points or 0.40 per cent.

Nifty Bank ended at 48,734.15, down by 769.35 points, or 1.55 per cent. The Nifty Midcap 100 index closed at 54,585.75 after dropping 1,160.15 points, or 2.08 per cent, while the Nifty Smallcap 100 index closed at 17,645.55 after declining 472.80 points, or 2.61 per cent.



Buying was seen in the IT According to market exsector after strong Q3 results perts, domestic market senof Tata Consultancy Services timent remained subdued (TCS), which saw its stock due to rising crude oil prices, driven by supply concerns and a strengthening dollar index.

"Despite the IT sector's resilience following positive early Q3 results, broader indices bled due to uncertainties surjumping 5.60 per cent at Rs 4,265 apiece. On the Bombay Stock Exchange (BSE), 829 shares ended in the green and 3,162 shares in the red, whereas there was no change in 87

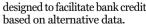
shares.

MSME Credit Deployment Grows 13.5% YoY: RBI

NEW DELHI: Bank lending to the Micro, Small and Medium Enterprise (MSME) sector demonstrated strong momentum, with gross credit deployment reaching Rs 26.48 lakh crore in November 2024, marking a 13.5 percent increase from Rs 23.32 lakh crore in the corresponding period last year, according to the Reserve Bank of India>s latest

sectoral credit deployment data. The MSME sector accounted for 15.5 percent of the total nonfood credit of Rs 170 lakh crore extended by scheduled commercial banks.

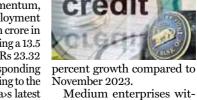
Within the MSME segment, micro and small enterprises (MSEs) attracted the lion>s share of credit at Rs 20.92 lakh crore, registering an 11.7



The platform, currently in its pilot phase, has already demonstrated significant traction, processing over 6 lakh loans totaling Rs 27,000 crore as of December 6, 2024.

Of these, MSMEs have benefited from 1.60 lakh loans amounting to Rs 14,500 crore, as reported in the central bank>s comprehensive banking report.

The sector>s growing significance in India>s credit ecosystem is further emphasised by the total outstanding bank credit to MSMEs, which stood at Rs 27.25 lakh crore at the end of March 2024, representing 19.3 percent of the total adjusted net bank credit (ANBC).

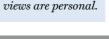


MSN

Medium enterprises witnessed even more robust growth, with credit deployment surging by 20.7 percent to reach Rs 5.56 lakh crore, up from Rs 4.60 lakh crore in the previous year.

The lending landscape for MSMEs is poised for transformation with the Reserve Bank of India>s upcoming launch of the unified lending interface (ULI),





INTERNATIONAL

US: Five Killed in California Wildfires

CALIFORNIA: Multiple major wildfires raging across Los Angeles County, the most populous US county, has killed at least five people and damaged at least 1,100 buildings, authorities said.

The Palisades fire, a devastating wind-driven brush fire in Pacific Palisades starting Tuesday, spread to 15,800 acres (63.9 square km) as of Wednesday afternoon with zero containment, according to the California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection (Cal Fire) on Wednesday.

"Extreme fire behaviour, including short and long-range spotting, continues to challenge firefighting efforts for the Palisades Fire," noted Cal Fire in an update.

The blaze destroyed about 1,000 structures, including many expensive homes built between the Santa Monica Mountains and the Pacific Ocean, and forced thousands to flee with new evacuation warnings issued for Malibu, reports Xinhua news agency. In a rich community located

Myanmar army airstrike



NEW DELHI: An airstrike by Myanmar's army on a village under the control of an armed ethnic minority group killed about 40 people and injured at least 20 others, officials of the group and a local charity said Thursday. They said hundreds of houses burned in a fire triggered by the bombing.

The attack occurred on Wednesday in Kyauk Ni Maw village on Ramree island, an area controlled by the ethnic Arakan Army in western Rakhine state, they said. The military has not announced any attack in the area. The situation in the village could not be independently confirmed.

ithout

32 km west of Los Angeles neighbouring cities of Los Andowntown, many landmarks, geles, killed five people and including the sumptuous Getseriously injured many others, ty Villa museum showcasing according to fire and police Greek and Roman antiquities officials. and the mid-century modern Cal Fire said that firefighters Eames House, were threatened are working aggressively to

slow the spread of the blaze by fire. Three schools in Palisades and protect critical infrastrucwere reportedly significantly ture under extreme conditions. damaged by the blaze.

Meanwhile, the Hurst fire, The Eaton fire, which which spread quickly durbroke out Tuesday evening, ing high winds overnight in had burned more than 10,600 Sylmar, scorched over 700 acres (42.9 square km) near Altadena and Pasadena, two Wednesday afternoon.

The authorities blamed the dangerous wildfire situation in Southern California on the combination of strong winds, very low relative humidity and dry vegetation as extraordinarily powerful winds and gusts - of up to 160 kph – were reported overnight. A Particularly Dangerous

Situation red flag warning will remain in effect across the region through Thursday afternoon, and a high wind warning will remain in effect through Wednesday evening.

Local TV station KTLA reported that widespread power outages caused by wildfires in Los Angeles, Ventura, Orange, San Bernardino, Riverside and San Diego counties in Southern California were impacting more than 4 million customers as of Wednesday afternoon.

California governor Gavin Newsom declared a state of emergency on Tuesday after tens of thousands of people were ordered to evacuate due to a fast-moving wildfire in Southern California

Putin Open to Contact With Trump After January 20 : Kremlin



MOSCOW: Russian President Vladimir Putin would welcome contact with Donald Trump if Trump's political will remains after his inauguration as US president on January 20, said the Kremlin on Thursday. There are currently no re-

quests for contact from the US side, said Kremlin spokesperson Dmitry Peskov. However, it would be reasonable to wait until Trump takes office, he added.

At a recent press conference

at his Mar-a-Lago estate in Florida, President-elect Trump said he was aware that the Russian leader would like to meet, adding that such a meeting would only be appropriate after his inauguration.

Trump said that he can "understand the Russians' feelings" about President Joe Biden allegedly breaking a "deal" to deny Ukraine NATO membership.

Discussing the causes of the war, Trump said that the pros-

Korean American **Senator Andy Kim Advocates for Stability** in South Korea Amid **Political Uncertainty**

pect of Ukraine joining NATO had been "a major issue for Russia for many, many years". "You know, a big part of the

problem was Russia for many, many years, long before (Russian President, Vladimir) Putin said, you could never have NATO involved with Ukraine. Now they've said ... that's been like written in stone. Somewhere along the line (US President Joe) Biden said no, they should be able to join NATO. Well, then Russia has somebody right on their doorstep and I could understand their feeling about that," Trump told reporters on Tuesday at Mar-a-Lago in Florida

"There were a lot of mistakes made in that negotiation. When I heard the way that Biden was negotiating, I said you're going to end up in a war and it turned out to be a very bad war. That war could escalate to be much worse than it is right now," he said in response to a question.

WASHINGTON: Andv Kim. the first Korean American senator, has emphasized the urgent need for stability in South Korea, following political turmoil stemming from former President Yoon Suk Yeol's failed martial law attempt and ubsequent impeachment.

Kim pledged to protect US-South Korea alliances, stressing the importance of coalition-building over isolationist rhetoric. He vowed to oppose any military or economic coercion in the Indo-Pacific, referencing concerns about Donald Trump's foreign policy approach. **Bipartisan Pushback:**

Kim warned of bipartisan resistance if Trump pursues a withdrawal of US troops from South Korea. He underscored the strategic importance of US military presence in South Korea for regional deterrence, particularly regarding Chi-na and the Taiwan Strait. Global Implications: Kim highlighted that the US benefits significantly from its partnership with South Korea, countering narratives that suggest otherwise. He remains committed to fostering alliances, both bilaterally and through multilateral frameworks like the Quad, despite uncertainties about Trump's foreign policy direction.

Imran's PTI agrees to third round of talks with Pak govt



ISLAMABAD: Pakistan's jailed former minister Imran party on

Myanmar army airstrike on village killed at least 40 Two Indian Americans elected to Virginia state legislatures

NEW YORK: Two Indian Americans were elected in special elections to Virginia's legislatures, ensuring the Democratic Party keeps its slender majority despite the national Trump wave in last year's election.

Kannan Srinivasan was elected to the State Senate and J.J. Singh to the State House of Delegates on Wednesday. In what seems like a round

of musical chairs, Singh takes the seat held in the House by Srinivasan, who in turn succeeds Suhas Subramanyam, who resigned the State Senate seat and was elected to Congress in November. The races featured another Indian American, Republican Ram Venkatachalam, who lost to Singh.

Srinivasan will join another



Indian American, the Hyder- Virginia, will probably be the abad-born Ghazala Hashmi, in first legislator in the US to wear the State Senate. He grew up in a turban, although other Sikhs Tamil Nadu and was a chartered have been elected. Singh worked accountant in India before emiin the White House Office of grating to the US, where he built Management and Budget una 30-year career in business and der former President Barack finance. Srinivasan was elected Obama. He had earlier served to the Virginia House in 2023. as a Peace Corps volunteer in J.J. Singh, who was born in Bolivia and as a senior US Senate advisor. The elections were crucial to

the Democrats, who had only a one-seat majority in both chambers in a state where the governor is a Republican.

Vice President Kamala Harris defeated President-elect Donald Trump in the state, but there are concerns among the Democrats that his national victory could seep into the races.

The election was a shocking disappointment for Kamala Harris, who stepped in to carry the Democratic Party torch after President Joe Biden dropped out as questions arose over his mental and physical capabilities.

The Democrats put more resources into the race than the Republicans to ensure their candidate's victory.

Trudeau ending 11-year Canadian leadership marred by confrontation with India

with Khalistanis.

OTTAWA: Justin Trudeau is ally Jagmeet Singh, leader of ending his 11-year leadership the opposition, New Demorole, nine years as Canada's Prime Minister, that was of orchestrating a deadly cammarred by his confrontation with India and deference to Khalistanis Activists.

He announced on Monday against some Indian leaders hat he will step down as Prim

cratic Party, he accused India paign against Khalistanis Activists. Some in his government made personal allegations

presenting proo



support him without joining the government.

Any leader succeeding him will have to get the support of the minority parties. If this is not possible, an early election before the October deadline could become inevitable givlge to the opposition Conservative Party. Conservative Party leader Pierre Marcel Poilievre is waiting in the wings and if he becomes Prime Minister a reset of Canada's policies can be expected. Polilievre has blamed Trudeau for ruining relations with India by being "unprofessional". He said in an interview with Toronto's Namaste Radio last year, that Trudeau "is so incompetent and unprofessional that now we are in major disputes with almost every major power in the world and that includes India".

Judge Rules No Prison Term for Trump in 'Hush Money' Case



NEW YORK: In a land- Trump, who framed himmark decision, Judge Juan self as a victim of politically Marchan announced that motivated prosecutions. President-elect Donald Potential Presidential Im-Trump would avoid a prison pact: The conviction casts a sentence despite upholding shadow over Trump's presidency, with his inauguration his conviction in the controversial "hush money" case. scheduled for January 21. The sentencing, scheduled for January 10—just 11 days Trump's Reaction- On his platform, Truth Social, before Trump's inaugura-Trump dismissed the rultion-will see him granted ing as a "Rigged Charade" an "unconditional discharge." and criticized Marchan for alleged conflicts of interest, Key Highlights of the Case Conviction Details: Trump citing the judge's daughter's was accused by Manhatties to Vice President Kamala tan prosecutor Alvin Bragg of falsifying business records to classify payments

Harris's campaign. Other Legal Cases Dropped Federal Cases: to Stormy Daniels, a porn Two federal cases, one constar, as legal expenses. cerning retention of official These payments were made records and another related re Daniels' silence to the January 6 riots to sec

Minister and the leader of the linking India to the killing Liberal Party, but will continue in office till a new leader is elected. Speaking outside his official residence here he said, "I intend to resign as party leader, as Prime Minister, after the party selects its next leader through a robust, nationwide, competitive process".

He said that the House of Commons will be prorogued till March 24, which means it will be dormant and the opposition cannot force a vote of no-confidence against him.

Egged on by his one-time resignation.

of Khalistani leader Hardeep Singh Nijjar. But that was not enough to mollify Singh, on whose support his minority government relied on to stay

in power. Singh joined the chorus for Trudeau's resignation, as his poll ratings cratered and his party and the government plunged into chaos with the

ouster of Deputy Prime Minister Chrystia Freeland. That, in turn, led to Liberal Party MPs calling for Trudeau's owed by an invitation sent for agreement in September to

The Trudeau government's a reception he was hosting campaign against India did to Jaspal Atwal, a Khalistani nothing to salvage his repuconvicted of involvement in tation. A visit to India by an assassination plot against Trudeau to India exposed his the then-Punjab Minister Malgovernment's entanglement kiat Singh Sidhu. The Liberal Party has only 153 seats in the Trudeau's penchant for 338-member, far short of the showmanship backfired dur- 170 needed for a majority. ing the trip when he and his Trudeau's government was family dressed in Bollywood on life support after the New glam, and it was overshad- Democratic Party broke an

34 Counts: Bragg treated each payment as a separate offense, leading to a conviction on 34 counts. Dismissal of Immunity Argument: Judge Marchan rejected Trump's lawyers' argument that presidential immunity applied, as the actions were unrelated to official duties. Political and Implications Election and Public Perception: Despite the allegations, voters elected

a defeat of his government

on the floor at least for the

time being. The government

needs the backing of a ma-

jority of the 338 members of

parliament in a no-confidence

vote. The Liberals are facing

a deficit 17 seats requiring

the support from members

of Canada's other parties. The

government has been surviv-

ing with the support of the

left-leaning New Democratic

Party (NDP). However, af-

ter Trudeau announced he

would step aside, NDP Leader

Jagmeet Singh said he would

vote to bring down the Liberal

Party Government, no matter

who the leader is. "They do

not deserve another chance,"

Gopal Misra has been

associated with national

and international media.

and geo-politics have been

His books on journalism

well-appreciated.

Views are personal.

scheduled in October.

dropped by a special counsel. about an alleged affair. Georgia Election Interference: Another local case in Georgia remains stalled amid accusations of impropriety by the Democratic prosecutor. Conclusion - While Trump avoids prison, the conviction underscores ongoing legal and political controversies surrounding his rise to power. His claims of persecution Backdrop and politically driven charges continue to resonate with his base, shaping his narrative as he prepares to assume office.

said it will participate in the third round of talks with the government to help ease political tensions in the country. The development came a day after PTI leaders on Tuesday demanded unrestricted access to Khan as a precondition for engaging in the next round of talks with the government. The government and PTI leaders began formal talks last month and. The third was expected this week but differences popped up after the PTI leaders were not allowed to meet Khan on Tuesday.

Anita Anand in Race, Trudeau Quits before Being Toppled in Parliament, Rebellion in the Ruling Alliance His suspension in April, 2024

NEW PM IN CANADA

GOPAL MISRA



mong the leaders of the rul-Anand, presently

Transport Min-Finance Minister, Chrystia

ing party, Anita affect his political position.

Freeland, and formal central the party should have been banker Mark Carney (a position equivalent to the Gov- ruling Liberal Party to select a ernor of the Reserve Bank of new leader without, especially India), have emerged as the in this election year. It may front-runners for the prime be recalled that his political minister's office in Canada.

Justine Trudeau, has already in 2015. announced his intention to till March 24 this year.

after refusing to apologise for calling Trudeau a "wacko" and "extremist" during a question period could not adversely It is being stated that Trudeau's intention to quit ister, the former the office of the prime min-

ister and the presidency of accompanied by allowing the fortune was at its zenith, when The present incumbent he had led his party to power

Justin Trudeau's recent inquit the coveted office, but is tention to quit, perhaps, have expected to remain in office amused political observers across the continents, espe-The recently held opinion cially from Washington and polls indicate that if a Cana- London. They have close ties dian election were to be held with Canada. It is stated that today, the country's main even being entrenched in the Opposition, Conservative office for a decade, he could Party, under the leadership not really attain the stature of Pierre Poilievre, would of a statesman, but his deciwin decisively. Since 2022, sion to prorogue the House of Poilievre has successfully Commons till March 24, has been able to brand himself shown that he just wanted as anti-elite and anti-Trudeau, time to avoid being toppled a down-to-earth everyman. in a no-confidence motion in the history.



the Canadian parliament. In this process, if the ruling party fails to elect a leader promptly, he might remain in the office till his successor his chosen, but the final decision has to be taken before March 24.

His supporters, however, considered it a political master-stroke by being toppled immediately in a no-confidence motion. In the Canadian history, he might be remembered for his histrionics being played in the strife-stricken Canadian politics of a hero before fading in

Justin's political misfortunes, according to some political observers, began when he got himself being identified with Islamists and the Sikh separatists, perhaps, being advised by the American Deep State. The majority of the ruling party did not approve his opportunistic alliances with the separatists at the cost of annoying India, a long-term friend. It may be noted that apart from being a sizeable presence of people of Indian origin, India has always been grateful to Canada for setting up a nuclear reactor in

Trombe, Mumbai, helping her to explore the high-ending to quit, Trudeau has thwarted a defeat of his government technologies.

The resignation of Chrystia Freeland in December 2024 has further exposed his political weakness; thus, turn-ing the political crisis into a tsunami. Being a scion of one of the most well-known families of Canada, Justin was expected to resolve the political issues, he could have made an impact on the world politics. It may be recalled when he was born of December 25, 1971, his father Pierre Trudeau was the prime minister of Canada. Interestingly, he also represented the two prominent European cultures, French and Scottish. His an-

cestry is also quite illustrihe said. However, if Anita ous. Among his grandfathers, Anand is chosen, the NDP might revise its decision. The Charles-Emile Trudeau was a businessman and Scottishfederal elections in Canada are born, James Sinclair was a minister of fisheries in the Canadian government during PM. Louis St. Laurent. One of Justin's ancestors, Major-General William Farquhar, had played a key-role in es-

tablishing modern Singapore. By announcing his intention Antony Blinken admits US sent arms to Ukraine ahead of conflict

WASHINGTON: US Secretary of State Antony Blinken admitted that the United States had "quietly sent a lot of weapons to Ukraine" five months ahead of the conflict.

"We saw it coming, " Blinken said in an interview with The New York Times, noting the United States made sure that "Ukraine was prepared" by sending it billions of dollars and weapons since September 2021.

"What we've had to look at each and every time is not only should we give this to the Ukrainians but do they know how to use it? Can they maintain it?" he added. When asked whether it is time to end the conflict, Blinken said a cease-fire would likely give Russia a break, and that any cease-fire must ensure Ukraine can "deter further aggression, "which, he noted, could be achieved through NATO membership.

"Russia has been talking about this for many years, said Russian Foreign Ministry spokesperson Maria Zakharova on Saturday in response to Blinken's remarks, noting that they underscored "the rationale behind Russia's objective on the



demilitarisation of Ukraine.'

'We voiced concerns over the United States and Britain pouring arms into Ukraine, the endless NATO exercises in the Black Sea that violate Russian borders, and the dangerous proximity of Western military aircraft to civilian airliners in our airspace, "she added.

The Kremlin has repeatedly criticised Western arms shipments to Ukraine, claiming they escalate the conflict, obstruct peace efforts, and drag NATO members into direct involvement, Xinhua news agency reported. According to the US Department of State, as of Monday, the United States has provided Ukraine with \$61.4 billion in military assistance since the conflict.

Priyanka Chopra

gives a shout out to 'brave' first

MUMBAI: Indian actress

Priyanka Chopra Jonas praised "brave" first respond-

ers for working through the night and continuing to help

affected families in the wake of the Palisades Fire in Los

Priyanka took to her

Instagram stories, where

she shared a post of "first responders" trying to con-

trol the wildfire, which has

destroyed thousands of acres

Angeles.

of land

responders

Suraksha Realty to continue maintainence of Kosmos, Aman says Noida Authority



KAVITA SHARMA Noida

In a recent development Noida Authority has thrashed the Suraksha Realty for not providing the proper services to the residents of Jaypee Wish Town and building pressure on the Apartment Owners Association (AOA) for taking over the handover of an incomplete society. A tripartite meeting was held at the Noida Authority office on 6th January attended by AOA Kosmos, AOA Aman and Suraksha

Officers. This meeting was presided over by ACEO Vanissued

The Kosmos AOA raised the issue of poor maintanence, incomplete infrastructure, water. They also showed the NCLT order where IFMD is supposed to be handed over to the Associations. Suraksha officials claimed it's a shared

objected. The AOA of Jaypee Aman society also raised the dana Tripathi who directed the issues of incomplete infra-Suraksha Group to continue structure, water, Club and poor maintenance services till the maintainence. The Kosmos Completion Certificates are and Kensington Park members also presented a Wishtown

map to the authority where 78 % of the green area is converted to Golf course managed power supply, security and by the Jaypee/Suraksha group.

After many discussions and heated arguments between Suraksha and AOAs of Jaypee Wishtown, the Noida Authorarea IFMD, to which everyone handover should only be given

Certificates are issued. "You can't only eat the Cream, you have to take care of the whole milk" if you were not able to manage the Jaypee Wishtown, why did you took over, ACEO Vandana Tripathi asked to which Suraksha officials Keep mum. Suraksha was also asked to submit detailed bifurcation of Common area in elements like Community, HealthCare, Horticulture, commercial roads and transport which shall be audited by Noida Authority soon.

to the AOA's after Completion

After hearing the Association Members issues, Vandana Tripathi said it is not legal and practical to offer handover for a incomplete society. She also asked Suraksha to provide Gangajal water to the entire Wishtown at the earliest, and meet the Electricity challenges properly as it is an essential service.

The meeting was attended by Kosmos AOA president Dharmendra Chaudhary, Sunil Bharadwaj, Ravi Shanker Sharma, Kavita Sharma, Shalini Rana, Asad Anwar and Devendra. AOA members of Aman included Presiity came to a conclusion that dent Yogesh Singh, Gajendra Choudhary and Vimal Singh.

MUMBAI: As Bollywood's Greek God Hrithik Roshan turned 51 on Friday, his former brother-in-law Zayed Khan shared a picture from the celebrations which included his ex-wife Sussanne Khan and his ladylove Saba Azaad among many others. Zayed took to his Insta-

gram, where he wished the star and said that Hrithik has never failed to be an honest sounding board to him his whole life. The "Main Hoon Na" actor also shared a picture which featured Sussanne, her beau Arsalan, Zayed, Hrithik, Saba and some friends.

He wrote: Happy birthday my brother Duggs!! To a guy a greatly admire ! Who's will power is simply stunning to say the least . Who has never failed to be an honest sounding board to me my whole life Whose advice I take sin-

MUMBAI: Vikram Bhatt is

Shine on my brother into this 2003 in the film Chura Livaa Blue. It's a wrap for Vikram Bhatt's



. Big hug. Always stay as kind as you are ! @hrithikroshan #happybirthday #family #friendslikefamily

Hrithik Roshan Celebrates 51st B'day With

Hrithik and Sussanne were childhood sweethearts. They got married in 2000 and 14 years later they separated. The duo share two sons together.

Talking about Zayed, who cerely and introspect deeply. he made his screen debut in Mission Istaanbul, Yuvvraaj,



year and many more to come Hai Tumne. He starred in

is the son of Sanjay Khan, next seen in Cash, Speed,

Main Hoon Na starring Shah Rukh Khan. The film was one of the biggest hits in his career. He was then seen in films such as Vaada, Shabd, Dus and Shaadi No. 1.

He starred in Sohail Khan's action multi-starrer, Fight Club - Members Only in 2006. Next, he appeared in Rocky: The Rebel. He was

Thanking them, she wrote: "A huge shoutout to the incredibly brave first responders. Thank you for working tirelessly overnight and continuing to help families affected. 人 @lasdhq @ osangelesfiredepartment@ lapdhq".

The actress had earlier shared a clip of the wildfire engulfing the Los Angeles neighbourhood.

She could be heard saying in the video, "it's crazy." Her post also included the caption, "My thoughts are with everyone affected. Hope we are all able to be

afe tonight. Priyanka dropped another glimpse of the Palisades Fire n Los Angeles, "Fast-moving Palisades fire in LA scorches thousands of acres, destroys homes"

A massive wildfire took over Los Angeles on January 7, 2025, forcing above 30, 000 residents to leave the place. Numerous videos of the fire have been doing rounds on social media, leaving everyone concerned. Meanwhile, California Governor Gavin Newsom has declared a state of emergency in Los Angeles. On the work front, the global head turner has several exciting projects lined up, including "Heads of State," where she stars alongside Idris Elba and John Cena. "Heads of State" is an action comedy film directed by Ilya Naishuller. She will also portray a 19th-century Caribbean pirate in "The Bluff", which a swashbuckler drama film co-written by Frank E. Flowers and Joe Ballarini, with Flowers also directing.

Alia Bhatt thanks **Bipasha Basu and** the reason will melt your heart



MUMBAI: Bollywood beauty Alia Bhatt recently thanked fellow actress Bipasha Basu for making daughter Devi wear a dress from her brand Edamamma Bipasha Basu is presently in the Maldives with her husband Karan Singh Grover and their little munchkin Devi. She had taken to the stories section of her official Instagram handle and dropped a clip where little Devi can be seen playing on the beach and guess what she is wearing? The little one can be seen in a pink and white coord set from Alia Bhatt's kids clothing brand Edamamma. Reacting to this, Alia Bhatt also reshared the clip on her Instagram stories, along with the caption, "this is soo adorable!!! thank you for choosing @edamamma for your little angle" She further added an angel baby and red heart emoji.

Adah Sharma to Perform Shiv Tandav Stotram at Mahakumbh Mela

MUMBAI: Adah Sharma has managed to carve a niche for herself in the industry with some power-packed performances over the years. 'The Kerala story' actress will next be seen performing live the vigorous Shiv Tandav Stotram at the MahaKumbh mela.

The Maha Kumbh Mela 2025 will commence on 13th January this year with the Paush Purnima Snan and will conclude on 26th February 26, 2025, on Maha Shivratri. This year's Maha-Kumbh Mela is expected to be a star-studded affair with some big names including Amitabh Bachchan, Alia Bhatt, Ranbir Kapoor, Shankar Mahadevan, Kailash Kher, Hariharan, and Mohit Chauhan, along with others. Adah Sharma has become the latest celebrity to join the long list. Refreshing your memory, a video of the 'Commando 2' actress chanting the Shiv Tandav Stotram live in her melodious vet powerful voice was shared on

social media some time back. The

clip left the netizens presently

surprised that the actress knew

sects are vital to the delicate balance of ecosystems, playing

crucial roles in nutrient cycling,

and natural pest control. Their

disappearance disrupts these

processes, leading to soil deg-

radation, waste accumulation,

and increased crop pests. Many



the whole thing by heart and went viral on social media. This is the first time that Adah Sharma flower 2" and "Reeta Sanyal". is visiting the Mahakumbh.

In the meantime, Adah Sharma was last seen in the highlyacclaimed web show, "Reeta Sanyal". Loved by cinephiles, it turned out to be one of the mostwatched OTT shows of 2024. All in all, 2024 was a great year for Adah Sharma who appeared

With "Reeta Sanyal" becoming such a huge success, fans are eagerly waiting for the sequel. Reacting to the same, the actress revealed, "It's lovely that people want sequels of Commando, Sunflower, Reeta Sanyal, and 1920. I promise there are a lot of sequels in the making.

for the project and announcing the same, Anupam Kher took to his official Instagram handle and shared a hilarious post. The veteran actor dropped a clip that featured him styling Esha Deol's hair, while the latter says, "Ek to main itni Khubsurat, upar se meri Haasi.(I am so beautiful and on top of that God has gifted me with such beautiful laughter)" followed by a high-pitch laugh. She added "Oh God! Itni sundar hasti hu main (Oh God! My laugh is so

beautiful)" Anupam Kher captioned his latest IG post, "It is a wrap for us for #VikramBhatts #TumkoMeriKasam. Had to make this crazy reel with #EshaDeol. What an amazing journey this has been. Till we meet again my dearest. Will miss you and your laughter!! #LoveAndLaughter.'

Along with Anupam Kher and Esha Deol, "Tumko Meri Kasam" will also star Adah Sharma and Ishwak Singh in the lead. Anupam Kher will also be a

Delhi file: The Bengal Chap-

presently tied up with his forthcoming drama "Tumko Meri Kasam" Recently, the team has concluded the shoot

'Tumko Meri Kasam'

Anupam Kher captioned his latest IG post, "It is a wrap for us for **#VikramBhatts** #TumkoMeriKasam. Had to make this crazy reel with #EshaDeol. What an amazing journey this has been. Till we meet again my dearest. Will miss you and your laughter!! #LoveAndLaughter."

ter". Jointly bankrolled by Abhishek Agarwal and Pallavi Joshi, the movie has been presented by Tej Narayan Agarwal & amp; I Am Buddha Productions. The film is part of Vivek Agnihotri, "The slated to be released across the globe on 15th August this



year. Aside from Anupam Kher, the project will also feature Mithun Chakraborty, Pallavi Joshi, Puneet Issar, and Govind Namdeo in significant roles.

Furthermore, Anupam Kher will also star in Kangana Ranaut's highly-anticipated flick, "Emergency". Directed by Kangana Ranaut, the movie is a cinematic adaptation of the infamous Indian Emergency. With Kangana Ranaut as former Prime Minister of India, Indira Gandhi, the film will also star Shreyas Talpade, Vishak Nair, Mahima Chaudhry, Milind Soman, and Satish Kaushik in important roles. "Emergency" is slated to reach the audience on 17th January 2025.

Talking Points

Narvijay Yadav

Butterflies are more than beautiful creatures. They are pollinators and indicators of ecological health, and their decline is symptomatic of larger environmental and economic imbalances

nsects, the silent custodians of life on Earth, are disappearing at an alarming rate. Scientists organic matter decomposition, estimate that over 75% of the global insect population, including butterflies, has vanished in the past few decades, a catastrophe with far-reaching consequences. This silent ex- birds and other animals that tinction is not merely an envi- rely on insects as a food source ronmental tragedy; it is a dire are also disappearing. The threat to humanity. In India, where agriculture forms the backbone of the economy, the decline of insects has severe cascading effects of insect loss implications for food security, on the food chain. public health, and the economy.

Pollinators like bees and butterflies are indispensable to crop production, facilitating the growth of fruits, vegetables, terfly poaching racket, seizing and oilseeds. In India, their dozens of rare and protected contribution to agriculture species. This points to the is enormous, yet their value is often overlooked. Without and underscores the lack of these natural pollinators, farm- awareness and enforcement ers face declining yields and of wildlife protection laws. The rising costs as they resort to artificial methods of pollina-are staggering. Globally, poltion. The economic fallout is immense, with food prices escalating and farmers bearing the brunt of the crisis. The overuse of chemical fertilizers **Financial Burden:** In and pesticides compounds the India, where agriculture problem, not only decimating insect populations but also contaminating soil, water, and crops. This contamination has a direct impact on human health, food security. Additionally, with a surge in chronic diseases such as cancer linked to pesticide residues in food.

Where Are **Butterflies?**



and public health. Invasive once-familiar sight of sparrows in urban areas has become a species thriving in disturbed rarity, a stark reminder of the ecosystems add to the financial burden, causing billions in agricultural losses

Urbanization, deforesta-A recent incident in the Aravalis near Delhi hightion, pollution, and climate change are key drivers of in-sect decline. The relentless lights the challenges insects face. Authorities busted a butpush for economic growth has come at a heavy cost to biodiversity. Habitat destruction, growing illegal trade in insects whether through the conversion of forests into farmland or the expansion of cities, leaves insects with nowhere to thrive. Light pollution in urban areas disrupts the life lination services provided by cycles of nocturnal insects like insects, including butterflies, fireflies, once a magical presare estimated to be worth bilence in the Indian countryside but now an increasingly rare sight.

Grow Native Plants: The supports nearly half the path forward demands colpopulation, the loss of insect lective action and systemic pollinators could devastate change. Sustainable agricultural practices must replace the overuse of chemical fertilrural livelihoods and national the absence of natural pest izers and pesticides. Organic controllers leads to higher farming, crop rotation, and pesticide usage, further de- integrated pest management Effect on Food Chain: In- grading the environment are proven methods that can

help preserve insect populations while maintaining soil health. Urban areas, too, must contribute by creating green spaces that serve as refuges for insects. Simple measures

like planting native flowering plants in parks and gardens can make a difference.

Legal frameworks need strengthening to protect in-sects from exploitation and habitat destruction. Wildlife laws must be rigorously enforced. Insects are not just another cog in the wheel of nature; they are the wheel itself. Their decline threatens the very foundation of ecosystems and human economies. The current crisis is a wake-up call demanding immediate and sustained action. If we fail to reverse this trend, the cascading effects of insect disappearance will lead to the collapse of ecosystems, making survival increasingly difficult for future generations.

The author is a senior journalist and columnist, views are personal. Twitter @narvijayyadav

Kashmir freezes under intense cold wave, Srinagar hits -4.4°C



FW DESK

A severe cold wave gripped Kashmir, Jammu, and Ladakh overnight, sending tempera-tures plummeting across the region. Srinagar, the sum-mer capital of Jammu and Kashmir, recorded a freezing -4.4°C, intensifying the chill

sweeping through the valley. The coldest spot in the Kashmir valley was Larnoo, which dropped to a numb-ing -11.6°C. Other notable lows included Pahalgam at -10.4°C, Shopian at -9.9°C, and Gulmarg at -9.6°C. Qazigund froze at -6.2°C, while Anantnag recorded a biting -8.4°C. In Jammu, temperatures stayed above freezing in most areas but were unusually cold for the region. Jammu city registered 5.5°C, Banihal saw 3.8°C, and Batote recorded 3.3°C. Bhaderwah dipped slightly below freezing at -0.2°C, while Padder experienced a sharp -5.1°C.

Ladakh endured the harshest temperatures, with Drass plunging to a frigid -24.8°C, followed by Kargil at -14.6°C and Leh at -13.3°C. The ongoing cold wave continues to impact daily life, with residents braving the harshest winter conditions so far this season

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