CEO SIBIN C APPEALS TO

RECOGNIZED POLITICAL

PARTIES OF PUNJAB TO

APPOINT BOOTH LEVEL AGENTS



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CORPORATES & INDUSTRY



GOOGLE OPENS ANANTA, ITS LARGEST GLOBAL CAMPUS IN BENGALURU



RAJ KUNDRA AND GEETA BASRA COMMENCE SHOOTING FOR RAKESH MEHTA'S PUNJABI FILM 'MEHR'

Punjab government will soon give regular appointment letters to 3381 Elementary Teachers

give impetus to the education sector in the state and provide job opportunities to the youth, the Punjab government led by Chief Minister Bhagwant Singh Mann will soon give regular appointment letters to 3381 Elementary Teachers in the state. A decision to this effect was taken in a meeting held under the chairmanship of the Chief Minister here at his official residence.

During a meeting to review the education department here today, the Chief Minister said that it is matter of immense pride and satisfaction that the recruitment process of 3381 ETT teachers has been completed. He said that this recruitment process has been completed in a batch of two including 951 and 2430 teachers. Bhagwant Singh Mann said that these teachers will be shortly given the appointment letters.

Sikh Genocide-1984:

Court reserves order

Friday reserved for February

25 the order on the quantum

of sentence against Congress

leader Sajjan Kumar in a Sikh

During the hearing, the

complainant, whose husband

and son were killed by a mob

instigated by Kumar, urged

the Delhi court to award death

penalty to the former Con-

The complaint made the

veri Baweja, who reserved for

February 25 the order on the

quantum of sentence against

"The accused being the lead-

er of the mobs instigated oth-

ers to commit a genocide and

crime against humanity and

cold-blooded murders, and

he deserve nothing less than

capital punishment," senior

advocate HS Phoolka, appear-

the court. The court has asked

the counsel for Kumar to file

his written submission within

Sonia Gandhi discharged

Genocide-1984 case.

gress MP.

Kumar.

on quantum of

Sajjan Kumar

sentence against



that for the first time in the ment has given a record number of 50, 892 jobs to the youth in 35 months of coming into power. He said that out of this more than 11000 jobs have been given only in the Education department, which is the main focus of the state government. Bhag-

JAGMOHAN SINGH

Singh Dhami.

In the meeting of the Executive

Committee of SGPC held here

today has rejected the resigna-

tion of its president Harjinder

Addressing the press con-

vice president of SGPC Mr.

Ragujit Singh Virk said that

the resignation of President

Harjinder Singh Dhami has

been rejected and urged him

to reconsider his decision. He

said that Executive Commit-

continue his religious services

sion of Bladev Singh Kalyan

would meet Dhami to urge him

to take his resignation back

and continue his services as

president of SGPC. Virk made

He said that shortly SGPC

as SGPC president.

satisfaction for him that all the history of the state, any govern- jobs have been given completely on the basis of merit, without any corruption or nepotism.

Chief Minister also said that the state government is laying major thrust on the development of health, education. power, employment and infrastructure development sectors. want Singh Mann said that it is He said that a comprehensive

it clear that SGPC ACT 125

empowered SGPC executive

to remove or to appoint anyone

in the SGPC even jathedars of

He said that if Gyani Harpre-

et Singh was removed it was the

decision of SPGPC Executive as

not done by president Dhami

the delegation of SGPC would

also meet Jatehdar Akal Tkaht

Gyani Raghubir Singh in this

the president of Shiromani

Gurdwara Parbandhak Com-

Dhami, resigned from his post

Dhami's resignation came days

after Akal Takht Jathedar Giani

Raghbir Singh strongly con-

demned the dismissal of services

of Giani Harpreet Singh as the

jathedar of Damdama Sahib by

Dhami said he is always com-

the SGPC.

However, on February 17,

Akal Takht too.

ference here today, senior alone. Virk said that shortly

tee has also urged Dhaml to mittee (SGPC), Harjinder Singh

Out of this more than 11000 jobs have been given only in the Education department, which is the main focus of the state government"

plan has been formulated to ensure that these core areas of immense public importance get a major fillip in the state. Bhagwant Singh Mann envisioned that these jobs will further strengthen the education sector on one hand by imparting quality education in schools and will make the youth an active partner in socio-economic growth of the state by giving them regular jobs on the other. On the occasion Chief Secretary KAP Sinha, Secretary Education KK Yadav and others were also

mitted to the Akal Takht, the

highest temporal seat of Sikhs.

Facebook post of Jathedar

Raghbir Singh on the termi-

nation of services of Giani

Harpreet Singh, Dhami said

ter was "highly condemnable"

and "unfortunate". "I being

'pardhan' (president of SGPC)

take responsibility and resign

from the post on moral grounds

Referring to a February 13

India to Transform Into High-Income Country with GDP of \$23-\$35 Trillion By 2047



NEW DELHI: India is set to transform into a high-income country with a projected GDP of \$23-\$35 trillion by 2047, driven by sustained annual growth of 8-10 per cent, according to a

This will be powered by India's

With nearly 200 million individuals expected to enter the workforce in the coming decades, India has a unique opportunity to drive high-value job creation and unlock significant economic po-

tential. Five key sectors, including electronics, energy, chemicals, automotive, and services, would act as strategic growth levers due to alignment with global trends and scalability, with the potential to address India's unique challenges and advantages.

Rising income, a growing pool of skilled workers, and continuous improvements in infrastructure are some of the key factors that can fuel this growth, said the report. "By investing in digital and transport infrastructure, enhancing domestic manufacturing, and driving collaborative R&D, we can position India as a leader in future technologies and

global trade. A multi-pronged, tech-driven approach will be key to unlocking inclusive and sustainable growth," said Sangeeta Gupta, Senior Vice President at Advances in AI-driven chip

design, touchless manufacturing, and backward integration into component manufacturing and design could enhance cost competitiveness and innovation, driving the sector's export share from 24 per cent to 45 per cent-50 per cent by 2047 and its GDP contribution from 3 per cent to 8 per cent-10 per cent.

India's share of renewables in overall energy generation has the potential to rise from 24 per cent in 2023 to 70 per cent in 2047 backed by modernising energy infrastructure, and scaled investments in green energy. India is also likely to transition from a net

energy importer to a net exporter. "AI-powered molecular design and digital twin technologies, along with other tech-driven improvements can lead to a potential increase India's share in global value chain from around 3 per cent to over 10 per cent in

Need to Revive Freedom Movement's Spirit for Viksit Bharat: PM Modi



Narendra Modi said on Friday reviving the spirit of the freedom movement to create new leadership will help achieve the aim of Viksit Bharat.

Addressing the first edition of the School of Ultimate Leadership (SOUL) Leadership Conclave 2025, he said India's freedom struggle was the best illustration of a shared purpose, noting that it produced leaders not just in politics but in other sectors

Highlighting the importance of shared purpose, PM Modi said it not only brings out the best in individuals but also enhances their capabilities according to the larger

Reiterating the need for rapid progress in all sectors to build a Viksit Bharat, he stressed the importance of creating leadership for conventional sectors like sports, agriculture, manufacturing,

and social service. Emphasising the need to develop strength and spirit in public policy and social sectors, the Prime Minister remarked on the necessity of preparing leadership for emerging sectors such as deep-tech, space, biotech,

PM Modi also shared how despite lacking natural resources. Gujarat became a top

The Prime Minister also highlighted the critical role of both human and natural resources and their role in the

progress of any nation. Quoting a Sanskrit verse, nomic challenges, Indian au- the Prime Minister emphaindependent existence of the nation's export performance. thorities have implemented sised that there is no word which cannot be turned into

a mantra, no herb that cannot become medicine, and no person who is incapable, and highlighted the need for a planner to utilise and guide individuals. Emphasising the different

levels of development: perdevelopment, organisational growth through team development, and explosive growth through leadership development, he said that these principles should always remind everyone of their duties and contributions.

in every sector is the need of the hour, he said, highlighting that the SOUL is an important milestone in the development journey of Viksit Bharat.



report on Thursday.

demographic dividend, technological innovation, and sectoral transformation, according to the report by Bain & Company and Nasscom.

with immediate effect," he said

while addressing the media in

ten to the Akal Takht Jathedar

to relieve him from his position

in the seven-member commit-

tee formed to supervise the new

membership drive of the Shiro-

On February 13, Giani Ragh-

bir Singh in a Facebook post

condemned the dismissal of

services of Harpreet Singh as

the jathedar of Takht Sri Dam-

In the post, he said Giani

On February 10, the SGPC

had dismissed the services of

Giani Harpreet Singh as the

jathedar of Takht Sri Damdama

Sahib in Bathinda.

dama Sahib in Bathinda.

mani Akali Dal (SAD).

Dhami also said he has writ-

Amritsar.

2047," said the report.

Moody's Lowers India's GDP Growth Forecast to 6.4 pc For 2025 Amid Global Headwinds

NEW DELHI: In a significant economic forecast released on Thursday, Moody's Analytics has predicted a continued deceleration in India's economic growth

trajectory. The renowned credit rating agency anticipates India's Gross Domestic Product (GDP) growth rate

to moderate to 6.4 percent in 2025, down from 6.6 percent in 2024, citing new U.S. tariffs Harpreet Singh's removal was 'highly condemnable" and "unand dampened global demand fortunate" which will harm the as primary factors affecting the

detailed in their report 'Asia-Pacific Outlook: Chaos Ahead,' indicates broader economic challenges across the Asia-Pacific region.

The analysis suggests that regional growth will face headwinds from trade tensions, policy adjustments, and uneven recovery patterns. This slowdown trend extends to China, where GDP growth is projected to decline from 5 percent in 2024 to 4.2 percent in 2025, further decreasing to 3.9 percent in 2026.

Earlier concerns about India's economic outlook were raised in Moody's January 29 report, which highlighted several risk factors including a weakening rupee, diminishing foreign investment, and unstable inflation.



Raman emphasised the necessity for policy adjustments in both fiscal and monetary domains to achieve the projected 6.4 percent growth rate. In response to these eco-

significant policy measures Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman announced substantial income tax reforms in the February 1 Budget, effectively eliminating tax obligations for incomes up to Rs 12 lakh. Subsequently, the Reserve Bank of India enacted monetary policy changes, reducing the repo rate from 6.5 percent to 6.25 percent during its Monetary Policy Committee meeting.

The latest projections from Moody's Analytics suggest India's GDP growth will stabilise at 6.4 percent for both fiscal years 2025 and 2026, reflecting a gradual moderation from current levels while maintaining relatively robust growth compared to other major economies in the region.

objective.

and renewable energy.

state due to good leadership

driven by its human capital.

sonal success through self-

Grooming excellent leaders

Canada's \$20 million gold heist: ED raids one of suspects premises in Chandigarh & Mohali

Executive committee of SGPC rejects resignation of Dhami

submission through her law- CHANDIGARH: The Enforceyer before special judge Ka- ment Directorate on Friday searched residential premises in Chandigarh and Mohali in Punjab of an alleged suspect in Canada's biggest-ever gold heist of more than \$20 million in 2023 on fake documents, officials said. The suspect, Simran Preet

Panesar, a former warehouse facility manager with Air Canada, has been staying in Chandigarh's Sector 38 and Sector 79 ing for the complainant, told of Mohali, near here.

> wide warrant for his alleged role in the robbery at the Toronto Pearson International Airport. The raids were conducted simultaneously on both resito media reports, an air cargo

container with gold bars was



He has been facing a Canada- at the airport. India's prime central agency that probes financial crimes, the ED, has launched the money-laundering probe as the accused resides in the country. The reason, as per dences of Panesar. According sources, is to investigate if the gold or its proceeds made their way to the country. On April 17, stolen from a storage facility 2023, fake paperwork was used



for the heist Canada's Peel Regional Police (PRP), which said it was the biggest gold heist in Canada ever, charged 10, including Panesar, in April 2024, and issued an arrest warrant against him. Panesar and another accused, Parampal Sidhu, lived in Brampton and worked at

Pearson's warehouse facility. Canadian authorities are yet to recover the gold. From the stolen cargo, only 90, 000 CAD is learnt to have been recovered by the police. The Peel police in November last year issued a bench warrant for the arrest of one of the suspects charged in connection with the heist.

Prasath Paramalingam, 35, was arrested for allegedly assisting Durante King-McLean, the suspect accused of driving off with nearly \$20 million in stolen gold bars. The police said 6, 600 gold bars were stolen from Air Canada's cargo facility on April 17, 2023 by a suspect who arrived at the warehouse in a five-tonne delivery truck. The gold, along with about \$2.5 million in foreign currency, had been shipped to Toronto from Zurich in an Air Canada plane.

Government Forms Seven-Member Panel to Overhaul Insurance Act, 1938

NEW DELHI: In a significant implementation. move towards reforming India's insurance sector, the government has constituted a seven- Finance Minister Nirmala Sithmember expert panel to review and propose amendments to the Insurance Act, 1938.

Originally enacted during British India, the Insurance Act, 1938, serves as the founthe insurance sector, governing life, general, and health insurance policies while empowering the Insurance Regulatory and Development Authority nal consultations are complete of India (Irdai) to oversee its

The government's renewed focus on reforms comes after araman, in her FY26 Budget speech, proposed increasing the foreign direct investment (FDI) cap in the insurance sector from 74 per cent to 100 per cent.

She emphasised safeguardwithin India while aiming to boost sectoral growth. M Nagaraju, Secretary of Financial Services, revealed that interand that the next step involves

presenting the amendment bill in Parliament. The proposed reforms include composite licences, reduced solvency norms, changes in investment regulations, and provisions for captive licences. Additionally, a one-time registration for intermediaries and permissions for insurers to distribute other financial products are under consideration. The government had earlier mulled repealing the Insurance Act, citing its

complexity due to multiple

streamline the Act through targeted amendments, aligning with its broader goal of replacing outdated pre-Independence laws with modern legislation.

The panel includes industry veterans such as NS Kannan, former MD and CEO of ICICI Prudential Life Insurance; Girish Radhakrishnan, Insurance; Rakesh Joshi, former member of Irdai; Saurabh Sinha, former executive director of RBI; Alok Misra, MD amendments over the decades. and CEO of MFIN; and legal expert L Vishwanathan. However, it now plans to

Punjab Police arrests four drug smugglers with 5kg heroin from Amritsar supervision of DCP Harpreet

JAGMOHAN SINGH Amritsar

Commissionerate Police has arrested four drug smugglers and recovered 5.06 Kg heroin from their possession in two separate cases, said Director General of Police (DGP) Punjab Gaurav Yadav here on Friday.

Those arrested have been identified as Gurjant Singh alias Kalu of village Bachiwind in Amritsar, Jagjit Singh of village Rania in Amritsar, Sahil Kumar alias Sahil of village Ghariyala in Tarn Taran and Rinku of Basti Dune Wali in Guru Har Sahai, Ferozepur.

DGP said that the arrested former CMD of United India individuals were in contact with Pakistan-based drug smugglers, who were using drones to smuggle narcotics across the border to further supply in different areas of Amritsar. Two separate first



information repots (FIRs) have been registered under relevant sections of the NDPS Ac at Police Stations Cantonment and Sadar Amritsar, he said.

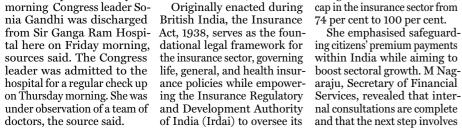
The DGP said that further investigations are on to establish backward and forward linkages in this case. More arrests and recoveries are likely in coming days, he added.

Sharing operation details of first case, Commissioner of Police (CP) Amritsar Gurpreet Singh Bhullar said that based on credible intelligence, Police teams from Contonment Police Station under the

Singh Mander, ADCP City-2 Harkamal Kaur, and ACP West Shivdarshan Singh conducted a special operation and apprehended the suspects identified as Gurjant Kalu and Jagjit Singh from the Mahal Bypass area and seized 3.067 kg of heroin from their possession He said that, similarly, Po-

lice teams from CIA Staff-1 led by Inspector Amolakdeep Singh arrested two more accused— identified as Sahil Kumar and Rinku—based on further investigation and interrogation of arrested accused, recovering an additional 2 kg of heroin from their possession.

The CP said that preliminary investigation has revealed that accused Rinku is running a big hawala network to transfer the illegal money of drug trade to different suppliers. Further probe in on, he added.





from hospital

ted to the hospital for a regular check up on February 20

CEO Sibin C appeals to recognized political parties of Punjab to appoint Booth Level agents

Chief Electoral Officer Sibin C has written a letter to all recognized political parties of the state to appoint their booth level agents by February

The Chief Electoral Officer said that booth level agents appointed by all recognized political parties will work closely with the booth level officers of the respective polling stations and help eligible citizens to file applications for inclusion, removal, modification and transfer in the electoral roll.



ty should send a list of 23 more), who are authorized to

ery recognized political par- district representatives (or

appoint booth level agents in the respective district, to the office of the Chief Electoral Officer, by February 28. He said that a meeting is also being held with the representatives of political parties next week to give more information about it and to answer the queries.

The Chief Electoral Officer has urged all recognized political parties to take necessary action to the instructions issued by ECI with an aim to maximize the transparency in the process of preparation and revision of electoral roll and also to improve its fidelity.

SATISH HANDA Chandigarh

Punjab's Director General of Police (DGP) Gaurav Yadav said on Wednesday (February 19, 2025) that as many as 52 police officials have been dismissed from service across the State for corruption, malpractice, criminal activities, and prolonged absenteeism.

To ensure full transparency, accountability and integrity in public service delivery, Punjab government has started taking stern action, especially to wipe out corruption from the state. The development started days after the state government issued directions to the Deputy Commissioners, Sub Divisional Magistrates, Senior Superintendents of Police and Station House Officers in the state to check corruption in their respective areas, else face action. The Bhagwant

the state and on Monday suspended a 2016-batch Deputy Commissioner of Sri Muktsar Sahib, Rajesh Tripathi, and ordered a vigilance inquiry against him, following serious complaints of corruption against him and replaced with another, a 2015-batch officer with immediate effect as per the information reveals.

complaints of corruption in

Punjab government dismissed

The development came soon after the incident when the Punjab state government issued directions to the all DCs, SDMs, SSPs, DSPs, SHOs, Tehsildars, Naib Tehsildars to check corruption in their respective areas else face action in consonance with the 'zero tolerance towards corruption policy', issued detailed instructions to all the officers, but also from the elected representatives like the MPs and MLAs and said feedback will lead to rewards and punishments

JAGMOHAN SINGH

vices of Takht Damdama Shaib

Jatehdar Gyani Harpreet Singh,

SGPC president Harjinder

Singh Dhami here today has

resigned as president of SGPC

Talking to media, Dhami

announced his resignation by

saying that he was going to re-

sign after the statement of Jate-

hdar Akal Takht Gyani Raghbir

Singh who said that to hold en-

quiry against the Takht Dam-

dama Shaib Jatehdar Gyani

Harpreet Singh followed by

on moral grounds.

Amritsar

52 police personnel involvement in corruption, criminal activities have dismissed 52 personnel over the past 10 days having involvement in corruption, criminal activities or prolonged absenteeism, addressing a press conference Director General of Police Gaurav Yadav said a couple of days ago said the action aligned with Chief Minister Bhagwant Mann's directions for ensuring transparency, accountability and integrity in public service in Punjab state. Of the 52 dismissed cops, one is inspector, 5 assistant sub-inspectors, four head-constables and 42 constables. Information revealed that the highest 7 dismissals are in Ludhiana, 5 in Patiala and 4 each in Jalandhar and

> Sources reveal, following the Aam Aadmi Party's poor performance in the Delhi Assembly elections, the Mann government in Punjab has intensified crackdown on corruption, since the AAP had won the 2022 Assembly poll in Punjab on the promise of eradicating corruption, particularly among the black sheeps in uniform and position involved in extortion charges. Meanwhile, while talking to media persons DGP Gaurav Yadav said the Punjab Police were all set to introduce an e-FIR facility for motor vehicle theft, which would allow complainants to lodge an FIR using online platforms or visiting 'Saanjh

Hoshiarpur.

Amritsar airport terminal to be upgraded: Union minister informs MP Aujla



JAGMOHAN SINGH Amritsar

To accommodate increasing traffic, the Airports Authority of India (AAI) has decided to expand and renovate the terminal building at Amritsar's Sri Guru Ramdas Ji International Airport. Work for this will start soon. This information was shared by the Union Civil Aviation Minister with Amritsar MP Gurjeet Singh Aujla.

The Union Minister said that about 10,000 square meters of additional space has been added to the terminal under the airport project. The peak-hour passenger handling capacity of the terminal is expected to increase from 1,600 to 2,000 passengers after the expansion.

In a statement issued here today Aujla said that the ministry emphasized that expansion and up-gradation is an ongoing process undertaken by AAI and other airport operators based on factors such as passenger demand, land availability, commercial facilities, socio-economic considerations and airline interest. About the complaints of harassment of passengers by ground handling staff, the ministry said no such complaints have been received. However, the ministry assured that necessary measures have been taken to address passengers> concerns, including prominently displaying contact numbers for the duty terminal manager and CISF control room, as well as dedicated help desks at both departure and arrival terminals. In response to concerns about exploitation of wheelchair-bound passengers, the ministry highlighted that the government has issued accessibility standards and guidelines for civil aviation to ensure safe and independent movement of

Taking responsibility for the objection raised by the Jatehdar Akal Takht Gyani Raghbir Singh over the dismissal of ser-

SGPC President Dhami resigns

Raghbir Singh had condemned the dismissal of services of Giani Harpreet Singh as the jathedar of Takht Sri Damdama Sahib. The reaction of the Jathedar of the highest temporal seat of Sikhs came three days after the Shiromani Gurdwara Parbandhak Committee ended the services of

In a Facebook post, Giani Raghbir Singh wrote that the way moved was "highly condemnable" and "unfortunate" and also said it would harm the independent existence of the 'Takht Sahibs'. 2, 2024, the edict pronounced by the Akal Takht was in accordance tour, described the reasons and said Giani Harpreet Singh was 18-year-old matter. Giani Raghthe SGPC that the formation of a probe panel against Giani

the jathedar of any takht.



passengers with disabilities and reduced mobility. Giani Harpreet Singh. **Commissioner of India**

The Jathedar said on December with the "Panthic sentiments and traditions." Giani Raghbir Singh, who is on a foreign ways to remove Giani Harpreet Singh as not appropriate. He a victim of a media trial in an bir Singh said he earlier asked Harpreet Singh was not right and reiterated that only the Akal Takht had the authority to probe any allegation against

Haryana Chief Secretary Dr. Vivek Joshi becomes the new Election



GULSHAN KUMAR Chandigarh

Chief Secretary of Haryana Dr. Vivek Joshi, a distinguished IAS officer of 1989 batch of Haryana cadre, has been appointed as the new Election Commissioner of India.

The announcement was made after a selection committee headed by Prime Minister Narendra Modi recommended Dr Joshi's name for the prestigious post. He will join the three-member Election Commission, which comprises Chief Election Commissioner (CEC) Gyanesh Prakash and Election Commissioner Sukhbir Singh Sandhu.

Dr Joshi, who has been serving as the Chief Secretary of Haryana since November 2024, has rich experience in public administration. On the request of the state government, Dr Vivek Joshi took over as the Chief Secretary of Haryana on November 1 last year after returning from deputation from the Central Government.

Prior to his appointment in Haryana, Dr Joshi has served for a long time on central deputation in the Government of India. He has served as Secretary, Department of Personnel and Training in the Union Ministry of Personnel, Public Grievances and Pensioners. In his illustrious career, he has also served as Secretary in the Department of Financial Services and Registrar General and Census Commissioner of India in the Ministry of Home Affairs. His tenure in the Government of India was from 2001 to 2006 and then from 2010 to 2017 and from 2019 to 2024.

Haryana Congress expels seven leaders for six years due to 'anti-party' activities

Chandigarh The Haryana Congress took strict

action against its seven leaders, expelling them from the Party for six years with immediate effect allegedly their involvement in 'anti-party' activities. This action has been taken ahead of the civic polls scheduled to be held during the early next month, as per the order issued by Haryana Congress chief Udai Bhan, who said these party leaders as well workers have been found indulged in anti-party activities in the recent past during ongoing process of 2025 Municipal Elections, as such have been expelled with immediate effect from the party for a period of

Åmong those expelled include

Punjab Police busts

smuggling racket; one

held with 10 kg heroin

cross-border drug

JAGMOHAN SINGH

Counter Intelligence (CI) of

Punjab Police wing Amritsar

has busted a cross-border drug

of a drug smuggler and recov-

ered 10 kg heroin from his pos-

session, said Director General

of Police (DGP) Punjab Gaurav

manpura in Amritsar. Apart

from recovering heroin, Police

teams have also impounded his

black coloured Hero Splendor

Motorcycle (PB02EW5675),

the team of CI Amritsar received

a reliable input that accused

Harmandeep has established re-

lations with the Pakistan-based

drug smugglers and recently got

a huge consignment of heroin

from Pakistan, which he is going

to deliver to someone at Ram

Tirath Road, Morh Village Kale

Acting swiftly on the inputs,

CI Amritsar has launched an in-

telligence-based operation and

Singh at a Special Police Check-

point established at Ram Tirat

Kgs of heroin has been recov-

The DGP said preliminary in-

in-touch with Pakistan-based

Bawa, who sent heroin consign-

sector for further supplying to

He said that further inves-

tigations are going on to es-

linkages in this case and iden-

in this drug smuggling racket.

days, he added.

other parties of the state.

ered from the accused.

in Amritsar.

DGP Gaurav Yadav said that

which he was riding.

Yadav here on Wednesdav.



former District Congress Committee presidents of Karnal Tarlochan Singh and Ashok Khurana, senior party leaders from Yamunanagar Pradeep Chaudhary and Madhu Chaudhary, senior party leader from Hisar Ram Niwas Rara, party leader from Gurugram Harvinder and PCC delegate from Gurugram Ram Kishan Sain. Information reveals,

CHANDIGARH: The Crime

and Criminal Tracking System

(CCTNS) of Haryana Police has

for the record 10th time achieved

top raking in the country in

tracking crime in 2024, accord-

ing to the monthly rankings of

the National Crime Records

Bureau (NCRB), Government

Haryana's Director General of

Police (DGP), Shatrujeet Kapur,

has congratulated the entire

CCTNS team for achieving this

distinction. Since taking over as

the DGP in August 2023, several

initiatives have been taken in

the State Crime Records Bureau

(SCRB) to enhance its technical

capabilities and improve work

of India (GoI).

the decision for expelling these party leaders for a period of six years was taken after consulting BK Hariprasad, in-charge of party affairs in Haryana. According to information, both Rara and Singh had recently joined the ruling BJP. Rara had unsuccessfully contested the previous assembly polls while Singh was defeated by former Chief Minister Manohar

seat in the 2019 elections currently a Union minister, had lost to Chief Minister Navab Singh Saini in the May 2024 assembly by-polls from Ladwa in Kurukshetra. The Haryana State Election Commission had recently announced the general elections for seven municipal corporations: Faridabad, Gurugram, Manesar, Hisar, Karnal, Rohtak, and Yamunanagar, four municipal councils and 21 municipal committees will take place on March 2, while polling for the Panipat municipal corporation is scheduled for March 9. Congress candidates are contesting municipal corporation wards and municipal council president elections on its party symbol challenging the

Mann-led AAP government for the officers. According to platforms in Punjab had received serious information, the Punjab Police Kendras'. Haryana tops nation again in crime tracking

and apprehending criminals. Currently, the state police are utilizing CCTNS for various tasks, including FIR registration, non-cognizable reports, medico-legal cases, missing persons, lost property, missing livestock, foreign registration, C-forms, unclaimed/abandoned property, unidentified/found persons, preventive actions, registration of supervision reports/progress, registration of unidentified dead bodies/unnatural deaths, research-related work, registration of complaints,

database services, etc. CCTNS is used by the police the SCRB, and matcl

to create a database of crime and criminals. Last year, 54,405 fingerprint data were uploaded in the NAFIS software operated his dismissal as jatehdar was edge that under DGP Kapur, SCRB, Sibash Kabiraj, Hary- comprehensive and integrated the data of the arrested accused of Akal Takht.

Since Giani Raghbir Singh had strongly opposed the removal of Giani Harpreet Singh as the Jathedar of Takht Damdama Sahib. Dhami made it clear that he resigned to show token of love for the Jatehdar Akal Takht Gyani Raghbir Singh. Dhami said that in the ongoing crisis between the leadership of the Akal Takht, the Shiromani Gurdwara Parbhandak Committee (SGPC) and the Shiromani Akali Dal (SAD) decided to give resignation.

Adding further he said that he has also stepped down from the seven-member committee formed by the Akal Takht Jathedar on December 2, 2024, for the reorganisation of SAD party.

However, on February 13, Akal Takht jathedar Giani

Illegal mining in Haryana: 2025 raids conducted at 3950 places in 44 days watch on the mining sites, for

has secured the first position in score of 99.99 percent, while

the NCRB's monthly ranking achieving a perfect score in other

The arrested accused has 324 vehicles seized, fine of been identified as Harmandeep Singh, a resident of village Ghu-Rs 1.37 crore recovered

> SATISH HANDA Yamunanagar

Cases of illegal Mining In Haryana are fast increasing since past sometime. Raids have been conducted at 3950 places in Haryana since January this year in connection with illegal mining in which 2025 raids have been conin the past 44 days in which 324 dumbers involved in illegal business have been seized along with Rs 1.37 crore has been recovered



ducted at 2025 at 3950 places towards fine. The Haryana government has become strict to stop illegal mining in the state as taken many tough measures to such continuous raids are being conducted by the Department

improvement in its working.

The records vindicate this as it

It would not be an exagger- 15 times in the last 17 months. months. The objective of de-

the SCRB has shown a marked ana Police secured the third system for crime investigation

of Mines and Geology. Apart from this, the department has stop illegal mining. The Haryana administration is keeping a close

position nationwide in August

and September 2024 with a

which drones are also being used, besides mining sites are being inspected from time to time, FIRs are being registered against those doing illegal mining and heavy fines are being imposed along with vehicles including dumpers involved in illegal mining are also being seized.

According to information, strict monitoring and concrete action being taken by the department officials to stop illegal mining in the state having 320 legal mining blocks, most of the quarries are located near Uttar Pradesh and Himachal border.

Two injured in bee attack in Haryana secretariat

arrested accused Harmandeep Chandigarh

A swarm of bees attacked the Road in Amritsar, he said, while adding that during search, 10 employees of Haryana Secretariat in Chandigarh on Tuesday afternoon. The employees started running here and there vestigation has revealed that the in a hurry to save themselves, arrested accused was constantly but two employees were severely injured in the bee attack. When smuggler identified as Chacha a CISF jawan attempted to save an employee, the bees attacked him too. Both the injured emment via drones in the Attari ployees were taken to the hospital in an ambulance. During the attack of the bees, the secretariat employees immediately entered the office to protect themselves, tablish backward and forward while some employees immeditify other associates involved ately covered themselves with a cloth and sat on the ground More recovery of narcotics and when they failed to find a safe arrests are likely in coming place near the barricade at the

In this regard, a case FIR No. The employees seriously 8 dated 18.02.2025 has been injured due to the bee attack registered under sections 21, were admitted to the nearby 25 and 29 of the NDPS Act at dispensary of MLA Hostel lo-Police Station State Special Opcated in Sector-3, where medierations Cell (SSOC), Amritsar. cal treatment was offered to

secretariat gate..



immediate medical treatment offered to the employees suffering bee stings, the infection could not spread in the victims' body when the doctor removed the stings of the bees and gave anti-inflammatory medicine to the employees. According to information, nearly a thousand employees and officers working in Haryana and its adjoining Punjab Civil Secretariat remain

on duty from 10 am to late eve-

ning. Employees usually come

for a walk in the secretariat

campus during lunch time in

the afternoon. The employees said, a complaint has been made by the **Employee Officer Association** to remove the bees hanging at places in the area but no relief has been provided for a long time. The doctor of dispensary in MLA Hostel said that the sting of bees spreads a poison called 'Melittin' in the human body causing severe pain, swelling and burning in the body, and if the victim is suffering from allergy or any other type of disease, then life of the patient suffered bee attack can also be in danger.

Haryana High Court's decision for home buyers, now able to file complaints with the RERA **SATISH HANDA**

Chandigarh

In an important decision, the Punjab and Haryana High Court has said that home buyers who have deposited money in a housing project can now file their complaints with the Real Estate Regulatory Authority (RERA) rejecting the petition of real estate developers companies giving them a severe shock, accepting that the potential allottees who have deposited money in a project are also within the purview of RERA, can also file their complaints if any with the Real Estate Regulatory Authority. Hearing in a case the High Court The division bench of Justice Suresh Thakur and Justice Vikas Suri termed this argument as absurd and said that has rejected the argument of a real estate company,

M/s Ramprastha Developers

Pvt Ltd, that home buyers who



have deposited money only for a potential project and whose project does not yet exist, cannot file a complaint with RERA saying that allottee, too have the full right to file a complaint against the real estate developers companies to RERA.

Real estate company M/s Ramprastha Developers Pvt Ltd and others had filed a petition in the high court challenging an order of the Gurugram-based Haryana Real Estate Regulatory Authority (HRERA), when they argued that RERA had no jurisdiction to hear

the case since the complainants do not fall in the category of allottees, so they have no right to file a complaint since the petitioners had the option of appeal under Section 43(5) of the RERA Act, so their petition is not admissible when the High Court gave decision that any aggrieved person has the right to submit complaint to the authority under Sections 31 and 37 of RERA and dismissed Developers plea giving home buyers who have deposited money in a project relief and shock to real

estate businessmen

India Set to Unveil EV Incentive Guidelines Congress hits back at BJP to Attract Global Automakers

NEW DELHI: India is set to unveil detailed guidelines for its electric vehicle (EV) manufacturing incentive scheme next month, offering global automakers, including Tesla, a flexible pathway to enter and invest in the Indian market.

The Scheme to Promote Manufacturing of Electric Passenger Cars in India (SMEC), first announced in March 2024, aims to bolster EV production and attract significant foreign investment.

Officials revealed that the upcoming guidelines will include an "on-tap" facility, enabling companies to explore the market before committing to full-scale local manufac-

This move is expected to benefit companies like Tesla, which is currently scouting for showroom spaces and



has yet to commit to domestic market entry strategically. production

The SMEC guidelines will be finalised within a fortnight and announced next month," a senior government official

The window to apply for incentives could remain open for 120 days or longer and may be reopened periodically, allow-

recruiting staff in India but ing automakers to time their

The scheme offers a major incentive: automakers investing a minimum of USD 500 million to set up local manufacturing will benefit from a reduced 15 per cent import duty on completely built-up (CBU) electric cars priced above USD 35,000 for up to

provision will allow companies like Tesla to test consumer demand through imports before establishing manufacturing units.

In a further boost to existing players, the scheme will also recognize investments made in setting up EV assembly lines within current factory premises, enabling legacy manufacturers to transition into the EV space without building entirely new facilities.

Industry experts view the flexible framework as a calculated move to accelerate India's EV adoption while minimizing risks for global automakers.

With the final guidelines imminent, the government anticipates receiving applications as early as next month, marking a pivotal step in India's green mobility ambitions.

Questions BJP's silence, connivance in Ford Foundation funded 2012 Anna movement to destabilise UPA govt

KAVITA SHARMA New Delhi

The Congress today hit back at the Bharatiya Janata Party over its baseless allegations against it for receiving foreign funding through agencies like the USAID.

The party accused the RSS of having taken money from the CIA to destabilise the Congress governments led by Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru and Ms Indira Gandhi.

"The RSS has always been a puppet of the US", party spokesperson and Chairman of the AICC Media and Publicity Department Pawan Khera remarked while addressing a press conference here today.

He also referred to the massive Ford Foundation funding for the Anna Hazare-Kejriwal led protests in 2012 to destabilise the Congress led UPA government at the centre.

The Congress spokesperson took a dig at the BJP government including its National Security Advisor Ajit Doval, over its baseless allegations of

turnout in India. Referring to a newspaper report proving these allegations to be false, he asked Doval, as what was he doing if the USAID really pumped \$21 million into India. It is a slap on your face that you have been caught unawares, he told the government.

\$21 million USAID for voter

He pointed out, this aid was actually sent to Bangladesh by the USAID. He asked, what were the IB and the RAW doing when the USAID pumped so much funds into a neighbouring country to destabilise the government there. In a pithy remark, he said he felt bad for Modi's friend Guatam Adani who suffered losses due to the regime change there, allegedly funded by the USAID.

Questioning the audacity of the BJP to accuse the Congress of taking foreign aid, Khera referred to the revelations made by a former CIA agent wherein he revealed that the RSS received massive aid for its "cow protection" protests, whose actual aim was to destabilise the government led by Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru. He said the RSS had even planned the murder of the then Congress president K Kamaraj.

over foreign funding The Congress spokesperson added that continuing with its relationship with the US, the RSS also took the US help to promote Jai Prakash Naryana's movement against Indira Gandhi in 1974. He referred to the RSS leader Dattopant Thengadi and the RSS supported Subhramniam Swamy's US visit during that time to

support the JP movement. Similarly, he said, the Anna Hazare-Kejriwal led protests in Delhi in 2012 were funded by the Ford Foundation to destabilise the UPA government. He said the RSS and the Vivekananda Foundation were part of those protests.

Khera also questioned Prime Minister Modi's meek surrender before the US President Donald Trump during his recent visit where he had gone 'uninvited". He pointed out how Modi was smiling, when Trump was slapping tariffs and insults on India. He wondered what made Modi smile when he should have protested the way Trump was announcing reciprocal tariffs on India.

He also revealed that union minister Piyush Goyal and Maharashtra Chief Minister Devendra Fadnavis have regularly met the USAID officials. Khera said, the Congress

will not keep quiet and it knows when to speak, where to speak and how to speak. Besides, he added, the Congress also knows how to take action. He demanded that the government should bring out a White Paper about the funding by various aid agencies whether these funds had come properly or illegally and whether these had been used or misused. He said the Congress will soon come out with a "black paper" and reveal everything.

Union Home Minister reviews implementation of 3 new criminal laws in J&K



NEW DELHI: Union Home Minister Amit Shah on Tuesday chaired a review meeting on the implementation of three new criminal laws in Jammu and Kashmir. Chief Minister Omar Abdullah, who attended the meeting, later said that some weak areas were pointed out as needing immediate attention.

CM Abdullah said in a Union

Territory the elected government is not responsible for implementing the law but indicated that it might play a role in raising awareness about the new law. Before the review of the implementation of the new laws in Jammu and Kashmir, HM Shah had undertaken a similar exercise with regard to 11 states, he said, adding that there was no discussion on J&K's security situation during the meeting. Earlier on February 14, HM Shah chaired a review meeting on the implementation of three new criminal laws in Maharashtra, asking the state to establish a model Directorate of Prosecution system in line with the new laws.

In the presence of Chief Minister Devendra Fadnavis, HM Shah reviewed the implementation and present status of various new provisions related to police, prisons, courts, prosecution, and forensics in the state. The meeting was attended by the Union Home Secretary, the Chief Secretary and Director General of Police of Maharashtra, the Director General of the Bureau of Police Research and Development (BPRD), the Director General of the National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB), and other senior officials from the Union Home Ministry and the state government. HM Shah said that the Narendra Modi government is committed to that the guilty are punished as

Congress demands Vaishnav's resignation over Delhi stampede



New Delhi

The Congress demanded immediate resignation of the union Railway Minister Ashwani Vaishnav over the death of 18 people during a stampede at New Delhi railway station on Saturday night. The party expressed profound condolences with the bereaved families say-ing that the lives were lost due to the criminal negligence of the government. "Rail minister Ashwani Vaishnav must resign with immediate effect", Congress spokesperson and Chairperson of the Social and Digital Media Platforms Ms Supriya Shrinate told a press conference at the party office here today. "This is not an accident but mass murder", she remarked, while adding, the railway minister does not have any moral right to stay in his position after last night's deadly incident that left 18 innocent family! We had a wonderful of mutual interest to the G7

Mysuru MUDA Case: Lokayukta Gives Clean Chit to CM Siddaramaiah and Family

ARUN KUMAR RAO Bengaluru/Mysuru

In a significant development, the Karnataka Lokayukta has given a clean chit to Chief Minister Siddaramaiah, his wife Parvathi, and two others in the alleged scam concerning the allotment of sites by the Mysuru Urban Development Authority (MUDA). The Lokayukta police, after a detailed investigation, found no evidence to substantiate the charges against them and have submitted their final report to the High Court.

According to sources, the probe officers examined the allegations under various sections of the Indian Penal Code (IPC), the Prevention of Corruption Act, 1988, the

Prime Minister Rishi Sunak

and his family met Prime

Minister Narendra Modi in

New Delhi on Tuesday. Both

dignitaries had a wonderful

conversation on many subjects.

a great friend of India and is

passionate about even stronger

India-UK ties. Taking to X, the

a delight to meet former UK

PM Modi said that Sunak is



tion) Act, 1988, and the Karnataka Land Grabbing Prohibition Act, 2011. After thorough scrutiny, the investigation concluded that the matter was more of a civil dispute rather than a criminal offense. The final report states that there was insufficient proof to support the claims made against Siddaramaiah, his wife Parvathi, her brother Mallikarjuna Swamy, and landowner Devaraj.

The Lokayukta police have

India and is passionate about

even stronger India-UK ties."

Minister for Finance and Corpo-

rate Affairs Nirmala Sitharaman

met former Rishi Sunak here

and the two discussed poten-

tial new avenues to strengthen market-based financial ties and

drive economic growth. The

importance of leveraging the

agenda for the benefit of

Earlier in the day, Union

NEW DELHI: Former UK Mr. Sunak is a great friend of

Prime Minister wrote, "It was Finance Minister stressed the

PM, Mr. Rishi Sunak and his Commonwealth to bring issues

clarified that compensatory land allotments made by MUDA between 2016 and 2024 under its 50:50 scheme are still under investigation. Any further findings will be submitted to the court under Section 173 (8) of the Criminal $Procedure\,Code\,(CrPC)\,once\,the$ probe is fully completed.

The clean chit from the Lokayukta comes as a major relief to CM Siddaramaiah, especially after the Karnataka High Court recently dismissed an appeal by RTI activist Snehamayi Krishna to transfer the case to the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI). The court's decision further reinforces the stance that the allegations lacked con-

Former UK Prime Minister Rishi Sunak, his family meet PM Modi

Akshata Murty and daugh-Rishi Sunak also visited Par- ters Krishna and Anoushka,

companied by Sudha Murthy, Member of Parliament, Rajya Sabha. Secretary General, Lok Sabha, Utpal Kumar Singh welcomed Sunak and his family. Secretary General, Rajya Sabha, P C Mody was also present on the occasion.

During their visit, the Sunak family explored the Parliament House Complex, admiring its architectural grandeur. They visited notable sites like the Galleries, Chambers, Consti- Indian-origin person to have tution Hall, and Samvidhan served as the UK Prime Min-Sunak, who is

currently visiting India, called on External Affairs Minister (EAM) S. Jaishankar in New Delhi on Monday. "Nice to meet former UK Prime Minister Rishi Sunak in Delhi today. Appreciate his constant support for strengthening India-UK relations, "EAM Jaishankar posted on X.

Born to Indian parents in Southampton with roots in Punjab, Sunak is the first

providing a speedy and transparent justice system to the countrymen. He said that to strengthen law and order, it is essential for crimes to be registered, so there should not be any delay in filing FIRs. HM Shah emphasised that efforts should be made to achieve over 90 per cent conviction rate in cases with sentences of more than seven years and the police, government lawyers, and judiciary should work together to ensure

TALE OF TWO DEMOCRACIES

A Weakling Becomes CEC in India, Invincible Patel to Lead FBI in US



MISRA

dent Donald Trump, finally gets approval of the US Sen- ing political battle was being ate to lead the key American investigation agency, Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI). During the same period,

Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi successfully imposes his one of the cronies, Gyanesh Kumar, as the chief election commissioner (CEC). It is considered, the ruling party's bid for seeking an institutional support He not only has promised for preventing its further to trigger off the process of political decline. It, perhaps, could have been inspired by the rulers of Pakistan, where the election commission is often accused of rigging and manipulating elections.

It, however, may be recalled that a few years ago, the present ruling establishment had ensured removal of one of the election commission- now soon be expediting the suffered partial political ers, Ashok Lavasa, respected investigations regarding their for his uprightness, before corruption and also would be he could be elevated to the exposing the child sex traffickposition of the CEC

political whispers in the York having the blessings of capital, had to be eased out eminent politicians like Bill electing Modi as the leader from the commission, before Clinton, a former American of the BJP Parliamentary he could be elevated for the coveted position of the CEC. nent Americans. The decision of his removal time-tested trick of implicatcooked up income tax enquiry. cluding prominent American name ratified in the BJP Par- dulging in false propaganda for ensuring transparency

Lavasa had faced the anger of the ruling establishment for taking cognizance of the ash Patel, violation of the election code an irre- or norms, also following the pressible reports of the recovery of huge unaccounted money from the ruling party. In Washington, breathtak-

witnessed this week, when finally Kash Patel succeeded in obtaining clearance of the US Senate. Interestingly, two Senators of the ruling Republican Party, Lisa Murkowaski (Alaska) and Susan Collins of Maines, defected to the opposition. They voted against him.

It, however, has made Kash Patel, more assertive.

cleansing the investigation agency, but he has also stated that he would be assisting Krishti Noem, who has already got clearance from the Senate to become Homeland Security Secretary.

The Democrats, including some Republicans, are apprehensive that Patel would ing. This crime was pioneered Lavasa, according to the by Jeffrey Epsttein in New president and other promi-

As soon as his name was was immaculately planned ratified in the Senate, Patel Modi promptly formed an to be accompanied by the promised Senator, Marsha Blackburn, that he would ing his family members, wife not allow any further delay Noel, or son, or both, in some in booking the criminals, in-



politicians, to face the consequences for luring young their sexual desires, violating and exploiting them.

Ignoring Parliamentary Conventions In India, the much-acclaimed invincibility of the ruling BJP under the leadership of Narendra Modi eclipse in the 2024 Lok Sabha poll. The BJP had not only failed to obtain a majority in 543-strong House with just 240 seats, it also abandoned the process of party before being declared the leader to lead a coalition government. Instead, alliance under the National Democratic Alliance (NDA) and after being declared the

liamentary Party as the new leader. Modi, however, chose teenage girls for submitting to to ignore the established parliamentary practice. He didn't care to adhere to the established convention that he should have tendered

resignation after losing the majority in the House. Later, he should have explored the possibility of setting up a minority government with allies. However, the reluctance of Modi in adhering to the democratic norms has amused the political pundits in India as well as in other political capitals; but his yearning to cling to power has even hurt a large number of the 240 MPs of the ruling BJP, including the 100 members facing criminal charges such as muder and rape in different Indian courts. Their legitimacy is under the cloud despite the support of the leader of the NDA, he got his mainline news channels in-

the USD 21 millions propaganda for ousting a section to get BJP defeated. În fact, seeking full details regarding it, the Indian channels are quoting President Donald Trump without explaining the context.

Before being elected the leader of his parliamentary party, Modi successfully stitched a coalition by luring the Telugu Desam, Janata Dal (U) and a section of the Shiv Sena under the banner of the National Democratic Alliance (NDA); thus ensuring his support for his minority

The Strategy

Earlier, Modi had ensured that the role of the Chief Justice of India in the selection of the election commissioner should be ended, and for this he got a new law enacted and invoked it before it could face judicial scrutiny in the apex

Under this new legislation, he expedited the appointment process by selecting the new incumbent just a day before the hearing on this issue before the Supreme Court of On the other hand, Kash

Patel finally succeeded in getting the approval of the US senate in a keenly contested voting. He was confirmed for the top position for a 10-year tenure with a slim margin getting just 51 votes in a 100-member Senate.

In India, the executive is also busy diluting the laws

regarding the narrative of and accountability of the system. On the other hand, in the US, the FBI and the of the American deep state Homeland Security would soon be initiating vigorous campaigns against Sextortion, which has increased by 700 percent in recent years. Since in this crime a number of top Americans, including politicians, tycoons like Bill Gates and Robert Murdoch. have figured for being close to Jeffrey Epsttein, the mastermind behind this crime, the concerned authorities didn't take strong measures.

According to the information available, they used to enjoy his hospitalities and had travelled in his private jet with pretty teen-age girls to his islands and luxury hotels. Later, Jeffrey Epsttein was found guilty and convicted, but before he could complete his jail term, he was found dead in a New York jail. It, however, goes to the credit of Modi that he ensured that Lavasa peacefully migrates to the Asian Development Bank. The income tax enquiry was also quietly dropped following the reports that the supporters of Lavasa might release the offshore investments of the leaders of the ruling party.

In the US, the Trump Administration is full of vigour. It is hoped that in coming weeks, more political fireworks could be witnessed in the US and

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

Congress Slams PM Modi for failing to defend Indian interest during US visit

KAVITA SHARMA New Delhi

Congress President Mallikarjun Kharge today flagged the issue of "voter list manipulations" by the Bharatiya Janata Party ahead of elections in different

He also criticised Prime Minister Narendra Modi for failing to defend India's trade and business interests during his recent visit to the United States.

In his opening remarks at the meeting of AICC General Secretaries and in-charges here today, the Congress president also said that the in charge of different states will be accountable for the organisation and the electoral performances in the respective states.

"I would like to tell you one very important thing about accountability. All of you will be accountable for the organisation and the future election results of the states under your charge", he told the general secretaries and in-charges.

Referring to the new challenge of "voter list manipulation", he said, it was happening on a large scale in elections, and Rahul Gandhi had also raised the issue in the Lok Sabha.

Asserting that this rigging has to be stopped at all costs, he pointed out how the names of Congress supporters were deleted from the voter list or the names were removed and added in a different polling booth at the last moment. He accused the BJP of adding fresh names just before the elections.

The Congress president also



referred to the manipulation of the selection process of the Chief Election Commissioner by the government by excluding the Chief Justice of India from the selection

He said the Chief Justice was also included in the selection committee of the Chief Election Commissioner (CEC) by the order of the Supreme Court, but Modi removed him as well. "The government does not even trust the impartiality of the Chief Justice of the country", he observed, while referring to Rahul Gandhi questioning the purpose of the committee, where the government was trying to use the Leader of the Opposition merely for "certification".

Referring to PM Modi's visit to the United States, Kharge said, he (the PM) had failed to protect India's trade and business interests. He pointed out, the PM did not protest the imposition of tariffs by the US on Indian goods. "They are forcing a loss-making deal on us, which our government is silently accepting. This is clearly an insult to India and its people", he observed, while adding, "America is hurting us deeply even in economic matters".

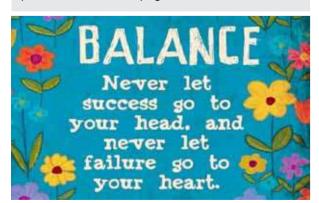


India must push back to protect its interests

ndia's Prime Minister Narendra Modi's recent visit to Washington was brief yet impactful, with significant developments marking his engagement with U.S. President Donald Trump. Taking place less than a month after Trump assumed office, the meeting positioned India among the first few nations to establish high-level diplomatic engagements with the new administration. The joint statement released post-meeting reflected a mix of economic and strategic discussions, with a notable emphasis on trade and investment. The launch of 'Mission 500', aimed at achieving \$500 billion in bilateral trade by 2030, alongside initial talks on a free trade agreement, underlined the economic focus of the visit. India's commitment to purchasing more U.S. energy, oil, and defence equipment is expected to contribute towards reducing America's \$45.7 billion trade deficit with India. A significant structural shift came with the introduction of the COMPACT framework, aimed at fostering military, commerce, and technological cooperation. The rebranding of the Initiative on Critical and Emerging Technologies (iCET) to TRUST further reinforced commitments in semiconductor, AI, and quantum computing collaborations. Additionally, the approval of Tahawwur Rana's extradition to India marked a crucial development in counterterrorism cooperation. Beyond the optics of camaraderie, the visit underscores the pragmatic nature of India-U.S. relations. The transactional aspects, particularly on trade, energy, and defence, recall elements of Trump's previous term. Notably, Modi's visit did not seem to ease concerns over counter-tariffs or immigration policies affecting Indians in the U.S. As India moves forward in engaging with the new administration, a balanced approach—asserting its interests while fostering collaboration—will be crucial in navigating potential challenges and leveraging opportunities for deeper bilateral ties. The upcoming Quad Summit in Delhi will serve as another platform to reinforce these commitments and further strengthen strategic cooperation between the two nations.

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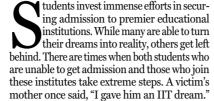
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EDITOR* ABDUL WASEY

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

RAJEEV KUMAR BELIEVES GENUINE CARE AND INTEGRATION FOSTER A COMPASSIONATE, FEARLESS EDUCATION SYSTEM

Redefine success in education



Despite various preventive measures, students

ending their lives is a tragic loss.

In 2024, around a dozen suicides were reported from the Indian Institutes of Technology (IIT); there have already been over 100 cases in the decade, 2014 to 2024. In 2025, there have been incidents reported from IIT Indore, IIT Kharagpur, and the Indian Institute of Management Bangalore, and six cases of admissionseekers in Kota in Rajasthan, which is famous for its coaching institutes. According to the 2022 National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB) data, there were 13,044 student suicides in India, or 7.6% of all suicide cases. Among these, 2,095

were linked to examination failure These tragedies have sparked much concern. In 2023, the President of India, Droupadi Murmu, called for a humanitarian approach, urging "all stakeholders to help students beat negative thinking and take study pressure in a positive way". The Supreme Court of India has directed academicians to explore innovative out-of-the-box solutions. The Council of Indian Insititutes of Technology has proposed a slew of measures while the University Grants Commission (UGC) has included a representative of the vulnerable group in the Grievance Redressal Committee to effectively safeguard their interests

In January 2025, the Supreme Court, addressing a Public Interest Litigation (PIL) by the families of victims, directed the UGC to collate data on the establishment of Equal Opportunity Cells (EOCs), complaints received, and action taken reports from all universities, as per its 2012 regulations. Despite these interventions, the effectiveness of these measures remains questionable



Cause analysis

Academic stress and caste-based discrimination remain the primary causes of these tragedies. But there are several other factors. It is a misconception that this is an issue that concerns only academically weaker students There are cases of high achievers, including an Olympiad winner, taking drastic measures. Additionally, students face societal pressure to "succeed", along with the 'fear of missing out' (FOMO) syndrome and constant comparison with peers. Setbacks and mental health struggles that young people experience are often stigmatised, while failure is viewed as a personal flaw. Institutional policies tend to be reactive rather than preventive, leaving students to chase unrealistic standards with little room for recovery or personal growth. This creates a cycle of isolation, despair, and hopelessness.

A Lancet Commission Report (2022) acknowledged that many of us experience some degree of mental ill health in our lifetime, but tackling stigma and discrimination is essential to changing the status quo. Stigma and discrimination in mental health not only violate basic human rights but also deepen marginalisation and social exclusion. To reduce stigma effectively, policies based on social contact should be prioritised, empowered, and supported to drive meaningful change

The effectiveness of existing measures

So, are the measures-in-place counterproductive? Current prevention measures such as counselling, complaint handling, remedial classes, and reduced academic load have their limitations. This stems mainly from the unintended consequence of these measures which end up isolating these individuals in their time of need.

Counselling plays a crucial role in promoting wellness skills and improvng mental health during normal times. However, challenges may arise during critical moments such as when depression

alates. An IIT Jodhpur study, using data from the 75th Round National Sample Survey (2017-18), revealed that self-reporting of mental illness in India is less than 1%, primarily due to societal stigma, leading to isolation during such critical phases.

Combating caste-based discrimination through a complaint-driven approach has significant flaws. It often results in no action in time, delayed or punitive actions, and instils fear of repercussions. The case of a student from IIT Kharagpur, in June 2024, exemplifies this, where the victim allegedly made a complaint and was later found dead. Later, a medical report showed murder, and not suicide. In another instance, at IIT Delhi, in 2023, in the case of two students, the Scheduled Caste/Scheduled Tribe cell saw no complaints, despite administrative efforts. It shows that a complaint-based system can discourage victims, only to worsen their suffering, and isolate complainants.

A similar issue exists with remedial classes and tutorials for academically weaker students, who are identified based on semester-end results. While these classes may help some students improve their academic performance, there is an inherent flaw. Participants are labelled as being academically weak, causing isolation from their peers. Although most manage to pass, some may struggle due to the stigma and other factors, which when combined with underlying mental health triggers, could lead to tragedy

Thus, the prevention measures have inher-

ent built-in-flaws. They unintentionally label vulnerable individuals, leading to isolation

The need for a change in approach

Exclusionary approaches worsen the struggles of victims and hinder integration. A paradigm shift is needed to ensure immediate and inclusive support in critical moments. The key to prevention lies in keeping students integrated, and free from stigma or fear.

There is also the point of early detection and flexible assessment. Instead of labelling weaker students at semester-end, early detection through performance in initial assignments or behavioural signs such as missed classes and reduced interaction can help before there is a crisis. A flexible ssessment system that is tailored to the varying strengths and interests of students is an effective olution. It should be noted that the same size does not fit all. Offering assignments of different difficulty levels is an approach that supports vulnerable students, boosts their confidence, and ensures that no one is left behind. The writer's successful implementation of this method over three decades highlights its potential to transform student outcomes.

This approach does not require reducing academic rigor for all, as doing so has its pros and cons. While it may ease stress for some, it could also affect the global competitiveness level and reputation of elite institutions.

Rajeev Kumar is a former computer science professor at Indian Institute of Technology (IIT) Kharagpur, Indian Institute of Technology (IIT) Kanpur, Birla Institute of Technology And Science (BITS) Pilani, and the Jawaharlal Nehru University (JNU), and a former scientist at the Defence Research and Development

Organisation (DRDO) and Department of Science and Technology (DST), with over 40 years of experience in academia and research and development. Views are



APAR GUPTA SAYS RANVEER ALLAHBADIA AND SAMAY RAINA ARE JUST PAWNS IN DIGITAL MEDIA BATTLE

The danger of a digital censor board



here is a moral panic over a show called India's Got Latent. Much of the furore centres around some crude remarks made by a You-Tuber, Ranveer Allahbadia. His remarks have been condemned by Chief Ministers, a Parliamentary Standing Committee, and even the Supreme Court.

On India's Got Latent, which was conceptualised and hosted by comedian and YouTuber Samay Raina, judges attempt to critique the "latent" talents of aspiring performers. Dank humour defines the show. Both Mr. Allahbadia and Mr. Raina enjoy immense popularity as YouTubers, especially with young people. Mr. Raina is a rising sensation who shared the KBC stage with Amitabh Bachchan and Mr. Allahbadia was extolled by the Prime Minister himself as that their online reach is the reason behind the moral panic, the two YouTubers are mere pawns in the great game for control of our digital media.

Notwithstanding the Supreme Court's curt remark that Mr. Allahbadia has "a very dirty mind," the law separates moral repugnancy from criminality. In Apoorva Arora v. Govt. of NCT of Delhi (2024), the Court quashed criminal prosecutions for foul language in an OTT show called College Romance. The Court demanded an objective test for obscenity, focusing on whether sexual or lustful thoughts were aroused and not on whether words were "decent". The Court further explained that coarse language, however distasteful or improper, does not automatically become obscene.



Its ruling is directly relevant here: Mr. Allahbadia's comments, at worst, constitute a risqué jest rather than actual obscenity. Yet fury and legal intimidation often eclipse constitutional principle.

The second legal provision which has Section 69A of the Information Technology Act, 2000, which provides the Indian government with the power to block access to a website, as revealed by Kanchan Gupta, a Senior Advisor, Ministry of Information and Broadcasting. Curiously, "decency and morality" do not fall under the grounds for blocking websites under Section 69A. This statutory limit was exposed as far back as 2010, when the government tried to block the pornographic website Savita Bhabhi. Legality, however, has not stood in the way of the Union government's expanding appetite for censorship, as seen in the surge of blocking orders, which has been aided by the Information Technology (Intermediary Guidelines and Digital Media Ethics Code) Rules, 2021. Blocking decisions remain shrouded in secrecy; courts typically avoid striking them down.

Question of regulation

The Ministry of Information and Broadcasting's push for a sweeping Broadcasting Bill gathered steam before the general elections and then returned in a form that placed online creators in the same bracket as traditional broadcasters. Earlier, there was a public outcry against provisions of the Bill. Now, thanks to the recent clamour for stronger censorship, the Bill has received momentum. The Parliamentary Standing Committee of Information Technology, headed by BJP MP Nishikant Dubey, has now urged the Ministry to propose new regulations and amendments. The recent controversy has different actors playing to familiar script: a public uproau new rules which arm the government with

On January 15, 2021, Amazon Prime's Tanday released, and was immediately accused of insulting religious sentiments. This led to criminal complaints, government intervention, and an apology from the creators, who cut supposedly offensive scenes. Yet multiple FIRs persisted, targeting actors, producers, and Amazon Prime's India head. Amid calls for censorship, the government on February 25, 2021, introduced the Information Technology Rules. Part III now covers digital news media and OTT platforms, albeit under ambiguous jurisdiction. However, what is interesting is that to escape the clutches of criminal prosecution, OTT platforms have entered into a Faustian bargain. They now

invite censorship powers of the Ministry to escape a visit to the police station or writ petitions before different High Courts. The price to pay is the discontinuation of any web series which, through its themes or dialogues, poses difficult questions to our society or political leadership. Hence, it should not come as a surprise if popular online creators, including those associated with India's Got Latent, plead for clemency in the coming weeks by pleading for "regulation" on digital olatforms such as YouTube.

This present moment in time is not simoly an outcome of a single controversy. Nor is it just an example of rising online vulgarity fuelled by cheap data and ubiquitious teleconnectivity. As Yamini Aiyar and Neelanjan Sircar have argued, the Indian state has undergone a fundamental change has enabled direct benefit transfers as a form of tribal allegiance rather than a right guaranteed by the constitution. Calling it techno-patrimonialism, they state that it has advanced within a framework of the Prime Minister's political appeal that relies on "a mix of cultural nationalism and welfarism populism". Hence, it should come as no surprise that political parties, after competing on direct benefit transfers, are now advocating for digital censor boards. This may explain why the entire state and large sections of society have been spurred into action by a distasteful joke.

> Apar Gupta, advocate and founderdirector of the Internet Freedom Foundation. Views are personal.



BOOKS: REVIEW

New book explores three centuries of short stories

alman Rushdie's depiction of a 'Sea of Stories' in Haroun and the Sea of Stories resonates deeply with the essence of the contemporary short story-a fluid and ever-evolving entity shaped by myth and history. A.J. Thomas, in his meticulously curated anthology of Indian short stories spanning three centuries, emerges as a modern-day Scheherazade, weaving together tales that captivate and challenge in equal

A major strength of this collection is the presence of familiar yet everenchanting narratives. Readers will find themselves revisiting cherished classics, such as Tagore's Kabuliwala, where the heart-wrenching call of "Mini, batcha, Oye Mini batcha" immortalized on film remains unforgettable. S.K. Pottekatt's On the Riverbank transports us to childhood innocence with Unni's search for a dragonfly's red tail, while Premendra Mitra's The Discovery of Telenapota draws readers into a $mysterious\ journey, mirroring\ the$

allure of adventure tales. Satyajit Ray's Two Magicians leaves us spellbound, a testament to his genius in storytelling beyond cinema.

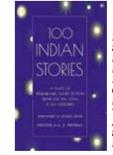
Beyond nostalgia, the anthology's power lies in its ability to immerse the reader. Many stories evoke the darkness of a pre-electricity era, their eerie atmospheres bringing to mind Vaikom Muhammad Basheer's The Blue Light, where readers become active participants, gripped by terror and anticipation. The ability of these stories to transport us back to childhood wonder and fear makes them particularly compelling.

While the collection celebrates human resilience, love, and memory, it does not shy away from pain. The oppressive weight of caste, the deeply ingrained inequities of privilege, and the horrors of Partition-era loyalties find space in these pages. The presence of poverty is an everlooming specter, portrayed with stark realism. The contrast between tenderness and suffering ensures that the collection is as thought-

provoking as it is entertaining. The arrangement of stories, moving from older authors to contempo-

rary ones, also allows for an evolving narrative—one that shifts from the lyrical and mythic to themes of modern-day struggles. Thomas acknowledges the influence of early publications, such as The Illustrated Weekly of India, in shaping his literary journey. Having also edited The Greatest Malayalam Stories Ever Told (2023) and served as an editor for Indian Literature, his experience in curating voices from varied backgrounds shines through in this anthology.

As the collection progresses, modern concerns take center stage. Themes of patriarchy, environmental degradation, and social stigmas gain prominence, demonstrating how short stories remain relevant in $addressing \, the \, pressing \, issues \, of \, our \,$ time. In Yeshe Dorjee Thongchi's The Smell of Bamboo Blossoms, translated from Assamese by Aruni Kashyap, the cyclical flowering of bamboo unleashes an infestation of



100 Indian Stories: A Feast of Remarkable Shor Fiction from the 19th, 20th and 21st Centuries Edited by A.J. Aleph;

rats, destroying crops in Arunachal Pradesh, paralleling a rat plague in Surat, Gujarat. This interplay of folklore and real-world crises underscores how intricately human lives remain tied to nature's unpredictable rhythms.

Ruskin Bond's words in the foreword ring true: "Honour the writers. Salute the translators. Celebrate the short story." Whether it is a grandmother who transforms into a crocodile or a metaphysical duel between magicians, the anthology offers a rich tapestry of narratives that demand to be savored at leisure. Each story is an invitation—one that rewards patience and curiosity in equal measure.

For readers seeking a blend of nostalgia, social critique, and literary brilliance, A.J. Thomas' anthology is an invaluable addition to any bookshelf. Its stories, drawn

from multiple languages and eras remind us of the timeless power of storytelling in understanding the past, confronting the present, and imagining the future.

One of the anthology's most commendable aspects is its attention to translation, which acts as a bridge between linguistic cultures. The translations retain the original charm, wit, and depth of the stories, allowing them to reach a wider audience. Thomas ensures that the richness of each regional tale is preserved, making them accessible to those unfamiliar with the original language. By doing so, he highlights the sheer diversity of Indian literature and reinforces the idea that storytelling transcends linguistic and cultural boundaries.

Moreover, the translators play a crucial role in not only maintaining the authenticity of the stories but also in capturing the nuances that make each tale unique. The anthology pays tribute to their meticulous work, recognizing that the art of translation is as significant as the act of writing itself. This collection, therefore, stands as a testament to the value of translation in fostering cross-cultural appreciation and literary unity.

Global Campus in Bengaluru Number of EVs on Indian Roads Likely to Cross 28 Million in 2030: Report Global Campus in Bengaluru

Bengaluru

Google is excited to announce the opening of its new campus, "Ananta" (meaning "limitless" in Sanskrit), in Bengaluru. This state-of-the-art facility is one of Google's largest globally and represents a significant investment in India's tech ecosystem.

India has long been a strategic nerve center in the global tech landscape. From a booming startup ecosystem to digital public infrastructure that is reshaping lives, India's technological evolution is nothing short of remarkable. The country is also home to a diverse and thriving community of creators, innovators, and problem-solvers. For over two decades, Google has been proud to contribute to this transformation, whether through AI-powered flood forecasting, cutting-edge tuberculosis detection models, or Google Pay's role in integrating millions into the formal economy.

Number of Active

Lakh in January

In India Crosses 18.17

NEW DELHI: A total num-

ber of 28,05,354 companies

were registered in the country

as of January 31, of which

65% (18,17,222) companies

per cent in the total propor-

tion of active companies

when compared to December

2024, according to the latest

data compiled by the Ministry

As on January 31, there

were also 5,216 foreign com-

panies registered in the coun-

cent or 3,281 entities were

try and out of them, 63 per

Private limited companies

account for 96 per cent of

the total companies with 38

per cent of the total paid-up

capital. In comparison, public

limited companies are small-

er in number (4 per cent) but

comprise 62 per cent of the

DR. ANIL KUMAR

ANGRISH

ceuticals touched US \$27.85

Bn from US \$15.07 Bn in FY

2013-14. For April-Decem-

n FY 2023-

24, export

of pharma-

ing to the Ministry's data.

of Corporate Affairs.



As we continue to build from India, for the world, we are thrilled to mark a significant milestone with the inauguration of Ananta—one of Google's largest offices globally. Nestled in Bengaluru, a city renowned for its dynamism and innovation, Ananta is a testament to our commitment to India's tech ecosystem. Designed as a collaborative effort between Google India and local development teams, this state-of-theart campus reflects our latest thinking in workplace design

The name 'Ananta,' derived from Sanskrit, translates to 'infinite' or 'limitless'—a reflection of the boundless opportunities' technology offers to improve lives. True to this spirit, the campus is more than just a workspace; it is a hub of innovation, sustainability, and accessibility. Thoughtful design elements such as tactile flooring, braille-integrated features, and fully accessible amenities ensure

an inclusive environment for all. Drawing inspiration from Bengaluru's identity as the 'Garden City of India,' Anan-

ta integrates extensive green landscapes with walking and jogging paths—perfect for informal brainstorming sessions or moments of tranquility amidst a bustling workday. Sustainability is at the heart of its design, with features that significantly minimize environmental impact. The campus recycles 100% of its wastewater, harnesses rainwater, and boasts one of India's largest smart glass installations to optimize energy use. Additionally, locally sourced materials dominate the interiors, reinforcing our commitment to responsible construction and community engagement.

For Google, India has always represented a unique opportunity—one where ingenuity meets impact. With Ananta, we take another bold step in shaping the future, reinforcing our dedication to building with and for India, and driving technological advancements

while three-wheelers would con-

tribute to 7 per cent of sales,"

India continues to make sig-

nificant and sustained inroads

in its decarbonisation journey,

with the rapid increase in sales

of electric vehicles, supported by

demand and supply incentives,

growing consumer demand, and

a focus on developing charging

(interim), IESA said that India

has witnessed a substantial rise

in the electricity consumption,

reaching 1,543 TWh in 2023-24

(7 per cent increase over last

Vinayak Walimbe, president

IESA said.

infrastructure.

would be e-

2wheelers, 10

per cent would

be e-4wheel-

ers, and com-

mercial ve-

hicles such as

trucks, buses



NEW DELHI: The cumulative number of EVs on Indian roads will likely cross 28 million units in 2030, generating significant demand for energy from the grid, according to the India Energy Storage Alliance (IESA), a leading industry body focused on e-mobility, energy storage and hydrogen.

India's cumulative EV sales have crossed 4.1 million units in the fiscal year 2023-2024 and the future outlook for electric vehicle sales continues to be positive, driven by increasing environmental awareness, customer interest, advancements in Battery technology, and readily available and easily accessible EV charging infrastructure, according to an IESA statement.

"According to the Central Electricity Authority (CEA), "It is predicted that 83 per electricity consumption at pub-

ber 2024 which has more than doubled compared to 204 GWh in 2022-2023," he mentioned. "Additionally, with the major-

ity of EV users opting for the convenience of home charging, the IESA estimate of energy demand for EV charging in FY 2024-2025 is 4,000 GWh and likely to increase to 38 TWh by FY 2031-2032 with maximum power demand estimated at 366.4GW," he added.

The Ministry of Power has prepared a National Electricity Plan, which is a comprehensive 10-year roadmap, crucial for advancing future strategies and helping ensure energy security. India is the third-largest producer and consumer of electricity in the world.

The National Electricity Plan forecasts total annual demand on the Indian power grid to rise to 2133 TWh by 2031-32 and as per IESA estimation, EV charging would likely constitute around 3 per cent of this

India Turns Food-Surplus Powerhouse Driven by Robust Farm **Sector Growth: Report**



NEW DELHI: India has evolved from a food-scarce nation to a food-surplus powerhouse with a strong export performance on the back of robust growth in agriculture, reflecting the farm sector's resilience and its significant role in the global agricultural trade landscape, according to a study released by apex business chamoer PHDCCI.

The report, titled 'India's Agricultural Transformation: From Food Scarcity to Surplus' projects the country's foodgrain production growth at 2 per cent, to about 3,357 lakh tonnes for the year 2024-25.

The business chamber's projections indicate a significant expansion in agricultural and processed food products exports, with exports reaching \$125 billion by FY2030, \$250 billion by FY2035, \$450 billion by FY2040, and \$700 billion by FY2047.

The PHDCCI study projects that India's food processing sector is expected to reach \$700 billion by FY 2030, \$1,100 billion by FY2035, \$1,500 billion by FY 2040, \$1,900 billion by FY 2040, and \$2,150 billion

The report states that while some states excel in agricultural performance, their overall economic growth remains modest. This highlights an opportunity to better leverage agricultural success to drive broader economic development. By strengthening linkages between agriculture and other sectors, these states can unlock new avenues for growth, fostering more inclusive and balanced economic growth, the

report points out.

GTRI Cautions about Petrochemical Risks in India-Qatar CEPA Talks

Companies Registered NEW DELHI: The Global Trade Research Initiative (GTRI) has advised India to exercise caution in pursuing a potential free trade agreement with Qatar, particularly regarding the petrochemical sector where both nations maintain strong market positions.

The economic think tank issued this guidance on Wednesday following high-level diplomatic discussions between the two countries.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Qatar's Amir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad Al-Thani recently discussed the possibility of establishing a bilateral Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement (CEPA).

The proposed agreement aims to double bilateral trade to USD 28 billion by 2030, ac-

cording to the joint statement released after their meeting.

Typical CEPA arrangements involve substantial reduction or elimination of customs duties on 90-95 percent of traded goods, alongside measures to facilitate services trade and investment.

GTRI Founder Ajay Srivastava emphasised that India's well-established domestic petrochemical industry could face significant challenges if tariff reductions lead to increased competition from Qatari im-

The existing trade relationship already shows a marked imbalance, with India's imports from Qatar reaching USD 12.34 billion in 2023-24, while exports remained at just USD 1.7 billion.

The trade composition reveals that 85 percent of India's imports from Qatar consist of energy products, including USD 6.3 billion in LNG, USD 3.1 billion in butane and propane for LPG production, and USD 1.1 billion in petroleum crude.

In contrast, India's primary exports to Qatar include more modest amounts of Basmati rice, iron and steel articles, and machinery.

Recent data indicates a decline in bilateral trade from USD 18.77 billion in 2022-23 to USD 14 billion in 2023-24. Qatar, with a GDP of USD 221.4 billion and a population of 3.1 million, has invested USD 1.5 billion in India through foreign direct investment between April 2000 and September 2024.

India aims to triple its textile exports to Rs 9 lakh cr by 2030

NEW DELHI: India's textile exports have reached Rs 3 lakh crore and the goal is to triple this to Rs 9 lakh crore by 2030 by strengthening domestic manufacturing and expanding global reach, the government has said.

India is the sixth-largest exporter of textiles globally, contributing 8.21 per cent to the country's total exports in 2023-24.

The sector holds a 4.5 per cent share in global trade, with the United States and European Union accounting for 47 per cent of India's textile and apparel exports, according to the Ministry of Textiles. The recently concluded 'Bharat Tex 2025' in the national capital served as a platform to accelerate the government's "Farm to Fibre, Fabric, Fashion, and Foreign Markets" vision. The event demonstrated India's leadership in the textile sector and its commitment to innovation, sustainability, and global collaboration.

Organised from February 14-17, the event spanned 2.2



countries including global CEOs, policymakers, and industry leaders, attended the event, according to the "From an employment perspective, the textile in-

dustry provides direct employment to over 45 million people and supports the livelihoods of over 100 million individuals indirectly, including a large proportion of women and rural workers, said the government. The government's focus

on increasing textile manufacturing, modernising infrastructure, fostering innovation, and upgrading technology has strengthened India's position as a global textile hub. India is one of million square feet and fea- the world's largest productured over 5,000 exhibitors, ers and exporters of fabrics, showcase of India's textile and international markets.

Overall, the analysis suggests that foodgrain production in India is significantly influenced by factors such as

electricity availability, warehousing capacity, and gross irrigated area. Rainfall does not appear to have a statistically significant

impact, which contrasts with the traditional view of India's heavy reliance on the monsoon for agriculture. The report is of the view that they have a moderate degree of association. This points to a more resilient ilture having emerged in the country.

Labour Ministry partners APNA to open 10 lakh job offers annually on NCS portal across metro and non-metro

NEW DELHI: In a significant step towards enhancing employment prospects for young job seekers, the Ministry of Labour and Employment (MoLE) has partnered with the job recruitment platform APNA.

standing (MoU) signed between APNA and Labour Ministry is expected to bring over 10 lakh



The Memorandum of Under- Portal. This will help boost domestic employment avenues, said the Ministry.

The MoU aims to help job National Career Service (NCS) broader employment options cilitate smooth integration via a India," it added.

cities. APNA will post job listings on the NCS Portal, connecting employers with candidates across formal and informal sectors. The partnership will also promote equal opportunities for women and persons with disabilities, ensuring a fair recruitment process. APNA will access NCS's vast candidate database, while Mol

user-friendly online and offline interface. "This initiative aligns with NCS's mission to create a dynamic, inclusive job ecosystem, helping job seekers from all backgrounds find suitable opportunities," said the ministry.

"This collaboration marks a significant step in bridging the gap between talent and employment, fostering economic growth

Table 2: Export of Drugs & Pharmaceuticals - Top Five Destinations April - December 2024 % Share in selected criteria's Exports (\$ Mn) total exports USA 7.104.30 32.78 2.65 Brazi France 532.49 2.46 South Africa 2.37

Source: Compiled from National Import-Export Record for Yearly Analysis of Trade

ber 2024, export of Drugs & Analysis of Trade Pharmaceuticals stood at US \$21.67 Bn. Bain & Co. in a repharmaceuticals, if gainers cent report that was published are Indian pharmaceutical in collaboration with IDMA, companies, then the same is IPA and Pharmaceuticals the case for the U.S. economy. Export Promotion Council The Association for Accessible of India (Pharmexcil) stated Medicines (AAM) which is a that India is the 3rd largest trade association that reprenation in terms of pharma sents generic and biosimilar exports by volume (measured manufacturers released its in thousands of tons) for the 2024 U.S. Generic & Biosimiyear 2023 with pharmaceular Medicines Saving Report tical exports of about 1,520 on September 5, 2024. The tons (in thousands) closely report revealed that due to use followed by the USA (about of approved generic and bio-1,510 thousand tons) and Ger-similar medicines, there was savings to the tune of US \$445 many (about 1,500 thousand tons). First and Second rank is billion in the year 2023 alone occupied by China and France for stakeholders including pawith 8,500 (thousand tons) tients, employers, taxpayers, and about 1,710 (thousand and the healthcare system. In tons) respectively. oast ten years, total generic & Drugs & Pharmaceuticals biosimilar savings amounted

are the 4th largest commodity exports from India. Export of Drugs & Pharmaceuticals account for about 7 per cent of India's total merchandise exports by value for April to Dec. 2024 period.

The USA alone forms about one-third of total export of drugs and pharmaceuticals from India. This reflects importance of the USA market Reduction Act in the USA. for India. In a way, this shows the dependence of the USA on drugs & pharmaceuticals

exported from India.

Table 1: Exports from India - Top Five Commodities April - December 2024

Commodities	(\$ Mn)	total exports
Engineering Goods	87,129.97	27.32
Petroleum Products	46,521.86	14.59
Electronic Goods	26,107.02	8.19
Drugs & Pharmaceuticals	21,673.86	6.80
Gems & Jewellery	21,354.09	6.69
Course Coursiled from National Insurant Courset Decord for Vaculty		

Indirectly, the cost of healthcare will go up for patients. The National Health Statistics Group within Centers for to more than US \$3.1 Tril-Medicare & Medicaid Services lion. The role of generics and of the USA conduct a comprebiosimilars can be gauged hensive review & revision of from the fact that generics & the National Health Expenbiosimilars represent 90 per diture Accounts (NHEA) on cent of prescriptions filled in five-yearly basis. The NHEA the U.S. but form only 13.1 are the official estimates of per cent of prescription drug total health care spending in spending. Moreover, inflationthe U.S. This data reflects that ary pressure is evident due to health spending accounted implementation of Inflation for 17.6 per cent of the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) of If tariffs are imposed at a the U.S. economy. Further, higher rate, then medicines the U.S. healthcare spending will become costlier, and ul- grew 7.5 per cent in 2023,

approximately \$14,570 per

person. One major concern for the U.S. may be India's Goods Trade Surplus which has touched \$35.33 Bn in FY24 as Exports from India during this period stood at US \$77.52 Bn and Imports were to the tune of \$42.19 Bn. In last five years, India's Goods Trade Surplus has more than doubled as the surplus stood at \$17.3 Bn in FY20, \$22.75 Bn in FY21, \$32.29 Bn in FY22, and \$27.45 Bn in FY23.

Union Budget 2025-26 introduced cuts on Basic Customs Duty (BCD) on more timately, patients' access to with a total amount of US than dozen items. 37 medi-Due to exports of drugs & care will be adversely affected. \$4.9 trillion. This comes to cines and related 13 Patient the largest generic pharma

Assistance Programs (PAPs) which were added in the list of items exempt from Basic Customs Duty (BCD) also benefited American pharmaceutical companies such as MSD Pharmaceuticals (known as Merck & Co., Inc., within the U.S. and Canada), Pfizer, Johnson & Johnson,

and Bristol-Myers Squibb. Many prominent Indian pharmaceutical companies have significant revenue from the U.S. market, e.g., Sun Pharma, the largest pharma company in India, was the 13th largest generics pharmaceutical company in the U.S. and held second position by prescriptions in the FY 24. In FY24, US business contributed 32 per cent to the company's consolidated revenue. In Rupee terms, the company's revenue in FY24, from the US market grew by 13.4 per cent Y-o-Y basis to reach Rs 153,493 Million. By March 2024, Sun Pharma had 3 out of 27 Finished Dosage facilities and 1 out of 14 API facilities in the U.S. itself. This partially lowers the impact of tariff.

As per IQVIA MAT March 2024, Aurobindo Pharma is in any specific market.

the U.S. market contributed Lifesciences is another promithat is the 5th largest generic products. In FY 2023-24, the company launched 28 generic products in the USA.

the highest ever revenue of US \$906 Mn in FY24. The North America core formulation business contributed 30 per cent of the company's revenue. YoY growth was 24.0 per cent in FY 2023-(a wholly owned step-down subsidiary) that was certified as 'Great Place to Work' in the U.S., the recognition achieved by only generic company in the U.S. Cipla is part of a joint venture (JV) MKC Biotherapeutics Inc., U.S. dermatology market in USA with the percentage stake owned by MNI Ventures, Cipla (EU) Limited and Kemwell Biopharma UK Limited in the ratio of 45.4 : 35.2 : 19.4. This purpose of this JV is to develop and commercialize novel cell therapy products for major unmet medical needs in the U.S. as well as in Japan and European Union (EU) re- U.S. market is undergoing gions. Such JVs de-risk any significant transformation. company from tariffs alto- Due to impending losses of gether when such products are manufactured and sold

company in the US by Rx dis- the 3rd largest pharmaceutical if any, will get nullified in the pensed. In FY24, segment- company in the U.S. by filled wise contribution reflects that prescriptions, with a 5.2 per cent market share in generics. 48 per cent to the total rev- Lupin ranked as the 2nd largenue of the company. Zydus est generic pharmaceutical company by sales in the U.S. nent pharmaceutical company respiratory segment. In FY 2023-24, the U.S. market concompany in the USA and tributed to 34 per cent of the distributes over 200 generic overall company's sales. With a revenue of Rs 67,628 million from the U.S. market, Lupin had 30 per cent growth over North America business of FY23. Moreover, the com-Cipla Limited had delivered pany has started focusing on 16, 2023, expressed optimism complex generics as can be that generic pharma products observed from the launch of might be exempt from the Tiotropium (Gx Spiriva) in tariffs as Sun Pharma supplies August 2023. It was the first Dry Powder Inhaler from India for the U.S. market.

For Torrent Pharma too, 24. Cipla has presence in the USA is among top four U.S. through Cipla USA Inc. markets with 10 per cent revenue coming from the US market in FY 2023-24. The breakup of revenues under key territories for FY 2022-23 shows that Torrent Pharma had 12 per cent of its revenue from the USA which fell by 7 per cent in FY 2023-24. The company earned 53 per cent of its revenue in FY 2023-24 from domestic market only. In absolute amount, Torrent Pharma earned Rs 1,078 Crore from the US market in FY 2023-24, down from Rs 1.162 Crore in FY 2022-23.

Indian pharmaceutical companies are likely gainers in near future too as the exclusivity, brand spending is likely to reduce by US \$145 Bn over the five years from FY By March 2024, Lupin was 2024-25. So, impact of tariff,

Trump, Tariffs and Trade of Pharmaceuticals from India medium-term.

Imposition of tariffs at a much higher rate, e.g., proposed rate of 25 per cent, will not be productive as pharmaceutical companies will pass it on to the customers only. Reciprocal tariff is not possible as product basket of American companies in India and Indian companies in the USA is entirely different. Even Dilip Shanghvi in a recent Summit held on February 15essential medications in the US market.

The U.S. market is the most important market for major Indian pharmaceutical companies given the fact that the U.S. pharma market is the largest globally in terms of dollar value – US \$ 446 Bn in 2023 that had a CAGR of 5.3 per cent in previous five years. But branded medicines constitute a majority part of the market value. In comparison to that, unbranded generics dominate in terms of prescription volume. In that way, Indian pharmaceutical companies have advantage. Any tariff hike will be more negative for the U.S. patients, taxpayers, and the overall U.S. healthcare system.

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.

India Poised to Stay World's Fastest Growing Economy in 2025-26: RBI claims in monthly bulletin

indicators point towards a sequential pick-up in momentum of India's economic activity during the second half of 2024-25, which is likely to sustain moving forward, according to the latest RBI monthly bulletin.

In a challenging and increasingly uncertain global environment, the Indian economy is poised to sustain its position as the fastest growing major economy during 2025-26 as per the IMF and World Bank estimates of GDP growth of 6.5 per cent and 6.7 per cent, respectively, the report points out. It further states that the

Union Budget 2025-26 prudently balances fiscal consolidation and growth objectives by continued focus on Capex alongside measures to boost household incomes and consumption.

The effective capital expenditure/GDP ratio is budgeted to improve to 4.3 per cent in 2025- 26 from 4.1 per cent in 2024-25 (revised estimate).



Retail inflation moderated to a five-month low of 4.3 per cent in January, mainly due to a sharp decline in vegetable prices driven by the arrival of winter crops in the market, the

High frequency indicators show that the economy is on a path of recovery during H2:2024-25 from the loss of momentum witnessed in H1.

Industrial activity has recorded an improvement over the previous quarter, as reflected in the Purchasing Managers' Index (PMI) in January.

Pick-up in tractor sales growth, and fuel consumption, ducted by the Reserve Bank

Listed non-government nonfinancial companies recorded acceleration in sales growth during Q3 as per early results.

corroborate this assessment.

On a sequential basis, operating profit margins have also turned out to be higher in line with improved sales growth, according to the report.

It further states that investment intentions of the private sector remained stable, with the total cost of projects sanctioned by banks/financial institutions (FIs) at close to 1 lakh crore in Q3:2024-25

External Commercial Borrowings (ECBs) and Initial Public Offerings (IPOs) for Capex purposes also recorded an uptick during Q3.

Uncertainty surrounding global trade and geopolitical landscape have had a bearing on domestic equity markets. The benchmark and broader markets declined on account of selling pressures from Foreign Portfolio Investors (FPIs) as

Indian Overseas Bank Launches Aadhaar-OTP Account Opening & API Banking Services

(Know Your Customer) guide-

lines, ensuring a secure and

hassle-free experience. With

customers can swiftly open

accounts, subject to transaction

limits as per regulatory norms.

enables corporate customers to

conduct transactions and in-

tra-bank transfers in real-time

directly from their accounting

systems. API Banking provides

to automate, optimize, and



CHENNAI: Public sector lender Indian Overseas Bank (IOB) has introduced Aadhaar-OTP based account opening minimal documentation, and API banking services to mark its 89th Foundation Day celebrations. These initiatives aim to simplify banking services for both individual and corporate customers.

The Chennai-headquartered bank has rolled out an Aadhaar-OTP based savings account opening facility, allowing customers to open accounts seamlessly via the bank's website. The digital onboarding process complies with the Reserve Bank of India's (RBI) a secure gateway for corporates Aadhaar OTP-based eKYC

Transactions initiated within corporate accounting systems integrate directly with the bank's Core Banking System, eliminating redundant data entry and manual intervention. Ajay Kumar Srivastava,

Managing Director and CEO of IOB, emphasised the bank's dedication to digital transformation. "As we celebrate another milestone in IOB's journey, our focus remains steadfast on delivering seamless, secure, and customercentric banking solutions.

The introduction of Aadhaar To meet the rising demand OTP-based account opening for automation in corpoand API Banking aligns with our commitment to making rate banking, IOB has also launched its API (Applicabanking simpler and more tion Programming Interface) efficient for individuals and Banking service. This facility usinesses alike," he stated.

With these digital initiatives, IOB aims to enhance customer experience and strengthen its presence in the evolving banking landscape, reinforcing its position as a forward-thinking

GST & Customs Outreach Programme for MSMEs Held in Mumbai



MUMBAI: A significant seminar focusing on GST and customs regulations for MSMEs was conducted on February 18, 2025, in Navi Mumbai.

The event, titled 'GST & Customs Outreach Programme on Ease of Doing Business -Focus on MSMEs,' was jointly organised by the Directorate General of Taxpayer Services (DGTS), Mumbai Zonal Unit, and the Navi Mumbai Branch of the Western India Regional Council (WIRC) of the Institute of Chartered Accountants of India (ICAI). Chief Guest Shri Mahesh Kumar Rustogi, Director General of Taxpayer Services, Central Board of Indirect Taxes and Customs (CBIC), emphasised the federal nature of GST and

its consensus-driven approach through the GST Council. He noted that this collaborative framework has successfully addressed the previous challenges of varying state tax rates while establishing a more equitable business environment. During the proceedings, Shri Sumit Kumar, Principal Additional

Director General of DGTS, Mumbai Zonal Unit, provided a comprehensive overview of India's GST evolution. He highlighted the system's enhanced transparency and simplified procedures since implementation, particularly noting the reduced direct interaction between taxpayers and government officials. Kumar emphasised the critical role of tax practitioners in facilitating various processes, including registration, returns, refunds, and appeals, while explaining how the self-assessment-based system has effectively streamlined compliance for small businesses. The government's commitment to MSME development was detailed by Shri Milind Barapatre, Joint Director and Head of Office at the MSME Development

and Facilitation Centre, Mum-

bai. He outlined various export-

oriented initiatives, including

a notable collaboration with

the Postal Department, which

has facilitated MSME access

to global markets. Barapa-

tre also discussed the 'Viksit

Bharat' initiative, which aims

DSP Mutual Fund Launches DSP Nifty Private Bank Index Fund

MUTUAL FUND MUMBAI: DSP Mutual Fund

today announced the launch of the DSP Nifty Private Bank Index Fund, an open-ended scheme replicating/tracking the Nifty Private Bank Index aiming to provide investors with a focused approach to investing in the private banking sector. Investors who are bullish on

the banking sector can invest in this fund, whose concentrated approach gets them exposure to the four largest private banks which comprise approximately 80% of the index. DSP believes that the concentration of larger banks within the Nifty Private Bank Index can be an advantage. Customers tend to trust & prefer larger banks more than other smaller peers. This facilitates higher credit growth, better access to capital and economies of scale thereby helping these banks market share of Indian private conditions. banks has also doubled in the last two decades*.

Indian Stock Market Ends Lower Amid Broad-Based Weakness, Weak Global Cues

MUMBAI: The Indian stock market closed lower on Friday and on a weekly basis, the Nifty and the Sensex extended their losses amid weak global cues and broad-based weakness.

At the closing bell, Sensex closed 424.90 points, or 0.56 per cent, down at 75,311.06 while the Nifty shed 117.25 points, or 0.51 per cent, to close at 22,795.90.

Nifty Bank closed at 48,981.20, down 353.35 points or 0.72 per cent. Overall, Nifty closed lower in 12 out of the last 13 trading sessions. Sectoral indices struggled, with 12 of 13 major indices closing in the red. The NSE Nifty Auto



senger traffic also point to a

recovery in overall momentum,

It also highlights that rural

demand continues to hold up,

buoyed by increasing farm in-

In rural areas, sales of Fast-

Moving Consumer Good

(FMCG) companies grew by 9.9

er cent in Q3:2024-25, much

igher than 5.7 per cent in Q2.

Urban demand also exhibited a

recovery with 5 per cent growth

in Q3, being nearly double of 2.6

per cent in the previous quarter.

The enterprise surveys con-

according to the bulletin. $\,$

rose the most. The Nifty Auto index dropped 2.5 per cent following reports that the government may slash import duties on electric vehicles.

Vikram Kasat of PL Capital-Prabhudas Lilladher said that Indian equity benchmarks opened lower, tracking weakness in global markets. Concerns over US retaliatory tariffs and persistent foreign selling continued to weigh on

sentiment. "Overnight losses on Wall Street, driven by a rise in US jobless claims and weak corporate outlooks, added pressure," he mentioned.

Hindalco Industries, Tata Steel, and Eicher Motors were the top gainers, while Mahindra & Mahindra, ICICI Bank, and Bharat Petroleum were among the top losers in the index. According to market experts, the domestic market continued to exhibit broadbased weakness, primarily influenced by investor concerns over the hawkish tone of the US Federal Open Market Committee (FOMC) minutes, which signalled prolonged higher interest rates that could

constrain liquidity in emerging markets (EMs).

The rupee traded weak by 0.05 at 86.70 despite the dollar index slipping to 106.60, as foreign institutional investor (FII) selling continued, keeping pressure on the currency.

Going forward, the rupee is expected to trade in a range of 86.45-87.10, with global sentiment and capital flows playing a key role in determining direction, according to market watchers. Meanwhile, gold traded weak and remained volatile within a range, with Comex gold fluctuating between \$2,920 and \$2,935. At MCX, gold moved between Rs 85,900 and Rs 85,400.

India's Wholesale Inflation Eases to 2.3 pc In January amid Falling Food Prices

NEW DELHI: India's wholesale inflation showed a modest decline in January 2025, easing to 2.3 per cent from 2.4 per cent in December, according to data released by the Commerce and Industry Ministry on Friday.

The slight moderation in the Wholesale Price Index (WPI) primarily reflects softening food creased prices across several key and improved supply



manufacturing, food articles, ary's positive inflation rate to in- non-food articles, and textile category decreased to 5.9 per 16.8 per cent.

This development coincides with recent National Statistical Office data showing retail inflation, measured by the Consumer Price Index, reaching a fivemonth low in January, largely due to moderat-

cent in January from 6 per cent in December. Notably, vegetable prices experienced significant relief, with inflation dropping to 8.4 per cent from the previous month's 28.7

While potato inflation showed some improvement, declining to 74.3 per cent from A detailed analysis of food prices saw an uptick with infla-The ministry attributed Janu- other manufacturing activities, articles reveals inflation in this tion rising to 28.3 per cent from

Union Finance Minister Launches Mutual Credit Guarantee Scheme for MSMEs



MUMBAI: Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman formally launched the Mutual Credit Guarantee Scheme for MSMEs (MCGS-MSME) on Monday, implementing a significant initiative that was previously announced in the July 2024

The scheme is designed to facilitate loans of up to Rs 100 crore to Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises for the purchase of machinery or equipment without requiring collateral security. During a post-budget interaction event held in Mumbai, the Finance Minister personally handed over sanction letters to the first eleven beneficiaries under the newly launched scheme, marking the operational commencemechanism. The ceremonial distribution underscored the

MSME sector. As per the approved frame-

work, the National Credit Guarantee Trustee Company Limited (NCGTC) will provide 60 percent guarantee coverage to Member Lending Institutions (MLIs) for credit facilities extended to eligible MSMEs.

This guarantee specifically applies to loans sanctioned for the MSME sector.

the purchase of equipment or machinery, addressing a critical need for capital investment in The scheme incorporates several important eligibility criteria and operational parameters. To qualify, borrowers must be

registered MSMEs with valid Udyam Registration Numbers, ensuring that benefits reach legitimately established enterment of this financial support prises. While the guaranteed amount is capped at Rs 100 to develop 6,000 products and government's commitment to allows for projects with higher thereby enhancing MSME implementing budget prom- total costs, providing flexibility competitiveness internationises aimed at strengthening the for larger capital investments. ally.

Union FinMin Hands over Keys to Homebuyers in Mumbai



MUMBAI: At a post budget interaction event in Mumbai, Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman today handed over keys to homebuyers from select projects in Mumbai Metropolitan Region (MMR), whose longstressed residential projects have been completed under the "Special Window for Affordable and Mid-Income Housing (SWAMIH I) Investment Fund". This milestone marks the hope and stability to families completion of 50,000 homes, impacted by stressed housing homes their own".

reaffirming SWAMIH's mission to provide relief to distressed homebuyers and revive stressed residential projects across the country.

Homebuyers from projects including Avant Hillways, Vision Heights and Shubham Trident received their keys at the event, symbolizing the transformational role of the SWAMIH Fund in restoring

Established in 2019 and managed by SBI Ventures Ltd., a State Bank of India Group company, the SWAMIH Fund is sponsored by the Ministry of Finance. As India's largest social impact fund for the real estate sector, it addresses critical funding gaps for stressed and brownfield residential projects. With no precedent or comparable peer globally, the Fund is a pioneering initiative for

impact-driven investing. Prem Prabhakar, MD and CEO of SBI Ventures Ltd, said that "With the vision and support of the Government of India, this fund has paved the way for the completion of numerous housing projects, ensuring that thousands of families can finally call these

RBI Raises Financial Awareness at Rose Festival 2025

TANVIR KAUR

Chandigarh

The Reserve Bank of India, Chandigarh Regional Office, is conducting a financial awareness campaign at the ongoing Rose Festival from February 21 to February 23, 2025. The campaign aims to educate the public about various financial frauds and safeguard measures

to prevent them. As part of the initiative, a Nukkad Natak is being performed to creatively engage the audience and effectively spread $awareness\,messages.\,The\,street$ play highlights different types of financial frauds and encourages

Additionally, a digital financial awareness quiz was orga-

nized for the students of Gov- vided with financial literacy and ernment High School, Maloya Colony, Chandigarh. This quiz aims to familiarize students with secure digital banking practices and encourage them to exercise caution while conducting online financial transactions. Visitors at the festival are also being pro-

awareness materials to enhance their knowledge of secure banking practices. Furthermore, officials from the Reserve Bank of India are sharing crucial information on safe digital banking methods to help people protect themselves from financial frauds.

Low inflation Boosting Development

of food items, the retail inflaof January, which is the lowest vember, the inflation rate was at 5.48 percent.

Food items contribute nancial year 2026. about 50 percent to the incame down to 6.02 percent in January on a month-onmonth basis. In December, it 2024. At the same time, rural inflation came down from in December.

current decline is the sharp was at 5.68 percent in Janu- by reducing inflation. ary, while it was at 7.7 per-

in January, which was at 6.5 percent in December. The inflation of meat and fish came down to 5.25 percent in January, which was at 5.3 percent in December.

December, the Reserve Bank tion rate based on Consumer of India had lowered the infla-Price Index (CPI) came down tion forecast for the financial to 4.31 percent in the month year 2024-25 to 4.8 percent, whereas earlier the central in the last 5 months. It was at bank had estimated it to be 5.22 percent in the month of at the level of 4.5 percent. At December, while in January the same time, inflation is 2024 it was at 5.1 percent. expected to remain within Earlier in the month of No- the tolerance limit set by the Reserve Bank of India in the financial year 2025 and fi-

Inflation plays an imporflation basket. Their inflation tant role in determining one's purchasing power. When inflation increases, the prices of both goods and services came down from 9.04 percent increase, which reduces the to 8.39 percent, which was purchasing power of a person at 8.30 percent in January and the demand for goods and services decreases. Then, their sales decrease, their produc-5.95 percent to 5.76 percent tion decreases, the company in December and urban in- incurs losses, workers are laid flation also came down from off, employment generation 4.89 percent to 4.58 percent decreases, etc. As a result, economic activities slow down, The biggest reason for the and the pace of development is hampered. In such a situareduction in vegetable prices. tion, it would be appropriate According to the data, inflator say that the pace of develoption in food and beverages ment can be accelerated only

The National Statistical Ofcent in December. Especially fice (NSO) has projected the the prices of vegetables have GDP growth rate to be 6.4 come down from 25.6 percent percent in its first advance to 11.35 percent, which has estimate of Gross Domestic brought great relief to the Product (GDP) for the financommon man. In the same cial year 2024-25, which is sequence, the inflation of lower than the last 3 financial grains was at 6.24 percent years. During the last financial

It is worth noting that in INFLATION

year, the GDP growth rate was the government has revised 8.2 percent. At the same time, the Reserve Bank of India has projected GDP to grow at the rate of 6.6 percent during the financial year 2024-25. Earlier, the GDP growth rate was minus 6.60 percent during the financial year 2020-21. Subsequently, the GDP growth rate during the financial year 2021-22, financial year 2022-23 and financial year 2023-24 was 8.70 percent, 7.2 percent and 8.2 percent respectively, while in the first quarter of the financial year 2024-25 it was

> quarter it was 5.4 percent. However, despite the low GDP growth rate of India, the Indian economy is in a better position than the world's most powerful country, US, and it is expected to remain strong in the coming years as well. The growth rate in US is estimated to be 2.7 percent during the financial year 2024 and 2.0 percent in the financial year

6.7 percent and in the second

Meanwhile, India Industrial Production (IIP) growth rate declined to 3.2 percent in December 2024 due to weak performance of mining and

the IIP data for November 2024 from 5.2 percent to 5.00 percent. In view of the slow pace of

mining and manufacturing sector and the slow pace of GDP in the last two quarters, the government wants to increase the pace of development. Therefore, the budget has also emphasized on increasing investment, savings and consumption, because only by accelerating these can economic activities be accelerated and development can be accelerated.

To boost economic activities, the Reserve Bank of India reduced the reporate by 0.25 percent in the monetary policy review conducted on February 7, bringing it down from 6.50 percent to 6.25 percent. It is worth noting that the repo rate has been reduced after about 5 years. The central bank was avoiding reducing the repo rate till now mainly due to inflation.

After having loan growth between 14 percent and 16 percent in the last two years, overall credit growth has been slowing down for the last few manufacturing sectors. Also, months and it has come down

to 11.2 percent in December 2024. A major reason for this is the high lending rate. Banks do not have cheap capital. Therefore, they are forced to lend at high rates and due to the availability of loans at high rates, common people and businessmen are avoiding taking loans. Because of this, companies are short of capital, due to which they are not able to produce at full capacity. Due to reduction of 0.25%

in repo rate by Reserve Bank of India, banks will get capital at cheaper rate and they will be able to give loan at cheaper rate and when loan is available at cheaper rate, then both common people and businessmen will take loan, due to which both investment and savings will increase and consumption will increase along with increase in economic activities. In the budget, the govern-

ment has clearly stated that its aim is to accelerate development. Despite the GDP growth rate falling in two quarters, the Indian economy remains strong, and India's growth rate is also higher than that of developed countries. Therefore, to further increase the growth rate, the Reserve Bank of India has cut the repo rate. Owing to the reduction in inflation in the month of January, the way has been cleared to cut the repo rate in the upcoming monetary reviews, which will boost the country's growth pace.

> $Satish\ Singh, Ahmedabad$ Based Senior Columnist, people to stay vigilant. views are personal.

Zelensky responds to Trump's claim of falling ratings, says US President living in 'disinformation space'

dent Donald Trump alleged that Volodymyr Zelensky holds a "4 per cent approval rating" the Ukrainian President responded on Wednesday saying that Trump was living in a "disinformation space".

"Unfortunately, President Trump, who we have great respect for as leader of the American people, lives in this disinformation space, "Zelensky told reporters in Kyiv.

Local media in Kyiv also highlighted a poll, carried out between February 4 to 9 and published after Trump's comments, to highlight Zelensky's popularity. "Around 57 % of Ukrainians trust President Volodymyr Zelensky as of February, marking an increase of five percentage points since December, according to a survey by the Kviy International Institute of Sociology (KIIS) published on February 19... The latest survey shows that Zelensky continues to enjoy support from the majority of Ukrainians,

Mexican President

Trump's threats

says she does not fear

President Claudia Sheinbaum

has said that she does not fear

US President Donald Trump

and his threats of mass de-

portations, steep trade tariffs,

and military "intervention"

to combat the drug cartels,

as she has the backing of the

During a daily press con-

ference, when asked if the

Mexican President feared

Trump's threats, Sheinbaum

are, why would one be afraid?' She allayed concerns over

Trump's measures, noting

there is ongoing dialogue be-

tween the two governments,

Xinhua news agency reported.

would never allow Mexico's

overeignty to be violated, but

"if it were to be violated, there

is an entire country to defend

Sheinbaum's statements

come one day after Trump said

Mexico "is run by drug cartels,

" criminal organisations the US

government has designated as

terrorists. Trump also accused

the United States illegally and

flow of immigration. Officials

the homeland".

Mexican people.



even marking a slight increase in trust after a year of steady decline in popularity throughout 2024, "reported the Kyiv Independent on Wednesday. Interestingly, Keith Kellogg, the US Special Envoy for Ukraine and Russia, has also arrived in Kyiv on Wednesday and is antees for Ukraine. scheduled to meet Zelensky soon. The Ukrainian media quoted Kellogg as describing his trip as "a chance for good

potential negotiations." Part of my mission is to listen before returning to the United States to report to President Donald Trump, Kellogg reportedly said. He also emphasised that the

United States recognises the

importance of security guar-

Zelensky's scathing comment came less than 24 hours after top officials from Russia and the United States held discussions

Arabia's Riyadh on Tuesday.

Both countries stated that they will soon announce teams to negotiate a path to ending the war in Ukraine besides also ensuring the "earliest possible appointment" of ambassadors in both Moscow and Washington.

"Russia and the United States will hold regular consultations on Ukraine after both sides appoint negotiating teams, "Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov said at a press briefing following talks with US officials in Riyadh, on Tuesday. A meeting of deputy foreign ministers will be scheduled in the near future to "remove barriers" to the work of embassies, Lavrov said following the talks with US Secretary of State Marco Rubio, National Security Advisor Mike Waltz and US special envoy to the Middle East Steve Witkoff.

On the Russian side, senior political, intelligence, and economic officials participated, including Yuri Ushakov, the Kremlin's foreign affairs advisor. **EAM Jaishankar Meets Counterparts from** Russia and China during G20 Meeting



JOHANNESBURG: External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar met several foreign ministers, including Sergei Lavrov (Russia), Wang Yi (China), Penny Wong (Australia), on the sidelines of the G2O Foreign Ministers Meeting in Johannesburg on Thursday

He also held discussions with Ethiopian Foreign Minister Gedion Timotheos, Brazilian Foreign Minister Mauro Vieira, Singapore FM Vivian Balakrishnan and many other dignitaries attending the event.

"Good to see colleagues from across the world," the EAM

posted on X along with several photographs of him holding informal discussions with the foreign ministers.

"Catching up with counterpart Foreign Ministers at the G20 meeting," Jaishankar said in another post. Earlier, the EAM met Brazilian Foreign Minister Mauro Vieira, discussing bilateral ties, global developments, work in the G20 and Brazil's **BRICS** Presidency.

Brazil assumed the presidency of BRICS, the prominent forum for political and economic cooperation among

on January 1, 2025. BRICS, an acronym representing Brazil, Russia, India, China, and South Africa, has recently expanded its membership to include Saudi Arabia, Egypt, the United Arab Emirates, Ethiopia, Iran and Indonesia.

very close and multifaceted relationship both at bilateral level as well as in multilateral fora such as BRICS, BASIC, G-20, G-4, IBSA, and International Solar Alliance. EAM Jaishankar also met Minister for Foreign Affairs of Singapore Vivian Balakrishnan on the sidelines of the G20 FMM. "Always a good conversation with Foreign Minister Vivian Balakrishnan of Singapore, this time in Johannesburg on the sidelines of G20 FMM. Discussed the state of the world and our work in furthering bilateral ties," he posted on X. India-Singapore relations were elevated to Comprehensive Strategic Partnership during the visit of Prime Minister Narendra Modi to Singapore nations of the Global South, in September 2024.

Why are we giving \$21 million to India? They got lot more money: Trump on voter funds row



Department of Government Efficiency (DOGE) cancelled \$21 million funding for "voter turnout in India, "US President Donald Trump voiced in favour of the decision. Speaking at his Mar-a-Lago residence in Florida, Trump raised the question of why \$21 million was given to India, a country with a lot more money.

"Why are we giving \$21 million to India? They got a lot more money. They are one of the highest taxing countries in the world in terms of us; we can hardly get in there because their tariffs are so high. I have a lot of respect for India and their Prime Minister, but giving \$21 million for voter turnout? In India? What about voter turnout here?' Trump remarked.

The controversy erupted after the DOGE, led by Elon Musk, announced the cancellation of the \$21 million grant on February 16. In a post shared on X, DOGE outlined several foreign assistance programmes that had been deemed unnecessary or excessive, with the India voter turnout project topping the list.

KIIT Nepal student commits suicide, campus unrest



ARABINDA MOHAPATRA

Bhubaneswar

The alleged suicide of a B. Tech student from Nepal in her hostel room has triggered unrest on the campus of a private university in the city. The deceased Prakriti Lamsal was a third year student at the Kalinga Institute of Industrial Technology (KIIT).

She was found dead in her oom on Sunday afternoor 61 kilometres per hour when Prakrit (20) was pursuing a B.Tech in computer science from the university, She committed suicide by hanging herself from the ceiling fan. The suicide is being attributed to her strained relations with her boyfriend. One of her relatives filed a police complaint alleging that she was being blackmailed by a male student which forced

> from Nepal who were asked to vacate the university campus

Trump 'very frustrated' with Zelensky, says **National Security Advisor Mike Waltz**

National Security Advisor Mike Waltz said US President Donald Trump was "very, very frustrated" with Ukraine's President Volodymyr Zelensky, as he highlighted the growing rift between the Trump administra-MEXICO CITY: Mexican

Waltz on Thursday didn't answer a question about whether Trump believes Russian President Vladimir Putin or Zelensky is more responsible for the ongoing war in Ukraine, CNN reported. "(Trump's) goal here is to

bring this war to an end, period, and there has been ongoing fighting on both sides—it is World War I-style, trench warfare," Waltz told reporters at the White House briefing.

on Wednesday responded, "His frustration with Presi-"No. I have the support of dent Zelensky—that you've the people. When one has certainty and conviction and heard—is multi-fold. One, there knows what one's principles



for what the American people, what the American taxpayer, what President Trump did in his first term, and what we've done since. So some of the rhetoric coming out of Kyiv, frankly, and insults to President Trump, were unacceptable.

On Truth Social on Wednesday, Trump called Zelensky a "dictator without elections", needs to be a deep appreciation prompting the Ukrainian Presi-

dent to say that Trump "lives in this disinformation space" and is "(helping) Putin out of his isolation" During the White House

briefing, Waltz wouldn't answer whether Trump believes Putin is a dictator. "Look, President Trump is

obviously very frustrated right now with President Zelenskythe fact that he hasn't come to the table, that he hasn't been willing to take this opportunity that we have offered. I think he eventually will get to that point, and I hope so very quickly," he

"But President Trump is, as we made clear to our Russian counterparts, and I want to make clear today—he's focused on stopping the fighting and moving forward, and we could argue all day long about what's happened in the past.'

Macron to Visit US for Talks with Trump over Ukraine & Tariffs peace talks should include both

PARIS: French President Emmanuel Macron will travel to the United States for discussions with his US counterpart, Donald Trump, focusing on the Ukraine issue and impending US tariffs, French Minister Delegate for European Affairs Benjamin Haddad confirmed on Thursday.

Speaking to French television channel LCI, Haddad revealed that Macron had already spoken with Trump twice this week regarding Ukraine. "Our approach is to maintain dialogue with the president of the United States to ensure that the voice of the Europeans is heard in this negotiation," he said.

Macron is expected to emphasise to Trump that "the future of Ukraine cannot be decided without the Ukrainians. and the future and security of Europe cannot be negotiated and decided without the Eu-

All 80 onboard have miraculous escape as jet crashes, flips over in Toronto



ropeans." Haddad stressed that Europe has contributed more to Ukraine than the United States, and therefore, must have a say in the process. Moreover, Macron will also address tariffs that Trump plans to impose on European products. "A trade war, protectionism is not in anyone's interest," the minister warned. This week, Macron has hosted European and non-European partners twice to coordinate a common stance on Ukraine. Both meetings concluded with a unified position that any and the Netherlands.

Ukraine and Europe, Xinhua news agency reported. On Wednesday, Macron said

that France is not preparing to send ground troops to Ukraine.

Macron, however, did not rule out the possibility that if a peace agreement is reached between Kyiv and Moscow, France could send experts or even a limited number of troops to non-conflict zones to "support Ukrainians and demonstrate solidarity." He also emphasised that there would be "no lasting peace without the Ukrainians and the Europeans." On Monday, Macron hosted a meeting on Ukraine, bringing together leaders from the North Atlantic Treaty Organization and the European Commission, along with representatives from France, Germany, Britain, Poland, Spain, Italy, Denmark,

US planning to reallocate \$50 billion of Pentagon budget, fire generals: Reports The President said she NEW YORK: President Don-

ald Trump's administration is various areas of the Pentagon budget and reallocate them to others considered priority areas like preventing illegal migration.

A list of generals and admirals who could be fired had been drawn up and circulated to Republican members of Congress.

Acting Deputy Secretary of Mexican authorities of "allow-Defense Robert Salesses asked ing millions of people" to enter defence officials to find at least \$50 billion that can be cut and offered his "help" to stem the transferred to "programmes aligned with President Trump's from both countries will meet priorities", Military Times reported. NBC reported that the in Washington this week to negotiate the suspension of allocations for the Indo-Pacific region would not be touched. tariffs on Mexican products and

strategies to combat drug traf-Earlier reports said the cuts ficking, particularly the flow of fentanyl into the United States. the impression that they would



be net cuts to the overall budget which is now \$849.8 billion.

NBC said that according to officials, the list for firings targets those closely associated with former Defence Secretary Lloyd Austin, worked on minority-oriented programmes, or "have voiced opinions that Trump's allies viewed as politically out of line with his agenda".

It was not known if the top military official, Chairman of the would be 8 per cent and gave Joint Chiefs of Staff CQ Brown,

TORONTO: Eighty passengers had a miraculous escape when their jet crashed here and wind in a snowed-in airport.

The Delta flight flying in from Minneapolis in the US lost one wing when it hit the runway, turned over on Monday afternoon, and lay on its back as the crew helped the passengers safely off the plane.

Officials said that 18 people, including a child, were taken to hospitals and two were in a critical, but not life-threatening, condition.

Videos of the crash showed crew members shepherding passengers out of the plane on a snow-swept airfield while firefighters rushed to coat the plane and the surrounding area with foam to prevent a fire outbreak. The Canadian-made Em-

braer CRJ-900 jet was operated by Delta subsidiary Endeavor

Canadian Transportation Safety Board will conduct an investigation into the unusual accident where a large passenger jet flipped over. It will

be assisted by the US Federal Aviation Administration and the National Transportation Safety Board.

Delta CEO Ed Bastian said in a statement. "We are working to confirm the details and will share the most current informa-

tion on news.delta.com as soon as it becomes available". Canada's weather service

the plane was trying to land. John Nelson, a passenger on the plane who posted on Face-

book dramatic videos of the crash and passengers escaping the plane, scene said, "We just landed. Our plane crashed. It's upside down. Fire department is on site. We're upside down. Everybody, most people appear to be OK".

The Delta crash caps a series of aircraft accidents in North America that began on January 29 when a military helicopter hit an American Airlines jet in Washington, sending them both into the Potomac River and killing all

her to take the extreme step. The death triggered unrest on the campus. with Nepalese students blocking the road near the campus. On Monday morning, the university was closed sine die for students

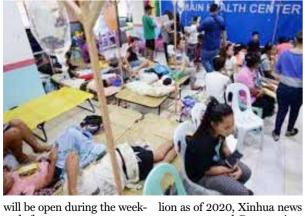
Dengue outbreak declared in Philippine US, Japan, South Korea discuss security capital's most populous city

MANILA: The Mayor of Quezon City, the most populous city in the capital region of the Philippines, declared a dengue outbreak on Saturday, citing a nearly 200 per cent surge in From January 1 to February

14, the city's health department recorded 1, 769 dengue cases, nearly 200 per cent higher than last year, said Quezon City Mayor Joy Belmonte. Belmonte said 10, including eight minors, have died from the disease.

"Our declaration of a dengue outbreak ensures that we are on top of the situation, and we are doing everything we can to protect our residents from this deadly disease, especially our children, "Belmonte said.

Fifty-eight per cent of the reported cases involve school-aged children aged five to 17, while 44 per cent are children aged one to 10. As a primary solution to address the late diagnosis of dengue, all 66 city health centres



ends from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. to accommodate possible dengue patients, Belmonte said.

The city's outbreak declaration came one day after the Philippines' Department of Health noted increased water and foodborne diseases, influenza-like illnesses, leptospirosis, and dengue. According to government data, Quezon City has a population of nearly 3 mil-

agency reported. Dengue virus is the most important arbovirus among humans. With around half the world population at risk and recent estimates of about 60–100 million symptomatic infections per year.

Dengue is a major public health problem in the Philippines and is endemic in all regions of the country. The country's outbreaks are largely

occurring during the wet season (June-February). Recent data from 2023 emphasise escalated dengue outbreaks in several countries, particularly Bangladesh, Brazil, Burkina Faso, Fiji Pakistan, the Philippines, and Viet Nam. Additionally, non-endemic countries are increasingly facing dengue as a significant public health concern. Dengue prevention and out-

break response involves several agencies in the public health sector. Addressing these challenges requires a multidisciplinary and multisectoral integrated approach, especially at national evel to achieve its goal of reducing the impact on public health. The strain on epidemic response capacity due to simultaneous concurrent outbreaks coupled with political crises highlights the need for robust emergency response mechanisms and strengthened collaboration

among stakeholders

MUNICH: Security scenarios seasonal, with most episodes in the Indo-Pacific and North Korea were discussed by the United States, Japan, and South Korea on the sidelines of the Munich Security Conference 2025. US Secretary of State Marco

Rubio, Japanese Foreign Minister Iwaya Takeshi, and South Korean Foreign Minister Cho Tae-yul stressed their shared commitment to ensure the safety, security, and prosperity of the three countries and the Indo-Pacific region, a joint statement issued by the US State Department said.

Expressing their serious concerns over and the need to address together the DPRK's nuclear and missile programmes and malicious cyber activities, they reaffirmed their resolute commitment to the complete denuclearisation of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK) in accordance with the United Nations Security Council Reso-



lutions (UNSCRs). Condemning the gross violations of human rights in North Korea and its nuclear and missile programmes, the trilateral cooperation pledged to take decisive actions to counter threats, enhance economic resilience, and advance shared interests. Reaffirming their commitment to bolstering defence and deterrence, they emphasised their shared commitment to the safety, security, and prosperity of their three countries and the broader

Indo-Pacific region. Opposing any unilateral attempts to change the status quo by force or coercion in the waters of the Indo-Pacific, including the South China Sea, they emphasised their commitment to maintaining a free and open Indo-Pacific and ensuring international law prevails.

The partnership mainly aims to counter China's aggressive policy in the Indo-Pacific and nuclear threats from North Korea.

In the North China Sea,

China and Japan are at loggerheads for the territorial sovereignty of the Senkaku Islands. The trilateral cooperation collaborates to advance its security infrastructure in the Indo-Pacific to counter the assertiveness of China and maintain peace and stability in the region.

Last week, President Donald Trump and Japan Prime Minister Shigeru Ishiba met in Washington, DC during which they affirmed their determination to pursue a new golden age for the relations between the two nations that uphold a free and open Indo-Pacific and ensures peace and prosperity.

Notably, North Korean President Kim Jong Un never shied away from issuing nuclear threats against the United States and South Korea n case of a conflict.

In October 2024, Kim threatened to destroy South Korea permanently with nuclear weapons if provoked.

Talking Points

Narvijay Yadav

Indian train passengers face increasing risks due to overcrowding, vandalism, and a lack of security. Recent incidents, including stampedes and violence, highlight the urgent need for safety measures.

personnel at railway stations

often called the nation's life-

line, yet its passengers' safe-

ty is frequently neglected.

Despite repeated appeals,

railway police personnel are

rarely seen patrolling plat-

ing travelers vulnerable to

theft, violence, and accidents.

a crucial mode of transport

who fail to enforce the order.

confidence in train travel will

further deteriorate, forcing

people to look for alternative

The railways must take

immediate and decisive

steps to ensure the safety

train should have desig-

Force (RPF) personnel on

in more significant numbers

and ensure law and order. To

modes of transport.

Safety First: The railway is

and inside compartments.

'ndian Railways, one of the absence of proper security the world>s largest and most vital transportation networks, is facing a growing safety crisis. While the government continues to expand railway infrastructure, the fundamental issue of passenger security remains unresolved. Shocking incidents of unruly crowds vandalizing forms or compartments, leavtrains, assaulting passengers, and creating stampedes expose the vulnerabilities of It is unacceptable that such train travel in India.

The recent stampede at operates with little to no vis-New Delhi Railway Station, ible security presence. The caused by overselling gen- responsibility for this crisis eral category tickets and poor lies with unlawful passengers crowd management, was a who resort to violent behavior tragic reminder of the sys- and the railway authorities tem's inefficiencies. Hundreds of passengers, desperate to If this trend continues, public board overcrowded trains, found themselves trapped in chaos, leading to injuries and panic. Despite past warnings, authorities failed to implement effective crowd control

Meanwhile, violent inci- of its passengers. Every dents have been reported across various train routes, nated Railway Protection particularly those linked to major religious events like board, particularly in general the Maha Kumbh. Angry pas- compartments and high-risk sengers, unable to board due routes. Additionally, security to overcrowding, resorted to personnel must be deployed vandalism-breaking windows, throwing stones, and at major railway stations to even inserting sticks through prevent crowd mishandling the train's iron grilles to attack those inside. Such incidents avoid dangerous overcrowd-

Train Travel Crisis: Safety at Stake



eral category tickets based on train capacity. Digital ticketing systems should be optimized to monitor and regulate the number of pas-

Take Precautions: Railway stations need automated entry and exit systems to regulate passenger flow and prevent stampedes. Additionally, wellmarked zones for boarding and deboarding should be introduced to avoid dangerous congestion at platform edges. To track and manage passenger movement, AI-based crowd monitoring through CCTV cameras should be implemented at key railway stations. Real-time monitoring will allow railway staff to intervene immediately in case of disruptions, ensuring a more secure travel environment. Strict penalties should be enforced against individuals guilty of damaging

railway property or endangering passengers. Public awareness campaigns must also be launched to educate travelers about the consequences of unruly behavior and vandalism, reinforcing discipline and responsibility.

Will Union Railway Minister Ashwini Vaishnaw take the necessary steps to make Indian trains safer? While the government is expanding railway networks and modernizing stations, these developments are meaningless if passengers do not feel secure while traveling. The focus should not just be on more trains and better infrastructure but also on ensuring law and order inside and around railway premises. The authorities must act now before another tragedy unfolds on the tracks.

> The author is a senior journalist and columnist, views are personal.



SGPC representatives, released the Nanakshahi Calendar for Sammat 557 (2025-26) for new Sikh year, at the Akal Takht Secretariat inside Golden Temple complex, in Amritsar on February 20, 2025. Jathedar Giani Raqhbir Singh urged the Sikh community to observe Gurpurabs and other historic events according to the Nanakshahi

Bobby Deol: his 'Ek Badnaam Aashram' character is the most vulnerable in new part of the show

MUMBAI: Actor Bobby Deol, who essays the lead in the streaming show 'Ek Badnaam Aashram', has said that his character is the most vulnerable in the new part of the show.

The show is set to return with the 2nd part of its third season. The trailer was unveiled on Wednesday. The trailer gives a glimpse into the cracks forming in Baba Nirala's empire, the tensions flaring with his close allies to Pammi's fearless return and Bhopa Swami's thirst for power.

Reflecting on his role and character, Bobby Deol said, "Baba Nirala believes he's invincible and his power is unmatched - but the thing about power is — it's fickle. This season he's at his most vulnerable, yet that's exactly what makes him even more dangerous. Everv decision he makes adds lavers to his character, making the story even more gripping. It's



packed ride, and I can't wait for audiences to experience it".

Directed and produced by National Award-winner Prakash Jha, 'Ek Badnaam Aashram' season 3 part 2 also stars Aaditi Pohankar, Darshan Kumaar, Chandan Roy Sanval, Vikram Kochhar, Tridha Choudhury, Anupriya Goenka, Rajeev Siddhartha, and Esha Gupta in key roles.

Talking about the show, Prakash Jha shared, "Every season of 'Ek Badnaam Aashram' peels another layer of Baba

episodes mark a critical turning point—where the foundations begin to crack, the rules of the game are rewritten, and no one's safe. It's a gripping saga of deep-rooted conflicts, betrayal, and relentless pursuit of power that will keep audiences hooked till the very end". Amogh Dusad, Head of Con-

tent, Amazon MX Player, said, "Ek Badnaam Aashram" is the largest series in India and has created a massive fandom, with its unique characters and engaging storyline. With Bobby Deol taking centre-stage and with a phenomenal ensemble cast, coupled with Prakash Jha's directorial expertise, can't wait for audiences to witness the next chapter of Aashram on Amazon MX Player".

The 2nd part of season 3 of the show will drop on February 27 on Amazon MX Player.

Raj Kundra and **Geeta Basra** commence shooting for Rakesh Mehta's Punjabi film 'Mehr'



Geeta Basra will be seen sharing the screen for the first time in Rakesh Mehta's latest Punjabi film, "Mehr".

The duo has already kickstarted filming for their next. Speaking about this film. filmmaker Rakesh Mehta said, "Punjabi cinema is at a turning point, and Mehr is a film that mixes emotion, drama, and

heart. Raj and Geeta bring so much depth to their roles, and I can already see the magic unfolding on set. This one's going to stay with people for long time. Raj Kundra, who will be making his Punjabi film debut with "Mehr" shared, "This story had me hooked the moment I heard it. Punjabi cinema

has an unmatched warmth and soul, and Mehr captures that beautifully. Working with Rakesh Mehta and this brilliant team is an incredible experience. I can't wait for audiences to see what we're creating." Raj Kundra announced

Mehr" during Lohri this year. Sharing a motion poster of the film on social media, he wrote in the caption, "This Lohri, we are overjoyed to announce Mehr-a tale of relationships, love, and life, inspired by the blessings that surround us. As Mehr means blessings, we humbly seek your love and prayers for this special journey. May Wahe Guru's Mehr be with us all as we bring this heartfelt story to life.

The motion poster also included the voice-over, "Kaahani sirf hero ki nahi hoti, zero ki bhi hoti hai... (It's a story about zero and not a hero).

"Mehr" is touted to be a tale of love, relationships, and second chances, wrapped in the rich cultural fabric of Punjab. The drama enjoys a stellar cast with Raj Kundra as the lead, accompanied by Agamveer Singh, Geeta Basra, Baninder Bunny, Savita Bhatti, Rupinder Rupi, Deep Mandeep, Ashish Duggal, Hobby Dhaliwal, Tarsem Paul, and Kulvir Sonv as the ancillary cast.

raise serious concerns about ing, the railway authorities Samantha loves her own company, spends three days in silence



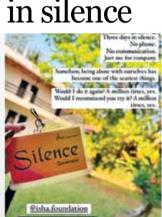
Ruth Prabhu has spoken about loving her own company and that she can spend time in silence sans her phone.

Samantha took to her Instagram stories, where she shared that she has gone for a "Silence sadhna". She posted a picture of a card, which read "Silence". Alongside the image, she wrote: "Three days in silence. No phone. No communication. Just me for company.

"Somehow being alone with ourselves has become one of the scariest things. Would I do it again? A million times, yes. Would I recommend you try it? A million times, yes.

She also took a poll for her fans, from which around 88 percent said that they would like to try it as well. Last month. the actress talked about the importance of meditation in her everyday life and says that for her it has become "her anchor."

Samantha took to Instagram, where she shared a video of her meditating.



"Meditation. If there's one thing I wish all of you would try, it's this. Just 15 minutes of meditation every day — in whatever way works for you. Sit in silence, focus on your breath, or follow a guided meditation on You-Tube. There's no right or wrong way, nothing formal - just the simple act of tuning in.

"For me, meditation has become my anchor — a way to return to the ocean of calm and peace that's always within.'

She added that no matter how chaotic the world gets, I know that quiet spot inside her is "always there, waiting."

"When you learn to find your way home to yourself, the noise outside loses its grip. Try it. Just for today. Close your eyes, take a deep breath, and see what happens. PS: Don't bother about the chatter in your mind. The trick is to simply watch your thoughts and let them pass. Don't get entangled with them. PPS: Don't forget to tell me how it goes. Let's do this!!

Hrithik Roshan and Ameesha Patel's Reunion Ignites Fans' Wishes For 'Kaho Naa Pyaar Hai 2 wait." "Part 2 banana chaiye,"

MUMBAI: Actors Hrithik Roshan and Ameesha Patel's recent reunion sparked a wave of excitement among fans on social media

The duo, who shared screen space in the iconic "Kaho Naa Pyaar Hai," has left fans eagerly hoping for a sequel. As photos and videos from their reunion went viral, many are now demanding "Kaho Naa Pyaar Hai 2." Ameesha also took to her Instagram handle and shared a heartwarming photo of herself posing with Hrithik, adding their popular song "Kaho Naa Pyaar Hai" to

In the image, both flaunted radiant smiles as they posed together. For the caption, the 'Gadar actress wrote, "About last night — lovely evening with SONIA's ROHIT — for me, you'll always be my Duggu BROSNAN first and then @ hrithikroshan the superstar later." Notably, fans were quick to react, with many demanding 'Kaho Naa Pyaar Hai 2.'

Echoing similar sentiments one fan commented, "Really looking forward to watching them together as a lead pair opposite each other! Really wish a producer-director is reading this!! Big fan of @



ameeshapatel9 & amp; @ hrithikroshan." Another said, "Vote for - Kaho Naa Pvaar Hai 2." A third user wrote, "My favorite couple, plisss Kaho Naa Pyaar Hai 2 plissss, we read another comment. Directed and produced by

Rakesh Roshan, "Kaho Naa Pyaar Hai" marked the Bollywood debut of both Hrithik and Ameesha. The 2000 romantic thriller also featured Anupam Kher, Dalip Tahil, Mohnish Bahl, Ashish Vidyarthi, Satish Shah, Farida Jalal, Asha Patel, Rajesh Tandon, and Tannaz Irani. Upon its release on January 14, 2000, the film became an instant blockbuster, grossing over Rs 800 million worldwide. It went on to become the secondhighest-grossing film of 2000

At the star-studded success bash of Netflix's 'The Roshans,' Hrithik shared a heartwarming moment with Ameesha. The glitzy event was attended by an array of celebrities, including Rekha, Neetu Kapoor, Ameesha Patel, Anu Malik, Saba Azad, Shabana Azmi, Javed Akhtar, Bhushan Kumar, Sam Kaushal, Mallika Sherawat, Pashmina Roshan, Jeetendra, Alka Yagnik, Jackie and Tiger Shroff, Anupam Kher, Vaani Kapoor, Siddharth Anand, Udit Narayan, and David Dhawan, among many

Nimrat Kaur Immerses Herself in Mysticism of Mahakumbh

MUMBAI: Bollywood actress Nimrat Kaur recently embarked on a spiritual journey to the Mahakumbh.

The 'Sky Force' actress took to Instagram handle to offer a glimpse into her unique experience. She shared vibrant snapshots, including moments from the rituals and the picturesque journey. Through photos and videos, Nimrat beautifully captured the energy of Mahakumbh, including an impactful clip of the aarti and the profound aura that surrounds the place. In one of the videos, Nimrat is seen performing the aarti, fully immersed in the spiritual experience. One of the photos shows her posing against the backdrop of the vibrant surroundings, capturing the essence of the place. Meanwhile, on the work front, the 'Airlift' actress was recently seen in the patriotic action thriller "Sky Force," where she shared screen space with Ak-



shay Kumar, Veer Pahariya, and Sara Ali Khan. Nimrat portrayed Akshay's on-screen wife in the action thriller. Interestingly, the Dasvi' actress treated her house help and their children to a special screening of the film. She shared the heartwarming experience on social media, posting adorable photos of them enjoying the movie together. Nimrat will be next seen in the upcoming political thriller "Section 84, where she will be seen alongside Bollywood megastar Amitabh Bachchan and Diana Penty. She was last seen in the film "Sajini Shinde Ka Viral Video," where she played the role of Bela Barot.



Congress party workers wearing shackles, protest to condemn the reported mistreatment of Indian immigrants during their deportation from the United States, in Amritsar on February 16, 2025

Handmade products of Uganda a favourite of buyers at Surajkund International Crafts Fair

Ugandan nationals all praise for arrangements made at Surajkund International Crafts Fair

GULSHAN KUMAR Chandigarh

At the 38th Surajkund International Crafts Fair being held in Faridabad, youth are buying products and decorative items made in Uganda at the F-40 shop. These products are eco-friendly as well as useful in everyday life.

Anchala, who hails from Uganda, said she has come to such an international level craft fair for the first time coming here. She would like



to come here again. She says that the way the Government of India and the Government of Haryana have supported and she is feeling happy after Uganda, it will increase the trust between the two coun-

tries and the artists of that country will get more oppor-

tunities to come here. She said all these products are handmade. There are many tribes living in Uganda who

earn their income by making similar handmade products. Along with Anchala, a woman named Hazara from Uganda at her shop also praised the arrangements made at the Surajkund mela under the guidance of Haryana Chief Minister Nayab Singh Saini and the leadership of Tourism Minister Dr. Arvind Kumar Sharma. She said this international craft fair has a unique identity. Women are liking the jewellery, decorative items. bangles and other products made in Uganda. Tourists are also buying bags made from banana leaves. Paintings related to nature by Ugandan artists are also being liked by tourists.

Leaders of Maham Chaubisi,

Dhanana Chaurasi Khap launched a campaign for the rally of swabhiman andolan Under the leadership of Prad-

han Subhash Numberdar on Sunday, visiting the villages of Maham Chaubisi, Bahbal, Basana, Mokhara, and Madina, Kharkada, Bhani, Nindana villages, invited the swabhiman rally to be held in Maham on the historic chabutra of maham Chaubisi on 23 February. Subhash Numberdar told that Maham Chaubisi Sarvakhap Panchayat officials met the common man in the villages on Sunday and said that due to the formation of the capital between Haryana, the area will be developed, while due



four sides, time will be left and expenses will also be reduced. It is said that the coming generations will get benefit from being in the middle of the state capital, there will be employment opportunities. With the formation of the capital between Rohtak Hisar Jind and Bhiwani, there will be equal distance from Palwal, Narnaul, to the same distance from all Ambala and Sirsa. During this



time, General Secretary Master Ramphal Rathi, Spokesperson Krishna Badali, Sandeep Nahra Nindana, Maham Tapa Pradhan Mahabir Goyat, Nindana Tapa Pradhan Surajmal Rathi, Bahbala Tapa Pradhan Baljit Rathi, Mokhara Tapa Pradhan Ramkishan Malik, Ajmer Bahbal, Raja Bahbal, Satyavan Medina, hundreds of dignitaries Stay present.

Between Haryana, the capital of Haryana will be a step of justice. Captain Bhimsingh today held a meeting of Sarvajat Sarvakhap officials of Sarvajat Sarvakhap of the village, meeting of Khap Principal Captain Bhimsingh in Dhanana, Randeep Lohchab, the convenor of Swabhiman movement being run on the issue of creating the capital among Haryana.