

REGION **2**



KHATTAR PRESENTS RS 1.77-LAKH CRORE BUDGET; OPPN CALLS IT 'JUGGLERY OF WORDS'

M KUMAR
Chandigarh

The Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) stormed into power in Punjab State, winning 92 seats. In the 117-member Assembly, a party needs to get 59 seats to form the government. The Congress had won 18 seats, showing the ruling outfit performed poorly, according to Election Commission of India website. Meanwhile, in a tweet Prime Minister Narendra Modi said, "I would like to congratulate AAP for their victory in the Punjab elections. I assure all possible support from the Centre for Punjab's welfare." While the SAD won three seats, its ally BSP won one, and the BJP won two seats and one seat went to an independent candidate. AAP supremo Ar-

vind Kejriwal hailed the party's performance in Punjab as a "revolution". The AAP tsunami made several stalwarts, including three former chief ministers, bite the dust.

Apart from Chief Minister Charanjit Singh Channi, who lost from his Chamkaur Sahib as well as Bhadaur, former CMs Parkash Singh Badal, Amarinder Singh and Rajinder Kaur Bhattal were also among the heavyweights who were defeated. Punjab Congress chief Navjot Singh Sidhu, senior SAD leader Bikram Singh Majithia and several Punjab Ministers also tasted defeat.

Prominent winners included AAP's chief ministerial face Bhagwant Mann from Dhuri, Leader of Opposition Harpal Singh Cheema from Dirba, Punjab BJP chief Ashwani Kumar Sharma from Pathankot,

CORPORATES & INDUSTRY **5**



100 PER CENT WOMEN-OWNED INDUSTRIAL PARK BEGINS OPERATIONS IN HYDERABAD



Congress leader Pratap Singh Bajwa from Qadian and minister Rana Gurjeet Singh from Kapurthala. In the 2017 Punjab assembly polls, the Congress had ended the SAD-BJP's 10-year rule by bagging 77 seats. AAP had managed to get 20 seats while the SAD-BJP had won 18. Two seats went to the Lok Insaaf Party.

"Many congratulations to the people of Punjab for this revolution," Delhi CM Arvind Kejriwal said in a tweet in Hindi. He also posted a picture of himself standing with AAP's chief ministerial face Bhagwant Mann. Mann won with a margin of 58,206 votes from Dhuri, defeating Congress candidate Dalvir Singh Goldy. The oath-

taking ceremony of the new Punjab cabinet will be held at Khatkar Kalan, the ancestral village of legendary freedom fighter Bhagat Singh in Nawanshahr district. Mann said no government office will display photograph of the chief minister. Instead, photos of Bhagat Singh and B R Ambedkar will be put on walls in government offices. "The oath-taking ceremony will not be held at the Raj Bhawan, but at Khatkar Kalan. The date will be announced later," Mann said addressing party workers and supporters at Dhuri.

Appealing to people to work unitedly, Mann said those who did not vote for AAP need not worry as the government will work for all sections of society. On the other hand, the rival parties accepted the people's verdict and congratulated AAP.

POTPOURRI **8**



SUSHMITA SEN SAYS 'AARYA' IS A CELEBRATION OF ALL BRAVE WOMEN

AAP storms to power in Punjab, wins 92 seats; PM assures all support to new govt

Direct confrontation between NATO and Russia is World War III: Biden

WASHINGTON: Russia will pay a severe price for the use of chemical weapons, US President Joe Biden said on Friday, stressing that Washington will not fight Moscow in Ukraine as a direct confrontation between NATO and the Kremlin would trigger World War III. On February 24, Russian forces launched military operations in Ukraine, three days after Moscow recognised Ukraine's breakaway regions - Donetsk and Luhansk - as independent entities.

"We're going to continue to stand together with our allies in Europe and send an unmistakable message. We'll defend every single inch of NATO territory with the full might of the United States and galvanise NATO. We will not fight a war against Russia in Ukraine. Direct confrontation between NATO and Russia is World War III. Something we must strive to prevent," Biden told reporters at the White House.

The North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO) is a group of 30 North American and European nations. According to NATO, its purpose "is to guarantee the freedom and security of its members through political and military means." Biden said Russia would never be able to gain victory in Ukraine.

"He (Russian President Vladimir Putin) hoped to dominate Ukraine without



a fight, he failed," Biden said, adding that Putin also failed in his alleged attempt to fracture and weaken the transatlantic alliance.

The American people and the world are united on the issue of Ukraine, he said. "We stand with the people of Ukraine. We will not let autocrats and would-be emperors dictate the direction of the world. Democracies are rising to meet this moment, rallying the world to the side of peace... We're showing our strength and we will not falter," he said. Biden said he will ask Con-

gress to strip Russia of its "most-favoured-nation" status. "As Putin continues this merciless assault, the United States and our allies and partners continue to work in lockstep to ramp up their economic pressure on Putin and to further isolate Russia on the global stage," he said.

"Revoking (this status) for Russia is going to make it harder for Russia to do business with the United States. And doing it in unison with other nations that make up half of the global economy will be another crushing blow to the Russian economy. It's already suffering very badly," Biden said. Responding to a question, Biden said that Russia will pay a heavy price for use of chemical weapons. "I am not going to speak about intelligence (matters). But Russia will pay a severe price for use of chemical weapons," he said.

AGENCIES

BJP set to retain power in UP, Uttarakhand, Goa & Manipur; AAP sweeps Punjab



NEW DELHI: The Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) is all set to retain power in Uttar Pradesh, Uttarakhand, Goa and Manipur while the Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) secured a landslide victory in Punjab. The AAP is the first regional party which will form a government in another state apart from New Delhi.

According to the Election Commission's counting update at 8 p.m., the ruling party BJP has won 171 seats in Uttar Pradesh and is leading in 82 Assembly constituencies, while the Samajwadi Party (SP) has won 63 seats and is leading in 50 constituencies. Rashtriya Lok Dal, which contested the Uttar Pradesh Assembly elections in alliance with the SP, has won seven seats so far and is leading in one constituency, whereas the BJP's ally Apana Dal (Sonelal) has won six seats and is leading in five constituencies.

The Bahujan Samaj Party (BSP) is limited to just one seat from where it is leading so far. The Congress has won only two seats while the Jansatta Dal (Loktantrik) has managed two seats in Uttar Pradesh. The state-level Nishad Party (Nirbal Indian Shoshit Hamara Aam Dal) won two seats and is leading in five constituencies, whereas another local party, Suheldev Bharatiya Samaj Party, won two seats and is leading in four constituencies. In Uttarakhand, the BJP has won 40 seats and is leading in seven others, while the Congress has managed only 16 seats and is leading in three constituencies.

AGENCIES

G-23 seeks speedy election of new Congress President, summoning of AICC session

NEW DELHI: A day after suffering a debacle in the Assembly elections held in five states, the Group-23 (G-23) leaders of Congress started assembling at senior party functionary Ghulam Nabi Azad's residence here on Friday evening.

Senior Congress leaders Kapil Sibal, Manish Tewari and Anand Sharma have reached Azad's residence, while many more are expected to join the meeting virtually, sources said.

There is simmering tension within the Congress after the poll debacle, and the G-23 leaders are reportedly miffed with the style of functioning of the party leadership.

One prominent leader said that "it is time that the first family of Congress steps aside and paves the way for a new leadership or act in tandem with the party leaders and be available 24x7 for party work, or else there won't be a revival of the Congress in the country".

The leaders pointed out that the present set-up is non-performing and it has to be changed as the party is not 'someone's fiefdom' and everyone has a stake in the Congress.



Accountability needs to fixed for the rejection in recent elections. Failed in your duties, not doing a favour to the Congress party

They also suggested that leaders like Sachin Pilot or Manish Tewari should be given charge of the party.

One leader who worked for Rahul Gandhi and is now a rebel within is Pankaj Shankar. "Accountability needs to fixed for the rejection in recent elections. Failed in your duties, not doing a favour to the Congress party," Shankar tweeted.

The Congress' disgruntled

group is upset with the party's performance in Uttar Pradesh, Uttarakhand, Punjab, Goa and Manipur.

The G-23 group has been sidelined in the party since it raised the issue of reforms in the Congress and demanded election for the top post. The Congress' 'G-23' leaders, at their meeting held on Friday after the party's debacle in the latest round of Assembly polls, are understood to have sought that there be no more delay in electing the new party President while an AICC session should be called to discuss the poll results, sources said.

The meeting was held at senior Congress leader Ghulam Nabi Azad's residence here, and was attended by Kapil Sibal, Manish Tewari, Anand Sharma and Akhilesh Prasad Singh while some other leaders joined virtually.

AGENCIES

SC to hear on March 15 plea against bail to Ashish Misra in Lakhimpur Kheri case

AMRITSAR: The Supreme Court on Friday agreed to list on March 15 a plea filed by the family members of the farmers, mowed by a car belonging to Ashish Misra, in Lakhimpur Kheri challenging bail granted to him by the Allahabad High Court. Misra is the son of Union Minister and BJP MP Ajay Kumar Misra.

Advocate Prashant Bhushan, representing the family members, mentioned the plea before a bench headed by Chief Justice N.V. Ramana and comprising Justices A.S. Bopanna and Hima Kohli. Bhushan said the matter was supposed to be listed on Friday for hearing, but it was not on the list. The Chief Justice said: "listing it on Tuesday". Bhushan, insisting on an urgent hearing on the plea, said: "there was an attack on a prime-witness in the case".

On March 4, the Supreme Court agreed to hear on March 11 a plea filed by the family members of the farmers. Bhushan had submitted that other accused in the matter are also moving the high court seeking bail, citing the order granting bail to Misra.

AGENCIES

Congress: a sinking ship due to its own policies?



SATISH HANDA
New Delhi

Poor performance by Congress exhibited in recent Vidhan Sabha polls in five states shows that the party has become a sinking ship. According to political experts, policies by party high command are responsible for crisis and downfall in a party. Question arises if poor performance in recent Vidhan Sabha polls in U.P., Uttaranchal and Goa especially in Punjab state where party has been squeezed from 77 to only 18 seats is also going to affect party's network in adjoining Haryana state.

Senior Congress leader Kuldeep Bishnoi MLA from Adampur Vidhan Sabha constituency recently while having a talk with media persons rightly said the time has arrived to change party's policies immediately in order to save it completely wiped out in other states too as well as in centre and bring back

heavy weight Congress leaders in active party politics to save party now struggling for life. According to another senior Congress leader in Haryana state, on the condition of anonymity said most of Congress leaders in Haryana state are worried over the future of party leaders in Haryana state too feeling themselves unsafe in present circumstances.

However, Krisham Pal Gurjar Lok Sabha member when questioned by media men recently told that Congress downfall in Punjab is likely to leave adverse effect over party leaders in Haryana too because any party having weak leadership remains handicapped blaming Congress functioning under the leadership of a single family can never grow in a democratic country and leaders of any party cannot accepted dictatorship attitude of its high command suggesting Congress high command should have listened to neglected G-23 senior leaders.

Bhagwant Mann to take oath on March 16th at Khatkar Kalan

FW BUREAU
Chandigarh

AAP's CM candidate Bhagwant Mann met Punjab Governor Banwari Lal Purohit in the morning and submitted his proposal to form the government. While addressing to media he said that each MLA of the Aam Aadmi Party would work for the prosperity of Punjab.

He further said Punjab would be run on the principles laid by Bhagat Singh. After meeting with the Governor he said, "The Governor welcomed us and asked us where we would like to have the oath-taking ceremony. We have told him that the ceremony would be held at Khatkar Kalan at 12.30 pm on March 16."

Yesterday after stellar show of Aam Aadmi Party in Punjab Assembly Elections, the CM-elect Bhagwant Mann reached Delhi to meet AAP National Convener and Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal. In a meeting at the residence of Arvind Kejriwal on Friday, Bhagwant Mann was joined by Delhi Deputy CM Manish Sisodia and Punjab affairs co-in-charge Raghav Chadha. AAP leaders shared their rejoice over their party's historic huge triumph in Punjab where they bagged 92 seats out of 117 to form the government in the state.



AGENCIES

UN warns of impending famine in war-ravaged Yemen



ADEN: The United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) warned on Friday that millions of Yemeni people are at risk of famine as a result of the country's years-long military conflict and sharp deterioration of its economy, calling for urgent action. "Children in Yemen are starving not because of a lack of food, but because their families cannot afford food," the UNICEF said in a statement posted on Twitter, Xinhua news agency reported.

The UN organization said that "the impact of the economic collapse on the humanitarian crisis in Yemen cannot be understated." "Without urgent action, millions could be plunged into famine," it warned. According to the UNICEF mission in Yemen, nearly 400,000 children under the age of five are slipping from acute malnutrition to severe acute malnutrition. AGENCIES

Will AAP govt in Punjab help Delhi get rid of air pollution?

NEW DELHI: With the Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) set to form the government in Punjab, can Delhi expect to breathe fresh air in the winters?

Will Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal, who has all along blamed stubble burning in neighbouring Haryana and Punjab for the air pollution in the national capital, ensure that his party's government

does not let 'parali' (stubble) burning add to Delhi's problem this winter? With a very small window available for the farmers in Punjab and Haryana between harvesting paddy and sowing of wheat, every year, the beginning of the winter season witnesses agro-waste burning in Haryana and Punjab, and the meteorological conditions bring

that pollution towards Delhi. The situation worsens further as and when the cold/fog conditions aids in stagnation of the pollutants.

Perception over the years has been that it is only the 'parali' burning in the fields of Punjab and Haryana which is responsible for Delhi's air pollution, whereas science has established other sources of

emissions too. Aarti Khosla, Director, Climate Trends, an advocacy NGO working on the issue of air pollution and climate change, said: "If they (AAP government) really take it as a top priority, if they can really set up some kind of a governance mechanism for better coordination quickly, it will be a good possibility that can be explored." AGENCIES

Bengal govt tables Rs 3.21 lakh crore Budget for 2022-23

KOLKATA: In the midst of strong protests by the opposition BJP, West Bengal Finance Minister Chandrima Bhat-tacharya on Friday presented a populist Budget of Rs 3.21 lakh crore, proposing extension of the 2 per cent rebate on stamp duty and 10 per cent waiver on circle rate of land for another six months till September 2022, along with incentives for battery-operated and CNG vehicles and tax relief for the tea sector. The total Budget allocation for 2022-23 will see 3.8 times growth to Rs 3,21,030 crore as against the figure in 2010-11, when the Trinamool Congress government assumed power, while the development allocation is projected to increase 6.7 times



to Rs 1,26,305 crore. Revenue receipts are pegged at Rs 1,98,047 crore, while the state government proposes to raise public debt to the tune of Rs 1,14,958 crore. Capital expenditure for the fiscal is estimated to be Rs 33,144 crore, and revenue expenditure is pegged at Rs

2,26,326 crore. Presenting the Budget, Bhat-tacharya said that the 2 per cent relief on stamp duty and 10 per cent reduction in property circle rate was effective till March 31, which has now been extended till September. "There has been a 25 per cent increase in revenue collection

with the state government's move in stimulating the real estate sector. The 10 per cent waiver on circle rate has resulted in registration of 20 lakh deeds," Amit Mitra, Chief Advisor to the Chief Minister and the Finance Department, said after the Budget announcement.

The Budget also seeks to provide relief to the tea industry by exempting rural employment cess and waiving agricultural income tax for the 2022-23 financial year.

Allocation towards the social service sector is also projected to increase 10.7 times to Rs 73,441 crore from the 2010-11 figures.

The Budget also proposes rise of the state's own tax rev-

enue by 3.76 times to Rs 79,347 crore for the 2022-23 fiscal. Meanwhile, noisy scenes were witnessed during the Budget presentation in the Assembly with BJP MLAs raising slogans, demanding filling up of vacant posts, besides raising the issue of "distressed tea gardens in the state", among others.

"There is nothing new in the Budget. There is no new project, no proposal for roads or bridges. The Budget gives nothing to the common man. The state government has only changed the names of the central projects, and running them as state projects. They are telling lies to the people. We are not going to accept this," Leader of Opposition, Suwendu Adhikari, said. AGENCIES

HARYANA BUDGET 2022

Khattar presents Rs 1.77-lakh-cr Budget; Oppn calls it 'jugglery of words'

M KUMAR
Chandigarh

As a Finance Minister of the state, Haryana Chief Minister Manohar Lal Khattar presented a Budget of Rs 1,77,255.99 crore for the financial year 2022-23 against the Rs 1.53-lakh-crore Budget in 2021-22. Haryana Legislative Assembly Speaker Gian Chand Gupta announced the formation of eight committees to discuss the state budget before its passage, on the lines of the parliamentary standing committees which scrutinises Union budgets. The Haryana government will introduce schemes to provide soft loans to women entrepreneurs from families whose annual income is less than Rs 5 lakh based on Parivar Pehchan Patra verified data as well as set up mahila ashrams for working women in Faridabad, Gurgaon and Panchkula. Khattar also announced a 'Sushma Swaraj Award' for women for their signifi-



cant contribution or achievements in different walks of life in national and international spheres. A total of Rs 530.94 crore have been allocated for Environment, Forests and Climate Change. While a 150-km long nature trail from Kalka to Kalesar will also be established, the government has also proposed to introduce an eco-tourism policy for the state. For the Education sector, Rs 2,0250.57 crore have been allocated for 2022-23. Among other announcements, the

government has proposed to start subject-wise Olympiads for Class 8 to 12. Students securing the highest ranks shall be sent to NASA and ISRO on exposure visits. Awards in the form of scholarships will also be provided to the winners of Olympiads. Moreover, tablets will be provided to students of Class 10 to 12 in government schools. Meanwhile, former Haryana chief minister Bhupinder Singh Hooda on Tuesday described the budget presented by the BJP-led govern-

Eight committees formed to scrutinise Haryana Budget before its passage

Haryana Legislative Assembly Speaker Gian Chand Gupta on Tuesday announced the formation of eight committees to discuss the state budget before its passage, on the lines of the parliamentary standing committees which scrutinises Union budgets. This is for the first time since the state was formed in 1966 that different committees have been formed to discuss the budget. Chief Minister Manohar Lal Khattar, who also holds the finance portfolio, had earlier in the day presented a Rs 1.77-lakh-crore budget for the financial year 2022-23 in the assembly. Deputy Speaker Ranbir Singh Gangwa will be the chairman of the first committee. MLAs Aseem Goel, Geeta Bhukhal, Ishwar Singh, Seema Trikha, Kiran Choudhary, Parmod Kumar Vij and Ghanshyam Dass Arora will chair the other seven committees in that order.

ment in the state as a "jugglery of words". "The budget is a jugglery of words. The government is following the policy of 'run ahead, leave behind' as the budget first shows inflated numbers but these are later revised and reduced,"

Hooda, who is the Leader of the Opposition in Haryana assembly, said. Hooda claimed the government has cut economic progress and infrastructure budget by 3 per cent "even at a time of record unemployment".

Campaign against milk dairies and medical stores in Haryana

SATISH HANDA
Chandigarh

In view of increasing complaints as regard supply of adulterated milk, milk products and sale of restricted medicines as well as illegal supply of medical termination pregnancy (MTP) kits, Haryana state government has launched a campaign against milk dairies and medical stores initially in 13 districts in the state by Chief Minister Flying Squad as well as by food supply and state drug control departments.

According to CID chief Alok Kumar Mittal, nearly 20000 litre adulterated milk seized during raids by teams along with mobile labs was destroyed at the spot in four districts in a day.

The raiding teams accompanied by Sandeep Kadian of health department collected milk samples from a vehicle containing 32 drums arrived from U.P when parked outside a milk supply depot on Kunjapura Road at Karnal and sent collected samples to forensic laboratory Madhuban for testing. CM Fly-



ing Squad also collected samples of milk products during raid in a factory at Kaithal and seized 200 kg cheese and 120 kg pure ghee collecting samples for testing at Madhuban forensic laboratory. However, owner of the factory managed to slip CM Flying Squad raided a milk plant at Hansi and collected milk samples from a van parked outside the plant as well as 5000 litre milk kept in a steel tank inside the plant.

The team also collected samples from 10500 litre pure ghee lying ready in the stock. The raiding teams conducted raids at three milk dairies at Bhiwani, four milk dairies at Kurukshetra, four milk sale shops at Yamu-

nanagar and few sweets shops at Jagadhri and collected samples. Meanwhile, State Drugs Control & Licensing Authority teams also launched campaign against illegal sale of medical termination pregnancy (MTP) kits and supply of restricted medicines consumed by drug addicts by wholesale and retail medical stores, which included four at Gurugram, two at Karnal and one each at Ambala and Bhiwani cancelled licenses of eight suppliers and suspended licenses of another 46 medical stores in the state. The team members posing as customer contacted such traders and trapped them in their net.

11546 rape, 176 gang rape cases registered in Haryana in 2021



SATISH HANDA
Chandigarh

Fast increasing cases of rape and gang rape in Haryana state is a matter of concern. According to state crime bureau record the number of such cases has witnessed nearly hundred percent increase in past seven years in the state although the number of cases related to rapes and gang rapes registered in police stations in the state are much higher recording four to five times increase but most of the complaints are found fake during police investi-

gation. According to police record 1546 rape cases and 176 gang rape cases were registered at the police stations in Haryana state during year 2021 although the number of rapes and gang rapes are much higher but large number of such cases are generally not disclosed by the victims and complaints are not lodged with the police by victim's family.

Out of total number of rape, gang rape cases reported at different police stations in Haryana state during previous year 2021 include maximum number of 212 cases registered at cyber

city Gurugram, followed by 135 cases registered with police in industrial town Faridabad. While having a look at few other towns in Haryana state 68 rape cases (including 20 gang rapes) were registered with the police in Mevat district during the year, 50 cases (including 3 gang rapes) registered in Kaithal district, 55 cases (including 8 gang rapes) in Bhiwani district, 50 cases (including 10 gang rapes) in Sirsa district, 45 cases (including 7 gang rapes) in Jhajjer district, 56 cases (including 19 gang rapes) in Palwal district, 45 cases (including 8 gang rapes) Jind district, 39 cases (including 3 gang rapes) in Panchkula district, 36 cases (including 5 gang rapes) in Fatehabad district, 46 cases (including 6 gang rapes) in Nar-naul district, 21 cases (including 5 gang rapes) in Hansi district and 14 cases (including one gang rape) in Charkhi Dadri district. However, situation as regard rape and gang rapes in other districts in the state was found not too serious.

Three including doctor arrested in pre-natal sex examination case

SATISH HANDA
Kurukshetra

Health department team at Kurukshetra in joint operation with health department Kaithal in a raid arrested three persons of a racket including two agents Sukhdev Singh resident of Vishnu Colony working as driver of a private hospital ambulance, another agent Tilak Raj and an unregistered doctor Mohd. Nadeem resident of Shamli in Western U.P while checking pre-natal sex of unborn child of a pregnant woman with the help of a portable ultrasound machine and a device rotating on her stomach. The raiding team seized portable ultrasound machines, device and 85 Medical Termination Pregnancy (MTP) Kits.

PNDT Nodal Officer Dr R. K. Sahay told that Civil Surgeon Kaithal gave information about the racket involved in illegal pre-natal checking of sex of child in pregnant women operating in the area to Civil Surgeon Kurukshetra



Dr Sukhbir Singh who constituted a team to bust the racket which prepared a fake pregnant women and a deal was finalized with the agent Sukhdev Singh at Rs 30000. Sukhdev called fake female customer in early morning hours at Bus Stand Kurukshetra where health department team was also waiting. Sukhdev and Tilak Raj took pregnant female to a residential house via Sharadha Chock and Salarpur Road in a car

chased by health department team in another car. Health department team on a signal conducted surprise raid when Dr Mohd. Nadeem was checking pre-natal sex of unborn child said stated a female child in her womb with the help of portable ultrasound machine seized by health department team which also recovered 85 MTP kits during search. A case was registered against three.

Another PWD fraud worth Rs 5 crore detected at Ambala

SATISH HANDA
Chandigarh

Fraud after frauds worth crores of rupees by PWD (B&R) officers in construction of government buildings detected at Ambala in past few months has raised a question mark over the working of ruling BJP-JJP government in Haryana state. There are large number of sensational scams reported at Ambala in past some time which include Rs 46 crore fraud in construction of International level Football Stadium inside War Heroes Memorial Sports Stadium at Ambala Cantt, construction of Mini Secretariat at Ambala City in which payment worth crores of rupees was released to steel suppliers without receipt of material, large number of embezzlements in construction of Mini Secretariat at Ambala City, in construction of Women College building at Ambala City, construction of building for Homeopathy College at Chandpuri near Ambala Cantt in which in fraud worth crores of rupees was detected and now the latest case of fraud alleged in construction of 96 flats for the doctors and paramedical staff near Civil Hospital

Ambala Cantt in which payment worth Rs 5 crore was released to a supplier for purchase of steel frames for doors and windows without receipt of material. Haryana state government had suspended three officers of PWD (B&R) department at Ambala including an Executive Engineer, an SDO and a Junior Engineer allegedly involved in embezzlements and a six members committee led by two chief engineers are investigating the frauds at Ambala since past six days. Meanwhile, construction company named in alleged fraud, too, has moved a writ in Punjab and Haryana High Court against government officers. The recent fraud for amount worth Rs 5 crore in construction of 96 flats for doctors and para-medical staff of Civil Hospital Ambala Cantt on Ambala-Jagadhri Road by PWD (B&R) has been exposed in which payment for amount worth Rs 5 crore towards supply of steel frames for doors and windows has been released by PWD (B&R) department without receipt of material and government has served a notice to the supplier and has terminated the tender contract.

Dr. Sunil in the service of humanity in the midst of Ukraine crisis

FW BUREAU
Chandigarh

On one hand, while the whole world is saddened by the Ukraine-Russia crisis at this time, on the other hand Dr. Sunil Sharma of Chandigarh, away from his family, has been engaged in helping Indian students on the Romania border for past few days. He is the Authorized Representative of the Bukovinian State Medical University, Ukraine in India, Advisor to the Chancellor, and Director of The MD House, Chandigarh. On the very first day of the war between Russia and Ukraine, Dr. Sunil had gone to Romania to help the Indian students and started trying to get the students out safely on the border there. So far, he has helped to send about 1500 students to India and is trying to get about 3500 students back to their homeland safely by making them stay in camps from this side of the border to the other side. Dr. Sunil is acting as a bridge between the Embassy of India and the Embassies of Romania and Ukraine. Due to his knowledge of Russian and Ukrainian languages, he is able to help the Embassy officials of the three countries as well as the students at the border. Dr. Sunil arranged accommodation for Indian students by setting up tents at his own expense on the Ukraine and Romania border. Last night, when the students on the Romanian border were troubled by snowfall, Dr. Sunil provided basic facilities by setting up camps on both sides of the border.

Every third complaint received on CM Window in Haryana relates to police department



SATISH HANDA
Chandigarh

About three years ago in order to solve increasing public grievances quickly Haryana state government had introduced CM Windows to receive public complaints in Deputy Commissioner's office in every district across the state. Information reveals, over three lakh complaints were received at CM Windows in the state in past three years between January 2019 and January 2022, of them nearly 87% complaints have been solved. Sadly, every third complaint received on CM Window was against police department. Sometime ago, Haryana Home Minister Anil Vij holding public durbar quite often in his home town Ambala Cantt to listen public grievance, too, while talking to media persons expressed deep concern over delay in action by police department in the state against public complaints and assured action against those police officers delaying action on public complaints lodged in police stations in the state.

According to information, graph of complaints received on CM Windows fast rising. Out of total number of nearly

three lakh complaints received on CM Windows in the state in past three years which include maximum number of 97219 complaints related to police department, 41257 complaints related to Rural Development & Panchayat Department, 25179 complaints related to State Electricity Department and nearly 22000 complaints related to State Education Department out of which nearly 87% complaints identified as 2,58,397 have been solved so far and remaining 13% complaints identified as 41436 are yet pending for action in the state.

Vij said, state government is taking steps to hi-tech police network in Haryana state and fill up large number of posts in state police department lying vacant to improve law and order in the state. He said, large numbers of police stations and police posts in Haryana state are being upgraded. In reply to a question regarding maximum number of complaints received on CM Windows in the state related to police working, admitting lapses by police department in the state Vij assured immediate steps are being taken to improve police working in the state.

5 held in Haryana for target killings, spread terrorism on terrorists' direction

SATISH HANDA
Chandigarh

Desire to earn money compelled five Haryana youths to spread terrorism on the directions by terrorist groups functioning outside the country including from Pakistan, Canada and Australia, CIA and Detective Staff of Haryana police on a clue arrested four youths at Sonapat identified as Sagar alias Binny the mastermind of racket, Surinder alias Sonu both having criminal background, Sunil alias Pehlwan Jatun alias Rajesh on February 19, 2022 and during eight days police remand named Tarun alias Tarunjeet their another companion who was also arrested on March 1, 2022 by Sonapat police. Five arrested by the police admitted working on the tips of Khalistani terrorists and getting handsome amount either in their bank accounts or cash through 'Hawala' admitting working on the tips of terrorists to earn money. Investigation during eight days police remand revealed that the prime accuse Sagar alias Binny son of a truck driver, only brother of two sisters studied up to class X was belonging to financially weak family and joined hands with terrorist group to start his own transport business and earn money for marriage of his sisters. Sunil alias Pehlwan the only brother of three sisters also belonging to poor family whose father



was working in a private firm hardly earning both ends meal for the family and admitted to join terrorist group in order to earn money and become rich. Jatun alias Rajesh too studied up to class X was also hailing from a family below poverty line but was not having any criminal background and desire to earn money forced him to adopt terrorism as his profession. Surinder alias Sonu studied up to class XII was having a criminal record since childhood having more than a dozen criminal

cases including a jail break case registered against him. Aiming to earn handsome money for the family as well as assurance to settle abroad forced him to join hands with terrorist group. Tarun alias Tarunjeet a resident of village Juan in Sonapat district was running a 'Atal Sewa Centre' in his village came in contact with the prime accuse Sagar and helped him in getting fake 'Aadhar Cards' at Chandigarh and Fatehabad addresses and also prepared a fake driving license for him, too, joined the racket was arrested by the police. Information reveals, police also recovered a AK-47 rifle, five imported pistols, a country made pistol and huge quantity of cartridges from four arrested youths on February 19 this year, which were supplied to Sagar and Sunil by Gopi a resident of Kharar in Punjab in a lonely place at village Dinapur near Kharar as admitted by both to spread terrorism.

Spend minimum time in Chandigarh: Punjab CM-designate Bhagwant Mann tells AAP MLAs

M KUMAR
Chandigarh

Former comedian and now Punjab's CM-designate Bhagwant Mann is asking newly elected AAP MLAs to remain grounded despite a remarkable win in Punjab assembly elections 2022. He has told the MLAs to spend most of their time in villages and cities to resolve public's problems. Speaking to the MLAs about future way of workings during a meeting of the AAP's legislature party, Mann said, "Work there where we sought votes. The government will run from villages, wards, mohallas. Go and meet people, have tea with them. Take officers along and resolve their issues".

He also advised them to spend minimum time in Chandigarh, which is the joint capital of Punjab and Haryana. Further, he asked MLAs to do away with arrogance saying, "You are MLAs of those people also who did not vote for you... You are MLAs of Punjab, and the government is formed by Punjabis." The 48-year-old Bhagwant Mann was born on October 17, 1973, in Sartoj village in Sangrur. He entered politics a decade ago in 2011 with the People's Party of Punjab and first contested for the Lehra constituency in Punjab in 2012.

The Aam Aadmi Party's (AAP) chief ministerial face Bhagwant Mann is all set to take oath as Punjab chief minister on March 16. Today, Mann met with Delhi CM and AAP's national convener Arvind Kejriwal in New Delhi in presence of Delhi Deputy CM Manish Sisodia.

NIA Report: 10 arrested in nearly 100 fake passport cases in past 4 years

SATISH HANDA
Karnal

According to National Investigation Agency (NIA), nearly 100 cases of fake passport prepared in past four years have been identified in Haryana and Punjab states during verification of all passports prepared in this period. Information reveals, most of the passport holders involved in criminal activities are suspected left country after committing crimes in past sometime. During verification of passports prepared in past four years maximum numbers of these were prepared at Karnal in Haryana state and police verification of applicants in most of



the cases was alleged conducted by sector 32-33 police station. As many as 32 accused involved in fake passport cases have been arrested so far by the police and involvement of two police personnel in fake verification is suspected in spite of the fact the town have

two senior police officers in the ranks of IGP and SP and action against both police personnel is in process. Investigation by CIA and Detective Staff of police revealed that most of the fake passport holders were originally hailing from the states of Haryana, Punjab, Bengal and Kerala states but their passports were prepared on fake names as well as having fake Karnal addresses and during investigation it was observed that no one was staying at these places.

According to police information, maximum numbers of fake passport were got prepared by as many as 10 accused arrested by the police which

include Puneet alias Rohit Sagar alias Romi a resident of Gurdaspur in Punjab having 27 criminal cases registered against him in different police stations in Punjab and two among arrested accused are suspected having contacts with terrorists and both were brought to Karnal by Haryana police on production warrant. Among other prominent arrested accused involved in fake passport scams include Pawandeep alias Titu resident of Gurdaspur in Punjab having five cases registered against him in different police stations in Punjab allegedly under arms act, attempt to murder and snatching cases.



FM airs concern over rising crude oil price due to Ukraine crisis

RISING CRUDE PRICES WILL HAVE A BEARING. WE HAVE MADE SOME PROVISIONS FOR IT IN THE BUDGET. BUT THAT PROVISION IS ONLY BASED ON SOME AVERAGE PREVAILING EARLIER BUT NOW IS BEYOND THAT. SO, WE WILL HAVE TO SEE HOW WE CAN WORK IT OUT

FW BUREAU
Imphal

Union Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman today expressed concern over rising crude prices due to the Ukraine crisis and indicated that the central government is looking to tap alternative sources. At an interactive session organised by BJP's Karnataka unit, she was asked about the impact of rising crude prices and war in Ukraine on the Indian economy.

"It will certainly have an impact on Indian economy", the Minister said. "How much



we are going to be prepared to take it as a challenge and mitigate the impact is something which we will have to see as we go along".

Noting that India imports more than 85% of its crude oil requirements, she said when oil prices go up, it is a matter of concern and "now we will have to see how it pans out".

She pointed out that oil marketing companies fix pump prices based on 15-day average. "But now averages and beyond averages are the numbers that we are talking about".

The government is watching to see if there are alternative sources from where it can get

crude, she said but hastened to add: "Obviously global markets are all equally unthinkable at various sources".

Rising crude prices will have a bearing. We have made some provisions for it in the budget. But that provision is only based on some average prevailing earlier but now is beyond that. So, we will have to see how we can work it out".

International benchmark Brent was trading at around USD 127 per barrel on Tuesday. On bringing petrol and diesel within the GST ambit, she said: "It's already in there (before the GST Council).

BJP sweeps Manipur with 32 seats; celebration erupts at Thambal Sanglen

ARIBAM BISHWAJIT
Imphal

Celebration erupted at BJP Manipur head-office, Thambal Sanglen, and various parts of the state as the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) clinched 32 seats in the 60-seat Assembly as the Election Commission of India on Thursday declared the results of the 12th Manipur Assembly Elections, which were held in two phases on February 28 and March 5, respectively.

Incumbent CM and BJP candidate Biren Singh registered a thumping victory from his home turf, Heingang, defeating his rival - Congress candidate Pangejam Saratchandra - by a massive margin of 18,271 votes.

As the BJP swept the majority of the seats, Mr. Biren, in a tweet, wrote: "The historic victory that we have achieved today is a testament of the people's faith in the dynamic leadership of Hon'ble PM @narendramodi Ji and citizen-centric governance." My heartfelt congratulations to all the Karyakartas of BJP, Biren added.

The saffron party indicated keeping Naga People's Front but ruled out a coalition with Meghalaya Chief Minister Conrad Sangma's National Peoples'



Party. Applauding the victory of the saffron party, Union Home Minister Amit Shah extended appreciation to the people of Manipur and hailed the chief minister for the landslide triumph.

The Union Minister, in a tweet, penned: "PM Narendra Modi Ji's resolve for a prosperous North-East has earned him a special place in the hearts of the people of our NE region; this victory is a testament to the same."

In an unexpected result, the Congress that managed to get 28 seats in the 2017 election won only five assembly constituencies. Nonetheless, the former three-time chief minister Okram Ibobi Singh and his son O Surjakumar managed to pull off victories from Thoubal and Khangabro constituencies, respectively.

Unfortunately, though, former three-time deputy chief minister Gaikhangam lost the Nungba seat to BJP candidate D Gangmei by a margin of 3 786 votes.

Deputy Chief Minister and National Peoples' Party (NPP) nominee Yunnam Joykumar lost from the Uripok seat as the BJP contender Raghmani Singh beat him by a margin of 7147 votes. Meanwhile, the NPP bagged seven seats while the Janata Dal (United) and Naga People's Front (NPF) won six and seven seats, respectively. Former DGP LM Khaute, who joined the Janata Dal (United) by taking voluntary retirement just a few months away from the election, won from Churachandpur seat, defeating his nearest BJP contender V Hangkhanliam by a margin of 624 votes.

Modi asks Gujarat Panchayati Raj leaders to undertake village upliftment work



NEW DELHI: Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Friday asked the Panchayati Raj elected representatives in Gujarat to carry out at least 75 village upliftment tasks by August 15, 2023, when the nation will be celebrating the 75th year of freedom. He was addressing more than 1.25 lakh elected representatives gathered in Ahmedabad.

The PM congratulated the villages of Gujarat as well as the country for sustaining during the Covid-19 pandemic.

"I congratulate the people of the villages for tackling the

Covid-19 situation very wonderfully. The awareness and preparedness shown by the villages of Gujarat as well as country, prevented the global pandemic from entering. I also bow down to the smallest of the farmers, who during such challenging times, continued producing, harvesting food for the country," said Modi.

The prime minister asked the elected representatives gathered in Ahmedabad to carry out work for the upliftment of villages.

"I am only asking each of you to carry out small works which

you can do. Can you carry out programmes to celebrate the birthday of the village school? Where the leaders of the village and other communities come together at the school and carry out the birthday celebrations, carry out work required in the school?" asked the PM.

Modi said that he wanted to see at least 75 such works of village upliftment by August 15, 2023, when the entire nation will be celebrating 75 years of the country's freedom. "This is the land of Bapu and Sardar. Bapu always talked about self-reliant villages. When we are celebrating the 'Azadi Ka Amrit' mahotsav let us show that we are committed to fulfil Bapu's dream and other freedom fighter's dream," added the PM. The PM asked the gathering consisting of village Sarpanches, Tehsil panchayat and district panchayat elected representatives to celebrate the birthday of villages too and for this involve all the former village inhabitants who had prospered in and outside the villages.

AGENCIES

Over 60,000 RSS shakhas running across country at present

NEW DELHI: The Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS) is currently running 60,929 shakhas across the country, marking an increase of 5,277 shakhas since March last year. Till March 2021, about 55,652 RSS shakhas were running across India.

This was revealed on the opening day of the three-day meeting of the Akhil Bharatiya Pratinidhi Sabha, a top decision-making body of the RSS, which got underway in Ahmedabad on Friday.

The RSS also witnessed an increase of more than 2,000 in its 'Saptahik Milan' (weekly meetings) from 18,553 in March last year to 20,681 in March 2022.

An annual report for the year 2021-22 was shared in the Akhil Bharatiya Pratinidhi Sabha. Talking about the national scenario, the RSS annual report flagged the violence that was unleashed in West Bengal post the declaration of Assembly election results in May last year.

"If violence, fear, malice, and violation of law become rampant in the society, not only



will there be unrest, instability, but democracy, mutual trust etc. will also be destroyed," the report said.

Talking about need to answer divisive conspiracy with the right narrative, the report said, "Today in Bharat, while on the one hand the age-old cultural values, traditions and sense of identity, unity and integrity of the country are awakening, and Hindu Shakti is standing up with self-respect, the inimical forces which do not tolerate this are also conspiring to create a vicious environment in the society." The report mentioned that it is necessary to create an effective and strong ideological discourse based on truth and facts about nationalism, Hindutva, its history, social philosophy, cultural values and tradition etc.

AGENCIES

MAHARASHTRA BUDGET

African Safari coming up in Nagpur

MUMBAI: In a significant step, Maharashtra plans to set up an African Safari Project in Nagpur with an outlay of Rs 100 crore, besides tiger and leopard safaris, Deputy Chief Minister and Finance Minister Ajit Pawar said here on Friday. Presenting the state Budget 2022-2023 in the Assembly, Pawar announced a series of tourism-related projects in the state. "The government intends to conduct the country's first experiment to display wildlife from the African continent. For this, an African Safari is proposed at the Balasaheb Thackeray Gorewada International Zoological Park," he said. Besides, there are plans for a Tiger Safari on a 171-acre jungle in Chandrapur and a Leopard Safari in Pune, on a 90-hectare forest at a cost of Rs 60 crore, on the lines of similar ones in Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh and Karnataka, and a Wildlife Rescue Centre in Chandrapur. Pawar said detailed proposals are being sent to UNESCO to declare Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj's forts and his guerrilla warfare as World Heritage.

AGENCIES

CJI lays foundation stone for IAMC building in Hyderabad



THE CJI THANKED GOVERNMENT OF TELANGANA AND CHIEF MINISTER K. CHANDRASEKHAR RAO FOR ALLOCATING VALUABLE LAND IN THE HEART OF THE CITY FOR HIAMC

HYDERABAD: Chief Justice of India, N.V. Ramana on Saturday laid foundation stone for permanent building India's first International Arbitration and Mediation Centre (IAMC). The building of Hyderabad International Arbitration and Mediation Centre (HIAMC) is coming up behind IKEA in HITEC City on a piece of land allotted by the

government of Telangana. The CJI thanked government of Telangana and Chief Minister K. Chandrasekhara Rao for allocating valuable land in the heart of the city for HIAMC and Rs 50 crore for construction of the building.

Justice Ramana termed IAMC a "big" step in promoting arbitration and mediation in this part of the world. He said during the international arbitration conference to be held in Dubai on March 17-18, HIAMC will showcase their progress and functioning of the centre and hoped that this will help attract international arbitration to this centre. The CJI hoped that IAMC Hyderabad will emerge as an arbitration and mediation centre on par with such centres in Dubai, London and Singapore.

AGENCIES

Centre to provide financial assistance to pharma clusters to improve productivity

NEW DELHI: With a total financial outlay of Rs 500 crore for the period from FY 21-22 to FY 25-26, the pharmaceutical department under the Ministry of Chemicals and Fertilisers released the guidelines for the Strengthening of Pharmaceutical Industry (SPI) scheme on Friday.

The scheme will address the rising demand in terms of support required for existing pharma clusters and MSMEs across the country to improve their productivity, quality and sustainability.

The SPI scheme will provide financial assistance to pharma clusters for creation of common facilities to make India a global leader in the sector.

In a bid to upgrade the production facilities of SMEs and MSMEs so as to meet national and international regulatory standards, interest subvention or capital subsidy on their capital loans will be provided to further facilitate the growth in volumes as well as in quality.

The new scheme includes three components -- Assistance to Pharmaceutical Industry for Common Facilities (APICF) to strengthen the existing pharmaceutical clusters' capacity for their sustained growth by creating common facilities; Pharmaceutical Technology Upgradation Assistance Scheme (PTUAS) to facilitate MSMEs to meet national and international regulatory standards; and Pharmaceutical & Medical Devices Promotion and Development Scheme (PMPDS) to facilitate growth and development of pharmaceutical and medical devices Sectors through study and survey reports, awareness programmes, creation of database and promotion of industry.

AGENCIES

BJP starts informal consultations on new Uttarakhand CM

NEW DELHI: While there is uncertainty over the next chief minister of Uttarakhand after Pushkar Singh Dhami lost in the assembly polls, the BJP leadership has started consultations with the MLAs. On the other hand, the Goa BJP is waiting for direction from the central leadership to elect its new chief minister. Sources said that BJP national general secretary Kailash Vijayvargiya and others held informal consultations with the MLAs in Uttarakhand capital Dehradun. "To get a sense of the MLAs' mood, Vijayvargiya has met a few of



them. The exercise has started to find the next chief minister after the party's victory and Dhami's loss," they said. After Dhami lost in the assembly polls from Khatima constituency, several names have started doing the rounds in Uttarakhand political circles. Minister of state for defence Ajay Bhatt is likely to emerge the frontrunner.

AGENCIES

Andhra Pradesh CM may go for Cabinet revamp next month



AMARAVATI: Andhra Pradesh Chief Minister Y.S. Jagan Mohan Reddy is likely to go for a complete revamp of the Cabinet next month by inducting leaders who have been waiting in the wings for more than two and a half years. He dropped hints to this effect

during a Cabinet meeting on Friday called to approve the state Budget 2022-23 before its presentation in the Assembly. The Chief Minister reportedly told his Cabinet colleagues that there are many aspirants for ministerial berths. He assured them that even if they are not part of the Cabinet they will not be sidelined. He told them that if they are re-elected in the next elections, they will return to the Cabinet as ministers.

The YSR Congress Party (YSRCP) leader also said to have told the ministers that those not in the Cabinet should work for strengthening the party.

AGENCIES

BJP notches stunning victory in Goa Assembly polls

DOMINICK RODRIGUES
Panjim

The BJP notched a stunning victory by emerging the single largest party after bagging 20 seats in the 2022 Goa Legislative Assembly elections.

The BJP, which had contested all 40 seats, improved its 2017 win by registering a vote share of 33.31%, while the Congress got a reduced vote share of 23.46% from all 37 contested seats. The Goa Chief Minister Dr Pramod Sawant said he had not expected a win of small margin in the Sanquelim constituency and would be analysing this result after forming the new Goa government. BJP Goa desk-in-charge Devendra Fadnavis thanked Goans for giving their mandate to development and public service.

AAP leader Arvind Kejriwal noted that his party won two seats in Goa and this was the beginning of "honest politics" in the State. Vishwajit Rane, who won the Valpoi seat, attributed the BJP victory in Goa to "teamwork," while Dabolim seat winner Mauvin Godinho said that the BJP strategies worked although it was "people's power" being supreme.

The 2022 elections also witnessed victory of couples - Vishwajit and Deviyan Rane, Michael and Delilah Lobo, and Babush and Jennifer Monserate.

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Delilah Lobo



Michael Lobo

ated a history of sorts by bagging the Siolim constituency with its woman candidate Delilah Lobo defeating former MLAs Dayanand Mandrekar and Vinod Paleykar among the 13 contestants for the seat. "The election results are not depressing but they are unexpected," said real estate baron Michael Lobo, who was re-elected from Calangute constituency while wife Delilah Lobo won as a first-timer from Siolim. Attributing the Congress' lack of winning seats to major vote-splitting that led to them not getting their expected 18-19 seats, he said "The development that we have done over the past five years will continue but the fulfillment of our election manifesto will be affected now."

The Congress party - and that too a woman candidate - has never won from Siolim in the past," noted first-time winner and Congress candidate Delilah Lobo. Ex-Assistant Solicitor-General of India and advocate Carlos Ferreira, who won the Aldona seat against two-time MLA Glenn Tielco, said "The votes counting was neck-to-neck but I had the hearts of my well-wishers across Goa. Power, money and muscle did not win for the two giants - one is a sitting MLA of the ruling and an ex-MLA - against me in this election and I will not tolerate goondaism."

AGENCIES

I witnessed vindictiveness against me where people - who were working with me 'silently or openly' or gave me a thumbs-up - had notices taken out against them. I will clean up the constituency of such people. I am grateful to Kiran Kandolkar for having taken away BJP votes," he added.

The Aam Aadmi Party (AAP), which was hoping to break ground in Goa in this election, finally succeeded with its Benaulim candidate Captain Vency Viegas upsetting the Alemao juggernaut. Despite football aficionado and TMC's Churchill Alemao expressing confidence of "the winning whistle being in his favour as a people's man," AAP's Viegas upset Alemao's apocryphal with a runaway win of total 6411 votes in the beachside constituency. The reactions from the winning candidates and others in the 2022 Goa legislative elections came fast and furious as they highlighted their victories.

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Atanasio "Babush" Monserate expressed unhappiness over the election results, especially in the margin of votes polled in his election victory from Panjim. "The BJP cadre did not work for me but they worked for the opposition candidate. I feel the BJP cadre did not accept me into the party - judging from the number of votes. The president of the all-Goa BJP women cell was sitting on the Congress table. This is also the first time in history that the BJP flag is fly-

ing from Taleigao. But the BJP cadre there also worked against Jennifer Monserate," he said.

Trinamool Congress did not win a single seat, despite contesting 26 seats in alliance with the MGP. Aleixo Reginaldo Lourenco, who won as an independent from Curtorim again after expressing unhappiness with the Congress and TMC parties, said "I have won with one agenda: to work for my people and I will go to the level that I have promised them." First-timer political entrant Revolutionary Goans (RG) made their presence felt in bagging a solitary yet important seat of St. Andre through their candidate Viresh Borkar, who got 5395 votes against BJP's Francisco Silveira (5319 votes).

Former CM Laxmikant Parsekar, who was contesting as Independent but lost the seat, had said he would win in Mandrem constituency despite the opposition strength being money. Chandrakant "Babu" Kavlekar, who led the mass defection from the Congress to the BJP, was also among the losers in the election. Kavlekar had earlier described himself as the "most eligible" to be Goa Chief Minister after winning the 2022 elections.

Distant reactions were also noted. Congress MP Shashi Tharoor tweeted that the party's "crushing defeat" in the latest polls highlighted the need to reform its organisational leadership towards "reigniting ideas

and inspiring people." Tharoor - along with 22 other party leaders - had written to party chief Sonia Gandhi that "change is unavoidable for the party to succeed." Meanwhile, the Herald daily here highlighted an RTI by Saket Gokhale that revealed 57 PSTs, 39 police inspectors and 18 deputy SPs were transferred on January 7/8 2022 without obtaining ECI sanction. Opposition parties alleged that these transfers were all +politically motivated+ to suit ruling party candidates. While DGP Goa ID Shukla stated that the wireless message regarding the transfers was sent out on Jan 7 - the eve of the model code of conduct - Gokhale's RTI query drew the reply as "No record available."

Meanwhile, farmers anguished over cutting of trees by the government for the Mopa (airport) link road have threatened to approach the National Green Tribunal (NGT) in this regard. The cashew and mango trees had just begun to bloom with flowers, but they axed all the fruit-bearing trees instead of at least waiting till the time of harvesting their fruits," said a farmer Ankhush Arawlekar. Suresh Shanbhogue, Director of Civil Aviation, Goa had stated that the concerned land - Four lakh square metres for the 6.5 kms, six-lane Expressway or Mopa link road - had been acquired legally with compensation amounting to Rs 60 crore given for also fruit-bearing trees.

Is Asian NATO in the making as feared by China?

China's claim that the U.S. Indo-Pacific strategy is aiming to create "an Indo-Pacific version of NATO", as the Chinese Foreign Minister, Wang Yi, put it on March 7, is not new. Indeed, even as long as 15 years ago, during the first iteration of the now revived India, Australia, Japan, U.S. Quad, Beijing warned of an impending "Asian NATO", which, of course, never materialised. The latest statement does, however, assume significance in the current global context and amid the crisis in Ukraine. Wang, speaking in Beijing during the National People's Congress, accused the U.S. of "stoking geopolitical rivalry" by "forming exclusive clubs". He said by "strengthening the Five Eyes" intelligence alliance and "peddling the Quad, piecing together AUKUS and tightening bilateral military alliances", the U.S. was leading what he called a "five-four-three-two" formation in the region. The broader goal, he said, was "to establish an Indo-Pacific version of NATO". In recent weeks, Beijing has repeatedly blamed NATO for the crisis in Ukraine. While claiming to stay neutral, it has moved to reaffirm ties with Russia, which Beijing has described as "rock solid". India's firm response has been to hold the line, and continue deepening ties not only with the U.S. and the Quad but also other Indo-Pacific partners to underline it will not be swayed. The other message from India has been that sensitivity to concerns has to be mutual, and cannot be demanded from one side when ignored by the other. Wang did acknowledge that recent "setbacks" in ties suited neither India nor China — a view New Delhi shares. As India and China continue to seek a much-needed modus vivendi to restore ties from the lowest point in decades and ensure peace on the border, they will also need to have a broader conversation about global currents that are reshaping their bilateral relations.



ASHUTOSH KUMAR DELVES INTO THE POTENTIAL OF THE PARTY TO SOLVE THE STATE'S BURNING ISSUES

The AAP gale wind that swept through Punjab

The 16th Assembly election in Punjab, in 2022, is a watershed election for the State, also marking a political deviation from the past. The most notable feature is the verdict itself — a landslide, after a long time. A certain percentage of Punjab's voters has always voted for the three parties — i.e. the Bharatiya Jana Sangh/Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), the Indian National Congress and the Akali Dal.

The average vote in the past five Assembly elections for the Congress and the Akali Dal-BJP alliance, respectively, has been 36.94% and 39.65%. But in this election, electoral bipolarity, a feature of the political system in the State till the 2017 election, seems to have transitioned to a four-party system. Even the BJP, in fourth place in this election with two seats, is most likely to chart its own course; it has never gained from alliances especially with the Akali Dal (1997-2020), winning only a 6.9% vote share in the last five Assembly elections. In the case of the smaller parties, they have never fared well while contesting on their own. Nor have they been of much help to their allies. The Bahujan Samaj Party, with one seat this time, has had a 4.33% vote share in the last five Assembly elections.

The second notable feature has been the dismal failure of the Congress's gamble to line up behind the leadership of Charanjit Singh Channi (after the ouster of Captain Amarinder Singh) in the face of stiff opposition from Navjot Singh Sidhu, President, Punjab Pradesh Congress Committee. It was a desperate but bold move by the party high command which sensed a sentiment of anti-incumbency and was also aware of the intense internal wranglings within the Punjab Congress.

In choosing Mr. Channi, a Dalit Sikh, the party defied, in a way, the age-old asymmetrical social basis of political power in the State that has been in favour of the numerically strong, landowning Jat Sikhs. Most of the State's Chief Ministers have been from the community since the formation of Sikh majority Punjabi Suba.

The Congress leadership might have factored in that Dalits, who constitute 31.94% of the State's population, would help it win. Dalits constitute more than 30% of the population in 55 out of 117 (34 reserved) Assembly constituencies in the State. But even here, religious and caste divides among Dalits were an obstacle in



the way of en masse voting in favour of Mr. Channi. Interestingly, other parties such as the Akali Dal — which promised a Dalit Deputy Chief Minister — were also looking at the Dalit vote. Rural Sikh votes also remained elusive for the Congress, mainly because of the party's failure to bring relief to farmers. These votes did not go to the Akali Dal either. AAP may have gained votes as its government in Delhi was seen to help protesting farmers at the Delhi border when they were demanding a rollback of the farm laws.

The Congress's second strategy, i.e., to blame the leadership of Captain Amarinder Singh for misgovernance/non-performance, did not find any takers. Even though there was an attempt to portray the government under Mr. Channi to be a new one, public perception was that it was essentially the same old party-government. Moreover, the Channi government had hardly any time before the election to show results for three crucial issues that haunt the State: drugs, sacrilege and the sand, transport, cable mafia. The Channi government made tall promises and big announcements. The Channi government also spent much of its time and energy dealing with inner party challenges and accusations levelled against it by its own party leaders, Navjot Singh Sidhu included.

Striking a chord

AAP's stunning victory — 92 out of 117 seats — is reminiscent of its victory in the Delhi elections in 2015. The sheer scale of its victory, in terms of seats and

vote share (42%), shows its widespread support across castes and communities. There are 39 constituencies in the State where Hindu voters constitute more than 50% of the electorate and AAP has won most of them. So, it is not only rural Sikhs who have extended their support to AAP.

How does one make sense of the landslide? The first factor has been huge anti-incumbency against the Congress and the Akali Dal, the two parties that have shared power at various times in the State over 25 years. This has been the period that saw a shift in the political narrative — from ethno-religious issues to better governance and development. Ironically though, the State has seen a deceleration in terms of economic growth; the first Green Revolution has run its course while the promise of a second one remains on paper. There have been frequent failures of cash crops in the State leading to immense distress for farmers; the Akali Dal, the self-proclaimed 'farmers party', has been unable to find satisfactory solutions. There are only 20 urban constituencies, the rest are overwhelmingly rural. This explains the importance of farmers and the issues related to them in the State.

Core issues in the State

Small- and medium-scale industries that once flourished in Ludhiana and Jalandhar have relocated to power-surplus and better governed neighbouring States such as Himachal Pradesh. The farm sector crisis in what is essentially a one-sector economy State has resulted in massive unemployment.

There is also a social crisis, with synthetic drugs ruining the youth. There have been serious allegations about the complicity of politicians in the sand, transport, cable, liquor and drug mafias. While parties that have come to power have all promised a cleansing, in reality the situation has only worsened. The famed State police force which took on militancy is compromised and politicised. Punjab today is a pale shadow of its former self, when it was once considered to be the 'model State' in terms of governance and progress (especially during the Partap Singh Kairon days).

All these developments have also led to youth losing faith in the future of the State. There is a huge rush among youth to migrate overseas, with many taking huge risks. A failing education system is also making many unemployable when it comes to white collar jobs. Therefore, these burning social and economic issues may have also influenced women voters and the youth to consider voting for AAP this time. Women voters have outnumbered male voters in these and even the last Assembly elections.

Pitching the 'Delhi model'

However, the massive scale of AAP's victory, while a reflection of the anger and the dissatisfaction with the Congress and the Akali Dal, might be more a yearning for change and hope that the AAP leadership would be the right party to cleanse the system — a promise it has made since the 2014 Lok Sabha election. This was also a party marketing its 'Delhi model', with a promise of reforms in the health and education sectors, in turn possibly making even the cynical voter take note.

AAP made course corrections after its blunders in the 2017 elections such as bringing in "outsiders" from Delhi for leadership roles. This time, the party not only projected Bhagwant Mann, a two-time Lok Sabha member and a Jat Sikh, as its chief ministerial candidate but also kept its distance from the Punjabi Sikh diaspora, suspected to be radicals by a segment of voters. Also, AAP leader Arvind Kejriwal seems to have won acceptability as a leader in command in the Punjabi Suba, unlike the last time.

Ashutosh Kumar is Lala Lajpat Rai Chair Professor and Chairperson, Department of Political Science, Panjab University, Chandigarh. Views are personal.

FIVE OBSERVATIONS

MODI MAGIC & SILENT VOTERS

- WHAT DID HAPPEN IN RECENT ASSEMBLY POLLS?**
The BJP has retained power in Uttar Pradesh with a thumping majority. This party has also returned to power in Uttarakhand, Manipur and Goa.
- HOW HAVE PEOPLE VOTED?**
Elections in these states were a subject of intense debate, speculation and surprises. The voters were silent but they changed the political scenario by voting for Narendra Modi's developmental agenda.
- MAJOR SETBACK IN UTTARAKHAND**
The defeat of the chief minister's face of the two national parties Pushkar Singh Dhami of BJP and Harish Rawat of Congress is not only shocking but also indicates that besides their over confidence.
- HUGE SETBACK FOR CONGRESS, MAJOR GAINS FOR AAP IN PUNJAB**
In a major setback to the ruling Congress, Punjab CM Charanjit Singh Channi lost on both his seats. This election belonged to AAP and its CM face Bhagwant Mann, as courtesy the party's win, as well his own.
- WHAT WORKED FOR BJP IN THESE ELECTIONS?**
The historical repeat mandate for the BJP in Uttar Pradesh and Uttarakhand along with the continued endorsement in Manipur and Goa is a testament to the magic of PM Narendra Modi. BJP's victory in four states has raised the question of whether it is impossible to defeat PM Modi.

LETTERBOX

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SRIKUMAR CHATTOPADHYAY HIGHLIGHTS HOW FRESHWATER RESOURCES ARE UNDER STRESS

Water management needs hydro-social approach

The Global Water System Project, which was launched in 2003 as a joint initiative of the Earth System Science Partnership (ESSP) and Global Environmental Change (GEC) programme, epitomises global concern about the human-induced transformation of fresh water and its impact on the earth system and society. The fact is that freshwater resources are under stress, the principal driver being human activities in their various forms.

In its fourth assessment report in 2007, the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) highlighted the link between societal vulnerability and modifications of water systems. It is globally estimated that the gap between demand for and supply of fresh water may reach up to 40% by 2030 if present practices continue.

The formation of the 2030 Water Resource Group in 2008, at the instance of the World Economic Forum, and the World Bank's promotion of the group's activity since 2018, is in recognition of this problem and to help achieve the Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) on water availability and sanitation for all by 2030 (SDG 6). Formally, it is: "to ensure safe drinking water and sanitation for all, focusing on the sustainable management of water resources, wastewater and



ecosystems..." The latest UN World Water Development Report, 2021, titled 'Valuing Water', has laid stress on the proper valuation of water by considering five interrelated perspectives: water sources; water infrastructure; water services; water as an input to production and socio-economic development, and sociocultural values of water.

Designing a comprehensive mix of divergent views about water (along with ecological and environmental issues) held by stake-

holder groups is necessary. In this context, a hydro-social cycle approach provides an appropriate framework. It repositions the natural hydrological cycle in a human-nature interactive structure and considers water and society as part of a historical and relational-dialectical process.

Inter-basin transfer projects

The anthropogenic factors directly influencing a freshwater system are the engineering of river channels, irrigation and other consumptive use of water, widespread land use/land cover change, change in an aquatic habitat, and point and non-point source pollution affecting water quality. The intra- and inter-basin transfer (IBT) of water is a major hydrological intervention to rectify the imbalance in water availability due to naturally prevailing unequal distribution of water resources within a given territory.

There are several IBT initiatives across the world. One recent document indicates that there are 110 water transfer mega projects that have either been executed (34 projects) or being planned/under construction (76 projects) across the world. The National River Linking Project of India is one of those under construction. These projects, if executed, will create artificial water courses that are more

than twice the length of the earth's equator and will transfer 1,910 km³ of water annually. They will reengineer the hydrological system with considerable local, regional and global ramifications. Based on a multi-country case study analysis, the World Wildlife Fund/World Wide Fund for Nature (2009) has suggested a cautious approach and the necessity to adhere to sustainability principles set out by the World Commission on Dams while taking up IBT projects.

Some of the key assumptions

Recently, inter-basin transfer of water drew attention in India due to a provision made in Budget 2022 for the Ken Betwa river link project which is a part of the National River Linking project (mooted in 1970 and revived in 1999). This decision raises larger questions about hydrological assumptions and the use and the management of freshwater resources in the country. We shall ponder over some of them.

Sri Kumar Chattopadhyay is ICSSR National Fellow, Gulati Institute of Finance and Taxation, and former Scientist, National Centre for Earth Science Studies, Thiruvananthapuram. Views are personal.

BOOKS: REVIEW

Land reform policy needs total review, says book

Current land usage policy and the acquisition process in India are big impediments to growth and development and radical reforms are the need of the hour, says a book by entrepreneur R P Gupta.

"Most of the farming land is fragmented into small plots. Average land holding is perhaps less than 5 acres and such small farms result in poor productivity," he writes in "Turn Around India".

"Laws should be flexible for merger or exchange of the land without any charge. Even land ceiling laws also need review," Gupta suggests.

"Land usage policy and the acquisition process in India are big impediments to growth and

development of the nation. Several big projects, may they be private or public, are trapped for land acquisition," he says.

"The forest and tribal land doesn't permit productive usage of mineral resources. The development of the tribal belt is stagnant due to restrictions on the private transfer of tribal land," he adds.

According to Gupta, India must resolve these problems through appropriate policies and regulations in public interest.

"That will boost overall investment, particularly in infrastructure, core sector, mineral and energy and thus boost GDP growth and reduce poverty ratio. However, such reforms need strong political will at the central

The forest and tribal land doesn't permit productive usage of mineral resources. The development of the tribal belt is stagnant due to restrictions on the private transfer of tribal land

and state levels," he says. Gupta also stresses that we cannot afford to lose mineral wealth. There should be a reverse restriction on the usage of major mineral bearing land for other purposes, as applicable for coal, he says.

"We must also amend the forest dweller act, which creates an



Turn around India
By R P Gupta
Himalaya
Publishing House
445 pages; Rs400

"Such old dated laws have deprived the tribal population from availing benefits of the economy and kept them in poverty. India must amend these laws and fetch prosperity in the tribal belt," he suggests.

Writing is not new to R P Gupta. He has several articles to his credit in different magazines of repute. But this endeavour of his is unique in many ways. He has boldly accepted to face hard realities of life and mustered courage to diligently bell the proverbial cat in a very dignified style by writing this book.

He is fairly optimistic that there is still ample scope to bring the Indian economy on the fast track. All that is needed is awareness and commitment among the people and positive attitude and team spirit in the government. The book has also stressed on the proactive role of the politicians, bureaucracy and media to realise our economic objectives.

ALSO READ | HIGHER COST, SUPPLY SIDE CONSTRAINTS DENT FEB AUTO SALES * P7 | 'INFLATION REDUCES VALUE OF MONEY AND PURCHASING POWER OF MONEY' * P7

NEWSBRIEFS

SpiceJet, Indigo shares fly as Centre allows scheduled int'l flights

NEW DELHI: Shares of SpiceJet and Indigo rose sharply on Wednesday after the Centre's announcement to lift the ban on scheduled international flights. India will allow resumption of scheduled commercial international passenger services from March 27. Last month, India's civil aviation regulator had extended the ban on scheduled international commercial flights till "further orders". India had banned the operation of international flights on March 23, 2020 to contain and control the spread of Covid-19. Flight restrictions, however, were later eased under air bubble arrangement with certain countries. At 12.59 p.m., shares of SpiceJet traded at Rs 59.90, up 4.9 per cent, whereas Indigo at Rs 1,716, up 7.4 per cent. **AGENCIES**

E-commerce, pharma to revive demand for packaging paper: CRISIL

NEW DELHI: India will allow resumption of scheduled commercial international passenger services from March 27. "After having recognised the increased vaccination coverage across the globe and in consultation with the stakeholders, the Government of India has decided to resume scheduled commercial international passenger services to or from India from March 27, 2022," an official communique said on Tuesday. "The suspension of scheduled commercial international passenger services to or from India, thus, stands extended only upto 2359 hrs IST on March 26, 2022 and air bubble arrangements shall accordingly be extended to this extent only." **AGENCIES**

Co-branding at railway stations to generate revenue

NEW DELHI: With the intention to generate non-fare revenue, the Railway Board has decided to allow co-branding, station branding or semi-naming rights at railway stations.

Following this, the names of brand or logos of government and reputed business houses can be prefixed or suffixed to the names of railway stations. However, such an activity is a form of advertisement only. As per a letter of the Railway Board, addressed to the general managers of all the railway zones of the country, the prefix or suffix of the brand name or logo to the name of the railway station and such brand name shall not exceed two words.

Co-branding shall not be permitted on railway tickets, PRS, websites, route maps, in announcements through public-address systems and on rail display networks where the name of the railway station shall be its original only.

In order to maximise revenue from co-branding of stations, this co-branding shall be permitted at all the places in the station building area wherever the name of the railway station is displayed.



In addition to the prefix or suffix indicated above, the licensee may be given advertising rights for its brand in the circulating area, subject to conditions of the out of home policy, and availability of space. However, the quantum or location of space to be allotted in the circulating area shall be decided by the respective divisions, keeping in view the availability of space, station layout, facade and aesthetics. In addition to the prefix or suffix indicated above, the licensee may be given advertising rights for its brand in the circulating area, subject to conditions of the out of home policy, and availability of space.

However, the letter mentions that due care should be taken so that prefixing or suffixing does not adversely impact clear visibility of station name that is essential for train operations.

It also comes with a rider that heritage buildings and in railway stations named after eminent personalities, national leaders, martyrs, etc. will be excluded from this change of policy. **AGENCIES**

Raids at industrialist Piyush Jain's premises in Kanpur concludes

THIRUVANANTHAPURAM: The Centre has ruled out the participation of the Kerala Government in the strategic disinvestment process of the state capital city headquartered HLL, a mini-ratna public sector undertaking. Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan said the weekly cabinet meeting held here has entrusted him to take up the matter with Prime Minister Narendra Modi. The Central government gave its "in-principle" approval for HLL's disinvestment in July which sought bids for a 100 per cent stake sale in the company by January 31, 2022.



It was to this the Kerala government evinced interest and decided to participate in the tender process, but the Centre in its latest order ruled out state government or other PSEs to take part in the tendering process. Established in 1966, HLL has come a long way as part of the implementation of the Family Planning Programme of Government of India under the Ministry of Health & Family Welfare. From a contraceptive manufacturing company to a total healthcare company, in its growth trajectory, it has won numerous accolades not only from the government but at international level too.

At present there are close to 10,000 employees in various categories at HLL which include 3,900 direct employees and the rest of contract third party and laboratory staff. **AGENCIES**

100% women-owned industrial park begins operations in Hyderabad

NEW DELHI: India's first 100 per cent women-owned FLO Industrial Park in Hyderabad began operations on Tuesday, the international women's day. Promoted by FICCI Ladies Organisation (FLO) in partnership with the Telangana government, the park announced commencement of operations by 25 women-owned and operated units representing 16 diverse green category industries.



The 50A acre FLO Industrial Park has been established with an investment of Rs 250 crores is the flagship project and first of its kind at a national level with participation open to chapter members, and the national members of FLO. The park has already garnered tremendous interest from women entrepreneurs to run and operate their business, FLO said.

The industrial park conceptualised in 2013 exclusively for women was formally inaugurated by Telangana's Industry Minister KT Rama Rao in the presence of FLO national President, Ujjwala Singhania, FLO Hyderabad Chairperson, Uma Chigurupati, FLO National

Governing Body Member, Jyotsna Angara and others. From the electronic sector to packaging, medical devices, wellness, engineering, and food processing, the park is at its core to demonstrate the power of women in the industry. FLO and its members infused significant investment to build this park, wherein the government provided the roads, electricity, water, sewerage, and sub-station. The park has also created amenities to offer a home environment for women by keeping in mind the necessities of working women entrepreneurs, including designing creches and playschools. Rama Rao urged the entrepreneurs to

think big, start to think about emerging technologies and focus on aerospace, defence, food processing, and forge global partnerships. He promised another 100 acres for the expansion of FLO women industrial park, subject to the park focus on novel products. He also offered additional 10 per cent subsidy for women entrepreneurs. Principal Secretary, IT, Jayesh Ranjan, applauded the unique aspect of the FLO Park as it has a very diversified set of industry from manufacturing to services all in green areas. Creating opportunities across spectrum is another area the government will be keen to embark upon. **AGENCIES**

After SKorea, India too needs law to ensure fairer app economy: ADIF

NEW DELHI: As South Korea set an example in curbing abuse of dominance by Apple and Google app stores, New Delhi-based Alliance of Digital India Foundation (ADIF) on Wednesday urged the government to create similar legislative reforms in the country to ensure a fairer app economy. South Korea's Cabinet has approved a revised bill that would ban app store operators from forcing developers to use their own in-app payment systems. Under the revised enforcement decree, app store operators will have to pay up to 2 per cent of their revenue for forcing developers to use their own in-app payment systems, and 1 per cent for delays in reviewing apps, according to the Korea Communications Commission (KCC). "It



is an important step towards creating a level-playing field for the startup and developer communities. We also hope that it sets the right precedent to be followed in the future by other nations looking to build a competitive app economy," said Sijo Kuruvilla George, Executive Director, ADIF. The South Korean 'enforcement ordinance' will be put into effect on March 15. In India, the Competition Commission of India (CCI) has been investigating both

Google and Apple for their abuse of power. "However, the fact that Apple has blatantly ignored the order from Netherlands' top competition regulator and has instead chosen to pay fines rather than do anything to change its policies, highlights the urgent need and importance of legislative reforms," said the ADIF. In August 2021, the South Korean National Assembly amended the Telecommunications Business Act in order to prohibit dominant app store operators from coercing developers to use their proprietary payment systems. Google and Apple, with a combined market share of 99 per cent, currently dominate mobile operating systems and act as gatekeepers to the app ecosystem. **AGENCIES**

First ethanol refinery to produce 30K litre from bamboo to come up in India



NEW DELHI: The world's first ethanol production refinery project from bamboo with a daily capacity of 30,000 litres is to be built in India, following an agreement signed between a Hyderabad-based company and a farmers' company in Maharashtra's Latur.

This will not just offer ethanol at competitive prices but also provide livelihood opportunities to farmers who can grow bamboo for the plant. Also, at present, the Centre has committed to blend 20 per cent ethanol with petrol by 2025. This creates a huge opportunity for using bamboo-based ethanol. The agreement for the ethanol refinery project was signed on Friday in Hyderabad between Nagarjuna Group, Hyderabad and Lodha Bamboo Industries in Latur district between Dr Banibrata Pande for Nagarjuna Group and Pasha Patel on behalf of the Lodha Bamboo Industries. "This refinery project will be the first in the world to produce 30,000 litres of ethanol per day from bamboo," Patel, a farmers' leader and former member of Legislative Council, said. The project is the realisation of efforts over the last four years to promote bamboo as the key resource for livelihood security for farmers and global climate resilience. **AGENCIES**

Fair market regulator CCI is 'spineless, toothless': CAIT

NEW DELHI: Coming down heavily on the Competition Commission of India (CCI) for dropping investigation against Amazon for alleged violations pertaining to selling private labels on its portal, the Confederation of All India Traders (CAIT) termed the fair market regulator as a "spineless toothless body" incapable of discharging its duties. The traders' body also termed the CCI as an "Anti-Trust Regulator".

"Issues kept pending for a longer and indefinite period and by that time, the gravity of the issue already caused damage to the affected party. The CAIT has demanded an in-depth study of the working of the CCI and remedial measures to make it a more efficient and accountable regulator like TRAI, SEBI" the traders' body said in a statement. It is highly unfortunate that



the CCI has dropped such an important investigation against law offender Amazon after starting a suo-moto case based on a global news agency's report which was published on October 13, 2021 and it took suo-motu cognisance on October 21 passing an order seeking details from Amazon, said CAIT's National President B.C. Bhartia and Secretary General Praveen Khandelwal in a joint statement. The joint statement further added that the agency report was "absolutely unambiguous and

crystal clear" highlighting how Amazon was pushing its own private label business when it was supposed to perform only as a marketplace as per FDI norms.

"We believe that CCI did not ask the agency to substantiate its charges referred to in its published article and an ex parte order was passed by the CCI which violates the norms of principle of natural justice."

"We are at a loss to understand why the government and government agencies are keeping a complete silence on the daylight violations of policy, rules and laws by Amazon and others."

Indian traders are extremely perturbed and shocked that the retail ecosystem has been left vulnerable simply because regulator CCI has failed to discharge its duties, it said. "The CCI was supposed

to ensure that interests of all stakeholders must be protected but over the last 5-7 years, foreign multinational giants have steamrolled their way through the Indian market, violating all laws in spirit and creating unhealthy business environment and CCI has been a mere spectator till date not able to rein in the foreign players."

Thus, the statement said it is the government's duty to ensure that 80 million traders of India do not perish against the onslaught of foreign retail players.

"The Department for Promotion of Industry and Internal Trade (DPIIT) is primarily responsible to safeguard India's internal trade but it is a matter of grave concern that Indian traders are fast losing faith in the efficacy of DPIIT as well as there is no sign of early roll out of long pending e-commerce policy." **AGENCIES**

NLMC to be setup for monetisation of CPSE's surplus land, buildings



NEW DELHI: A National Land Monetisation Corporation (NLMC) will be set up to undertake the monetisation of surplus land and building assets of Central Public Sector Enterprises (CPSEs) and other government agencies. Accordingly, the decision was taken by the Union cabinet to set up NLMC as a

wholly owned Government of India company with an initial authorised share capital of Rs 5,000 crore and paid-up share capital of Rs 150 crore.

The decision was based on a proposal made as a Budget Announcement for 2021-22. "With monetisation of non-core assets, the government would be able to generate

substantial revenues by monetising unused and under-used assets," an official communique said. At present, CPSEs hold considerable surplus, unused and under-used non-core assets in the nature of land and buildings. "For CPSEs undergoing strategic disinvestment or closure, monetisation of these surplus land and non-core assets is important to unlock their value. NLMC will support and undertake monetisation of these assets." "This will also enable productive utilisation of these under-utilised assets to trigger private sector investments, new economic activities, boost local economy and generate financial resources for economic and social infrastructure." **AGENCIES**

No new taxes, MP gov't presents Rs 2,79,237 cr budget

BHOPAL: The Madhya Pradesh government on Wednesday presented the annual budget of Rs 2,79,237 crore for the financial year 2022-23 focusing on infrastructure development and employment generation.

The annual budget which was presented with the concept of 'Atmanirbhar Madhya Pradesh' saw a fiscal deficit of Rs 55,111 crore and more importantly, no new taxes have been imposed. Finance Minister Jagdish Deora announced the allocation of Rs 370 crore for a statue of Adi Shankaracharya, an eighth-century spiritual leader who consolidated the Advaita Vedanta doctrine and contributed to the unification of Hinduism by setting up four monastic institutions across India. The Finance Minister said that the



government has decided to start a new scheme for cow protection and its welfare in the state, for which Rs 150 crore has been allocated in the annual budget. "Tribal Development Corporation will be constituted to provide new job opportunities to tribals. Similarly, a provision

of Rs 40 crore has been made for Scheduled Caste Finance Development Corporation and Rs 50 crore for Other Backward Classes."

Deora said. He said two new industrial parks will be set up in Bhopal apart from solar plants in Sagar, Ujjain, and Shajapur to promote green

energy. "To promote electric vehicles, 217 charging stations will be set up in Bhopal, Indore, and Jabalpur," he said.

Deora said the government is working for the welfare of its employees and that the dearness allowance has been increased from 20 to 31 per cent.

He added the government will promote organic farming through a new scheme and storage facilities for about 1 lakh MT of horticulture produce will be developed.

Opposition Congress earlier staged a protest in the well of the House before Deora's speech.

During over an hour-long budget speech, Congress MLAs kept raising issues such as rising unemployment, SC/ST, OBC scholarship, atrocities against them, Narmada river conservation, **AGENCIES**

Indian non-life industry grew by Rs 814 crore in February

CHENNAI: Indian general insurance industry closed February 2022, with a gross premium of Rs 16,560.99 crore, up by Rs 814 crore over the corresponding period last year. According to the Insurance Regulatory and Development Authority of India (IRDAI), general insurers booked a total premium of Rs 16,560.99 crore last month as against Rs 15,746.99 crore earned in February 2021.

During the period under review, the 25 member composite non-life insurers had earned Rs 14,173.59 crore as against Rs 13,158.86 crore earned in February 2021.

Industry leader and government owned New India Assur-



ance Company Ltd earned Rs 2,245.03 crore.

While government-owned The Oriental Insurance

Company Ltd had a marginal growth, United India Insurance Company Ltd and National Insurance Company Ltd registered negative growth during the period under review. The five stand alone health insurers had earned Rs 1,831.63 crore up from Rs 1,406.32 crore premium last month with Star Health & Allied Insurance Company Ltd leading the pack earning Rs 1,025.70 crore.

The two specialised insurers - ECGC Ltd and Agricultural Insurance Company of India Ltd - logged negative growth while earning Rs 555.77 crore last month down from Rs 1,181.80 crore earned during February 2021. **AGENCIES**

ALSO READ | IPL 2022: CSK STARTS TRAINING IN SURAT * P8 | GLOBAL COVID-19 DEATH TOLL TOPS 6 MN: WHO * P8

Ducati Scrambler Tribute 1100 PRO launched in India

NEW DELHI: Luxury motorcycle brand Ducati on Thursday launched its new motorcycle Scrambler 1100 Tribute PRO at Rs 12,89,000 in the Indian market. The Ducati Scrambler 1100 Tribute PRO is a special motorcycle that was created to pay homage to the history of the air-cooled twin-cylinder engine, fifty years after it was first introduced on a Ducati, in 1971 with the Ducati 750 GT. It also features a unique "Giallo Ocra" livery with a black frame and sub frame along with a brown seat, the company said. "The Scrambler 1100 Tribute PRO stays true to the Scrambler DNA while also paying homage to the history of the Borgo Panigale through the unique 'Giallo Ocra' livery. Our first launch this year, the Scrambler 1100 Tribute PRO is a distinctive offering celebrating the iconic air-cooled L-Twin engine and it's great that Ducatis from India can also get their hands on this exclusive edition," Bipul Chandra, Managing Director, Ducati India said in a statement. **AGENCIES**



India's manufacturing sector to take a hit as costs of commodities rise

NEW DELHI: India's manufacturing sector is expected to take a hit as commodities' costs have risen due to the ongoing Russian-Ukrainian crisis. At present, international prices of crude oil, natural gas, coal, nickel, copper, aluminium, titanium, palladium have risen to multi-year high levels. The raw material prices will impact the sector which was already reeling under expensive commodity costs due to rise in their international demand and supply constraints. Moreover, India is a major importer of these precious as well as industrial commodities. "Due to higher crude prices, we may see higher freight charges, which will impact perishable and non-perishable commodities," IIFL Securities VP, Research, Anuj Gupta said. "Services and the manufacturing sectors may be impacted badly due to higher prices. Higher commodity inflation is expected to impact India's

GDP growth rate." Besides, lower manufacturing growth will have a direct bearing on the country's GDP growth as well as job creation. "We had expected Indian GDP to grow by 8 per cent in FY2023, boosted by a low base in H1, albeit contingent on the GoI's budgeted Capex kicking-off early," said Aditi Nayar, Chief Economist, ICRA. "However, protracted geopolitical tensions and high commodity prices pose large downside risks, with margin compression set to squeeze value added growth during the period of the conflict." Earlier, the seasonally adjusted IHS Markit India Manufacturing Purchasing Managers' Index (PMI) report for February noted a further increase in average input costs faced by Indian manufacturers. It said that purchase price inflation was sharp, but softened to a six-month low. Part of this additional cost burden was passed on in the form of higher selling charges, though the rate of increase was modest. "In terms of commodities, there is a great deal of reliance on Russia for aluminium, copper, and other precious metals, and supplies of these commodities will be impacted. Aside from that, there is an impact on logistics as a result of the war," said Kshitij Purohit, Lead of Commodities and Currencies Capital Via Global Research. **AGENCIES**

Index (PMI) report for February noted a further increase in average input costs faced by Indian manufacturers. It said that purchase price inflation was sharp, but softened to a six-month low. Part of this additional cost burden was passed on in the form of higher selling charges, though the rate of increase was modest. "In terms of commodities, there is a great deal of reliance on Russia for aluminium, copper, and other precious metals, and supplies of these commodities will be impacted. Aside from that, there is an impact on logistics as a result of the war," said Kshitij Purohit, Lead of Commodities and Currencies Capital Via Global Research. **AGENCIES**

Land tax, fair value, vehicle taxes go up in Kerala, liquor left out

NEW DELHI: Presenting his second and the first full budget of the second Pinarayi Vijayan, State Finance Minister K.N. Balagopal on Friday decided to increase the land tax, fair value of land and vehicle taxes, but the biggest relief came for the tippers as no fresh tax was imposed on liquor.

Balagopal said that it is required to revise the basic land tax which is the central element in land records management.

"The basic land tax would be revised by the introduction of a new slab. The rates would be increased in a calibrated manner in all the slabs. The fair value of land is not in tune with the current market values in many areas of our state. A one-time increase of 10 per cent will be implemented in fair values across all segments. It is expected to result in additional revenue of about Rs 200 crore," said Balagopal. One-time motor vehicle tax



The basic land tax would be revised by the introduction of a new slab. The rates would be increased in a calibrated manner in all the slabs

15 years) has been increased by 50 per cent. In addition, Green tax will also be levied on the following categories of diesel vehicles except motor cycles, 3-wheelers, private motor vehicles, medium motor vehicles, heavy motor vehicles and other diesel vehicles," added Balagopal. With the price of liquor and beer already at the highest level compared to other states, Balagopal has left it untouched, bringing a sigh of relief for the tippers. **AGENCIES**

on motor cycles costing up to 2 lakhs is increased by 1 per cent. The basic land tax would be revised by the introduction of a new slab. The rates would be increased in a calibrated manner in all the slabs. The fair value of land is not in tune with the current market values in many areas of our state. A one-time increase of 10 per cent will be implemented in fair values across all segments.

It is expected to result in additional revenue of about Rs 200 crore. Balagopal said that a 'green tax' based on the Central Government's scrapping policy to address the issues of pollution due to old vehicles, is also necessary to discourage the use of diesel vehicles and encourage electric vehicles. "The green tax imposed on the old vehicles (above

NEWS BRIEFS

Centre invites applications for drone PFI scheme

NEW DELHI: The Central government on Thursday invited applications from the drone industry for the sector's production linked incentive (PLI) scheme. The total incentive in the scheme is Rs 120 crore spread over three financial years, and the sum is nearly double the combined turnover of all domestic drone manufacturers in FY 2020-21. Besides, the PLI rate is 20 per cent of the value addition. "The value addition shall be calculated as the annual sales revenue from drones and drone components (net of GST) minus the purchase cost (net of GST) of drone and drone components," an official communique said late on Thursday night. "Minimum value addition norm at 40 per cent of net sales for drones and drone components instead of 50 per cent, an exceptional treatment for drones." Furthermore, it said that PLI for a manufacturer shall be capped at 25 per cent of total annual outlay. "This will allow widening the number of beneficiaries." **AGENCIES**

CCI approves acquisition of L&T Investment Management by HSBC AMC



NEW DELHI: The Competition Commission of India (CCI) has approved 100 per cent share capital acquisition of L&T Investment Management by HSBC Asset Management. "The proposed combination relates to acquisition of 100 per cent equity share capital of L&T AMC by HSBC AMC from L&T Finance Holdings (L&T sponsor or seller) and its nominees," the CCI said. "The acquisition of equity shares of the 'Target' falls under Section 5(a) of the Competition Act, 2002," it added. At present, HSBC AMC is the asset management entity for operating the day-to-day

functioning of HSBC Mutual Fund schemes. It is responsible for managing investments of money pooled-in through investments in HSBC MF. HSBC AMC is a wholly-owned indirect subsidiary of HSBC Holdings PLC (HSBC Group) and belongs to the HSBC Group of companies. On the other hand, L&T AMC is the asset management entity for operating the day-to-day functioning of L&T Mutual Fund schemes. It is responsible for managing the investment of money pooled-in through investments made in L&T MF. L&T AMC is a wholly-owned subsidiary of L&T Sponsor. **AGENCIES**

India's GDP growth expected at 7.8% next fiscal: CRISIL

NEW DELHI: India's gross domestic product (GDP) growth is expected to come in at 7.8 per cent in fiscal 2023, said ratings agency Crisil. According to the ratings agency, any potential upside due to the early end of a mild third wave of Covid-19 infections will be offset by the ongoing geopolitical strife stemming from Russia's invasion of Ukraine. Currently, the geo-political crisis is creating a dampening effect on global growth and pushing up oil and commodity prices. The agency said that risks to growth are tilted to the downside. "Spiking commodity prices, especially of crude oil, will have a bearing on India's macros, including the current account deficit and inflation. These would create headwinds to growth. The good part is, the health of the financial sector is on the mend, with better capitalisation, profitability and asset quality," said Amish Mehta, Managing Director & CEO, Crisil at 'India Outlook, Fiscal 2023' event. "That, and enhanced public spending on infrastructure, private investments driven by the Production



Linked Incentive scheme, and a chunk of green capex should deliver some good-quality tailwinds." Besides, the ratings agency said that average Consumer Price Index (CPI)-based inflation, will stay firm at 5.4 per cent next fiscal— if the price of crude oil averages \$85-90 per barrel -- and takes into account the excise duty cuts announced last year. However, it cited that upside risks will build if the geopolitical strife prolongs, keeping oil and commodity prices higher for longer. When the price of crude oil averaged \$110 per barrel between fiscals 2012 and 2014,

inflation was in double digits. Furthermore, the agency pointed out that private consumption, which is the largest component of demand and has been the slowest to recover from the pandemic, will also face headwinds from high inflation. "We believe the fiscal policy will need to be deployed more aggressively than envisaged in the Union Budget for next fiscal. This can be done by increasing allocation for employment-generating schemes and food subsidy, and cutting duty on petroleum products," said Dharmakirti Joshi, Chief Economist, Crisil. **AGENCIES**

PFRDA pension schemes' subscriber base crosses 5.07 cr

NEW DELHI: A healthy rise in corporate sector subscribers took the overall subscription base of various pension schemes regulated by the PFRDA to reach 507.22 lakh as of end-February 2022. According to the Pension Fund Regulatory and Development Authority (PFRDA), the number of subscribers in various pension schemes rose to 507.22 lakh, as of February 2022, from 414.70 lakh reported for February 2021, showing a year-on-year (YoY) growth of 22.31 per cent. Besides, the PFRDA data showed a YoY rise of 25 per cent in corporate sector subscribers to 13.80 lakh as of last month, from 11.04 lakh reported for February 2021. Furthermore, the 'All Citizen Sector' category subscription rose to 37.70 lakh on YoY basis to 21.33 lakh. "The number of subscribers in various schemes under the National Pension System (NPS) rose to 507.23 lakh by end-February 2022 from 414.70 lakh in February 2021 showing a year-on-year (YoY) increase of 22.31 per cent," the PFRDA said. "As on 28th February 2022, total pension assets under management stood at Rs



717,467 crore showing a YoY growth of 28.21 per cent." The NPS was initially notified for Central government employees recruits from January 1, 2004 and subsequently adopted by almost all state governments for their employees. It was later extended to all Indian citizens and to corporates for their employees. **AGENCIES**

BIS to develop standards for new soy products

NEW DELHI: The Bureau of Indian Standards (BIS) is in the process of developing new Indian standards for new soy products, especially in view of its increasing acceptance as a health food. With the increasing health consciousness among the general people, the use of soya beans is getting acceptance in the form of textured vegetable protein (popularly known as soy 'vadi' or soy nuggets), soy milk, tofu, soy dahi, etc. In order to maintain the quality and safety of these soy products, physical, chemical, and microbiological parameters and their test methods are standardised. "BIS is in process of developing new Indian Standards for soy products covering new category products. A request to this effect has been made by ICAR-Central Institute of Agricultural Engineering (ICAR-CIAE), Bhopal," a release from the Ministry of Consumer Affairs, Food & Public Distribution said. BIS has already published seven Indian Standards for soy products including edible medium-fat soya flour, edible low-fat soya flour, edible full-fat soya flour, soymilk (non-dairy product), soy nuts, soy butter, and soy amrakhand. The new products list for which Indian Standards are proposed to be made anew includes soy curd, soy nuggets, soy-based extruded snacks, soy chakka and soy shrikhand, soy muffins, soy sattu, soy biscuits and tofu (soy paneer). **AGENCIES**

Economy recovers, set to grow by 12.1% in 2021-2022

NEW DELHI: The Maharashtra economy is in the pink of health and slated to grow by 12.1 per cent in 2021-2022, surging ahead from the -8 per cent (minus-eight per cent) recorded in 2020-2021 at the height of the Covid-19 pandemic, as per the state Economic Survey. The state's Gross State Domestic Produce (GSDP) growth will be higher than that of the Indian economy at 8.9 per cent, with the services sector set to grow from 13.50 per cent (against 9.0 per cent previous year), followed by industry sector at 11.90 per cent (against -11.3 per cent), and agriculture



& allied sectors to grow by 4.4 per cent (against 11.7 per cent). As per the advance estimates, the nominal GSDP for 2020-2021 is Rs 27,11,685 crore (against Rs 27,34,552 crore in 2019-2020), the real GSDP is Rs 18,89,307

crore for 2020-2021 (against Rs 20,43,983 crore for 2019-2020). The state's per capita income for 2020-2021 is Rs 193,121 against Rs 196,100 during 2019-2020, which is expected to touch Rs 225,073 for 2021-2022, according to advance estimates, said the Economic Survey. The state's revenue receipts stood at Rs 3,68,987 crore for 2021-2022 (Budget Estimates) against Rs 2,89,498 crore during 2020-2021 (Revised Estimates). The tax and non-tax revenue including central grants are Rs 2,85,534 crore (BE-2021-2022) and Rs 83,453 crore. Respectively, and the actual revenue receipts during April-November 2021 were Rs 180,954 crore (49 per cent of BE). The state's revenue expenditure is Rs 379,213 crore (2021-2022 BE) against Rs 335,675 crore (2020-2021 RE). According to the BE (2021-2022), the share of capital receipts in total receipts is 23.8 per cent and capital expenditure in the total expenditure is 21.7 per cent, and the share of development expenditure in the revenue expenditure is 68.1 per cent (2020-2021 RE). **AGENCIES**

Increase in registration cost, market value slows down home sales in Hyd

HYDERABAD: Increase in property registration costs and market value has slowed down home sales in Hyderabad. According to real estate consultancy firm Knight Frank India, upward revision in registration/market value effective for the second time in financial year 2022 caused apartment sales registration volumes to drop 25 per cent year-on-year in February 2022. The monthly residential property registrations in Hyderabad stood at 5,146 units in February 2022. The Hyderabad residential market includes four districts -- Hyderabad, Medchal-Malkajgiri, Rangareddy and Sangareddy. The rise in registration costs



has hit the less than Rs 25 lakh category the most, as sales registrations in this category reduced significantly to a mere 844 units in February 2022 as against a much robust 2,888 units in February 2021. According to the Knight Frank report, 69 per cent of residential sales registered during February 2022 occurred in the under Rs 50 lakh ticket-size category, as compared to 76 per cent in

and the steep fall in its share accounted for the lower volume of sales registrations in February 2022. The share of sales registrations of all other ticket-size segments stayed stable or grew marginally in YoY terms in February 2022. Within this category, demand in the less than Rs 25 lakh ticket-size remained weak at a mere 16 per cent in February 2022, compared to 42 per cent in February 2021. Traditionally, this extremely price-sensitive segment constitutes the highest sales registrations in the Hyderabad market

SUN Mobility appoints Anant Badjatya as new India CEO

NEW DELHI: EV infrastructure provider SUN Mobility on Thursday announced to appoint Anant Badjatya as the CEO for its India business. An engineer from NIT Durgapur and an alumnus of INSEAD France, he served as Group CEO with Stallion Group, a diversified conglomerate in West Africa with interests in automotive assembly and distribution. "We are confident Anant will surely lead SUN Mobility into the next phase of growth and help us in our aim to position the company as an industry leader in the Electric Vehicle energy infrastructure space", said Chetan Maini, Co-Founder and Vice-Chairman, SUN Mobility. Founded in 2017, SUN Mobility has successfully deployed 65 swap points in more than 15 cities in India, resulting in more than 700,000 rides and powering 15 million kms in the country. "The exponential growth in the EV sector, not just alters the way people and goods move today but also gives India the opportunity to emerge as a leader in clean, connected, and shared mobility solutions, charging infrastructure, and to be a pioneer in renewable energy integration

traders of energy and a significant investor in zero-emission technology. With this new funding, SUN Mobility planned to expand its footprint to major cities both by increasing the number of swap points, partnering with various OEMs (original equipment manufacturers), collaborating with various fleet operators and distributors to introduce newer business models, and adding more vehicles to its ever-expanding mobility-as-a-service (MaaS) offering. It should be mentioned here that Founded in 2017, SUN Mobility has successfully deployed 65 swap points in more than 15 cities in India, resulting in more than 700,000 rides and powering 15 million kms in the country. **AGENCIES**

Debasish Panda to be IRDAI Chairman

NEW DELHI: More than 11 months after the post fell vacant, the Central government on Friday decided to appoint Debasish Panda, former Secretary, Department of Financial Services, as the Chairman of the Insurance Regulatory and Development Authority of India (IRDAI). The IRDAI Chairman's post has been vacant since May. It is also not known whether the government is waiting for some bureaucrat to retire so that he/she can be accommodated in IRDAI, The Appointments Committee of the Cabinet has approved the appointment of Panda as IRDAI chief, initially for a period of three years from the date of assumption of the charge of the post or until further orders, whichever is earlier. Subhash C. Khuntia retired as IRDAI chief in early May 2021 and the government didn't fill up the post after that. It was then said the post was kept vacant to accommodate Panda who retired in January 2022. "The IRDAI Chairman's post has been vacant since May. It is also not known whether the government is waiting for some bureaucrat to retire so that he/she can be accommodated in IRDAI," an industry official, who did not want to be named, told in October last year. Setting the house in order, working towards its core mission of policyholder's interest, speeding up the new company licensing process, and avoiding micromanagement are some of the important tasks for IRDAI's incoming Chairman, as per a cross section of industry officials. They also said simplification of its regulations, and levelling the playing field are some of the other areas that he should focus on to make IRDAI a vibrant regulatory body. **AGENCIES**

India's Jan 2022 industrial production rises sequentially, YoY

NEW DELHI: India's industrial output rose on a sequential as well as on a year-on-year basis in January 2022, official data showed on Friday. The Index of Industrial Production (IIP) for January 2022 rose by 1.3 per cent from a rise of only 0.7 per cent reported for December 2021. Similarly, the production rate was higher on a year-on-year basis. In January 2021, the IIP had contracted by 0.6 per cent. "For the month of January 2022, the 'Quick Estimates of Index of Industrial Production' (IIP) with base 2011-12 stands at 138.4," said the Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation. "The Indices of Industrial Production for the Mining, Manufacturing and Electricity sectors for the month of January 2022 stand at 124.7, 138.1 and 165.6, respectively." On a YoY basis, the mining excavation output grew by 2.8 per cent from (-) 2.4 per cent in January 2021. The manufacturing production rose by 1.1 per cent



from (-) 0.9 per cent, however, electricity generation rose at a slower rate of 0.9 per cent from 5.5 per cent. Among the major use-based segments, the January data, on a YoY basis, showed that manufacturing of primary goods grew by 1.6 per cent from 0.7 per cent, whereas capital goods production fell by 1.4 per cent from (-) 9 per cent, and intermediate goods increased at a slower rate of 0.9 per cent from 2 per cent. Similarly, the production of infrastructure or construction goods rose by 5.4 per cent from 2.3 per cent. However, consumer durables' production degrew by 3.3 per cent from a fall of (-) 0.1 per cent and the sub-segment of consumer non-durables rose by 2.1 per cent from (-) 5.4 per cent. "The industrial sector escaped relatively unscathed from the third wave... While this mild pickup in headline IIP growth admittedly benefitted from the base effect, in MoM terms, industrial output remained unchanged in January 2022 despite the Omicron-related restrictions, with higher mining and electricity output absorbing a muted downturn in manufacturing," said Aditi Nayar, Chief Economist, ICRA. **AGENCIES**

Tourism gets fat allocation in Kerala budget

THIRUVANANTHAPURAM: Kerala Tourism Minister P.A. Mohamed Riyas on Friday welcomed the substantial budget allocation of Rs 362.15 crore for planning and implementation of a slew of projects in the tourism sector during 2022-23 in the budget presented by Finance Minister K.N. Balagopal in the Assembly. Riyas said this allocation will impart a great momentum to the post-pandemic travel and hospitality activities in the state. "The budget has made substantial allocations to the development of the tourism sector to take up a slew of initiatives like tourism hubs. The amount allocated in the budget for tourism is Rs 42 crore more than that set for 2021," the minister added. He said the increased allocation will support the revival of the pandemic-hit tourism in the state as the entire spectrum of tourism enterprises, which provide jobs to thousands of people will benefit. The new projects in the pipeline include the launch of cruise tourism connecting



Kovalam, Kollam, Kochi, Bepore, Mangalore and Goa, for which an initial allocation of Rs five crore has been made. A sum of Rs 15 crore has been set apart for transforming the Champions Boat League into an Indian Premier League model. The budget has also allocated Rs 20 crore for interest subvention for an ambitious project to avail a Rs 1,000-crore loan for the rejuvenation and development of the tourism sector. The scheme-wise allocations include Rs 132.14 crore for the "one panchayat-one destination" initiative, Rs 81 crore for marketing strategies and promotional activities, Rs 29.30 crore for training activities in the tourism sector and Rs five crore for setting up caravan parks. Apart from putting the Caravan Tourism initiative firmly on track, the new projects to be implemented include development of 25 eco-friendly tourist hubs in five years, strengthening of the pilgrim circuit and inclusion of marine travel in tourism plans. **AGENCIES**

Indian e-health sector poised to reach \$12 bn in GMV by 2025



NEW DELHI: The e-health sector in India is poised to reach \$9-12 billion in GMV (gross merchandise value) by 2025 and \$40 billion in GMV by 2030, a new report showed on Friday. India's e-health sector witnessed a 47 per cent increase in 2021 in its Net Promoter Score (NPS), suggesting that customers are now more likely to recommend the e-health platforms to their friends and relatives. According to Bengaluru-based market research firm RedSeer, same-day deliveries and cross-selling further characterise the sector's performance. "India's healthtech sector is on an exciting journey of disruption and continues to offer immense value proposition to consumers and businesses alike," said Kushal Bhatnagar, engagement manager, RedSeer. e-pharma dominated the e-health sector, even before Covid. Soon enough, the Covid-induced pandemic worked as a catalyst to trigger growth within this sector, thereby paving the way for a booming e-health landscape that saw an annual growth rate of 51 per cent in 2021. "It's been two years since the Covid-induced pandemic, yet it looks like e-health is here to stay: the eHealth sector continues to create delights, indicating that it could be the new normal for our healthcare industry," the report noted. **AGENCIES**

Higher cost, supply side constraints dent Feb auto sales

NEW DELHI: Higher costs, along with supply side constraints, impacted India's domestic auto sector sales in February 2022 on a year-on-year basis. The sector's February off-take of passenger cars, two-and-three wheelers were lower on a YoY basis. In terms of PVs, challenges pertaining to electronic components' availability lowered production and pulled sales down. The shortage has extended waiting periods and escalated prices. The industry was only able to produce 170,428 units of passenger cars in February 2022 from 181,247 units made in the corresponding period of the



previous year. The data furnished by the Society of Indian Automobile Manufacturers (SIAM) does not include figures from some key players such as Tata Motors. Sales of passenger vehicles fell to 262,984 units in February as compared to 281,380 units sold during the corresponding month of 2021. Segment-wise, a total

of 133,572 passenger cars were sold in the domestic market in February, down from 155,128 units sold in the like period of 2021. As per the data, UV sales stood at 120,122 units from 114,350 units, on the other hand, the off-take of vans declined to 9,290 units from 11,902 units in the year-ago period. Besides, two-wheelers' sales were lower in February 2022 at 1,037,994 units from 1,426,865 units sold in the same month of 2021. Furthermore, three-wheelers' sales during the month under review slipped to 27,039 units from 27,656 units sold during February 2022. **AGENCIES**

Andhra Pradesh's Rs 2.56L cr budget focuses on welfare

AMARAVATI: Andhra Pradesh Finance Minister Buggana Rajendranath on Friday presented the budget for the year 2022-23 with an outlay of Rs 2,56,257 crore, an increase of 11.50 per cent as compared to year 2021-22, and focuses on welfare. The revenue expenditure has been pegged at Rs 2,08,261 crore while the capital expenditure is estimated at Rs 47,996 crore. The estimated revenue deficit is nearly Rs 17,036 crore, up from Rs 5,000 crore during the year 2021-22, while the fiscal deficit is estimated at around Rs 48,724 crore, up from Rs 37,030 crore. The fiscal deficit would be nearly 3.64 per cent of the Gross Domestic State Product (GDSP), whereas the revenue deficit will be nearly 1.27 per cent of the GDSP. Presenting his fourth consecutive budget, the state Fi-



nance Minister allocated the lion's share for social welfare in tune with the policies and priorities of the Y.S. Jagan Mohan Reddy-led government. Top priority has been given to welfare with an allocation of Rs 45,955 crore to various welfare schemes. The budget allocated Rs 69,306.74 crore or 27.05 per cent of the total

outlay for economic services, Rs 1,13,340.20 crore (44.23 per cent) for social services and the rest for general services. For education, Buggana Rajendranath has allocated Rs 30,077 crore while for health the amount has been fixed at Rs 15,384, up from Rs 13,830 crore for financial year 2021-22. **AGENCIES**

Stakeholders urge Centre to announce tourism sector as 'national priority'

NEW DELHI: The Federation of Associations in Indian Tourism and Hospitality, the policy federation of all the national associations representing the complete tourism, travel and hospitality industry of India, has recommended to the Centre to announce the tourism industry as a 'national priority' sector. "Like agriculture has been a national priority of all successive governments and gets vital focus of the Prime Ministers & the Chief Ministers, tourism too can get due national domestic priority if it is declared as such in the National Tourism Policy," the federation said.



Impact of tourism and its footprint across the country is far reaching and in the geographical and cultural fabric across the length and breadth of the country, it said. "If recognised as a national

priority sector it will ensure tourism will focus on channelised domestic investments as such more so needed post this worst 24 months ever (of Covid)." Further, the federation seeks the tourism sector to

be included in the concurrent list of the Constitution. "The constitution rightfully needs to recognise tourism as a joint and collectible responsibility of centre and states to ensure a shared national vision and development, marketing and skilling synergies among all our individual tourism portfolios across states and segments. In addition, to address multiple issues across the central ministries and across states, it suggested that the policy must provide the instruments of multiple inter-ministerial and intra state task forces headed by the secretary of tourism ministry. **AGENCIES**

India's forex reserves rise to over \$631.920 bn

NEW DELHI: India's foreign exchange reserves rose by \$394 million during the week ended March 4. The Reserve Bank of India's forex reserves rose to \$631.920 billion from \$631.527 billion reported for February 25. The country's forex reserves comprise foreign currency assets (FCAs), gold reserves, SDRs, and the country's reserve position with the IMF. On a weekly basis, FCAs, the largest component of the forex reserves, edged higher by \$634 million to \$565.466 billion. However, the value of the country's gold reserves decreased by \$147 million to \$42.320 billion. The SDR value also declined by \$59 million to \$18.981 billion. **AGENCIES**

Pharma stocks surge on positive cues from Nifty healthcare, Cipla up 6%

NEW DELHI: Taking positive cues from Nifty healthcare index, domestic pharma stocks outperformed all other sectoral stocks on Friday, with shares of Cipla leading the pack. Nifty pharma index was the top mover among all the sectoral indices, rallying 2.5 per

cent, while Nifty healthcare rose 2.6 per cent. Outlook for Indian drug exporters turned positive on prospects of firm exports amid the ongoing geo-political scenario, said analysts. Investors buying on dips after the recent correction also somewhat supported the stocks on Friday.

Shares of Cipla settled nearly 6 per cent higher from the previous close at Rs 1,045. Laurus Labs shares rose 4.7 per cent, Sun Pharmaceutical's 3.7 per cent, Torrent Pharma's 1.7 per cent, Dr Reddy's Labs 2.1 per cent, and Aurobindo Pharma 1.9 per cent. **AGENCIES**

'Inflation reduces value of money and purchasing power of money'

M KUMAR
Chandigarh

Dr Harvinder Kaur, Assistant Professor, SD College Ambala says that the Inflation is a decrease in the purchasing power of currency due to a rise in prices across the economy. People use their savings to fulfill their daily needs. The worst effect of inflation is that it eats savings of the people and fewer savings means lesser investment and further leads to unemployment and less production in the economy, she adds.

In an interview with 'The Financial World', Economist Dr Harvinder Kaur talks inflation and its effects on the life of common people, what are the standard measures of inflation among others, Excerpts from the interview:

What is inflation?

A state of persistent and appreciable rise in general price level in an economy is called inflation. It is a macro economic problem and is responsible for economic instability and slow progress of a country. There are three standard measures of inflation, (i) Wholesale Price Index (WPI), (ii) Consumer Price Index (CPI) and Gross Domestic Product (GDP) Deflator. Continuous increase in GPL is called inflation. It may

be mild or hyper inflation depending upon the cost push and demand pull factors.

How inflation affects the life of common people?

Inflation is the no.1 enemy of the public. It reduces the value of money and purchasing power of money. This first effect of inflation is really just a different way of stating what it is. Inflation is a decrease in the purchasing power of currency due to a rise in prices across the economy. People use their savings to fulfill their daily needs. The worst effect of inflation is that it eats savings of the people and fewer savings means lesser investment and further leads to unemployment and less production in the economy. These are the demand-side effects of inflation. On the supply side when derived demand of costly inputs increases, it also gives a big push to prices of commodities of daily use. To enable the people to meet their daily needs of consumption of goods and services when their prices are rising, their incomes must rise if they have to maintain their standard of living.

What is the current inflation rate of India?

The inflation rate is calcu-

lated using the price increase of a defined product basket. This product basket contains products and services, on which the average consumer spends money throughout the year. They include expenses for groceries, clothes, rent, power, telecommunications, recreational activities and raw materials (e.g. gas, oil), as well as federal fees and taxes.

Why is the inflation rate in India rising? Explain in details

Basically, inflation is caused by a situation whereby the pressure of aggregate demand for goods and services exceeds the available supply of output (both being counted at the prices ruling at the beginning of a period). In such a situation, the rise in price level is the natural consequence.

When aggregate demand for all purposes—consumption, investment and government, expenditure—exceeds the supply of goods at current prices, there is a rise in the price level. Since inflation is a continuous increase in the price level, not a one-time rise in it, sustained inflation requires a continuous increase in aggregate demand.

As stated above, demand-pull inflation occurs when there is an increase in any component of aggregate de-

mand, namely, consumption demand by households, investment by business firms, increase in government expenditure unmatched by an increase in taxes (that is, deficit spending by the government-financed by either creation of new money by the central bank or borrowing by the government from the market).

How inflation rate is linked with the consumer price index?

To measure inflation, we estimate how much CPI has increased in terms of percentage change over the same period the previous year. If prices have fallen, it is known as deflation (negative inflation). The Central Bank (RBI) pays very close attention to this figure in its role of maintaining price stability in the economy. The CPI monitors retail prices at a certain level for a particular commodity; price movement of goods and services at rural, urban and all-India levels. The change in the price index over a period of time is referred to as CPI-based inflation or retail inflation. Generally, CPI is used as a macroeconomic indicator of inflation, as a tool by the central bank and government for inflation targeting and for inspecting price stability, and

as a deflator in the national accounts.

How CPI is calculated (CPI formula)?

To calculate CPI, multiply 100 to the fraction of the cost price of the current period and the base period. CPI formula: (Price of basket in current period / Price of basket in base period) x 100.

Does have any impact of Ukraine crisis on the inflation rate of the country?

A report by CRISIL (Credit Rating Information Services of India Limited) pointed out how. The price of Brent crude has increased and highest after 2008, above US\$130/barrel from US\$97/barrel before the Russian invasion began. Without a commensurate increase in retail fuel prices, oil marketing companies are already making losses. The impact of this is also being felt by sectors such as chemicals and paints which use crude oil-linked derivatives as their primary feedstock. These sectors may see some margin squeeze that could extend well into the first quarter of next fiscal, as inventories bought previously at lower prices run out. Spot prices of natural gas, which are also linked to crude, could continue to climb. But this won't impact the down-

stream sectors as much. Urea-makers, who use it as feedstock, can pass on the higher prices. But if the war prolongs, domestic availability of urea could become a bother for the farm sector because almost 8% of the requirement is imported from Russia and Ukraine. The credit rating agency highlighted that city gas operators have favourable cost economics versus competing fuels, which could permit them to pass on the gas price inflation downstream at least to an extent.

How Corona virus affected inflation rate of the country?

During pandemic time the maximum people lost their employment. 52% people were either with no income or have decreased income. Because of this demand of poor people decreased as they have no money to spend and on the other side cash became king for the middle class. The overall effect was that the aggregate demand decreased in the economy and because of lack of any demand booster the investors stopped investment and demand for blue collar and white collar workers decreased and this multiplied the unemployment in the economy. In Haryana the unemployment rate was maximum about 35% in August

2021, 11% more than national average.

How inflation rate is linked with dearness?

To enable the people to meet their daily needs of consumption of goods and services when their prices are rising, their incomes must rise if they have to maintain their standard of living. For government employees, their dearness allowance is increased. Wages and salaries employed in the organised private sector are also raised, though after some time-lag. But people with fixed incomes and those who are self-employed are unable to raise their prices and suffer a lot due to inflation. The poor suffer the most from persistent rise in prices, especially of food-grains and other essential items.

Does have any impact of high inflation rate on employment of any country?

Unemployment will increase with high rate cost push inflation and because of lack of sufficient demand as investment will decrease and will further

lead to low demand for labour.

How high inflation rate affects the GDP of any country?

The rising prices mean that the factors of production like labour and raw materials have also become expensive. The profit margins of the companies are decreasing. And after an extent, the companies pass on the burden of these additional expenses to the final consumer. And the entire economy suffers. The person most affected by rising inflation is the final consumer of goods.



SUSHMITA SEN 'Aarya' is a celebration of all brave women

'AARYA' IS A CELEBRATION OF ALL OF THE BRAVE WOMEN OUT THERE WHO ARE BREAKING THE GENDER BIASES AND CONQUERING THE WORLD

Bollywood actress and former Miss Universe Sushmita Sen recently spoke about how her character from crime-thriller drama 'Aarya' has manifested itself in her conduct throughout her life. On International Women's Day, she mentioned that having led life as a strong woman gave her the edge to play a character like Aarya. Talking about presenting an inspiring clutter-free story and how she resonates with her character that breaks gender stereotypes, the actress said, "From becoming the first Indian woman to win the title of Miss Universe at the age of 18 to raising two daughters singlehandedly and entertaining viewers through clutter-breaking stories, I have lived Aarya Sareen through my life. Calling the experience of working in the series a fulfilling one, she added, "Playing the character in Hotstar Specials 'Aarya' has been a worthy and inspiring experience showcasing the relationship of a mother and of a woman who can hold the family together despite all odds." "Aarya' is a celebration of all of the brave women out there who are breaking the gender biases and conquering the world," she concluded. **AGENCIES**



Alia Bhatt TO MAKE HOLLYWOOD DEBUT WITH 'Heart Of Stone'



Bollywood Actress Alia Bhatt is set to join the cast of Netflix's 'Heart of Stone', as she makes her global debut opposite Gal Gadot. The film will release globally on Netflix this spring and has received great reviews singling out her performance in the title role. The film follows the story of Rachel Stone (Gal Gadot), an intelligence operative, the only woman who stands between her powerful, global, peacekeeping organisation and the loss of its most valuable -- and dangerous -- asset. 'Heart Of Stone' is directed by Tom Harper. It is written by Greg Rucka and Allison Schroeder. Skydance's David Ellison, Dana Goldberg, and Don Granger, along with Mockingbird's Bonnie Curtis and Julie Lynn, and Pilot Wave's Gal Gadot and Jaron Varsano are producing the film. **AGENCIES**

54% of Indian women comfortable in taking the lead during intimacy



MUMBAI: According to a Gleeden survey, 54 per cent of women feel comfortable in taking the lead during intimacy. Women above the age of 40 are even more comfortable, with 67 per cent revealing they are happy to do so.

According to dating App Gleeden's community, 33 per cent of Indian women who subscribed to the app declare having started online dating after the painful break-up of a complicated relationship. The data varies depending on the gender of the subscriber. According to the "sought relationship type" preference checked in their profiles, men

look mostly for "anything exciting" (89 per cent) and for short-term relationships (75 per cent), while women look mostly for "virtual companionship" (84 per cent) and "long-term relationships" (67 per cent).

According to a survey, women engage in an average of four online conversations with the same amount of users before picking one to date. The length of the virtual interaction may vary but on average it lasts one month before attempting to know each other in real life. Is Intimacy a parameter for getting into relationships? **AGENCIES**

BCCI announces schedule for IPL 2022, CSK to face KKR in season opener



IN ALL, 20 MATCHES EACH WILL BE HELD AT WANKHEDE STADIUM & DY PATIL STADIUM, 15 MATCHES EACH AT BRABOURNE AND MCA INTERNATIONAL STADIUM, PUNE. PLAYOFF GAMES WILL BE PLAYED IN 65 DAYS

NEW DELHI: Defending champions Chennai Super Kings will take on fellow finalists of the last season, Kolkata Knight Riders in the opening match of IPL



2022 on March 26 at the Wankhede stadium, the BCCI confirmed on Sunday while announcing the schedule for the 15th season of the cash-rich league. A total number of 70 league matches and four Playoff games will be played in 65 days in Mumbai and Pune. In all, 20 matches each will be held at Wankhede Stadium & DY Patil Stadium, 15 matches each at Brabourne and MCA International Stadium, **AGENCIES**

India, Canada to re-launch CEPA negotiations



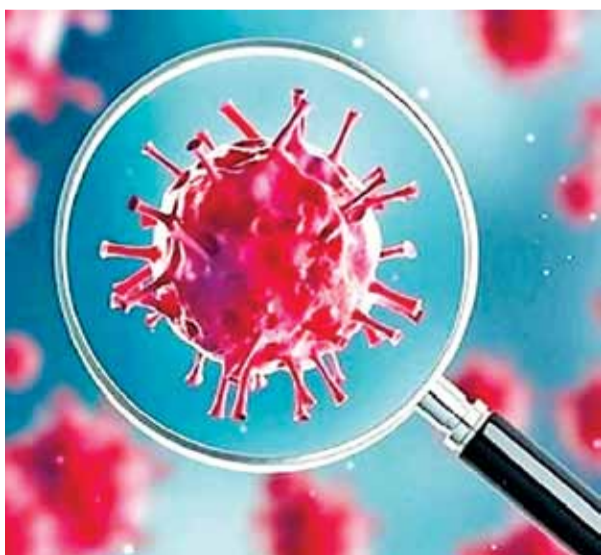
NEW DELHI: India and Canada have agreed to formally re-launch the negotiations for a Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement (CEPA). Both the countries might also consider entering into an 'Early Progress Trade Agreement'. The development comes after India and Canada held the fifth Ministerial Dialogue on Trade & Investment (MDTI) here on Friday. According to the Ministry of Commerce & Industry, Indian Minister Piyush Goyal and Canada's Small Business, Export Promotion and International Trade Minister Mary Ng co-chaired the MDTI. "The Ministers agreed to formally re-launch the negotiations for India-Canada Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement and also consider an 'Interim Agreement' or Early Progress Trade Agreement that could bring early commercial gains to both the countries," a ministry statement said. "The Ministers highlighted the existing trade complementarities between India and Canada and emphasised that the trade agreement would help in expanding bilateral trade in goods and services through

unlocking the potential across sectors." According to the ministry, the interim agreement would include high level commitments in goods, services, rules of origin, sanitary and phytosanitary measures, technical barriers to trade, and dispute settlement, and may also cover any other areas mutually agreed upon. "A range of other bilateral trade and investment issues were discussed during the meeting. Both countries agreed to undertake intensified work with respect to the recognition of Canada's systems approach to pest risk management in pulses and market access for Indian agriculture goods such as sweet corn, baby corn and banana etc. "Canada also agreed to examine expeditiously the request for Conformity Verification Body (CVB) status to APEDA (Agricultural and Processed Food Products Export Development Authority) for facilitating Indian organic export products," the statement said. **AGENCIES**



AAP candidate Jeevan Jyot Kaur after winning Amritsar (east) constituency seat, contesting against PPCC President Navjot Singh Sidhu and Bikram Singh Majithia, outside a counting centre in Amritsar. **PHOTO: PRABHJOT GILL**

Global Covid-19 death toll tops 6 mn: WHO



GENEVA: The worldwide death toll inflicted by the ongoing Covid-19 pandemic has surpassed six million, reaching 6,004,421 as of Tuesday, according to the World Health Organization (WHO). As per reports, Americas and Europe have so far reported more than 148 million and 183 million confirmed cases respectively. Globally, there have been 446,511,318 confirmed cases of Covid-19, including 6,004,421 deaths, Xinhua news agency reported, citing the data released by the WHO. The US has the highest cumulative numbers of both confirmed cases and deaths, with more than 78 million confirmed cases and 951,348 deaths, accounting for 17.6 per cent and 15.8 per cent of the world's totals respectively. The US is followed by India and Brazil, which have recorded confirmed cases exceeding 42 million and 29 million respectively, as well as 515,210 and 652,143 deaths. In terms of WHO regional offices, the Americas and Europe have so far reported more than 148 million and 183 million confirmed cases respectively. The two regions' respective death toll stands at 2,649,627 and 1,891,911. **AGENCIES**

UNSC calls for decisive action to end Russia-Ukraine conflict

NEW DELHI: Alarmed by spreading violence in Ukraine, targeted attacks on civilians, ineffective humanitarian corridors and spiralling risks, the United Nations Security Council called for decisive action to end the conflict. The Security Council held its seventh meeting in two weeks related to the unfolding situation in Ukraine. "Simply put, millions of lives have been shattered," said Martin Griffiths, Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs and Emergency Relief Coordinator. Indeed, the reach of humanitarian efforts can only go so far without the committed cooperation of Ukraine and the Russian Federation to ensure civilian protection and the maintenance of safe corridors for people wanting to escape the violence and those delivering critical aid. Some civilians are unable to escape at a time when 1.7 million people have already fled the country since the conflict began on February 24, while those who remain are facing cuts of essential services. Voicing an extra sense of dread over the impact the conflict will have on the wider world, he expressed deep worry about the consequences on vulnerable people living half a world



away, with food prices spiking and supplies uncertain. "We have the capacity and the know-how to meet the most urgent needs in Ukraine, if the parties cooperate, but make no mistake, we are unable to meet the needs of civilians today; I hope we will not fail them tomorrow," he said, summarizing the widespread ongoing humanitarian efforts alongside enormous and growing needs blanketed by spreading violence. To address the current situation, he highlighted priority areas, which he had already conveyed to Ukraine and the Russian Federation: the parties must take constant care to spare civilians and civilian homes and infrastructure in their military operations; safe passage must be ensured for humanitarian supplies into areas of active hostilities; and a system of constant communication must be established with parties to the conflict, with assurances provided to enable aid deliveries. Providing the latest information on the ground, Catherine Russell, Executive Director of the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), called upon Security Council members to remind all parties of their legal and moral obligation to protect children and spare them from attack and called for an immediate suspension of ongoing military actions in Ukraine. In the ensuing debate, Council members agreed that a ceasefire is urgently needed along with safe, guaranteed humanitarian corridors. **AGENCIES**

A complete **KNOWLEDGE CAPSULE**

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