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## Delhi Govt ups water supply to meet growing demand

**NEW DELHI:** Amid a deadly heatwave building up in various parts of the country, the Delhi government on Thursday said it will supply around 1,000 million gallons of drinking water every day during the summer season as against 935 MGD earlier to meet the rising demand.

Sharing its Summer Action Plan, the Delhi Jal Board (DJB) said a total of 1,198 water tankers will be deployed across the city during the peak summer season (April-July) to prevent water scarcity.

Large swathes of India are reeling under a punishing heatwave, with temperatures



nearing the 45-degree mark at several places in the national capital. The heatwave is predicted to turn deadlier in the coming days. «To meet the

potable water during the summer of 2022 by optimising all the resources.» a statement quoted Water Minister Satyendar Jain as saying. Earlier, the DJB supplied 935 MGD of drinking water to the city residents on an average.

«The system has been made efficient and robust so that there is no water scarcity in the summer season. The water minister is personally monitoring the situation.» the statement said.

The Delhi government is also keeping a close watch on the level of ammonia in the raw water released from Haryana so that it does not

impede the water supply in the national capital. All the jhuggi-jhopri clusters in the city avail the facility of public hydrants and water tankers. Additional water tankers will be provided if there is scarcity of water, Jain said.

Depending on the requirement during peak summer, the trips of the tankers will be optimised to supplement the demand in the water-deficient areas and regions lacking piped water supply. The DJB has also replaced old pipelines and fixed leakages to minimise water loss and contamination, it said.

**AGENCIES**

## PM Modi hosts Sikh delegation at his official residence

Prime Minister, Narendra Modi hosted a Sikh delegation at 7 Lok Kalyan Marg, the official residence of the Prime Minister. The group included people from different walks of life. Union Minister, Hardeep Singh Puri was among those present on the occasion.

Speaking on the occasion, the Prime Minister recalled his long association with the Sikh community. «Going to Gurudwaras, spending time in 'sewa', getting langar, staying at the homes of Sikh families has been a part of my life. The feet of Sikh saints keep falling from time to time in the Prime Minister's residence here. I keep getting the good fortune of their company», the Prime Minister said. The Prime Minister also recalled his visits to the places of Sikh heritage all over the world during his visits abroad.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi said «our Gurus have taught us courage and service. The people of India have gone to



different parts of the world without any resources and achieved success through their labour. This is the spirit of New India today too», he said.

Reiterating his appreciation for the mood of new India, the Prime Minister said New India is scaling new dimensions and is leaving its mark on the whole world. Period of Corona epidemic is the biggest example of this. At the beginning of the epidemic, people with old mindset were

expressing concerns about India. But now, people are giving the example of India for its handling of the pandemic. Earlier concerns were being voiced over the enormity of population of India and many were doubtful about vaccine for Indians. But today India has emerged as the biggest vaccine maker. «You will also be proud to hear that 99 percent of the vaccination has been done through our own Made in India Vaccines», he said.

## India can be cheapest producer of green hydrogen: NITI Aayog

**NEW DELHI:** India can be the cheapest producer of Green Hydrogen in the world due to its enabling climatic conditions, NITI Aayog CEO Amitabh Kant said on Tuesday.

In an interactive session at the Raisina Dialogue, Kant pointed out that India has brought down the cost of renewable energy. «India has size and scale. India can be the cheapest producer of the Green Hydrogen in the world ... India is the only climatic-blessed country to do it», he said.

While noting that China does not have climatic conditions to become the cheapest producer of Green Hydrogen, Kant said India will have to compete with Middle-East countries. Observing that the country is a large consumer of Green Hydrogen, he said India will be the capital of the world in Green Hydrogen production.

According to Kant, the long-term solution to the world does not lie in batteries. «The world cannot be dependent on lithium, cobalt and nickel ... resources in the world are being managed by one country», he noted. Secondly, he observed they will create their own complexity in terms of making a cleaner world for the future.

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## Efforts on to remove AFSPA completely from NE: PM

**DIPHU:** Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Thursday said efforts are on to remove AFSPA completely from the northeast region.

Addressing a 'Peace, Unity and Development' rally here, he said the Armed Forces (Special Powers) Act could be withdrawn from various parts of the region as the law and order situation has improved in the last eight years.

«As the (law and order) situation improved with 75 per cent decrease in violence in the region, there have been changes in the imposition of laws. The AFSPA was first revoked in Tripura and then in Meghalaya», he said.

The previous governments in Assam in the last three decades had extended it again and again as there was no improvement in the law and order situation, Modi said.

«Due to the proper control of the situation in the last eight years, the AFSPA has been removed from most parts of the state. We are trying to withdraw it from the remaining parts too.

«The Act is applicable in some areas of Nagaland and Manipur, and we are work-



ing speedily to revoke it completely», he said.

In a major outreach to the northeast region, the Centre had announced reduction of the disturbed areas imposed under the AFSPA in Nagaland, Assam and Manipur from April 1, after decades.

PM Modi also said the effect of the BJP's «double engine» government is evident in the return of permanent peace and speedy development in Assam.

The term «double engine» is used by BJP leaders to refer to the party being in power at the Centre as well as in a state. The government has entered into peace agreements in Assam's Karbi Anglong and in Tripura, while efforts are on to ensure permanent peace and speedy development in the entire region, he said.

«Several outfits of Karbi Anglong returned to the mainstream to march forward in the path of peace and development. The Bodo Agreement in 2020 paved the way for peace in the region and in Tripura, the NLFT also came forward for the peace, while the two-and-a-half decade long Bru-Reang issue was resolved», he said.

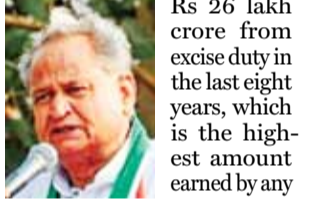
**AGENCIES**

## 'Centre earned highest revenue by taxing petrol & diesel'

After Prime minister Narendra Modi on Wednesday urged the state governments to lower value added tax (VAT) on petrol and diesel in the «spirit of cooperative federalism», Rajasthan Chief Minister Ashok Gehlot accused the Centre of earning the highest amount of revenue in the history of the country by taxing petrol and diesel.

Rajasthan imposes VAT of 30 per cent on petrol and 22 per cent diesel, which are among the highest in the country.

«The Centre earned about



Rs 26 lakh crore from excise duty in the last eight years, which is the highest amount earned by any government in the history of the country by taxing petrol and diesel. Despite low crude prices as compared to the UPA era, petrol is being sold at more than Rs 110 a litre and diesel at more than Rs 100 per litre under the present regime.

During the tenure of the UPA government, the price of crude oil breached \$100 per barrel, but petrol price didn't exceed Rs 70/litre and diesel Rs 50/litre in view of the interest of the common man, «Gehlot said.

On the Prime Minister naming Jaipur, Gehlot said, «Perhaps the Prime Minister took the name of Jaipur to give a message to the BJP-ruled Bhopal where the prices of petrol and diesel are higher than Jaipur. Perhaps he called Bhopal as Jaipur by mistake.»

## Forex Reserves down USD 3.271 BN to 600.423 bn says RBI

**MUMBAI:** The country's foreign exchange reserves decreased by USD 3.271 billion to USD 600.423 billion in the week ended April 22, RBI data showed. In the previous week, the reserves had declined by USD 311 million to USD 603.694 billion. During the reporting week, the fall in the reserves was on the account of a decline in the Foreign Currency Assets (FCA), a major component of the overall reserves, and gold reserves, Reserve Bank of India's (RBI) weekly data released on Friday showed. FCA dropped by USD 2.835 billion to USD 533.933 billion in the week ended April 22. Expressed in dollar terms, the foreign currency assets include the effect of appreciation or depreciation of non-US units like the euro, pound and yen held in the foreign exchange reserves. Gold reserves declined by USD 377 million to USD 42.768 billion in the reporting week, according to the data. The Special Drawing Rights (SDRs) with the International Monetary Fund (IMF) dipped by USD 33 million to USD 18.662 billion, RBI said. The country's reserve position with the IMF decreased by USD 26 million to USD 5.060 billion in the reporting week, as per the data.

## IMD issues orange alert for NW India over heatwave

The India Meteorological Department (IMD) has issued an orange alert for Delhi-NCR and the plains of northwest India over continued heatwave conditions until May 1.

«There has been no significant rainfall since February 25. In between, on April 14 and April 21, there were dust storms in Rajasthan and Haryana but there was no significant rain. Hence the long dry spell has resulted in high temperatures, «senior IMD scientist R.K. Jenamani told mediapersons.

A Western Disturbance on May 2 will bring in some relief for northwest and central India, he said.

Asked if this month's maximum temperatures for the entire country were creating any record, Jenamani said: «April 2010 was the hottest till date



for all India.

«This year, even when northwest India and large parts of central India are witnessing extreme heat, the northeast region, Kerala, large parts of Tamil Nadu are experiencing heavy rainfall. So, we have to wait till April 30 to see how it averages out.»

In an advisory, the IMD said that under the influence of another fresh Western Disturbance likely to affect northwest India from May 2, light/moderate isolated/scattered rainfall accompanied with thunderstorm/lightning is likely over the Western Himalayan Region during May 2-4.

**AGENCIES**

## Veiled message for Nagas: Talks for lasting peace are on and with 'all seriousness', says PM

If Prime Minister Narendra Modi's subtle and yet categorical message from Diphu in Assam on Thursday is to be understood, perhaps it was for Naga militants.

«Baaki jagao mein bhi shanti ke liye hamare prayas lagatar chal rahan hain, gambhirta se chal rahan hain (All across northeast, our sincere efforts are on to establish a lasting peace. Efforts are continuing, they are being pursued with all seriousness), «the Prime Minister said in Diphu located in the Karbi Anglong region, which shares a border with Nagaland.

While his reference could be seen from a general perspective for all militant groups, it was obviously more relevant for Naga militants and the state of Nagaland as the Naga peace parleys that began in 1997 are understandably at a final stage.

The Prime Minister said: «Last September in Karbi Anglong region, many organisations have decided to take the path of peace and development. In 2020 the Bodo Accord opened avenues for a lasting peace. In Tripura, the NLFT took the step towards peace. For two and half decades, there was a problem of Bru-Reangs That has been



resolved also.»

Of course the Prime Minister did not dwell specifically or in details on the Naga issue, but his remarks have special significance for the Nagas and the state of Nagaland.

The Centre had last week deputed its peace representative A.K. Mishra, a former intelligence official, to visit Nagaland and interact with all stakeholders including NSCN (IM), its general secretary Thuingaleng Muivah, NNPG leaders and also representatives of various social organisations and pressure groups.

N. Kitovi Zhimomi of NNPG (umbrella organisation of seven Naga militant groups) is already keen to sign a peace pact and so he insists that the formality and the last stage in any talks should be tried in all sincerity.

**AGENCIES**

## Rahul attacks PM over fuel price issue

**NEW DELHI:** Congress leader Rahul Gandhi on Thursday hit out at Prime Minister Narendra Modi, saying his federalism is «not cooperative but coercive».

His remarks came a day after Modi flagged higher fuel prices in many opposition-ruled states and urged them to reduce VAT in «national interest» to benefit the common man and work in the spirit of cooperative federalism in this time of global crisis.

Gandhi alleged that the prime minister is abdicating his responsibility by blaming states for the high fuel prices even when the Centre has taken 68 percent of all fuel taxes. «High Fuel prices - blame states. Coal shortage - blame states. Oxygen shortage - blame states,» he said in a tweet.

«68% of all fuel taxes are taken by the Centre. Yet, the PM abdicates responsibility. Modi's Federalism is not cooperative. It's coercive.» Gandhi charged. Modi had raised the issue of many states not adhering to the Centre's call for reducing the Value Added Tax (VAT) on petrol and diesel after his government slashed excise duties on them in November last, and called it «injustice» to people living there and also harmful for neighbouring states.

**AGENCIES**

## HDFC Life Q4 profit up 12% to Rs 358 cr, FY22 earnings fall 11%

**NEW DELHI:** HDFC Life Insurance Company Ltd on Tuesday reported 12.4% year-on-year rise in net profit at Rs 357.52 crore for the quarter ended March 31, 2022.

The private sector life insurer had posted a net profit of Rs 317.94 crore for the year-ago period. During January-March, total income stood at Rs 16,054.94 crore, as against Rs 19,191.32 crore in the same quarter of 2020-21, HDFC Life said in a regulatory filing. Of this, the net premium income was Rs 14,289.66 crore, up from Rs 12,868.01 crore in the year-ago period.

For the full year 2021-22, net profit was down to Rs 1,208 crore, as against Rs 1,360 crore in the previous fiscal year. «PAT for FY22 was at Rs 1,208 crore, a decline of 11 per cent versus FY21 due to higher mortality reserve created during the year. Post wave 2 (pandemic), our PAT in Q3 and Q4 improved steadily, with PAT for Q4 registering a 12 per cent year-on-year growth,» Vibha Padalkar, MD & CEO, HDFC Life said. Total premium during



the year, however, rose 19 per cent to Rs 45,963 crore from Rs 38,583 crore. HDFC Life said its assets under management (AUM) crossed Rs 2 lakh crore mark, clocking a yearly growth of 17%.

«We delivered a value of new business (VNB) for FY22 of Rs 2,675 crore, 22 per cent higher than FY21. Our VNB has grown at a 24 per cent CAGR (compounded annual growth rate) over the past 5 years,» it said. VNB refers to present value of the future profits associated with new business written during the year. Padalkar said the company clocked a growth of 16 per cent in individual WRP in FY22 with a market share of 14.8 per cent and 9.3 per cent in the private and overall sector respectively.

## Prashant Kishor declines to join Cong; says it needs leadership, collective will to fix problems

**NEW DELHI:** Poll strategist Prashant Kishor on Tuesday declined the Congress offer to join the party and evolve its poll strategy and said more than him, the party needs leadership and collective will to fix deep-rooted structural problems through transformational reforms.

Kishor was asked by Congress president Sonia Gandhi to join the party and be a part of the Empowered Action Group-2024 and take care of its election strategy for upcoming

polls.

Congress chief spokesperson Randeep Surjewala said Kishor has declined the offer and the party appreciates his efforts and suggestions.

Kishor had made a detailed presentation before top Congress leaders, which was discussed at length by senior leadership of the party, after which an offer was made to him.

Within a few minutes of the Congress saying that Kishor has declined the offer, he took



to Twitter and said the party needs a collective will to fix

deep-rooted structural problems through reforms.

«I declined the generous offer of Congress to join the party as part of the EAG and take responsibility for the elections. In my humble opinion, more than me the party needs leadership and collective will to fix the deep rooted structural problems through transformational reforms,» Kishor said in a tweet.

Kishor was keen to join the Congress and had desired to do so without any expectations. He

had also made a presentation to the party on which its top leaders deliberated upon during the last week.

«Following a presentation and discussions with Prashant Kishor, the Congress president constituted the Empowered Action Group-2024 and invited him to join the party as part of the group with defined responsibility. He declined. We appreciate his efforts and suggestions given to the party,» Surjewala said on Twitter announcing that

Kishor has declined the offer.

Sources said the reason for his not joining the Congress was the pact signed by his company I-PAC with the Telangana Rashtra Samithi (TRS) for the Telangana assembly elections and that was viewed by the Congress leadership as conflict of interest.

Kishor has been engaged by Mamata Banerjee's TMC in West Bengal as well as Nitish Kumar's JD-U in Bihar for election management.

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# 95 % patients visiting Delhi mohalla clinics happy with the services there: Kejriwal



**“**We have opened two mohalla clinics in Delhi’s most posh area -- Greater Kailash -- and a lot of rich patients also come to these centres. They say they do not get such care anywhere else”

**NEW DELHI:** Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal on Monday said 95 per cent of the patients visiting ‘Aam Aadmi Mohalla’ clinics in the national capital are satisfied with the services provided there.

He also showed a model mohalla clinic and a Delhi government school to his Punjab counterpart Bhagwant Mann, who is on a two-day tour to the city to learn about the best practices of the Aam Aadmi Party’s (AAP) model of governance.

At a mohalla clinic, patients told Mann that on an average, a person spends just 10 min-

utes in these clinics to meet the doctor and get prescribed medicines

“Ninety-five per cent of the patients visiting the mohalla clinics are happy with the services. Anybody, be it from any state, can come and get free treatment at these health facilities.

“We have opened two mohalla clinics in Delhi’s most posh area -- Greater Kailash -- and a lot of rich patients also come to these centres. They say they do not get such care anywhere else,” Kejriwal told Mann

At the government-run Sar-

vodaya Bal Vidyalaya in Chirag Enclave, Deputy Chief Minister Manish Sisodia told the Punjab chief minister that the party, after coming to power in Delhi, had called a meeting of school principals and asked for their suggestions to strengthen the education system in the city.

Kejriwal told Punjab government officials that the principals of government schools were sent for training abroad and the teachers were trained at Indian Institutes of Management.

# 5 arrested allegedly manufacturing fake coins in Haryana

SATISH HANDA

Special Police Cell Delhi led by Rajiv Ranjan DCP in late night raid on May 22, 2022 busted an industrial premises while manufacturing Rs 5 and Rs 10 coins and seized nearly 2.82 quintal fake coins of value worth Rs 12 lakh in a house at village Imlota in Charkhi Dadri district in Haryana and arrested four persons while packing coins in bags. The prime accuse Naresh Kumar originally hailing from Charkhi Dadri arrested on a clue at Delhi disclosed that coins are being manufactured at village Imlota in Charkhi Dadri district since past over a month as such Delhi police team conducted raid, Sandeep Faugat ASI in-charge Imlota police post said.

Information reveals, prime accuse in the case Naresh on a clue was arrested by Delhi police on April 22, 2022 from PVC market near Tikri border and during search police recovered 10113 Rs 10 fake coins from his car. During preliminary investigation he



disclosed that fake coins are being manufactured in his factory at Imlota in Charkhi Dadri district from where he originally belongs. Information revealed that Naresh was involved in illegal manufacturing and sale of fake coins since past over two decades and was arrested three times in past including twice by Haryana

police while selling fake coins. He was arrested by police and sentenced five years imprisonment by the court, released on bail by High Court orders when he managed to abscond and was declared offender by the court in 1998.

Investigation during police remand revealed that Naresh was involved in different professions including sale of automobile carpet and seat covers and even running general store at Rohini in Delhi for sometime hiding his identity even from his near relatives. In 2016 Naresh started manufacturing fake coins in a

factory at Bawana in Delhi along with two others. Finally, Naresh was arrested by Delhi police on a clue and during raid at his Imlota factory arrested four persons preparing fake coins on April 22 late night identified as Santosh Mandal, Sharvan Kumar Sharma, Dharminder Mehto and Dharminder Sharma all originally hailing from Bihar and seized stocks of fake coins, machine to manufacture coins and raw metals for manufacture coins.

During police remand, Naresh admitted that fake coins of value 7.5 lakh were being supplied at the cost Rs 5 lakh through a network for supply of fake coins in the market and the manufacturing cost of a Rs 10 fake coin was only Re 1 each and he used to pay 25 paise each coin to the workers manufacturing fake coins. Naresh disclosed that he had taken factory premises at village Imlota on monthly rent Rs 15000 on a lease period for 11 months to manufacture chemicals.

# Fire breaks out in room of Transport Bhawan



**NEW DELHI:** A fire broke out in the Transport Bhawan on Parliament Street here on Tuesday, Delhi Fire Services officials said.

No injuries have been reported, they said. According to the fire department, a call was received at 4:10 pm and four fire tenders were rushed to the spot.

The fire started from an air-conditioner in one of the rooms of the Transport Bhawan, a senior official said, adding that the fire has been extinguished.

# Goa Chief Minister calls on the Prime Minister



Chief Minister of Goa Dr Pramod Sawant called on the Prime Minister, Narendra Modi in New Delhi.

The Prime Minister Office tweeted: “The CM of Goa @DrPramodPSawant called on PM @narendramodi.”

# Criminal case under registered against UddhavThackrey & DGP Maha in Ambala



SATISH HANDA  
Ambala

A criminal case against Maharashtra Chief Minister Uddhav Thackrey and Rajnish Seth DGP Maharashtra was registered under section IPC 295 -A in the court of Chief Judicial Magistrate court at Ambala on the complaint of Viresh Shandilya National President Anti Terrorist Front India and President Brahman Mahapanchayat through his advocate Sumit Sharma allegedly recitation of holy Hanuman Chalisa by independent MP Navneet Rana and her husband Ravi Rana MLA both arrested allegedly hurting the sentiments of Hindu religion in the country. Honourable judge registered the case directing Shandilya to produce himself in the court to register his statement as well as produce evidences as regard his complaint.

Talking to media persons in the court campus, Brahman Mahapanchayat president said that no one will be permitted to have license for playing with the sentiments or insult any religion in the country and alleged accuse should be declared a traitor for this shameful act and stern action should be taken against him. Shandilya raised a question over Shivsema alliance NCP to clarify if their party is associated with Uddhav Thackrey or against them on this issue. Expressing deep concern on this unfortunate incident Shandilya continued that Bala Sahab Thackrey was known for his noble acts for every religion but his son Uddhav Thackrey presently chief minister Maharashtra has tarnished the image of his father and such type of attitude will not be tolerated by Hindu religion at any cost and he challenged Maharashtra chief minister to face him personally at Maharashtra shortly.

# Punjab Police misbehaves with Sr. Journalist at Kejriwal-Mann press Conference, complaint lodged

**NEW DELHI:** A complaint has been lodged against Punjab Police officials for misbehaving with a journalist during a joint press conference of Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal and his Punjab counterpart Bhagwant Mann at The Imperial here.

Senior police official said that they were looking into the matter. Senior Journalist, Naresh Vats, who lodged the complaint at the Connaught Place Police Station, alleged that when he went to cover the press conference on April 26, he was stopped by security personnel at the entry gate.

“I showed them my PIB (Press Information Bureau)

card. But on the pretext of checking they took it and after few minutes they told me that I was not a reporter and will not allowed to enter the press conference room,” Vats claimed.

He further alleged that when he asked the Punjab Police what was the criteria to define a reporter, they allegedly misbehaved with him.

“One of them asked other cops to have me arrested. When I again opposed, they dragged me out of the room. In CCTV, it could be seen.” He has now requested the two Chief Ministers to take action against the accused Punjab Police officials.

# Building collapse in Delhi ‘very sad’, monitoring situation: Kejriwal



**NEW DELHI:** Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal on Monday said the collapse of a building in the city’s Satya Niketan area is “very sad” and that he is monitoring the situation.

A three-storey building that was undergoing renovation collapsed in Satya Niketan area, trapping five labourers under the rubble. All of them were rescued after an over three-hour-long operation and rushed to a hospital for

treatment, fire officials said. “This accident (building collapse) is very sad. The district administration is engaged in the relief and rescue work. I am receiving information related to the incident,” Kejriwal said in a tweet in Hindi.

A senior fire official said according to preliminary inquiry, it seems that the building was old and not in a good condition to undergo renovation

# BJP workers disrupt Telangana Minister’s speech in Gadkari’s presence



The workers of BJP disrupted the speech of a Telangana minister at an official ceremony for the foundation stone laying of national highway projects. The incident occurred in the presence of Union ministers Nitin Gadkari, G. Kishan Reddy and V.K. Singh.

Raising slogans of ‘Jai Shri Ram’, the BJP workers created an uproar when state roads and buildings Minister Vemula Prashant Reddy started his speech.

The BJP workers, who were present in large numbers, were on their feet raising slogans. This created disorder at the event at GMR Arena near Rajiv Gandhi International Airport at Shamshabad.

The programme was organised to lay the foundation stone for various national highway projects in Telangana by Union minister for road transport and highways Nitin Gadkari. Kishan Reddy intervened to appeal to the BJP workers not to raise the slogans at the official programme.

This is the first time that such an incident occurred in the state at an official event. It comes amid the ongoing war of words between the leaders of Telangana Rashtra Samithi (TRS) and opposition BJP in the state over various issues.

Alleging discrimination towards Telangana by the BJP government at the Centre, the TRS leaders have been targeting the saffron party. The BJP leaders have been attacking TRS over the one family rule and alleged corruption in the state.

Kishan Reddy used the platform to deny that the Centre is discriminating against Telangana. He claimed that Narendra Modi government was committed to the development of all states

# Massive fire at garbage mound in Manesar, 2 dead



**GURUGRAM:** A fire at a garbage mound in Gurugram’s Manesar gutted several adjoining shanties, killing two people and injuring two others, officials said on Tuesday.

The fire broke out in the

also housed small godowns of scrap dealers.

Over 40 fire tenders from Gurugram, Faridabad, Nuh and Rewari were pressed into service and it took around eight hours for them to douse the blaze, fire department officials said.

“We have so far recovered two bodies -- a man and a woman. The fire has been doused but we are still searching if there are other bodies,” Gulshan Kalra, the deputy director of the Gurugram fire department, said.

The two injured people have been rushed to hospital, fire department officials said.

Over 100 shanties have been gutted while some animals too have died, sources said.

# Government approves strategic buyer for disinvestment of Pawan Hans Limited

Alternative Mechanism, empowered by the Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs, comprising Nitin Gadkari, Union Minister for Road Transport and Highways, Nirmala Sitharaman, Union Minister for Finance & Corporate Affairs and Shri Jyotiraditya M. Scindia, Union Minister of Civil Aviation, has approved the highest bid of M/s Star9 Mobility Private Ltd for sale of entire GoI’s shareholding (51% of shareholding) of Pawan Hans Limited (PHL) and transfer of management control.

PHL is a joint venture of GoI and ONGC providing helicopter and aero mobility services. GoI holds 51% of the shares in the company and ONGC holds the balance 49%. ONGC has earlier decided to offer its entire shareholding to the successful bidder identified in the GoI strategic disinvestment transaction, on the same price and terms as GoI.

CCEA had approved the strategic disinvestment of entire GoI stake in PHL in October, 2016. The transaction had been attempted thrice in the past. In the first round, the Preliminary Information Memorandum (PIM) was issued on 13 October 2017 seeking Expressions of Interest (EOI). Out of four EOIs



received, only one was found eligible and the transaction was cancelled. In the second round, PIM was issued seeking EOIs on 14 April, 2018 and two bidders were found eligible and were issued the Request for Proposal (RFP). Finally, however, a single, incomplete bid non-compliant with the RFP was received. In the third round, PIM was issued seeking EOIs on 11 July 2019. Out of four EOIs received, only one was found eligible and the process was cancelled. This is the fourth iteration with request for Expressions of Interest (EOI) invited on 8 December 2020. Seven EOIs were received and four interested bidders were shortlisted as qualified bidders. After detailed due

diligence, the qualified bidders were invited to submit financial bids. Three financial bids were received.

As per extant procedure, the Reserve Price for sale of 51% shareholding of PHL was fixed at Rs 199.92 crore, on the basis of valuation carried out by experts (transaction adviser and asset valuer). Thereafter, the three bids were opened in the presence of the bidders. All three bids were found to be valid. M/s Star9 Mobility Private Ltd, a consortium of M/s Big Charter Private Limited, M/s Maharaja Aviation Private Limited and M/s Almas Global Opportunity Fund SPIC; emerged as the highest bidder quoting Rs 211.14 crore, which was above the Reserve Price. The other two bids were

for Rs 181.05 crore and Rs 153.15 crore. Following due deliberations, the financial bid of M/s Star9 Mobility Private Limited has been accepted by the Government.

The strategic disinvestment transaction was implemented through an open, competitive bidding process supported by a multi-layered consultative decision making mechanism involving Inter Ministerial Group, Core Group of Secretaries on Disinvestment and the empowered Alternative Mechanism. The transaction now moves to the concluding stage. The next steps are issuing of the Letter of Award, signing of the Share Purchase Agreement and closing of the transaction.

PHL has been incurring losses in the last three years (FY-19, FY-20 and FY-21). The company has a fleet of 42 helicopters with 41 of them owned by the company. The owned helicopters have an average age of over 20 years and three-fourths of them are presently not being manufactured by the original equipment manufacturer. With this privatization, it is expected that the strategic buyer will revitalize the company by replacing the aging fleet through infusion of fresh capital and improve the performance of the company.

# Lawyers of Bengal post-poll violence victims to meet President & Home Minister

A delegation of 10 lawyers representing victims of post-poll violence in West Bengal are scheduled to meet President Ram Nath Kovind and Home Minister Amit Shah on Friday.

It is learnt that the delegation is likely to meet President Kovind at 12 p.m. at the Rashtrapati Bhavan and Home Minister Shah at 9 p.m.

In the evening at 4.30 p.m., lawyers of the Supreme Court, Delhi High Court and Delhi-NCR district courts, under the banner of “Lawyers for Justice” will hold a peaceful candle march at the India Gate.

While family members of



victims are also expected to join the march, some of them may join the delegation to meet the President and Home Minister.

Earlier, claiming complete collapse of law and order in the state, the delegation had said that it will give representation to two leaders demanding im-

position of “President’s rule” in West Bengal.

Convenor of “Lawyers for Justice” and counsel of victims of political violence in West Bengal, Kabir Shankar Bose had said that the representatives will meet the President and Home Minister and give representation about the complete breakdown of law and order situation in the state.

“We will also demand imposition of President’s rule in West Bengal for breakdown of law and order and state-sponsored violence,” Bose said.

The lawyers body claimed that since 2018, the state has

seen unprecedented state-sponsored violence targeted against particular groups and persons affiliated to certain groups and communities.

“Post May 2, 2021 after announcement of Assembly polls results, a reign of unprecedented terror, lawlessness and violence was unleashed by goons and anti-socials, which was actively supported by the ruling dispensation. Hundreds of thousands were driven out of their homes. Hundreds murdered. Daughters and mothers were raped,” Bose had said.

Ram Nath Kovind and Home Minister Amit Shah

# SVB investigation in 15 corruption cases in Haryana complete, 8 including Chief Engineer booked

SATISH HANDA

State vigilance Bureau (SVB) Haryana has completed investigation in 15 corruption cases in government offices in the state and submitted final report to government for action recommending registration of criminal cases against 11 alleged accuse employed in government offices as well as private persons, besides four other cases to take departmental action against persons involved in embezzlements. There are several other corruption cases

yet pending with SVB for investigation and necessary action.

According to SVB report, there are several officers as well as employees working in government departments in the state including PWD (B&R), Food Supply Department, Central Cooperative Bank, SH-VPN, Haryana Roadways Jind, Municipal Corporation Gurugram & Faridabad, SDM office Radaur, police stations at Nuh, Chika, Faridabad and a long list of alleged accuse caught red-handed while accepting bribe trapped in vigilance net.

State Vigilance Bureau registered a case against eight employees of Municipal Corporation Faridabad including Chief Engineer D.R. Bhaskar, Executive Engineer Raman Sharma, Junior Engineer Deepak Thapar and few employees working in accounts department allegedly involved in Rs 200 crore fraud in which payment was released to a contractor Satveer on the basis of fake bills for installation of inter-locking tiles and various other construction jobs without doing any work.

# Government blocks 16 more YouTube channels for spreading disinformation

Union Centre on Monday blocked 16 YouTube channels, including six operating from Pakistan, and a Facebook account for spreading disinformation related to India's national security, foreign relations and public order, according to an official statement.

The blocked YouTube channels and the Facebook account had a cumulative viewership of over 68 crore and were spreading "false, unverified information to create panic, incite communal disharmony and disturb public order in India", the statement issued by the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting said.

"None of the digital news publishers had furnished information to the ministry as required under Rule 18 of the



IT Rules, 2021," it added.

The ministry said the content published by some of the blocked India-based YouTube channels referred to the members of a particular community

as terrorists and incited hatred among various religious communities.

"Such content was found to have the potential to create communal disharmony and

disturb public order," it said. The ministry said multiple India-based YouTube channels were publishing unverified news and videos that had the potential to trigger panic among various sections of the society.

"Examples include false claims related to announcement of a pan-India lockdown due to COVID-19, thereby threatening the migrant workers, and fabricated claims alleging threats to certain religious communities etc. Such content was observed to be detrimental to public order in the country," it said.

According to the ministry, the blocked YouTube channels based in Pakistan were found to have been used in a coordinated manner to post fake news about India on various subjects such as the Army,

Jammu and Kashmir and foreign relations in the light of the situation in war-hit Ukraine.

"The content of these channels was observed to be completely false and sensitive from the perspective of national security, sovereignty and integrity of India, and India's friendly relations with foreign States," the ministry said.

The ministry issued an advisory to private television news channels last week, cautioning them against making false claims and using scandalous headlines.

The blocked YouTube channels include MRF TV LIVE, Saini Education Research, Tahaffuz-e-Deen India and SBB News. The channels based in Pakistan include AjTak Pakistan, Discover Point, Reality Checks and The Voice of Asia. **AGENCIES**

# SGPC delegation meets Uttarakhand Governor to discuss issue of Gurdwara Gian Godrhi, Haridwar

**AMRITSAR:** A high-level delegation of Shiromani Gurdwara Parbandhak Committee (SGPC) today met Uttarakhand Governor Lt. Gen. (Retd) S. Gurmit Singh to discuss the issue of Gurdwara Gian Godrhi Sahib, Haridwar and submitted a memorandum demanding an early resolution to the long-pending issue.

The SGPC delegation included Senior Vice-President Raghujit Singh, General Secretary Karnail Singh, SGPC member Rajinder Singh, SGPC's Sikh Mission Raipur, Chhattisgarh in-charge Gurmit Singh, and Sikh leader from Vishakhapatnam Dilshah Singh.

The delegation leaders appealed to Uttarakhand Governor to intervene for resolving the issue of Gurdwara Gian Godrhi Sahib. Giving information in this regard, Raghujit Singh said, "SGPC is serious about the issue of Gurdwara Gian Godrhi Sahib and making constant efforts for



the resolution of this issue. We met Uttarakhand Governor and demanded from him that Gurdwara Gian Godrhi Sahib at Har Ki Paurhi, Haridwar should be established again, so that, the issue of this historical shrine of Sikh Quam (nation) could be resolved as per Sikh sentiments." Raghujit Singh added that taking the SGPC's demand seriously, the Uttarakhand Governor has assured to resolve this issue at the earliest. Meanwhile, the SGPC delegation also honoured Uttarakhand's Governor Lt. Gen.

(Retd) Gurmit Singh.

Notably, SGPC in the past has made several appeals to the Government of India and concerned state governments by sending resolutions passed in its general house sessions demanding a resolution to the issue of Gurdwara Gian Godrhi Sahib at the earliest. Apart from this, several leaders of SGPC have met the Prime Minister of India, Home Minister, and Chief Ministers of concerned states, while demanding to resolve this issue. **AGENCIES**

# Gujarat MLA Jignesh Mevani granted bail

**KOKRAJHAR:** Independent MLA from Gujarat Jignesh Mevani was granted bail on Monday by a Kokrajhar Court in a case related to a tweet by him against Prime Minister Narendra Modi.



Kokrajhar First Class Judicial Magistrate Bhavna Kakoty granted him bail with several conditions, details of which are awaited.

Mevani was taken back to the Kokrajhar Jail after the hearing, and his lawyers said they are working on the formalities related to the bail bond.

Mevani was arrested on April 19 from Palanpur town in Gujarat after an FIR was lodged in Kokrajhar Police Station over his tweet, in which he had said Prime Minister Narendra Modi "considered Godse as God".

The MLA was brought to Kokrajhar on transit remand and remanded to a three-day police custody on April 21 by the Kokrajhar Chief Judicial Magistrate **AGENCIES**

# Facing suspension, Jakhar wishes Congress 'good luck'

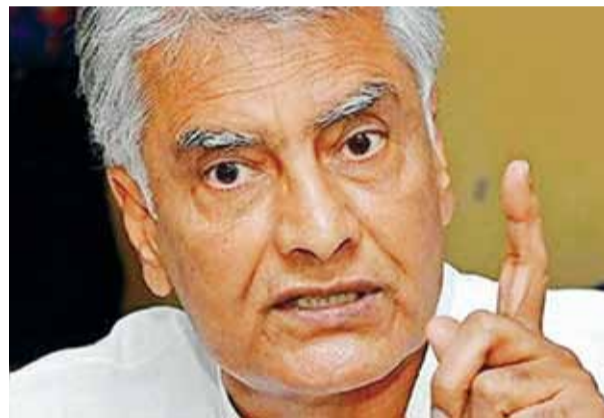
**CHANDIGARH:** Shortly after the Congress disciplinary panel recommended his two-year suspension on Tuesday, former Punjab unit chief Sunil Jakhar wished his party good luck while refusing to reveal his own plans.

I wish the Congress good luck, Jakhar said when reporters sought his reaction to the disciplinary committee's recommendation. He refused to comment when asked what would be his next step.

The committee, which met Tuesday morning in Delhi, gave its recommendations to party president Sonia Gandhi, who will take the necessary action.

Ahead of the panel's meeting, Jakhar had said those who still have a conscience will be punished.

Aaj, sar kalam honge unke jimme abhi zameer baaki hai. (Today, those with a conscience will be beheaded). (My apologies to Javed Akhtar Sa-



heb), the former MP said in a tweet earlier in the day.

The party disciplinary committee had on April 11 given a show-cause notice to Jakhar for alleged anti-party activities and sought a reply within a week. But he chose not to reply.

Jakhar had criticised former Punjab chief minister Charanjit Singh Channi and termed him a liability for the

party after the Congress lost the Punjab Assembly polls to the Aam Aadmi Party.

Some party leaders, including former minister Raj Kumar Verka, had also demanded action against Jakhar, accusing him of using objectionable language against Channi and the Scheduled Caste community during a TV interview.

But Jakhar had rejected the charge, saying his remarks

were twisted out of context. He had also expressed regret if anybody was hurt by his comments.

He had earlier created a flutter claiming that 42 MLAs wanted him to be the chief minister and only two backed Channi after the unceremonious exit of Amarinder Singh last year.

He was among the frontrunners for the CM's post after Amarinder Singh was unseated by the party.

Earlier, Jakhar was replaced by Navjot Singh Sidhu as the Punjab Congress president.

His chances of becoming the CM were scuttled after party veteran Ambika Soni said the Congress should go with a Sikh faced in Punjab.

The disciplinary panel also recommended the suspension of five Meghalaya MLAs who had supported the ruling Meghalaya Democratic Alliance (MDA), defying the party directives. **AGENCIES**

# Delhi court takes cognizance of ED charge sheet in Indo-Bangla border cattle smuggling case

**NEW DELHI:** A Delhi court has taken cognizance of a charge sheet filed by the Enforcement Directorate against former TMC youth wing leader Vinay Mishra, the alleged kingpin of a cattle smuggling racket across the India-Bangladesh border, Mohammad Enamul Haque and others.

Special Judge Sanjay Garg issued summons against Mishra, his brother Vikas Mishra and other accused persons in the matter, and directed them to appear before the court on June 1.

I have gone through the complaint and the accompanying documents. There is sufficient material to proceed against the accused. Accordingly, the cognizance of the offence under sections of PMLA (Prevention of Money Laundering Act) is taken, the judge said in an order passed on April 19. The charge sheet was filed through Nitesh Rana, ED's special public prosecutor, who told the court that Haque acquired huge amount of wealth from proceeds of crime generated out of cross-border activities and violated several laws.

According to the Enforcement Directorate (ED), the case was lodged following an FIR by the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) in Kolkata against Satish Kumar, the then Commandant, Border Security Force (BSF). The FIR alleged that Haque along with Kumar and other public servants and private persons was involved in the smuggling of cattle. It was alleged that smuggling of cattle through the India-Bangladesh border was carried out at Haque's instance and he paid bribes to security personnel for facilitation of the trade. **AGENCIES**

# Over 45 cr people lost hope of getting job due PM Modi's 'masterstrokes', alleges Rahul

Congress leader Rahul Gandhi on Tuesday hit out at Prime Minister Narendra Modi over the unemployment issue, alleging over 45 crore people have lost hope of getting a job due to his "masterstrokes".



He claimed that Modi is the "first such prime minister" in 75 years to do so. "New India's new slogan -- 'har ghar berozgaari, ghar ghar berozgaari' (there is unemployment in every household).

"In 75 years, Modi is the first such prime minister whose masterstrokes have led to over 45 crore people losing the hope of getting a job," the

former Congress chief tweeted in Hindi. He also cited a news report that claimed 2.1 crore jobs were lost in the last five years and 45 crore people have stopped searching for a job.

# Vijay Sampla appointed NCSC chairperson for second time

**NEWDELHI:** BJP leader and former Union minister Vijay Sampla has been appointed as the chairperson of the National Commission for Scheduled Castes (NCSC) for a second time.

The official order for his appointment was issued by President Ram Nath Kovind on Wednesday.

Sampla had resigned as the NCSC chairman ahead of the Punjab elections and had contested the polls.

Sampla, a prominent Dalit face of Punjab, began



his political career in 1998 as the Sarpanch of Sofpind

village in Jalandhar Cantonment. **AGENCIES**

# UP ministers, IAS officers asked to declare assets



**LUCKNOW:** Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath on Tuesday directed his ministers to declare within three months all property owned by them and their families and asked IAS and IPS officials to put similar details online.

He also said that the ministers' family members should not intervene in the government work.

The CM while addressing a special sitting after the cabinet meeting said that the IAS, IPS, and the Provincial Civil Service officers should also declare their and their family members' properties and make it available on an online portal for the people to see it.

"For a healthy democracy, the conduct of public representatives is very important. According to this spirit, all the honourable ministers should make a public declaration of all movable and immovable property of themselves and their family members within a period of next three months after taking oath," Adityanath said.

The code of conduct prescribed for the ministers should be followed in compliance with the provisions of the Representation of the People Act in letter and spirit, he said.

"All ministers should ensure that there is no interference of their family members in the government work. We have to set an example by our conduct," he said. A presentation of all the departments for the next 100 days, six months, and a five-year work plan has been done, the CM said. It should now be

implemented on the ground, he said. The CM directed all departments to guide officers to ensure completion of projects in a set time-frame.

Under guidance of the Prime Minister, we all strive to fulfil the resolution of 'Antyodaya,' he said. The CM has formed 18 groups, each headed by a cabinet minister, to tour the entire state and hold meetings with the local leaders and prominent people across districts to know people's issues. He said these ministers will complete a visit of the entire state before the next assembly session begins.

"The group of 18 will visit all divisions beginning from Friday to Sunday, Adityanath said. There are 18 divisions in the state with 75 districts under them. In the first phase each group of ministers will be given responsibilities of different divisions on a rotational basis," he said. The CM said that during these three-day visits, each team will have to stay at least for 24 hours in a district. He said that the senior ministers leading the team should visit at least two districts, and other ministers should take charge of one district each. Each group should hold a divisional review meeting, while connecting with districts under each division virtually.

He also directed the ministers to engage with local legislators, former public representatives, and the party members to hear their suggestions during these visits, and try to address them. **AGENCIES**

# NEWS BRIEFS

## Man accused in cheating case nabbed after 12 yrs

**THANE:** The economic offences wing (EOW) of the police has arrested a man who had been on the run for 12 years after allegedly cheating investors of over Rs 7.6 crore in Maharashtra's Thane district, an official said on Thursday. Based on a tip-off, Sandeep Zhumbarlal Pokhrana was apprehended from Pune on Monday, the official said. Pokhrana had allegedly cheated 13,900 persons by wooing them to invest in his firm and promising them lucrative returns. He operated a financially unviable scheme at his firm and published about the same in the social media and through publications, he said. Investors were cheated to the tune of Rs 7.64 crore and an offence under relevant provisions of the IPC, RBI Act, Prize and Chit Fund Money Circulation Scheme (Banning) Act, MPID Act, had been registered with the Mahatma Phule police station in 2010, the official said. The accused had been on the run for 12 years, he said, adding that further probe is underway. **AGENCIES**

## Spice Jet to start Bhavnagar-Pune flight from May 5

SpiceJet on Tuesday said it will start flights connecting Bhavnagar in Gujarat with Pune and Mumbai from May 5 onwards. In a statement, the airline said it will also start additional flights on the Ahmedabad-Pune route. The Bhavnagar-Pune flight will operate under the Central government's UDAN scheme, it mentioned. Under the UDAN scheme, financial incentives from the Centre, state governments and airport operators are extended to selected airlines to encourage operations from unserved and underserved airports and to keep airfares affordable. SpiceJet will deploy its Q400 aircraft for the flights. **AGENCIES**

# Kumar Vishwas moves high court, seeks quashing of Punjab police FIR against him

Former AAP leader Kumar Vishwas on Tuesday moved the Punjab and Haryana high court, seeking quashing of an FIR lodged against him in Punjab over his "inflammatory statements" against Delhi chief minister Arvind Kejriwal.

In the petition, Vishwas, also a poet, submitted that the case registered against him by the Rupnagar police was a sheer abuse of the process of law and politically motivated.

The manner in which the investigating agency is proceeding, it is apparent that it is investigating agency is trying to curtail the liberty of the petitioner by adopting a procedure unknown to law, Kumar said in his petition filed through his counsel Mayank Aggarwal and Himanshu Gupta.

It was further submitted that the registration of the FIR against Kumar is absolutely illegal, arbitrary and unjust and it is nothing but a means to wreak vengeance through politically motivated criminal investigation by using the state machinery for oblique motive of political gain.

The petition is yet to be listed



for hearing. The petitioner stated the lodging of the FIR reveals an apparent malafide intention and the abuse of the process of law.

The case has been registered at an alien jurisdiction at Rupnagar Police Station which has nothing but an oblique motive to settle political scores as the alleged statements/interviews were given in Mumbai, he said.

The case was lodged against Vishwas in Rupnagar town's Sadar police station on April 12. The former AAP leader ahead of the assembly elections had accused Kejriwal of supporting separatists. The Punjab police on April 20 had visited Vishwas's home in Ghaziabad and summoned him for questioning.

Vishwas was booked following a complaint in which it was

alleged that he gave "inflammatory statements" against Kejriwal on news channels and social media platforms, alleging Kejriwal's links with separatist elements.

The complainant had claimed that when he was roaming in villages along with AAP supporters for the redress of people's grievances, some unknown masked men stopped them and called them Khalistani.

Similar incidents have been occurring regularly. All this started after Kumar Vishwas gave inflammatory statements against AAP convener Arvind Kejriwal on news channels / social media platforms alleging AAP links with separatist elements," the complainant had said.

The FIR was registered under various sections, including 153-A (promoting enmity between different groups on grounds of religion, race, place etc), 505 (whoever makes, publishes or circulates any statement, rumour or report), 120-B (criminal conspiracy) of the IPC and 125 of the Representation of People Act. **AGENCIES**

# Mamata to go to Delhi for national conclave, will not meet PM



**KOLKATA:** West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee said she will go to Delhi on Friday to attend a national conclave slated to be held there the next day where Prime Minister Narendra Modi will be present, but will not meet him as she will return to the city to attend the programmes on May Day and Eid-ul-Fitr. Banerjee, who was speaking to reporters on Thursday, said that she has got her return ticket booked.

"I will reach New Delhi tomorrow (Friday) night and return the next day (Saturday). I have my tickets booked. That is the reason why I will not get the time to meet the PM this time. I have no appointment with the PM," Banerjee told reporters at the state secretariat on

Thursday. The TMC chief said she will attend May Day programmes and the Eid namaz on Red Road either on May 2 or May 3, depending on the sighting of the moon, as she has been doing for the past several years.

"April 30 will therefore be a crucial day for me ... The minorities comprise 33 per cent of population of Bengal and I attend the Red Road namaz every year. I will have to attend it this year too. And then there is Akshay Tritiya. I attend the programmes of all festivals," she said.

Chief ministers of other states, Chief Justice of India N V Ramana and judges of high courts are invitees at the conclave on the pendency of cases across courts in the country. **AGENCIES**

## Ways to reboot the Rural Economy after COVID-19

India may enter into the 4th phase of lockdown; we are caught between the dilemma of savings lives or protecting livelihoods by keeping the economy open and running. The most marginalised, daily wage earners, unorganised labour class and those at the fringes of our society have been disproportionately affected. With the migrant labourers returning home with no cash or savings, village communities are stressed due to the loss of remittance income, and the added mouths to feed.

India is primarily an agrarian economy supporting 60% of the population, reviving agriculture and allied sectors would be critical in the coming days. While we continue supporting in immediate relief efforts, we must work towards creating small local growth clusters with more self-reliant systems of production, processing and marketing to create livelihoods and employment for 0.5 to 1 million households. At PRADAN, we are directing our energy to create around 10 such growth clusters which will positively impact a population of 5 million. Some key elements of our strategy are briefly captured below: Creating public awareness across all our 10,000+ project villages on safety and hygiene issues, including maintaining social distancing.

Strengthening public systems to enrol families who do not have Ration cards, Jan Dhan accounts, MGNREGS Job cards and other such documentation into former government systems so that they can receive state benefits and the slew of relief measures that seek to reach the neediest and deserving. Facilitating provision of relief work through MGNREGS (100 days job guarantee scheme) by creating assets like plantations, water-harvesting structures, land treatment measures, etc. which can provide immediate wages as well as improve livelihoods in the medium and long-term. As food stocks dwindle, the nutrition status of households would be adversely impacted. To ensure nutrition security, about 100,000 vulnerable families would need to be supported to set up their kitchen gardens.

Enumerating all migrant labourers who have returned home and facilitate those willing to return to their place of employment by re-activating the agent networks. For those who do not want to return, PRADAN plans to groom and promote 10,000 such youth as Entrepreneurs or Self-employed, who are linked to local livelihood eco-systems.

Facilitating backyard poultry and goat rearing with provisions for improvement on sheds, vaccines and other support to 100,000 families.

Encouraging 100 Farmer Producer Organisation to support around 400,000 Small and Marginal Farmers by providing all necessary services to the farmer. For the coming years, FPOs can help SMFs cultivate cereals, oilseeds and pulses to ensure food security at the household level as well as contributing to the national food security. PRADAN also plans to promote 100 Farm produce pick-up and selling to final consumer vehicle support centres called "Veggies-on-wheels", as a move towards shorter and more localised supply chains.

Working with 250,000 farmers towards a new paradigm by shifting from intensive chemical-based agriculture to adopting sustainable eco-friendly agriculture practices. Tribals in forest fringe areas, who are dependent on Non-Timber Forest Produce would be supported for smooth access to schemes under Pradhan Mantri Vandhan Yojana.

### LETTERBOX

Readers' feedback adds value to the newspaper. Please email comments on reports, features and columns to [fwletters@gmail.com](mailto:fwletters@gmail.com). We will publish them on this page.

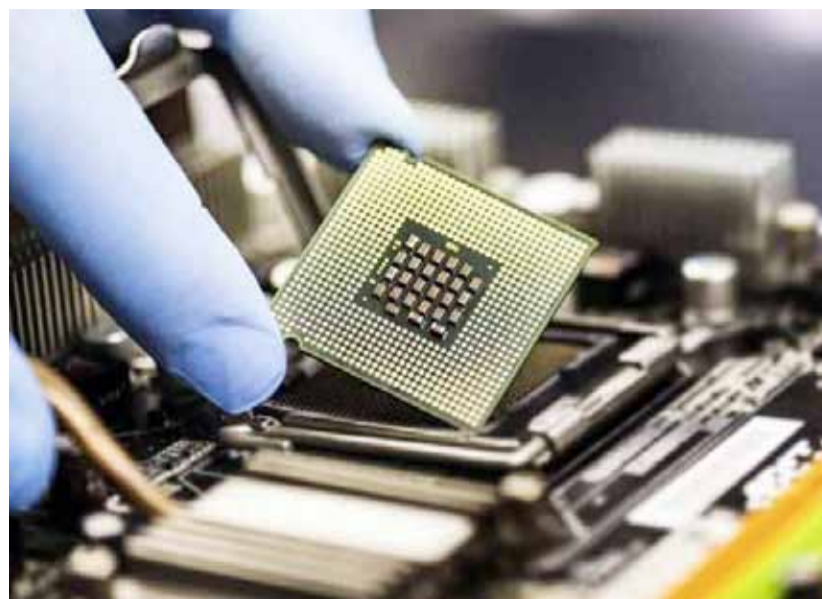


## THE FINANCIAL WORLD

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## India towards self-reliance in electronics sector



New India is self-reliant in many ways and it is estimated that India will start producing electronics products also worth Rs 30,000 crore rupees by 2026. The demand for such products is increasing day by day in the country. To install chips in these products, the country will need semiconductors worth at least Rs 6 lakh crore. Preparations are underway to make the semiconductor indigenously. Currently India imports semiconductors from other countries. While addressing at SEMICON, the Semiconductor Conference held in Bengaluru recently, Rajiv Chandrashekhar, Union Minister of State for Information Technology and Electronics, said that the government has received proposals from many companies for electronic chip production. These include Vedanta Foxconn Joint Venture, IGSS Ventures and ISMC. Meanwhile, semiconductor production has decreased due to the revival of Covid pandemic and lockdown in China. Integrated circuit production in China declined by 4.2 percent in the first quarter of this year. Semiconductor chip production declined 5.1 percent in March. Chinese electronics makers are fearful of supply chain disruptions. This can also have an impact on India, as India imports a lot of components from China.

India imports 100 per cent of semiconductors, of which half material is

imported from China alone. Apart from the chip, many types of electronic, auto and mobile phone parts are also imported from the Dragon. There is such a shortage of chips in the world at this time that chip makers are working by extracting semiconductors from old washing machines bought from junk dealers. The chip shortage doesn't seem to be going away anytime soon. The Russo-Ukraine war has disrupted supply lines, causing

intermittent or halting supply of goods. Taiwan Semiconductor Manufacturing Company, one of the largest chip makers in South East Asia, fears a reduction in chip production due to a shortage of manpower and parts. More than 169 industries, including electronics, have been affected due to chip shortage. In the last two years, people started working from home during the lockdown, due to which the demand for electronic

products like computers, laptops, gaming consoles etc. increased. Chip makers, on the other hand, had reduced production.

A modern car uses 1,500 to 3,000 chips. During the pandemic, cinema halls were closed to contain the spread of the virus, forcing many people to turn to home entertainment during periods of self-isolation, fueling demand for video game consoles. The properties of semiconductors or chips are in between that of conductors and insulators. Chips typically made from silicon are used to supply power to a wide variety of devices such as cars, laptops, smartphones, home appliances and gaming consoles. The chip performs many functions, such as power display and data transfer, etc. Hence, the supply crunch is bound to have an impact on the sales of cars, fridges, laptops, TVs and other electronic equipment. Taiwan is the world leader in semiconductor manufacturing. Last year there was a severe drought, which caused problems for the chip makers. A large amount of pure water is needed to manufacture semiconductors. Chip production cannot be increased on short notice, because it is a complex process that takes months. It usually takes more than three months to make a chip. In such a situation, the problem is expected to persist till 2023.

Narvijay Yadav, Writer is a senior journalist & columnist. Twitter @NarvijayYadav



## Marriage no ground to deny wife right to prosecute husband of rape



Feminists have long demanded criminalizing of marital rape because marriage is not a lifelong consent. In fact, India is one of the 36 countries in the world where marital rape is not criminalized. However, feminists and women rights activists have for long been raising voice against it.

The Delhi High Court, is now hearing a bunch of petitions seeking criminalization of marital rape in the country and the protection provided to husbands against being booked for rape. A two-member

Delhi HC Bench has observed that it is merely having an 'open discussion' before arriving at a judgment. 'A husband has no business to compel but the court can't ignore what happens if it strikes down

the exception' the Bench observed, adding: 'The husband goes to jail for 10 years if he does this even on one occasion... We need a much more incisive insight into the issue.'

Since it is not a crime to rape one's wife, the National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB) does not maintain any separate statistics on marital rape. In the year 2000, the Law Commission had opposed criminalizing marital rape, arguing that 'it may amount to excessive interference with the marital relationship'. In 2013, the JS Verma Committee recommended that marital rape be criminalized, but four years later, a

Parliamentary Standing Committee opposed it on the grounds that 'the entire family system will be under great stress' if it were criminalized. The domestic violence is a crime that is rampant but grossly underreported, and criminality of sexual violence in a marriage must be acknowledged and marriage must not be considered as lifelong consent.

Feminists and women's rights groups have long demanded criminalizing of marital rape. The orthodox mindset is that a woman's body, after she gets married, is her husband's property. In other words, a woman, whether she likes it or not, grants perpetual consent

and a licence for cohabitation to her husband. Sometime back, the High Court of Chhattisgarh had observed that sexual intercourse by a husband with his spouse would not constitute rape even if it was against the consent of the wife.

In 2018, a private Bill was introduced by Congress MP Shashi Tharoor in the Lok Sabha, seeking to criminalize marital rape, among other rights. However, it lapsed after the failure to garner support from the elected government. While recommending changes to India's rape laws, the Justice JS Verma Committee, constituted after the Nirbhaya rape case, said in 2013 that forced sex between spousal partners should also be considered as rape and punished as a criminal offence. The government, however, did not accept this arguing that such a move would destroy the institution of marriage.

The UN Committee on Elimination of Discrimination against Women had in 2007 and 2014 asked India to criminalize marital rape. One of the arguments being used against it is that women can misuse such a law if it came into force and they would file false cases of rape against their husbands. There is an urgent need for the judiciary to recognise marital rape as an offence under the Indian Penal Code.

Now the Delhi High Court is hearing PILs by NGOs RIT Foundation, All India Democratic Women's Association and two individuals who have sought striking down the exception in the Indian law, saying that it discriminated against married women being sexually assaulted by their husbands. The plea

is that the exception in Section 375 of the Indian Penal Code, which exempts forceful sexual intercourse by a man with his own wife from the offence of rape, must be viewed as an "instrument of oppression".

The exception in Section 375 IPC decriminalizes marital rape and mandates that sexual intercourse by a man with his wife, the wife not being under fifteen years of age, is not rape. Arguing before a bench of Justices Rajiv Shakdher and C Hari Shankar, senior advocate Rebecca John, told the court that exception 2 of IPC 375 is a colonial legacy. She said the court will uphold the physical integrity of women by striking it down and putting the people to notice that a marital partner's consent must be respected. "What is written in exception 2, which has been given to us from a doctrine, propounded 200 years ago by our colonial masters, does not reflect either the Indian man or the Indian woman, certainly not the Indian marriage. The colonial masters have done away with it. We continue to hang on to that legacy," John said.

She argued that the section gives dominance to the husband or the man in the marriage, while completely disregarding the "no" by the wife and making her a subordinate partner in the alliance. She contended that if the court holds the same to be unconstitutional, it will not be creating a new offence as the same already exists, but only a class of individuals who at present enjoy legal immunity from the prosecution will lose it.

She submitted that the expectation of sex or a meaningful conjugal relation

within a marriage is fair, and that there may even be a unilateral expectation for sex in a given case. "If that expectation is not fulfilled, then the spouse has every right to resort to civil remedies.

However, when the expectation within a marriage becomes a physical act based on coercion and force and is non-consensual, causing harm or injury... then that sexual act must become an offence," John said. While referring to the consequences, John asked whether the court will allow a husband, who is suffering from a venereal disease, to claim the exception and also permit it in a case where a woman is ill and a sexual relation will have detrimental effect on her health.

Also arguing before the bench, senior advocate Rajshankar Rao submitted that a "rapist remains a rapist irrespective of the relationship" as he read out from the Verma Committee report which had recommended the criminalization of marital rape. Exceptions of section 375 IPC decriminalizes marital rape and mandates that sexual intercourse by a man with his own wife, the wife not being under 15 years of age, is not rape. The marital rape exception, thus, creates a legal fiction where, even if all the requirements for rape are otherwise fulfilled, the law deems not to be rape if the parties are married and the woman is above 15.

Gautam Bhatia a Delhi-based advocate and the one involved with drafting one of the petitions before the high court reportedly observed that if sexual assault takes place five minutes before a marriage is formalized, it is rape; but five minutes after, it is not. The indisputable fact is that the marital rape exception means that consent is irrelevant to the question of rape in a marriage. For that reason alone, the court — whose task it is to uphold and vindicate everyone's right to equal treatment and non-discrimination — should strike it down.

Bharat Hiteshi, Writer is a senior journalist & columnist views are personal

### BOOKS: REVIEW

## Have a query about Covid-19? This Book has an answer !

HUMRA QURAISHI

This book authored by the two leading scientists of the country, Seyed Ehtesham Hasnain and Arun Tewari, focuses on the Covid 19 pandemic, with all its dimensions and hues and forms.

Yes, as I read through this book, it got writ large that every aspect to the Covid 19 pandemic seems to be focused on. Written for the common man, it answers all those queries that we often think aloud: Why the infection hit the vital organs of one patient but spared that of the other? Why only minor

symptoms surfaced in some whilst others were down by more than one symptom?

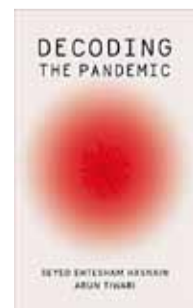
What if in future a pandemic of this nature strikes? What is our collective future vis-à-vis this virus still hovering around ... lurking? What are the chances of it striking yet again? Who all are to be blamed for this level of health disasters hitting this planet, destroying lives and livelihoods?

Actually this book has to be read to get answers to all possible doubts and apprehensions and the ground realities that exist today in the context of the virus and the dilemmas and tragedies spread around.

Besides addressing the

**The woman, Miranda, got infected and was cared for by the soldier, Adam. During her illness the woman ran high fever and got disoriented. By the time she recovered, Adam had succumbed to the infection, which most likely he got while nursing her**

various aspects to the pandemic, what I found rather interesting is the fact that the authors have taken the



Title of the book—**DECODING THE PANDEMIC**  
Authors—**Seyed Ehtesham Hasnain and Arun Tewari**  
Publishers—**Sakal Publications**  
Pages—**254**  
Price—**Rs 599**

trouble of researching and brining to the fore, all aspects and details about the past pandemics that hit mankind. "Though there had been many endemics in the 20<sup>th</sup> century --- Manchurian plague in 1910, United States poliomyelitis in 1916, Russian Typhus during 1918-22, Indian Smallpox in 1974, West African meningitis in 1996, Malaysian Nipah virus in 1998 --- none of them crossed national boundaries, leave aside international boundaries..."

What makes this book very readable is that webbed and inter-webbed in, are many details of the human happenings. To quote one such 'happening' from the book — "In 1939, American journalist Katherine Anne Porter (1890 - 1980) published a novel 'Pale Horse, Pale Rider', brilliantly capturing the human tragedy of the pandemic. The novel narrated a love story between a soldier of an occupying army and a woman who sold newspapers in the street with 1918 Influenza pandemic in the backdrop. The woman, Miranda, got infected and was cared for by the soldier, Adam. During her illness the woman ran high fever and got disoriented. By the time she recovered, Adam had succumbed to the infection, which most likely he got while nursing her."

## WNS to Participate at Q2 of 2022 Investor Conferences

MUMBAI: Maharashtra, India & New York, United States & Business Wire India

WNS (Holdings) Limited (NYSE: WNS), a leading provider of global Business Process Management solutions, today announced that the company will participate at the following calendar Q2 2022 investor conferences:

Needham & Company 17th Annual Technology & Media Conference

**DATE:** Monday, May 16, 2022  
**Location:** Virtual, Barrington Research 16th Annual Spring Investment Conference

**DATE:** Thursday, May 19, 2022  
**Location:** Virtual  
Cowan & Company 50th Annual Technology, Media & Telecom Conference

**DATE:** Wednesday, June 1, 2022  
**Location:** New York, NY  
**Presentation:** 2:45 PM (Eastern)

Live audio webcast available on WNS's website at <http://ir.wns.com>

Baird 2022 Global Consumer, Technology & Services Conference

**DATE:** Monday, June 6, 2022  
**Location:** New York, NY  
**Presentation:** 2:35 PM (Eastern)

Live audio webcast available on WNS's website at <http://ir.wns.com>

William Blair 42nd Annual Growth Stock Conference

**DATE:** Wednesday, June 8, 2022  
**Location:** Chicago, IL

About WNS: WNS (Holdings) Limited (NYSE: WNS) is a leading Business Process Management (BPM) company. WNS combines deep industry knowledge with technology, analytics and process expertise to co-create innovative, digitally led transformational solutions with over 400 clients across various industries. WNS delivers an entire spectrum of BPM solutions including industry-specific offerings, customer experience services, finance and accounting, human resources, procurement, and research and analytics to re-imagine the digital future of businesses. As of March 31, 2022, WNS had 52,081 professionals across 54 delivery centers worldwide including facilities in China, Costa Rica, India, the Philippines, Poland, Romania, South Africa, Spain, Sri Lanka, Turkey, the United Kingdom, and the United States. For more information, visit [www.wns.com](http://www.wns.com).

**Safely Harbor Provision:** This document includes information which may constitute forward-looking statements made pursuant to the safe harbor provisions of the Private Securities Litigation Reform Act of 1995, the accuracy of which are necessarily subject to risks, uncertainties, and assumptions as to future events. Factors that could cause actual results to differ materially from those expressed or implied are discussed in our most recent Form 20-F and other filings with the Securities and Exchange Commission. WNS undertakes no obligation to update or revise any forward-looking statements, whether as a result of new information, future events, or otherwise.

## ASSOCHAM for duty free coal imports, differential diesel prices for captive generation sets to deal with power situation

**NEW DELHI:** ASSOCHAM has suggested key measures, including duty-free imports of coal along with increased availability of railway rakes for movement of coal and differential rate of diesel for captive generation sets for tackling challenges of power supply in several states, amidst unprecedented early onset of heatwave conditions in several parts of the country.

“We would urge the states and the discoms not to differentiate against the commercial consumers in power supply. This is critical because growth in industrial production remains muted despite the overall economic recovery,” ASSOCHAM



Secretary General Deepak Sood said.

He said while the Centre has allowed blending of imported

coal to the extent of 10 per cent with the domestic coal, global supply constraints and a sharp rise in the prices in the inter-

national markets are making going difficult for the power generating companies and the discoms in the further chain of transmission. “Although the import duty on coal is 2.5 per cent at present, we would urge scrapping the duty for now in view of the pressing situation.”

The ASSOCHAM said while in the medium to long term, the recently signed Free Trade Agreement with Australia, the main source of imported coal for India would help, the issue of adequate coal supply needs to be handled upfront.

“In cases of power cuts by the discoms, no extra burden should be imposed on the industrial

consumers. Those who have the captive generating capacity should be supplied diesel at differentiated prices,” the chamber Secretary General said. He said several states are reeling under power shortages with the situation being further affected by extra-ordinary heatwave setting in quite early this year.

“Rains are still away and we need to manage the situation with constant monitoring, jointly by the Centre, states, and the industry,” Sood said. He said ASSOCHAM has reached out to its members to keep sharing the evolving situation, which we would share with the government. **AGENCIES**

## India sees 70% spike in ransomware attacks on critical infrastructure

**NEW DELHI:** Cyber-attacks on critical infrastructure by nation-state bad actors have increased significantly and India observed a 70 per cent increase in ransomware activity in the fourth quarter (Q4) of 2021, a new report said on Wednesday.

According to the report by cybersecurity company Trellix, over half of adversarial advanced persistent threat actor activity originated from Russian and Chinese backed groups and Russian-backed groups like APT29 have continued to greatly increase their activity in 2022. Reports surfaced last week that a Russian malware planted from a server in Nigeria was used for a cyber attack on Oil India's (OIL) system in Assam.

The state-owned company had suffered a major cyber-attack in its field headquarters in eastern Assam's Duliaganj, with the hacker demanding \$75,00,000. The report found a significant 73 per cent increase in cyber incidents targeting individuals and positioned people as the top actor sector in Q4 2021.

Individual consumers are the top target of cybercriminals, closely followed by the health-



care vertical. Additionally, the transportation, shipping, manufacturing and information technology industries showed a sharp increase in threats.

“We are at a critical juncture in cybersecurity and observing increasingly hostile behaviour across an ever-expanding attack surface,” said Christiaan Beek, lead scientist and principal engineer, Trellix Threat Labs.

The fourth quarter signalled the shift out of a two-year pandemic which cybercriminals used for profit and “saw the Log4Shell vulnerability impact hundreds of millions of devices, only to continue cyber momentum in the new year where we've seen an escalation of international cyber activity,” he added. **AGENCIES**

## Indian Accent to Open In Mumbai

Restaurateur Rohit Khattar's EHV has signed an agreement with Reliance Industries Limited to bring India's most awarded restaurant, Indian Accent to Mumbai. This comes on the heels of announcing the summer opening of EHV's forthcoming restaurant in New York, Koloman helmed by Chef Markus Glocker as well as a collaboration with Chef David Thompson for Thai restaurants in India.

Indian Accent, Mumbai is expected to open before the end of the year. It shall be housed in a beautiful space overlooking the fountains at the Dhirubhai Ambani Square at Jio World Centre in Bandra Kurla Complex.

Rohit Khattar, Chairman EHV says, “For many years we have explored locations in Mumbai for Indian Accent and our search has ended at the spectacular Jio World Centre,



the new epicenter of Mumbai. Indian Accent has a very loyal clientele of discerning guests from Mumbai. So we are particularly thrilled to be able to bring the Indian Accent experience to this vibrant city and look forward to it embracing us as warmly as New Delhi and New York have.

The kitchen at Indian Accent Mumbai will be helmed by Executive Chef Shantanu Mehrotra who has been Executive Chef of Indian Accent,

New Delhi since its opening under the guidance of Chef Manish Mehrotra, who created the Indian Accent menu and has been promoted to Culinary Director. Rijul Gulati shall be Head Chef and Varun Sharma, who leads the award winning bar at EHV's other restaurant, Comorin, shall head the bar programme. The G.M. of Indian Accent is yet to be appointed and shall report to the Operations Director, Nitin Mathur. **AGENCIES**

## Sminu Jindal addresses top global entrepreneurs at US summit

**NEW DELHI:** It is an annual congregation of some of the best business minds in the world, and this edition features one of India's top industrialists and accessibility champion Sminu Jindal. The Entrepreneurs' Organization (EO) has invited the Managing Director of Jindal SAW Ltd and Founder Chairperson Svayam to speak at their flagship event, the Global Leadership Conference (GLC), on 25 April in Washington.

The US-based EO is a high-quality support network of 15,600+ leaders across 61 countries. This year's theme for the summit, “Unleashed”, promises to help EO members “unearth greater success, find greater purpose and have a greater impact”. Fittingly, the multi-awarded, multi-faceted, woman of steel Jindal headlines the Indian representation at the exclusive, invite-only event. She will be sharing insights from her inspiring journey and why start-up business models build around accessibility are the financial future of a world facing an increased number of people with reduced mobility.

Jindal was the first to train the spotlight on the need for accessibility in transport and the built environment as a universal necessity. An accident at the age of 11 turned her world upside down and saw her adapting to life in a wheelchair. It changed her worldview, and the seeds of her passion project, accessibility non-profit Svayam, can be traced to the period following this. Her relentless pursuit of an accessible world has turned Svayam into a movement that focuses on creating a barrier-free world for everybody, irrespective of their abilities. EO calls the 2022 edition the most immersive and thought-provoking GLC to date with in-person and virtual forums in Washington, US, and Barcelona, Spain, from 23 to 26 April. Other speakers at the GLC include the supermodel-turned-businesswoman Tyra Banks and best-selling author Daniel Pink. **AGENCIES**



## Three days fair inaugurated to develop Haryana as Pharmaceuticals hub



SATISH HANDA Chandigarh

3-Days Pharma Tech & Lab Expo Fair was inaugurated today in which more than 200 reputed manufacturers from all over the country participated to boost sale and export of their pharmaceutical products and machinery. According to Anil Kumar Choudhary General Manager Haryana Business Fair Authority, business for value worth over Rs 800 crore is expected in this three days fair being organized with the assistance of Engineering Export Promotion Council of India a. dot com Private Ltd.

Choudhary disclosed that Haryana state is doing export of pharmaceutical products of value worth Rs 3000 crore annually with nearly 12% increase every year. He said, Haryana

state is having continuously increase in industrial investment every year since after launch of pharmaceutical policy in 2019. He said, Additional Chief Secretary Dr G. Anupma has extended full cooperation in organizing this exhibition in which as many as 35 pharmaceutical companies from Haryana state are participating in the Expo Fair.

Rakesh Suraj Regional Director Indian Engineering Export Council giving detail of Expo told that several reputed pharmaceutical manufacturing companies from Himachal Pradesh, Tamilnadu, Karnataka, Gujarat, Maharashtra and M.P and other states are displaying their products in the fair having seminars on different subject on all three days especially focusing on exports.

## WallMantra plans to expand in 2022, expect 2.5X growth



**NEW DELHI:** Home decor start-up, WallMantra is growing from strength to strength ever since its debut in 2013. It has also overcome the lull due to the pandemic and has been receiving an overwhelming response following the lockdown. It is currently catering to the decor requirements of more than 10,000 customers every month.

The decor brand has set new targets for 2022-23, which includes new durable segments. Giving details about the company's expansion plans, Jitesh Agarwal, founder of WallMantra, says, “We plan to expand into new verticals like designer home electronics, furniture and other durables. We recently launched designer-printed ceiling fans, which have been receiving a great response from the users. We are also developing an augmented reality app to facilitate and assist users in planning and designing their home decor.” He adds, “With the combination of these durables and app, the projected growth of the brand is estimated to be around, at least, 2.5X in this financial year of 2022-23.”

Interestingly, WallMantra began its home decor journey with wall stickers. Currently, the brand's top-selling categories are paintings, mirrors, shelves and coffee tables. Talking about the philosophy that drives his brand and keeps it relevant, Agarwal shares, “WallMantra is driven by the desire to provide beautiful home decor and furnishing to Indian consumers at an affordable price. With this philosophy, we are able to come up with new products, designs and categories that are exclusive to us. This in turn has customers coming back to us for more.”

What also sets the home decor brand apart from the rest is that it follows responsible business practices. For instance, when it comes to glassware manufacturing and retailing, it consciously ensures the avoidance of malpractices like hazardous working conditions, child labour, toxic materials, and callous waste disposal that plagues the industry.

## Porsche sales in India rise 22 pc in Jan-March

**MUMBAI:** German sports car manufacturer Porsche said on Tuesday its sales in India grew 22 per cent to 188 units in the first quarter of the current calendar year, recording its best Q1 performance since 2013.

The brand's SUV range comprising Cayenne and Macan continue their success in India and remain the most sold models in the range, the company said in a statement.

The record Q1 sales came on the back of Porsche posting a massive 62 per cent growth in its total car sales in CY 2021 over 2020, it said.

Porsche India has further driven the positive momentum,



resulting in a 22 per cent increase in new car deliveries at 188 units in the first quarter of this year over the same period in 2021, the company said.

“The momentum from 2021's solid results, with a

62 per cent increase over the previous year, was transferred into the first quarter with an excellent overall result that we are all proud of,” said Manolito Vujicic, Brand Director for Porsche India. **AGENCIES**

## Story Telling Session by Mumbai Entrepreneurs

The City of Mumbai witnessed an interesting session, wherein select Eminent City Entrepreneurs Shared their Amazing Growth Stories to a cross section of audience comprising Renowned Personalities, Investment Professionals, Business Mentors, Practising Professionals and Attending Entrepreneurs.

The Session Mumbai Entrepreneurs Story was held on Saturday, 23rd of April at the Mumbai Press Club Premises.

The moderated session had 11 Entrepreneurs from various genres share their journey, the challenges they face, their vision for the future and much more. Each one got to speak on a 10 min session to make it more effective and valuable of their growth and development.

The Entrepreneurs who Shared their Stories were

- Sanjita Prasad - Co founder Amaltas apparel and accessories pvt ltd
- Kapil Bhatia - Founder - Unirec
- Anshav Jain - Founder - Bringle Global
- Abhijeet Bhandari - Co Founder - Ecosystem Ventures
- Satanik Roy - Co Founder - Hyper X Change



- Manak Lal Agarwal - Renowned Signature & Logo Consultant
- Saket Tiwari - Director - Saket Group
- SS Lature - MD- Suyog group
- Shaina Mukadam - renowned capital market analyst
- Hiren Shah - Founder & Chairman - Vertoz Advertising Limited
- Harddikk Patel - Founder - Quali55care

The Moderators of the Session were Dr. Sanjay Chaturvedi, Renowned Expert on Real Estate Sector and Rohit Chabria, Renowned Surveillance and Security Solutions Expert.

The event was Curated by Nova Realtime Solutions LLP co-founded by Sanjay Kumar Garg & Sunil Goenka, is a busi-

ness communication enterprise which is trying to create a dedicated Entrepreneurial Ecosystem.

The presenters were Srujan Alpha Capital Advisors, a SEBI registered category I merchant banking firm which assists in raising equity capital for growing companies and has offices in Mumbai and Jaipur. Rajat Baid, partner, said that “Entrepreneurs are the real gallants of the nation who add to the national progress in multiple ways and there is so much to learn from their journey. Hence this curated event was to listen from the change agents themselves”. Jinesh Doshi, partner, said that “This event is a part of a series which celebrates entrepreneurship with more editions in other cities to follow soon”. **AGENCIES**

## UST marks one year of partnership with Blue Yonder

UST, a leading digital transformation solutions company, is marking the first anniversary of its unique strategic partnership with Blue Yonder, a leader in digital supply chain solutions and omnichannel commerce fulfillment. At a time of increased difficulty for retailers and supply chain platforms, UST and Blue Yonder remain committed to revolutionizing supply chain and retail.

Over the past year, the partnership has allowed UST to enhance its professional services capabilities significantly and offer retail customers a range of exciting possibilities. UST has in this first year participated in over 15 joint projects implementing innovative Blue Yonder solutions, and has been increasing its scope of offering with additional services for these projects as part of continuing efforts to help mutual customers find even more success. The company's broad range of services makes UST a one-stop shop for Blue Yonder Planning services.

The new Blue Yonder Retailers compliment UST's existing Retail Practice which currently counts 12 of the top



20 global retailers as long-term clients. The close relationship has benefited both companies, and UST's Blue Yonder practice team has doubled since the partnership first began.

UST is the only Blue Yonder partner trained and experienced in providing services for the Retail Markets newest offerings, such as Luminate Assortment and Luminate Allocation. UST is an accredited Blue Yonder partner for the implementation of existing and future retail planning solutions. As the relationship continues to grow, UST is proud to announce the following initiatives:

UST Secure A new enterprise platform focused on

store advertising using digital signage.

Peter Charness, Vice President, Retail Strategy, UST, said, “UST prides itself on our strong client relationships, and we are excited to participate in ICON 2022 as we roll out a new range of services for the retail sector. Our partnership with Blue Yonder has allowed us to offer dynamic new supply chain management solutions catered to emerging needs. We will continue to prioritize agility and responsiveness as we work to put clients in a position for continued success.”

“The relationship between Blue Yonder and UST shows how close collaboration can result in pathbreaking supply chain innovation and improved services for end users. Both companies have benefited from the partnership, and we look forward to continuing to build on our legacy of success,” noted Wayne Usie, Chief Market Development Officer, Blue Yonder.

UST will have a booth at ICON - Blue Yonder's flagship global event - taking place in Orlando, Florida and online from May 23-25, 2022.

**NEWSBRIEFS**

**SBI duped of Rs 4.5 cr after miscreants tamper with ATMs**



**SAMBALPUR:** Miscreants have allegedly duped the State Bank of India of around Rs 4.5 crore over seven months by apparently tampering with the cash dispensing shutters of ATMs in Odisha's Sambalpur district, a police officer said on Monday. Twenty-five cards of different banks were used 4,630 times at nine SBI ATMs in Sambalpur and Rengali towns between September 2020 and March 2021. The unidentified robbers used exit shutter manipulation fraud to siphon off the money after manually tampering with the cash dispensing shutters of Automated Teller Machines (ATMs). The miscreants would insert their cards and once the PIN and requested amount had been keyed in, the machine would authenticate the card and the process of cash dispensation would begin. The robbers would then jam the ATM's cash shutter while it was dispensing money, prompting it to generate an error message.

**AGENCIES**  
**Geetha Ravichandran, IRS assumes charge as Principal Chief Commissioner of Income Tax, Mumbai**

Geetha Ravichandran, an IRS officer of 1987 Batch, has taken charge as the Principal Chief Commissioner of Income Tax, Mumbai. Mumbai is the largest region in terms of the revenue collection. The overall tax collection of direct taxes in Mumbai region for FY 2021-22 was Rs.4,42,774 crores, which is 32% of India's total tax collection. Before taking over as Principal Chief Commissioner of Income Tax, Mumbai, Geetha Ravichandran held the charge of Principal Chief Commissioner of Income Tax for Tamil Nadu and Puducherry Region. She has served in various parts of the country including Chennai, Mumbai, Nagpur and Bangalore.

**AGENCIES**

**FM invites US semiconductor players to make further investments in India; promises incentives**

Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman on Monday held a meeting with representatives of the semiconductor industry of the US and invited them to make further investments in India.

The Finance Minister spoke about opportunities for companies situated in Silicon Valley and about the government of India's commitment to be a reliable player in the entire semiconductor value chain with dedicated incentive for the sector in mission mode through the Indian Semiconductor Mission.

Last year, the government approved a Rs 76,000-crore scheme to boost semiconductor and display manufacturing in the country in a bid to position India as a global hub for hi-tech production, and attract large chip makers.

Incentives have been lined up for companies engaged in silicon semiconductor fabs, display fabs, compound semiconductors, silicon photonics, sensor



fabs, semiconductor packaging and semiconductor design.

During the roundtable with industry leaders from the semiconductor ecosystem, including design, manufacturing, equipment, technology and systems in San Francisco, the participants informed the Finance Minister that they have substantially scaled their capabilities in India in the last few years and are also

collaborating with Academia for R&D. «The participants also mentioned that in view of global supply chain disruptions, they need to review overreliance of supply chain in certain jurisdictions and with the right policies and talent in place, next decade will belong to India.» the finance ministry said in a tweet.

Participating in the meeting Devinder Kumar, Chief

Financial Officer and Treasurer of AMD spoke about the company's growth in India and how India is poised to grow strongly with the vision of Atmanirbhar Bharat driving it.

Western Digital, Senior Vice President, Corporate Business Development Dan Steere said the company is excited to explore opportunities with the government of India to expand manufacturing in the Indian market. Manish Bhatia, executive vice president of global operations at Micron Tech said the USD 10 million scheme by the government would encourage semiconductor manufacturing in India.

The Finance Minister also met Uber CEO Dara Khosrowshahi, who gave a snapshot of the company's investment in India and expansion plan.

During the meeting, he expressed his optimism about the company's growth in India across segments, and how

the company is looking to quadruple the number of drivers on the platform to 2 million.

«Finance Minister Smt. @nsitharaman acknowledged @Uber's expansion plans in India and said that technology plays an important role in strengthening transportation and mobility sectors as well as last mile connectivity.» another tweet said.

«Union Finance Minister Smt. @nsitharaman met with Mr Mark Widmar, CEO, @FirstSolar, in San Francisco, today. They discussed about India's renewable energy landscape and @FirstSolar's \$700 million investment in India.» a separate tweet said. Widmar informed the Finance Minister that the company's plant will be operational shortly and this is their lowest-cost factory across jurisdictions with very low carbon footprint and recycles 90 per cent of the material.

**AGENCIES**

**Sopra Banking Software to double its headcount in India**

**NEW DELHI:** A Coffee Connect meet was organised at the Embassy of France in India in association with Business France India, in the presence of the Ambassador of France to India, H.E. Mr Emmanuel Lenain, the CEO of Sopra Banking Software, Mr Eric Bierry, and other prominent CEOs of the Industry.

Sopra Banking Software (SBS), a global leader in banking and specialised finance software company with headquarters in Paris, announced its ambitious plan: to strengthen its footprint and increase the overall investment in India. At this event Mr Eric Bierry shared that the Group aims to increase the overall headcount to 12,000 over the next three years across both Sopra Banking Software India and Sopra Steria India. Mr Bierry said, «Our teams have done a tremendous job in scaling our business across different locations throughout the world. With that foundation, we are ready to make our next



move as a global fintech solution provider and this decision of increasing headcounts in India is a strategic and exciting step forward.»

Reflecting on the company's expansion plans in India, Mr Sunil Goyal, CEO of Sopra Banking Software India, and Deputy CEO of Sopra Steria India, said, «Our people are at the core of our business, and we're committed to creating an environment in which they can thrive. The Great Place To Work certification is a testament to the efforts we have put in to build a high-trust, high-

performance culture backed by a highly engaged workforce. We are also coming up with a huge state-of-the-art campus in Noida, which shows our commitment towards our people. Despite the COVID-19 crisis, we have maintained strong growth and our plans for India is another step in our global strategy to accelerate business opportunities locally and globally.»

Since Sopra Banking's inception in 2012, the revenue has increased from 171 million euros to nearly half a billion. The organisation has evolved from a France-centric provider to a

global one and has expanded its services to include cloud technology and an open banking platform. The organisation is focused in making finance accessible to as many people as possible and thus build a better future.

Sopra Banking expanded its presence in India in 2019 with a focus on R&D and innovation centre and is now a strong family with 1000+ colleagues.

India has emerged as a popular destination for FinTech companies because of the digital push that led to high digital adoption among consumers as well as SMEs. Moreover, the continuing government efforts to formalise and digitise the economy have led to a plethora of opportunities for FinTech players. «While most industries and sectors saw major setbacks during the Covid-19 pandemic, the FinTech industry has benefited from a second push towards digitisation with all operations and transactions happening virtually,» added Mr

Lalit Tyagi, Head R&D Sopra Banking Software India.

**AGENCIES**

H.E. Mr Emmanuel Lenain, Ambassador of France to India, remarked, «French companies are committed to investing and innovating in India. They appreciate the huge opportunities offered by the country, its incomparable talent pool, and its promising market which receives strong support from both the governments.»

About Sopra Banking Software Group : Sopra Banking Software is the partner of choice for more than 1,500 financial institutions worldwide. The rich variety of our solutions, the strength of our conviction, and our passion for innovation enable us to support our clients on a daily basis and in their future projects, as well as in their goals regarding financial inclusion. Our customers, based in over 80 countries around the world, benefit every day from our technologies and software, as well as the expertise of our 5,000 employees.

**AGENCIES**

**MoS Finance Dr. Bhagwat Kishanrao Karad inaugurates PNB branch at AURIC City, Maharashtra**

**MUMBAI:** Punjab National Bank (PNB), a leading Public Sector Bank in India, today opened its new branch at Aurangabad Industrial City (AURIC), Maharashtra. Dr. Bhagwat Kishanrao Karad - Minister of State (Finance) inaugurated the Bank's branch, accompanied by Atul Kumar Goel - MD & CEO of PNB, B P Mahapatra - CGM Mumbai and other bank staff.

With the inauguration of the bank branch at AURIC city, PNB's presence has reached 389 branches in rural, semi-urban and urban areas of Maharashtra. Presently, the Bank's branch share stands at 3 % and its business share at 3.7 % among the Scheduled Commercial Banks (SCB) in the State. With the view to scale up the market share and become a household name in this region, PNB has sanctioned the opening of 13 more branches in the State.

Presently, PNB has ten branches with Rs 1000 plus crore of business in the Aurangabad district. The opening of the AURIC city branch allows the Bank to cater to the need of more than 37 lakh populace in the district.

With the opening of the new branch, the Bank touches 400th milestone branch and 525th ATM in Mumbai Zone (Including Maharashtra and Goa). The AURIC branch will provide customer-friendly services, including the Bank's latest offerings like Cardless Cash Withdrawal, Virtual Debit Card and doorstep banking, among others.

AURIC is one of India's first greenfield industrial smart cities along the Delhi-Mumbai Industrial Corridor (DMIC). The environment-friendly city, which has attracted an investment of up to Rs. 5500 crore, is expected to become a major manufacturing hub in Maharashtra and generate large-scale employment opportunities in the next 15 years, with increased opportunities for the Bank to meet their financial requirements.

Speaking on the announcement, Atul Kumar Goel, MD & CEO of PNB, said, «We have recognized AURIC city's rich potential as an economic hub that will unlock substantial industrial advancement in the region. This is an opportunity for us to contribute substantially to the prosperity and development of this region while facilitating as the first point of contact for providing a best in class financial products and services.»

Inaugurating the branch, the chief guest Dr. Bhagwat Kishanrao Karad, Minister of State (Finance), congratulated PNB, its employees and residents of Maharashtra. He said, «PNB has played a pivotal role in serving underprivileged and underbanked customers. Financially enabling this segment of citizens is crucial to Hon'ble Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi's vision of 'Atma Nirbhar Bharat' and India becoming a 5 Trn economy.

With a network of 10,000 plus branches and a total business of Rs 19.40 lakh crore as of March 31, 2022, PNB proudly serves a customer base of more than 18 crores across the country.

The Bank has been successfully serving the country for 128 years. The recently amalgamated PNB has emerged stronger to play an essential role in the nation-building exercise, thereby supporting the government's vision of financial inclusion and boosting the entrepreneurial spirit in the country.

PNB assures one of the best banking service delivery infrastructure and a strong branch network in the country, enabling seamless customer service and ready access to a diverse range of tailor-made financial products and services.

**AGENCIES**



**Valediction ceremony of the 74th batch of Indian Revenue Service in NADT, Nagpur**

The Valediction Ceremony of the Induction Training for 74th batch of 54 IRS officers and 02 officers of the Royal Bhutan Service is scheduled on Friday, i.e., 29th April, 2022 at 4 PM at the National Academy of Direct Taxes (NADT), Nagpur. Mr Venkaiah Naidu, Hon'ble Vice President of India, has kindly consented to be the Chief Guest on the occasion. Bhagat Singh Koshyari, Hon'ble Governor of Maharashtra, has given their kind consent to be the Guest of Honour for the occasion. Also present on the occasion would be J. B. Mohapatra, Hon'ble Chairman, Central Board of

Direct Taxes. Senior officers heading various Central and State Government organizations and senior officers from the Income Tax Department, Nagpur are expected to grace the occasion.

National Academy of Direct Taxes, Nagpur is the apex training institute for the Indian Revenue Service Officers (Income Tax) of the Government of India. The IRS Officers are recruited through the Civil Services Examination (CSE) conducted by the Union Public Service Commission (UPSC). The direct recruit IRS Officers undergo Induction Training of about



16 months before being posted to field offices. During their training, the Officer Trainees are trained on various aspects of tax administration and are provided specialized inputs in Income Tax Laws, jurisprudence as well as Allied laws, General Laws and Business laws.

The Officer Trainees receive

intensive training on accounts and accounting systems. Further, inputs in Financial Forensics and Cyber Forensics are also given in order to prepare the Trainees for Investigation in tax matters and financial crimes, including tax evasion and money laundering. The Trainees are particularly sensitized towards tax payer services improving ease of compliance. Further, practical aspects of training include attachment with field offices of the Income Tax Department as well as with various constitutional/statutory bodies in India, including Parliament, RBI, SEBI & NSDL etc. There

is also a component of International Attachment wherein the trainees are exposed to the best practices prevailing in other tax jurisdictions.

The training equips the Officer Trainees with the knowledge and skills required to function as tax authorities and contribute towards revenue augmentation. On the successful completion of the Induction Training, i.e., after Valediction, the Officer Trainees are posted as Assistant Commissioners Of Income Tax in field offices and are charged with governing revenue collection and being an important part in nation-building.

**SBI Card engages TCS for digital transformation**

**MUMBAI:** TCS on Monday said it has signed a deal with SBI Card that will help digitalise and transform online onboarding processes of the latter's customers and will further enable the client to expand its e-card issuance.

It, however, did not disclose value of the deal. TCS has been serving the largest pure play credit card issuer in the country for a decade and the new deal is an expansion of the engagement, the IT company said in a statement.

The deal will help digitalise and transform online onboarding processes of customers



for SBI Card and will further enable the client to expand its e-card issuance, it said.

TCS as a strategic partner has played an important role in this digital journey for us, especially in digitizing our

core cards sourcing platform, implementation of Video KYC and eSignature features during COVID-19 period, Rama Mohan Rao Amara, managing director and chief executive of SBI Card said.

**AGENCIES**

**Economic Growth: What India can learn from China**

**Ease of Doing Business in India and Lesson to be learnt from China**

As India is a member of WTO and wants to attract more FDI to fulfill its dream to become a global vendor of manufacturing goods. The central government is doing efforts to improve the ratings of international agencies to attract more FDI and wants to capture the place of China, the global factory. Among the chosen 190 countries, India ranked 63rd in Doing Business in the latest World Bank Report. In 2014, the Government of India launched an ambitious program of regulatory reforms aimed at making it easier to do business in India. The program represents a great deal of effort to create a more business-friendly environment. India has emerged as one of the most attractive destinations not only for investments but also for doing business. India jumps 79 positions from 142nd (2014) to 63rd (2019) in 'World Bank's Ease of Doing Business



Ranking 2020'. With the aim to improve the ease of living and the ease of doing business in India, more than 25,000 compliances have been reduced by the GOI. Positive changes have led to this impressive improvement in India's ranking in the EoDB index, among the 190 economies, India ranks 13th in Protecting Minority Investors and 25th in Getting Credit.

**How to be a Global Vendor. Lesson to be learnt from China**

India is not the sole country that tries to start a new love affair with MNCs, as there are others -Korea, Taiwan, Vietnam, Thailand, and of course China and these all are on the priority list of MNCs. According to a study by a Japanese financial group (Nomura) in 2020, 56 companies

relocated their production base from China, of these 26 went to Vietnam, 11 to Taiwan, and 8 to Thailand. Only three came to India.

Trade theories explore that we do trade for our benefit, not for others. As Adam Smith says that "baker, baked the bread not for us but for his own benefit". 2.86 trillion Indian economy and want to achieve the goal of being a

5 trillion economy .Japan is an enemy of China and still does 7% of its total trade with China but India does only 2.1% of its total trade with China.

China has become a global factory and has grasped the global supply chain and India is not alone and depends on China for intermediate goods, semi-manufactured goods, and raw materials. From 1970 China adopted the policy of maximizing its economic benefits, as Dang said in the late 1970s that either the cat is black or white, our only purpose is to catch the rats.

China is Asia's largest economy and the world's second-biggest economy with a GDP of \$13.6 trillion because of its political structure, production strategy, population trends, and solid and huge infrastructure. The government of China provides the best infrastructure and its efficiency to minimize production costs has made it a global factory and as a

result, dominates the global value and supply chain for many key industries in the world making China a global leader. Production is the by-product of all the above-mentioned facilities. The whole world depends on China from cars to phones, trains to airplanes, and garments to laptops. There are several reasons for China's dominance in the global supply chain. China's school education policy from 1970 taught theory and practice in a combined curriculum. Chinese labor knows how to produce goods that are not just cheap and durable but also fulfill the demands of different segments of different economies. About 80 % of labor in China have basic education and skill and at the same time in India, only 25 to 30% of labor has basic school education. China's primary sector has the capacity to produce and process, without any barriers and hurdles, and the final product reaches the final consumer. But in India, there is a lack of

rural industries. Both India and China roughly have the same population, but China's economy is five times larger than India's. GDP of India and China was almost the same in 1985 but after it, China's GDP per capita increased to \$8,827 and India's \$1,942. Both have made enormous growth but China has done miracles. China has filed more applications for patents in comparison to all other countries and even the US.

This is the most favorable time for India to promote FDI and to be the vendor of world economies. Our focus should be on FDI and providing a better business environment and better infrastructure to attract MNCs. No doubt India is lagging behind China but after COVID-19 it is a favorable opportunity for India as world economies don't want to put all manufacturing eggs in one basket and the second choice maybe India as India has a big proportion of the young population and MNCs need



**DR. HARVINDER KAUR,** S.D. College, Ambala Views are personal

# INTERNATIONAL

## Diaspora body urges Sitharaman to allow NRIs, OCI card holders to invest in Indian stock market

**WASHINGTON:** A prominent Indian Diaspora body, FIIDS, on Monday urged Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman to allow non-resident Indians and overseas citizens of India (OCI) card holders to invest in the Indian stock market.

Such a move would boost the Indian economy further by attracting investment from the global Indian community, said the Foundation for India and Indian Diaspora Studies (FIIDS) USA.

FIIDS is a US-based institute for US-India policy studies and awareness.

Sitharaman, is currently in the West Coast after attending the annual Spring meeting of International Monetary Fund and World Bank.

In a submission to Sitharaman, FIIDS said as many as 88 per cent of the Indian



Diaspora community in a recent survey had supported the move.

FIIDS also urged the Finance Minister to expand the Double Tax Avoidance

Agreement (DTAA) to avoid filing of the taxes in the United States on the income (with

some restrictions) taxed (filled) in India.

«This will avoid a need to file taxes in two places on investment and get credit on the taxes filled in the other country,» it said, adding that this input received a 4.2 out of 5 rating in the survey (84 per cent).

Urging the Finance Minister to have an agreement with the US government on social security, FIIDS said in the last few years, many IT immigrants have returned to India.

«Those Indian H1/b expatriates potentially lose the Social Security number (SSN) withheld on their income by the Internal Revenue Service (IRS). Hence, we request to establish a social security agreement (SSA) with the United States. This question received 4 out of 5 ratings in the survey (80 per cent), FIIDA said. **AGENCIES**

## India's food security approach and innovations appreciated in the WTO

India's food security approach and innovations that reflect the Government of India's concern and sensitivity towards poor and vulnerable sections of society were widely appreciated by participants in the WTO seminar from across the globe.

The WTO high-level seminar on Food Security was held in Geneva on 26th April 2022 to facilitate dialogue on trade and food security among Geneva-based trade officials, policymakers, experts from international organizations and think tanks, etc.

Joint Secretary, Department of Food and Public Distribution, Jagannathan, who represented India in the WTO Seminar, highlighted India's outstanding experience in successfully ensuring dignified & foolproof access to adequate food grains to the most vulnerable people in the country, especially during COVID, through a series of bold technology-based reforms and landmark innovations in the Public Distribution System. He made a detailed presentation on the Indian perspective in the panel on 'National and Regional Experiences' at the 'WTO high-level seminar'.

He also highlighted the Government's efforts to forge inter-departmental data sharing to deepen the outreach of mass citizen-centric government programmes across the country. In recent times, as India's food security response to the COVID-19 crisis is being hailed as a shining example for its unparalleled speed, scale & transparency, and rightful targeting, S. Jagannathan explained these successful strategies adopted by the Government of India for ensuring the Availability, Af-



fordability, and Accessibility of both normal and free food grains at all times.

He highlighted the crucial role played by Pradhan Mantri Garib Kalyan Anna Yojana (PM-GKAY) in ensuring additional food security for around 800 million beneficiaries in the country during the COVID period and how the scheme continues to cushion them against supply shocks and rising inflation during the period of recovery, with an additional food subsidy outlay of nearly USD 45 billion apart from the regular food subsidy of nearly USD 22 billion.

Further, he highlighted how India's food security measures in the PDS, ICDS and PM Poshan, and PMGKAY directly contribute to the attainment of some of the UN's Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in the field of Women and Child nutrition, health, education, and food security, being the foundational indicators of Human Development as well.

He highlighted the landmark technology-based inno-

vation One Nation One Ration Card Plan that allows all NFSA beneficiaries, particularly migrant beneficiaries, to claim either full or part foodgrains from any of the 0.5 million Fair Price Shops (FPS) in the country through existing ration card with biometric/Aadhaar authentication in a seamless manner. The system also allows their family members back home, if any, to claim the balance of food grains on same the ration card. Speedy implementation of ONORC during COVID has enabled beneficiaries to avail of nearly USD 5 billion of food subsidy through nearly 580 million portable transactions and around 650 million portable transactions since the beginning.

National experiences from different countries and world regions were shared & discussed in the Seminar with a focus on the relationship between trade and the multiple dimensions of food security, including access, availability, stability, and use, in the light of existing and future challenges. **AGENCIES**

## Ukraine says Russian offensive in east picks up momentum

**POKROVSK:** Ukraine said Thursday that Russia's offensive in the east picked up momentum, with several towns coming under intense attack as Moscow's forces attempt to surround Ukrainian troops.

In a reminder of the horrific toll the war has taken since it began February 24, United Nations Secretary-General António Guterres visited towns outside the capital of Kyiv where evidence of mass killings of civilians was found after Russia's retreat from the area. The fighting gathered pace after Russia suddenly cut off natural gas to two NATO nations, in what was seen as a bid to punish and divide the West over its support for Ukraine



ahead of the potentially pivotal battle in the eastern industrial region of the Donbas.

The General Staff of Ukraine's military said Russian forces were "exerting intense fire" in several places as they pushed on with

the second phase of their invasion. The most intensive action was around Donetsk and close to Kharkiv, which lies outside the Donbas but is seen as key to Russia's apparent bid to encircle Ukrainian troops there. Tatiana

Pirogova spoke of the intense fear of living under constant bombardment.

"It's not just scary. It's when your stomach contracts from pain" the Kharkiv resident said. "When they shoot during the day, it's still OK, but when the evening comes, I can't describe how scary it is." The General Staff said that over the past 24 hours, the Ukrainian forces have repelled six attacks in the Donbas, control of which is now Moscow's primary focus ever since its initial offensive faltered and failed to take the Ukrainian capital.

Luhansk governor Serhiy Haidai said the Russian army shelled the residential area in his region "29 times by aircrafts,

multiple rocket launches, tube artillery and mortars." Satellite photos analyzed by The Associated Press also showed evidence of intense Russian fire on Mariupol in recent days. The images show how concentrated attacks have greatly damaged a central facility at the Azovstal steelworks, the last redoubt of Ukrainian fighters in the key battleground city. An estimated 1,000 civilians are sheltering along with about 2,000 Ukrainian fighters in the steelworks, a massive Soviet-era complex with a warren of underground facilities built to withstand airstrikes. Russia, meanwhile, said a city under its control in the south also came under fire. **AGENCIES**

## Elon Musk sells Tesla shares of \$8.5 Billion to take share of Twitter

Tesla Inc Chief Executive Officer Elon Musk sold \$8.5 billion worth of shares in the electric vehicle maker, U.S. securities filings showed, in sales likely aimed at helping finance his planned purchase of Twitter Inc.

Musk said in a tweet on Thursday that there are "no further TSLA sales planned after today". He sold about 9.6 million shares this week, according to the filings on Thursday and Friday, equating to 5.6% of his stake in the company. It was not clear whether all of Musk's recent Tesla share sales were reported. Tesla did not immediately respond to a Reuters request for comment.

The sale came after Musk on Monday clinched a deal to buy Twitter for \$44 billion in cash

in a transaction that will shift control of the social media platform populated by millions of users and global leaders to the world's richest person. Musk's net worth is \$268 billion, according to Forbes.

As part of the deal, Musk said he would provide a \$21 billion equity commitment. It was not immediately clear how the billionaire would raise the remaining \$12.5 billion of equity financing. Musk holds a 43.61% stake in unlisted rocket company

SpaceX, which is reportedly valued at \$100 billion. Tesla shares rose about 5% in morning trading on Friday. They have tumbled about 20% since Musk's disclosure of a more than 9% stake in Twitter on April 4.



## World looking at India's digital prowess with respect: Rajeev Chandrasekhar



Embedding technology into governance has changed the way the world used to look at India and in the last two years, the country has begun amalgamating deep tech with governance, thus plugging leakages in delivery to the masses, Rajeev Chandrasekhar, Union Minister of State for Electronics and IT and Skill Development, said here on Monday.

Speaking at the annual lecture of the Public Affairs Forum of India (PAFI), the minister said that we have

reached a stage where every global leader looks at us with respect and awe, "not just in terms of our healthcare performance but also in terms of our economy bouncing back".

"We need to ensure that the pace of digitalisation is not allowed to slow down if India has to claim its rightful place in the decade to come," Chandrasekhar told the audience.

"In the past 35 years, I have had the highs of optimism and the lows of skepticism and negativity, and I can safely

testify that India's potential has never been more exciting," he emphasised.

India has the potential to become a \$1 trillion digital economy by 2025, by tapping opportunities in manufacturing, engineering and digitalisation.

India currently has 800 million online users, and the numbers are projected to rise to 1.2 billion by 2024-2025.

The minister said that India has successfully used technology to prevail over the pandemic by seamlessly managing to administer 1.8 million jobs to 1.4 million citizens. He said that tax revenues have risen a record 20 per cent, on the back of rapid digitalisation.

"India is witnessing an incredible number of first-generation entrepreneurs, unlike in the early days where companies were founded only by those that knew people in the corridors of power," Chandrasekhar emphasised at the PAFI event. **AGENCIES**

## Ukraine city Kreminna falls to Russia: UK



England's Defense Ministry says Russian forces have taken the Ukrainian city of Kreminna.

Street-to-street fighting had been going on for days in the city in Ukraine's Luhansk region, with civilian evacuations there made impossible by the war.

In a tweet early on Tuesday, the British military said: The city of Kreminna has reportedly fallen and heavy fighting is reported south of Iziium as Russian forces attempt to advance towards the cities of

Sloviansk and Kramatorsk from the north and east.

There was no immediate response from the Ukrainian government. Russia claimed days earlier to have taken the city.

Kreminna is some 575 kilometers (355 miles) southeast of the Ukrainian capital, Kyiv.

The United Kingdom has been providing daily intelligence reports publicly since the start of the war. The British military did not say how it knew that Kreminna had fallen. **AGENCIES**

## EU prepared for Russian gas cut-off: Von der Leyen

**BRUSSELS:** The European Union (EU) is ready to face the suspension of Russian gas deliveries to its member states, said European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen. The Russian gas supplier Gazprom announced earlier on Wednesday that it was fully stopping its gas deliveries to Poland and Bulgaria, due to the two EU member states' "failure to pay in rubles". In a statement reacting to Gazprom's announcement, von der Leyen on Wednesday called the move "another attempt by Russia to use gas as an instrument of blackmail" in the context of the Russia-Ukraine conflict. Russian President Vladimir Putin demanded on March 23 that Russia's current gas contracts with "unfriendly countries" should be paid in rubles, Xinhua news agency reported. **AGENCIES**

## Trump says he has no plans to rejoin Twitter after Musk deal

**NEW YORK:** Former President Donald Trump said Monday that he has no intention of rejoining Twitter even if his account is reinstated following Elon Musk's agreement to buy the social media giant for roughly \$44 billion.

Trump told Fox News that he will instead focus on his own platform, Truth Social, which has been mired in problems since its launch earlier this year.

"I am not going on Twitter. I am going to stay on Truth," Trump was quoted telling the network.

"I hope Elon buys Twitter because he'll make improvements to it and he is a good man, but I am going to be staying on Truth." Trump was barred from major social media platforms after the deadly Jan. 6 insurrection, with Twitter citing the «risk of further incitement of violence».

The decision denied him the megaphone he had used to generate media attention and speak directly to his followers, which had been integral to his political rise.

At the time, the former president had roughly 89 million followers on Twit-



ter alone.

Musk, the world's wealthiest person and a self-described free-speech absolutist, had said he wanted to buy and privatize Twitter because he believed it wasn't living up to its potential as a free speech platform. It raised questions about whether he might reinstate Trump's account as the former president lays the groundwork for another White House run in 2024.

Trump has continued to spread lies about his 2020 election defeat in speeches and statements since leaving office, and it is unclear how Musk would approach those statements if Trump were ever to return to the site.

In recent weeks, Musk has voiced a number of proposed changes for the company, including relaxing its content restrictions, and said he would be «very reluctant» to delete content and cautious of permanent bans. **AGENCIES**

## PM to visit Germany, Denmark, France from May 2-4

**NEW DELHI:** In his first trip abroad this year, Prime Minister Narendra Modi will embark on a three-day visit to Germany, Denmark and France from May 2 amid the crisis in Ukraine and Europe's firm approach to dealing with it.

Announcing the visit, the Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) on Wednesday said the prime minister will first travel to Germany, then visit Denmark and will have a brief stop over in Paris on his return journey on May 4.

In Paris, Modi will hold talks with French President Emmanuel Macron, who was re-elected to the top post on Monday after he defeated rival Marine Le Pen in the fiercely-fought presidential election.

"In Berlin, the prime minister will hold bilateral talks with Olaf Scholz, Federal Chancellor of Germany, and the two leaders will co-chair the sixth edition of the India-Germany Inter-Governmental Consultations (IGC)," the MEA said in a statement.



It will be Modi's first meeting with Chancellor Scholz who took charge of the top office from his predecessor Angela Merkel in December last year. The Russian aggression in Ukraine is likely to figure in Modi's talks with the European leaders in all three countries.

Reflecting the EU's tough approach in dealing with the Russian aggression, European Commission President

Ursula von der Leyen said at the Raisina Dialogue on Monday that Europe will make sure that Moscow's "unprovoked and unjustified" aggression against Ukraine will be a "strategic failure".

India has not yet publicly condemned the Russian attack on Ukraine and has been calling for the resolution of the conflict through dialogue and diplomacy.

"During his visit, the prime

minister and Chancellor Scholz would also jointly address a business event. The prime minister will address and interact with the Indian community in Germany," the MEA said.

In 2021, India and Germany commemorated 70 years of the establishment of diplomatic relations and the two countries have been strategic partners since 2000.

"This visit will be an opportunity to enhance and intensify cooperation in a broad range of areas and for the two governments to exchange views on regional and global matters of mutual interest," the MEA said. From Germany, Modi will travel to Copenhagen at the invitation of the Danish Prime Minister Mette Frederiksen. He will also participate in the second India-Nordic summit being hosted by Denmark.

The MEA said the bilateral component of the visit will include talks with Frederiksen as well as an audience with Queen Margrethe II. **AGENCIES**

## Bilawal Bhutto-Zardari becomes Pak's youngest Foreign Minister



**ISLAMABAD:** Bilawal Bhutto Zardari, the scion of Pakistan's leading political dynasty, on Wednesday took oath as the foreign minister in the government led by Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif at a crucial juncture as he faces multiple challenges such as fixing strained ties with the US and finding a way to restart the peace process with neighbouring India.

President Arif Alvi administered the oath to 33-year-old Bilawal at a simple ceremony at the Aiwan-i-Sadr (President's House), where Prime Minister Shehbaz, former president Asif Ali Zardari and other officials as well as leaders of Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP) were present.

It is for the first time that Bilawal has been given a key post in the government and assigned the key portfolio of the foreign minister of the country. He was first elected to the National Assembly in 2018. He became the head of the ministry of foreign affairs at a crucial juncture when Pakistan needed a stable hand to steer its foreign policy through the choppy waters.

Among the main challenges, Bilawal needs to fix strained ties with the US in the wake of conspiracy allegations by former premier Imran Khan and find a way to restart the stalled peace process with neighbouring India.



## 'Geet Dholi' Geet's Life in Danger? Will Malhar be able to save her again?

KULBIR KALSI |

Geet has been able to survive many life attempts in the show but this time it is going to be a very close call between life and death for her. In the current storyline, Geet goes to Simone's birthday party where she is embarrassed by her. Geet doesn't hold back and retaliates by answering back to her insults in English. Today, the audience will witness a life-threatening situation towards

Geet. While attending the birthday party, the chandelier in the hall starts to dangle and will begin to fall upon Geet. Malhar watches this and runs towards his lady love and tries to save her. Will Malhar save Geet's life again? Or it will be the end of the road for the couple? Watch today on Zee Punjabi at 8 PM, the drama-packed episode of 'Geet Dholi' to find out if your favourite character will survive this life attempt.

## Cricket Legend Gundupa Vishwanath's autobiography released

KULBIR SINGH KALSI Chandigarh

At a function organized by the Chandigarh Literary Society (CLS), Playwrite, and JP Atray Memorial Cricket Tournament organizers, the legendary cricketer Gundupa Vishwanath's autobiography, *Wrist Assured*, was released here today. He shared his life's journey and the highlights in conversation with two brilliant cricket lovers Vivek Atray, ex-IAS, author, and TEDx speaker, and the country's leading heart



specialist Dr H.K. Bali. *Wrist Assured*, coauthored by R Kaushik, a sports journalist, traces the cricketing journey of wristy genius G.R. Vishwanath from the dusty by-

lanes of erstwhile Bangalore to the most iconic venues in the world. It gives deep insights into the mind of a champion, and of the trials and tribulations of an international ca-

reer that saw both despair and delight in his very first Test. This is a fascinating story of how a shy, and slim boy is thrust into international cricket stardom, through sheer dedication and fair play. Vishwanath followed up a first-innings duck with 137 in the second against Australia in Kanpur in 1969. The same crowd that had hurled matkas on his way back in the first innings rose as one to celebrate his century, providing him his first important lesson—nothing succeeds like success.

## Pull out of IPL, for all you care: Shastri tells Kohli

Former India coach Ravi Shastri has again advised to the out-of-form Virat Kohli to take a break, even if it meant "pulling out of the IPL, for all you care" to prolong his international career. Batting maestro Kohli has been battling one of his worst phases in a hugely successful career, having failed to score a hundred in any format for more than three years now. "I think a break is ideal for him because he has played non-stop cricket and he has captained the side across all formats. It will be wise of him to take a break. You know, sometimes you have to draw the balance. This year he is already into the tournament (IPL 2022), tomorrow if push comes to shove and you want to prolong your international career and make a mark there



for 6-7 years, pull out of the IPL, for all you care," Shastri told Star Sports presenter Jatin Sapru on his YouTube channel. Kohli was promoted to the top

of the order against Rajasthan Royals on Tuesday after back-to-back ducks but the move also did not yield the desired result as the former India cap-

tain was out for nine. RCB lost the match by 29 runs. Shastri emphasised on the importance of a break in a player's career at a time when the calendar is crammed with one assignment after another. "Not only Virat, I'll tell that to any other player. If you want to play and do well for India, you have to draw the line where you want to take that break and the ideal break would be off-season where India is not playing and the only time India does not play is the IPL," Shastri said. Kohli, the former India skipper in all three formats, stepped down from captaincy roles last year. He has not scored a century in any format since November 2019. Few days back, after his first golden duck, Shastri said if anyone needs a break, it's an "overcooked" Kohli.

## Sonakshi campaigns for PETA against leather

KULBIR KALSI Mumbai

Bollywood actor Sonakshi Sinha has featured in a new campaign for People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals (PETA) India that encourages fans to ditch leather and wear vegan. For the campaign, Sonakshi is seen holding a bag that's dripping with "blood", she calls attention to the more than 1.4 billion cows, dogs, cats, sheep, and goats and millions of other animals who are slaughtered for leather each year. "Through this campaign with PETA India, I hope to inspire



more people to keep fashion fun, not grisly, by wearing vegan." Sonakshi has previously joined other stars in calling for the strengthening of animal protection laws, starred in a pro-adoption campaign for PETA India, and penned a letter on behalf of the group pushing for the transfer of an abused elephant near Jaipur.

## Santosh Trophy is good platform to grab attention of big clubs: IM Vijayan

MALLAPURAM: IM Vijayan catapulted into instant stardom with his exploits in Santosh Trophy more than 30 years ago and the legendary former India captain wishes the same for the players of semi-finalists taking part in the 75th edition of the National Football Championship. Hosts Kerala will play Karnataka in the first semi-final on Thursday while Bengal is pitted against Manipur in the second semi-final on Friday. "All the players have a chance to prove themselves, especially the ones that have made it to the semifinal so far. This is one of the most prestigious tournaments in



India, and they will be trying to prove themselves and catch the eyes of the top clubs," Vijayan, the greatest Indian footballer to have emerged from the state, told aiff.com. In fact, East Bengal club has sent its former stars Alvaro D-Cunha and Sasthi Duley as talent spotters. Santosh Trophy has been a big hit in Kerala with hosts game against Bengal being watched by a capacity crowd. "There have been so many fans that have come to enjoy the matches as Santosh Trophy is being held in Malappuram for the first time. Kerala fans are different, they are special. AGENCIES

## Women Hairstyles for the summer heat



TANVIR KAUR

The sun has finally shown its face, and we're eager to embrace our summer vibes. Though, in the blazing heat, no one needs a thick mop of hair around their neck, that's why some low-maintenance summer hairstyles are a must to keep our hair looking great while also keeping us cool. Plus, no matter how hot it gets, they're quick, don't require any heat, and remain out of your sweaty face. Here are some of our favourite summer hairstyles that will keep you looking cute while you're out and about.

**Low Slicked-Back Twisted Bun**  
Pull all of your hair back into a low pony at the back of your head to achieve this sleek bun. Then, twist your hair clockwise all the way down and style it into the desired bun shape. You can make a classic bun shape.

**Space Buns**  
Space buns are classic because they look chic and cool with very little effort. They are probably the easiest hairstyle out there. Simply create two small buns on either side of your head and secure them with an elastic or a bobby pin.

**Braided Bun**  
This style gives your low messy buns a little something extra. Part your hair on the side and braid it from the crown of your head to the back, where you



**CHHAVI MITTAL** says she is 'CANCER FREE' after undergoing surgery

MUMBAI: Actor Chhavi Mittal, best known for TV shows «Teen Bahuraaniyaan and «Naaginn», on Tuesday said she is «cancer free» after undergoing surgery for the disease. On April 17, the 41-year-old actor revealed that she was diagnosed with early-stage breast cancer. Post surgery, Mittal shared an Instagram post in which she shared her selfie after undergoing the medical procedure, which she said went on for about six hours. «When the anaesthesiologist asked me to close my eyes

and think of something nice, I visualised my beautiful breasts perfectly healthy and then I went under. The next thing I know, I woke up cancer free,» she wrote. It is a long road to recovery, the actor said, adding that «the worst is over». «Your prayers were in my head all through and I need them even more now, coz I'm in a lot of pain (sic)» she added. Mittal thanked her fans and followers for their best wishes and support through these testing times. «The pain, that reminds me of the huge battle I just won with a smile on my face.

I'm going to spare you the gory details, but thank you guys for sticking with me with through this. Your messages brought tears to my eyes. Don't stop the prayers yet,» she said. Mittal, a mother of two, also tagged her director-husband Mohit Hussein in the post and praised him for being her pillar of strength. «I couldn't have done this without my partner in crazy, the equally strong, the equally insane, resilient, brave, patient, caring, loving @mohithussein Don't want to see tears in your eyes ever again! #cancerfree. AGENCIES



Was scared to refuse projects to not upset seniors: Shreyas Talpade

MUMBAI: There was a phase in Shreyas Talpade's career when he featured in several multi-starrer comedies and the actor says he did those films to keep working rather than "sit on the fence" and wait for the right project to come his way. Talpade made his debut in 2005 with the acclaimed drama "Iqbal". The Nagesh Kukunoor film, along with the maker's next, "Dor", established Talpade as a bankable performer, especially in the independent cinema space. Though the actor further explored the space with Shyam Benegal's 2008 comedy-drama "Welcome to Sajjanpur", he soon moved to multi-starrer comedies like the "Golmaal" series, "Paying Guests", "Aagay Se Right" among others. In an interview with PTI, the 47-year-old actor said some of his earlier choices reflect the phase of the industry when biopics or big dramas were not in vogue. AGENCIES

## Kangana Ranaut speaks up about being 'inappropriately touched' in childhood

MUMBAI: Shining a spotlight on child abuse and sexual assault, actor Kangana Ranaut recounted her experience when she was "inappropriately touched" in her childhood years by a youth in her hometown in Himachal Pradesh. The actor talked about the incident on the reality show "Lock Upp", on which she serves as a host, after contestant and comic Munawar Faruqi revealed that he was "sexually assaulted" by his relatives when he was around six and that it went on till he turned 11.



Munawar chose to share his "secret" on the ALTBalaji and MX Player series to save his fellow contestant, fashion designer Saisha Shinde, in a task assigned to the

players on the episode which premiered Sunday. "After a point of time, I think they realised that they had gone into the extreme, so they thought they should stop for a while... Once I felt my dad had found out. I can't remember properly but I felt that he had found out... I never felt that sharing about this with family will do any good," the comedian said. Kangana praised Munawar for sharing his story publicly for the first time, adding that she too was subjected to "inappropriate touch" in childhood. AGENCIES

## ZEE5 sets premiere date for 'The Kashmir Files'

MUMBAI: "The Kashmir Files" will have its digital premiere on May 13, streaming platform ZEE5 announced on Monday. Written and directed by Vivek Agnihotri and produced by Zee Studios, the film depicts the exodus of Kashmiri Hindus from Kashmir following systematic killings of people from the community by Pakistan-backed terrorists. The film stars veteran actors Anupam Kher and Mithun Chakraborty as well as Pallavi Joshi and Darshan Kumar in pivotal roles.



"The Kashmir Files" is a depiction of an incident that happened with our people, years ago and is still not known to so many... The film received appreciation from all over the nation and now for those who couldn't watch it on the big screen, The Kashmir Files will be available on ZEE5 across the world," Kher said in a statement. "The Kashmir Files" will be available in India and many other countries in multiple languages, including Hindi, Tamil, Telugu, and Kannada. AGENCIES

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