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Punjab CM Mann expands cabinet, 5 AAP-MLAs take oath as ministers

Five AAP MLAs on Monday were inducted as ministers in the Punjab government as Chief Minister Bhagwant Mann expanded his cabinet. It was the first cabinet expansion of the Mann-led government after AAP stormed to power in the state during the Assembly elections earlier this year. Punjab Governor Banwarilal Purohit administered the oath of office and secrecy to the MLAs at Guru Nanak Dev Auditorium of Punjab Raj Bhawan here on Monday evening. Barring two-time Sunam MLA Aman Arora, four others were the first-time legislators. Arora was the first one to take oath, followed by Dr Inderbir Singh Nijjar, who is the MLA from Amritsar



South seat. Later, Fauja Singh Sarari, who represents Guru Har Sahai, Chetan Singh Jourdajra, MLA from Samana, and Kharar legislator Anmol Gagan Mann were administered oath as cabinet ministers. Anmol Gagan Mann is the second woman who became the cabinet minister in the Mann-led cabinet. All of them took oath in Punjab. Of the five new faces, four MLAs are from the Malwa

region and one is from the Majha region. With the induction of five more ministers, the strength of the Mann-led cabinet will reach 15, including the chief minister. After AAP formed the government following its resounding victory in the assembly polls, 10 MLAs, including eight first-timers, were inducted as ministers in March. However in May, Health Minister Vijay Singla was sacked from the state cabinet over graft charges, taking the strength of ministers to nine in the Cabinet. There are 18 berths in the cabinet, including the chief minister. The Aam Aadmi Party had stormed to power in Punjab by bagging 92 seats out of a total of 117.

PM Modi expresses shock and sadness at the tragic demise of Former Japanese PM Abe Shinzo



Announces one-day national mourning on 09 July 2022 as a mark of deep respect for Abe Shinzo. The Prime Minister has expressed shock and sadness at the tragic demise of Former Japanese PM Abe Shinzo. PM Modi also emphasised his association and friendship with Abe and remarked on the immense contribution that he made to elevate India-Japan relations to the level of a Special Strategic and Global

Japan's former PM Shinzo Abe Dies after being shot during speech

Former Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe has died after he was shot earlier in the city of Nara on Friday, 8 July, officials said. After being shot, Abe (67) was not showing any vital signs. He was not breathing, and his heart stopped while being airlifted to the hospital for a gunshot wound, a fire official was quoted as saying. The fire department said that the former prime minister was in a state of cardiorespiratory arrest, a term often used in Japan before a death can be confirmed by a coroner. A man, identified as Yamagami Tetsuya (41), has been arrested for attempted murder and a gun has been confiscated.

Partnership. Modi announced one day of national mourning on 9 July 2022 as a mark of deep respect for Abe Shinzo. The Prime Minister also shared a photograph from their latest meeting in Tokyo. In a series of tweets, the Prime Minister said; "I am shocked and saddened beyond words at the tragic demise of one of my dearest friends, Shinzo Abe. He was a towering global statesman, an outstanding leader, and a remarkable administrator. He dedicated his life to make Japan and the world a better place."

Deeply saddened by demise of Abe: Rahul



Congress Leader Rahul Gandhi expressed condolences over the demise of former Japanese prime minister Shinzo Abe, and lauded his role in strengthening the strategic relationship between India and Japan. "Deeply saddened by the demise of former PM of Japan, Shinzo Abe. His role in strengthening the strategic relationship between India & Japan was commendable. He leaves behind a lasting legacy in the Indo-Pacific. My condolences to his family and to the people of Japan," Gandhi said on Twitter. The 67-year-old Abe died after being shot during a campaign speech in western Japan.

Forex reserves fall USD 5.008 bln to USD 588.314 bln



The country's foreign exchange reserves declined by USD 5.008 billion to USD 588.314 billion in the week ended July 1, according to RBI data released on Friday. In the previous week ended June 24, the reserves had increased by USD 2.734 billion to USD 593.323 billion. During the reporting week ended July 1, the fall in the foreign exchange reserves was due to a dip in Foreign Currency Assets (FCA), a major component of the overall reserves, and also in the gold reserves.

Punjab CM Mann gets married to doctor from Kurukshetra



Punjab Chief Minister Bhagwant Mann turned groom for his wedding with a doctor from Kurukshetra at his home on Thursday. It was a private ceremony without the usual crowds, so much a part of the big, fat Indian wedding. Though few details were available, visuals on television and Twitter showed Mann and his bride dressed in red at the Anand Karaj ceremony. Aam Aadmi Party colleague Raghav Chadha also shared some images on Twitter showing Mann, in his regular yellow turban and a gold coloured kurta-pyjama, with party chief Arvind Kejriwal and others. Mann (48), the first chief minister of the state to get married while in office, is tying the knot with Dr Gurpreet Kaur from Pehowa in Kurukshetra in Haryana.

Car swept off bridge in Uttarakhand, 9 dead

Nine people, mostly tourists, drowned on Friday morning when their car was swept off a bridge by an overflowing Dhela river following heavy rains at Ramnagar here, police said. The accident occurred around 5:45 am when the car was returning to Punjab, SSP Pankaj Bhatt said from the spot. The bodies have been recovered. One person, 22-year-old Nazia, a resident of Corbett Colony, was rescued alive and sent to a hospital in Ramnagar, the SSP said. As the car had a Punjab registration number, officials initially presumed it was carrying tourists from that state only. Six of those killed were women and three men, the police said.

Mumbai : Sanjay Raut meets Sharad Pawar



MUMBAI: Shiv Sena leader Sanjay Raut on Thursday met NCP president Sharad Pawar at the latter's residence here. Raut, who has been the target of the rebel Shiv Sena legislators, did not speak to the media. The Sena rebels have accused the Rajya Sabha member of being closer to the NCP chief than the leaders of his own party. Both Pawar and Raut were instrumental in the formation

Maharashtra CM Shinde asks for expediting of SMART project



Maharashtra Chief Minister Eknath Shinde on Thursday directed the state administration to fast-track the Maharashtra Agri Business and Rural Transformation (SMART) project. Shinde and his deputy Devendra Fadnavis attended a meeting to review the project with World Bank officials, an official release said. The project envisages doubling of farmers' income with participation of 19 lakh farmers across 10,000 villages. The CM also reviewed Climate Smart and Resilient Maharashtra (CSRMR) project.

RBI imposes penalties on Federal Bank, Bank of India



Reserve Bank of India (RBI) on Friday said it has imposed a penalty of Rs 5.72 crore on Federal Bank for deficiencies in regulatory compliance. A penalty of Rs 70 lakh has also been imposed on Bank of India for non-compliance with certain provisions of Know Your Customer (KYC) norms and instructions on 'compliance function in banks' issued by RBI, it said in a statement. About Federal Bank, RBI said the bank failed to ensure that no incentive (cash or non-cash) was paid to its staff engaged in insurance broking/corporate agency services by the insurance company, according to a separate statement. RBI had carried out Statutory Inspection for Supervisory Evaluation (ISE) of the bank with reference to its financial position as on March 31, 2020.

Amarnath cloudburst: ITBP says atleast 15 dead, 40 still missing, 15,000 stranded pilgrims evacuated



The border guarding force has also expanded its route opening and protection parties from lower part of the holy cave up to Panjtarni, he said. The flash flood near the holy cave shrine of Amarnath in south Kashmir swept away scores of people, killing at least 13 and swamping tents and community kitchens on Friday evening. The yatra that began on June 30 has been suspended following the tragedy and a decision on its resumption will be taken after rescue operations get over, a senior administration official had said. "Most of the yatri, who were stranded near holy cave area due to the flash flood that occurred last evening, have been shifted to Panjtarni. The evacuation continued till 3.38 am. "No yatri is left on the track. About 15,000 people have been safely shifted till now," the Indo-Tibetan Border Police (ITBP) spokesperson said. **Rescue ops near Amarnath cave shrine continue overnight** 6 pilgrims were evacuated by Army's helicopters on Saturday as rescue operations continued through the night near the holy cave shrine of Amarnath after a cloudburst triggered by a cloudburst swept away scores of people, killing at least 13, officials said. The cloudburst that

A cloudburst near the holy cave shrine of Amarnath in south Kashmir swept away scores of people, killing at least 15 and swamping tents and community kitchens on Friday evening. At least 15,000 pilgrims have been shifted to the lower base camp, while more than 40 people are still missing. Who were stranded near the Amarnath holy cave in Jammu and Kashmir due to a flash flood triggered by a cloudburst, have been shifted to the lower base camp of Panjtarni, an ITBP spokesperson said on Saturday Morning.

occurred around 5.30 pm on Friday dumped copious rain and thick streams of sludge rolled down the mountain slopes into the valley. The gushing waters hit the base camp outside the shrine in south Kashmir, damaging 25 tents and three community kitchens where the pilgrims are served food, according to officials.

Ludhiana Textile Park could be the final downhill nudge to Punjab environments say Greens

AAYUSH GOEL

64 year old Sukhmeet Kaur of Haider Nagar village has put up her ancestral home for sale. She and her daughter-in-law are selling their jewellery and taking loans to uproot the entire family and shift to Mohali. "My son died of cancer and so did many others who worked with him in Ludhiana. The doctors at PGI told us that the 'Kala Dariya' (Buddha Nala) killed him. I brought my daughter in law and her two sons to the village here to save them. Now they are taking our lands and building a factory that will pollute everything. I will not let them die and have no strength to fight," she says. Sukhmeet is not a lone case but thousands of villagers, environmentalists and even a section of political leaders are up against the forthcoming Mega Integrated Textile Region and Apparel Park in Koom Kalan, Ludhiana.

Conceived in 2020 as part of PM-MITRA scheme, the project has been dubbed as the last nail on degrading environmental health of the state and Ludhiana district in particular. The project is to be set up in natural flood plains of Sutlej river and bordering one amongst few surviving forest patches of state, the Mattewara forest. While Punjab CM Bhagwant Mann has been assuring no environmental damage but the green activists refuse to buy it. "It's all politically and capitolly profit driven. The project would not only disturb the biodiversity of the protected forest, but will also



lead to chemical discharge from factories into the river and make this area a cancer zone like other areas of Punjab. Sutlej is the drinking water source of around 1 crore people who either consume it directly or indirectly. Sutlej is direct drinking water supply of South Punjab and eight districts of Rajasthan. Industries are already ejecting their effluents in Sutlej. If this project comes up we will lose all that is left of Sutlej," says Dr Amandeep Singh, an environmentalist and member of Public Action Committee (umbrella body of over 50 NGO's fighting against the project)

The project A Mega Integrated Textile Region and Apparel Park, under the PM-MITRA scheme is being undertaken jointly by the Centre and the state government. Initially it was named as Mattewara Textile Park for its proximity to Mattewara forest but after public outrage the name was hence changed. As per the Union Ministry of Textiles, this park will be one amongst seven such parks that will come up across the country



with the objective of sustainable industrialisation that does not harm the environment to meet the United Nations sustainable development goals. The 957.74 acres acquired so far, falls near the Mattewara forest and on the river Sutlej floodplains. 463 acres of government land in the villages Ghari Fazal, Haider Nagar and Garcha has been transferred to Punjab Urban Development Authority (PUDA), another 493.99 acres of panchayat land in villages Sekhowal, Saikiana and Salempur has also been acquired and compensation has been paid.

Environmental Concerns The proposed project site touches Mattewara forest from two sides and river Sutlej on one side. Spread over 2,300 acres, the forest is the sole lungs of Ludhiana district which is one amongst top polluted districts in India. Punjab is amongst the states with poorest forest cover with just 3.7 percent of its land under forest. It has minimal untouched forest patches scattered across Punjab and Mattewara is one amongst them. The project is expected to usher in the need for deforestation to get land for industry and would warrant cutting of hundreds of trees. Not just flora, several animal and avian species including Peacocks, Sambhar, Antelopes (nilgai), Monkeys, Deers etc too will be displaced killing the mini ecological habitat completely. A group of residents from Ludhiana have also filed a petition in the National Green Tribunal (NGT) against the project. "It is also important that ecology at flood plain zone of river should not get damaged permanently hence we direct that any construction activity if allowed within the flood plain zone of Sutlej, shall be at the risk of the proponent/developer," observed the Tribunal while admitting the case.



Sutlej Pollution Threat Not just the forest but environmentalists fear of toxic discharges in Sutlej post setting up of the project. The river is popularly known as the dead river in Punjab owing to high levels of pollution. According to records the state was disposing of around 2000 kilolitres of wastewater per day in the river in year 2021, apart from the enormous amount of industrial effluents mainly via Buddha Nullah in Ludhiana. There are 2423 industries in the river Sutlej catchment area, which either directly or indirectly release their trade effluent into Sutlej. Buddha Nala is the district's oldest rivulet and one of key channels of Sutlej pollution. The water in the nullah is rich in toxins and merges with Sutlej making it highly polluted. "The project will trigger a series of ecological catastrophes in state. It is not only going to damage Sutlej floodplains but also the biodiversity in Mattewara forest. Thousands of villagers still depend on Sutlej for water for drinking and other needs and we cannot have one more polluting project on its banks. We will not let this happen" says Bhavjit Singh, activist and member of the Public Action Committee (PAC).

Forced acquisition claim farmers Despite government's claim for smooth land acquisition, the majority of villagers dub it as forced acquisition, especially the Sekhowal village which refuses to give possession. The farmers claim that compensation was transferred in Panchayat accounts in 2020. The majority of farmers are tilling panchayat lands. "They are acquiring 416 acres of fertile land which is our only source of livelihood. We have even moved to court against it. The Gram Sabha of Sekhowal village has passed a resolution (in July 2020) against this forceful acquiring of our land and we will not give up our land," says Kashmir Singh representative of local sarpanch.

Political storm grips the project. When the project was conceived during the previous Amarinder Singh led congress government, senior AAP leaders including current CM Bhagwant Mann had strongly opposed it but now in power AAP government has decided to move forward with it. Punjab Chief Minister Bhagwant Mann during the Assembly session on June 28 said no river pollution would be allowed in the project. "All environmental clearances and norms as fixed by the Centre and State Pollution Control Boards would be adhered to. Environmental laws would be followed to ensure that there is no pollution of river waters or any sort of health hazard. The ambitious scheme would help attract investments on the one hand and open new vistas of employment for the youth on the other. One of the basic requirements for the project is that the interested state government should have the availability of contiguous and encumbrance-free land parcel of 1,000 acres for the project and site selected was best," Mann had said. "Even during our government under Captain Amarinder I was against the project. The Mattewara forest is adjacent to Ludhiana city, reportedly one of the four most polluted cities for Respirable Suspended Particulate Matter (RSPM). This project is environmentally unsound and cannot go ahead. I will be part of each struggle against it" he said speaking to Tehelka. AAP leader Punjab assembly speaker Kultar Singh Sandhwan too wrote to the chief minister asking him to save the forest and prevent the Sutlej River from getting polluted further.

Alternate Site at Kandi area a Solution? The opposition headed by Congress leader Pratap Singh Bajwa has suggested that this project, if vital to the state's economy, can be shifted to Kandi area where there is more environmental stamina to recover any loss and needs economic attention. "We understand the fight between development and the environment.

Canada-based devotee family offer 1kg gold at Sachkhand Sri Harmandar Sahib



Canada-based devotee Mehar Singh Chandna expressed his devotion by offering 1kg gold at Sachkhand Sri Harmandar Sahib. He offered this gold in the form of 10 coins weighing

100 gram each. Mehar Singh said that it was the wish of their late son Mandeep Singh Chandna, which has been completed. He said there is no greater house than

Sachkhand Sri Harmandar Sahib, from where one gets spiritual and mental guidance. He prayed before the Guru (master) to bless humanity with peace and welfare of all.

On this occasion, Shiromani Gurdwara Parbandhak Committee (SGPC) additional secretary Partap Singh said that every day lakhs of Sangat pay obeisance at Sachkhand Sri Harmandar Sahib and offer offerings at the Guru's house and Canada based Mehar Singh Chandna has served with gold. He thanked the devout family. SGPC executive committee member Bibi Gurpreet Kaur, Partap Singh, manager Sri Darbar Sahib Sulakhan Singh honoured Mehar Singh Chandna and his family with the Guru's blessing Siropaos (robes of honour) and photos of Sachkhand Sri Harmandar Sahib.

Sacked Punjab health minister gets bail in bribery case

CHANDIGARH: Sacked Punjab's Health Minister Vijay Singla was granted bail on Friday by the Punjab and Haryana High Court in a bribery case. The bench of Justice Lisa Gill allowed his bail plea. Singla was accused of demanding «one per cent commission» in tenders and purchases by his department. In his bail petition through his counsels, Singla contended that the «first information report (FIR) was the outcome of political rivalry» and wreaking vengeance had «gathered unprecedented popularity among the masses.» He was sacked from the Cabinet of the Bhagwant Mann government on May 24

and arrested shortly afterwards on corruption charges. The Chief Minister had said the minister was involved in corruption cases and he had proof of that. Reiterating his government's firm commitment to make Punjab a corruption-free state, Mann had said Singla was dismissed for seeking one per cent commission in a department headed by him. First-time legislator Singla, 52, a dentist by profession, won from Mansa. He had defeated popular Punjabi singer and Congress candidate Shubdeep Singh, also called Sidhu Moosewala, by a margin of 63, 323 votes, the highest winning margin in the election.



Punjab's Taxation Commissioner bats for zero tolerance approach against Tax Evasion



Taxation Commissioner of Punjab Kamal Kishor Yadav on Friday asked the officers of the department to adopt zero tolerance policy for checking the pilferage of taxes to enhance revenue generation in the state. Chairing a meeting of the department with officials of Amritsar Taxation Division to review the Tax collection, the Taxation Commissioner unequivocally said that any sort of laxity in checking tax evasion will not be tolerated. He said that every officer is duty bound to ensure that pilferages of taxes, if any, is checked with a heavy hand. Yadav said that pilferage of taxes causes huge losses to state exchequer which is not at all tolerable adding that department will now further tighten noose against all tax evaders. Reiterating commitment of Zero tolerance against corruption, the Taxation Commissioner said that severest of severe action will be taken against anyone

found indulging in this menace. He said that the services to the people must be provided in a time bound manner without any inordinate delay. Yadav also said that department should set a new benchmark in tax collection and service delivery. The Taxation Commissioner also batted for early recovery of the pending arrears of taxes. He said that all the officers must embark a major recovery drive for getting the arrears from the wilful defaulters. Yadav said that this is need of hour for enhancing the tax collection in the state. Welcoming new ideas for Tax reforms from the officers, the Taxation Commissioner said that new out of the box initiatives should be given for tax enhancement. He said that department will replicate such new and dynamic ideas by the officers at the state level too. Yadav also said that department is working tirelessly to further improve tax collection in state.

No proposal to appoint Deputy says Punjab CM



Punjab government on Friday said there was no proposal of appointment of a Deputy Chief Minister. A government spokesman said all such news were purely manufactured, motivated and without any basis. «We condemn the reporting of such fake news.

Punjab: Instagram account of Dasuya MLA hacked

Dasuya MLA Karambir Singh Ghuman on Wednesday said that his Instagram account had been hacked by some miscreants who also circulated misleading information on it. «The hackers were circulating false information and were asking social media users to send money by various means. The hackers were also circulating fake and misleading videos on my account,» said the ruling AAP MLA. Ghuman said that he had made a complaint with police on Tuesday in this connection. Hoshiarpur Senior Superintendent of Police Sartaj Singh Chahal said on Wednesday that the matter was being investigated and the guilty persons would soon be apprehended.

Centre to reverse ban on Kanwar Grewal's 'Rihai' song - Sukhbir Badal



CHANDIGARH: Shiromani Akali Dal (Badal) President Sukhbir Singh Badal today described the ban imposed on a song calling for release of the Sikh detainees by Kanwar Grewal as a most unfortunate development and asked the union government to reverse this decision keeping in view citizens' right to freedom of speech as well as the sentiments of the Sikh community.

The SAD president said the song 'Rihai' sung by Kanwar Grewal reflected the sentiments of Sikhs worldwide who were perturbed at the continued incarceration of Sikh detainees even after completion of their life sentences. «Kanwar Grewal has done nothing more than use poetic license to highlight this grievance besides demanding that history books should not be rewritten. This does not call for a ban under any circumstances».

Appealing to centre to reconsider its decision, Mr Sukhbir Badal said «such bans have the capacity to create a wrong impression about India in the comity of nations. We cannot be seen to be suppressing the freedom of speech which is enshrined in our constitution. India is known as the world's largest democracy which respects pluralism. The union government should ensure the country stays this way. Democracies which do not respect freedom of speech and expression cannot remain sustainable for long».

250-yr-old tree falls in Chandigarh's School, a student dead, 19 hurt

A student was killed and 19 others, including an attendant, were injured as a tree fell on them at Carmel Convent School, Sector 9, here on Friday.

Medical teams and police rushed to the spot. A team of doctors from Fortis Hospital, Mohali, was also called. While a few students were given the first aid at the school the others were rushed to hospital. Area councillor Mahesh Inder Sidhu said one student died, while another is said to be critical. UT officials reached the school to take stock of the situation. Sources said many parents also rushed to the school. The Deputy Commissioner



reached the spot and said the administration had ordered an inquiry. The tree that fell is a heritage tree said to be around 250 years old. According to an official statement from the Chandigarh Administration, the



accident took place around 11.30 am. A total of 19 students and a woman attendant, 40, were reported injured. A student (16) was rushed to the PGI, where she was declared brought dead. 11 students who have suf-

ferred minor injuries are being treated at GMSH-16 under the supervision of Director, Health Services, and will be discharged after medical examination. Four students who suffered minor injuries were taken to Fortis Hospital and two were taken to Mukut Hospital and are reported to be stable. In a late-evening health update, the PGIMER said health condition of the woman attendant, who is under observation in the ICU, continues to be critical. While surgery of one of the injured students has been completed successfully, another student, who suffered spinal injury, is also stable and recovering.

Bus falls into gorge, 12 killed in Kullu



Twelve passengers, including some school children, were killed as a private bus fell into a gorge in Himachal Pradesh's Kullu district on Monday, district officials said. The bus was on its way to Sainj from Shainsher when it fell into the gorge at a hairpin bend near Jangla village at around 8.30 am, they added. The bus was carrying over 30 passengers, including several school children, they added. The deceased were yet to be identified. The president and prime minister have condoled the loss of lives in the accident. President Ram Nath Kovind said he was distressed to learn about the death of students and other people in the accident. Condoling the loss of lives, Prime Minister Narendra Modi announced Rs 2 lakh each for the next of kin of those who have lost their lives in the incident.

The injured would be given Rs 50,000 each, the prime minister's office said in a tweet.

Delhi police registers case against controversial documentary Kaali'

The Delhi Police has registered a case in connection with the controversial poster of a documentary Kaali, officials said on Tuesday. The Intelligence Fusion and Strategic Operation (IFSO) unit of the Delhi Police has registered a case under Indian Penal Code sections 153A (promoting enmity between different groups on ground of religion, race etc., and doing acts prejudicial to maintenance of harmony) and 295A (deliberate and malicious acts intended to outrage religious feelings of any class by insulting its religion or religious beliefs), a senior police officer said. Under attack for a poster of her documentary Kaali showing the goddess smoking and holding a LGBTQ flag, filmmaker Leena Manimekhalai on Monday said she will continue to use her voice fearlessly till she is alive. The poster had led to a social



media storm with the hashtag 'Arrest Leena Manimekhalai', allegations that the filmmaker is hurting religious sentiments. Several Twitter users slammed Manimekhalai. «The film depicts Maa Kali smoking a cigarette in a very objectionable form!! Very embarrassing!! Hindu Sena demands from @DelhiPolice to register an FIR against @LeenaManimekhalai,» tweeted Hindu Sena national president Vishnu Gupta.

Installation ceremony of the 46th President of Rotary Club Chandigarh

KULBIR SINGH KALSI The installation ceremony of the 46th President of Rotary Club Chandigarh Midtown Rtn Dr. Sanjay Kalra and Board (2022-23) was held on 6th July 2022 at CII Auditorium Sec 31 Chandigarh in the august presence of Dr Kiran Bedi Former Lt Governor Pondicherry as the Chief guest on the occasion joined by The Guest of Honor worthy Deputy Commissioner of Chandigarh Vinay Pratap Singh IAS. The investiture ceremony is a very prestigious celebration in the Rotary International every year, when the baton is passed to the new leadership to infuse new energy into the incoming team for dedicated service to the community for making a difference. Rotary International this year has created history as for the first time, women Rotarian shall be serving



as its President. Jennifer Jones from RC Windsor, Canada has given the theme Imagine Rotary as she urged people to dream big and harness their connections to turn those dreams into reality. The outgoing President Sali Chopra presented an elaborate report of Rotary service done to reach out the local community with special mention of Project Sahyog for artificial limbs, Project Aasha for Cervical Cancer Vaccination, TB Hut, vocational training, ASRA SERAI at GMCH, Sector 32, Chandigarh and several other projects in the health, education and community development.

Proposals for Ideal Industrial Estate at Ambala, Film City at Pinjore finalized in Haryana

SATISH HANDA Haryana Home & Health Minister Anil Vij in a meeting with HSIIDC Managing Director Vikas Gupta and Sunil Sharma as well as senior officers of industries department in the state took decision to develop Ideal Industrial Estate at Ambala especially for the entrepreneurs having tiny and micro industrial units in the area or are willing to set

up fresh manufacturing units under Start up scheme introduced by Haryana state government recently. Vij said that there are hundreds of tiny manufacturing units producing scientific goods and spare parts for scientific instruments located in thickly populated areas in Science City Ambala but failed to expand their business due to lack of facilities, support, technical know-how and in some cases shortage of funds



in-spite of entrepreneurship. Vij directed HSIIDC officers to complete this project on priority bases since prosperity of the area depends upon

industry and also to meet employment opportunities for the youths. Vij said, Ideal Industrial Estate will have common facility centre, a common tool room, an exhibition hall for the display of products manufactured by industrial units situated in the complex and all other facilities at a place including Padma scheme by the government for small scale industry including provision to get loan from bank.

Farmers protest in Haryana: One farmer dies, 3 cops injured in clash

A farmer died and three policemen were injured in a clash here as a group of protesters allegedly broke barricades put up by police with tractors and started going towards a railway track as part of a protest on Friday.

After this, police resorted to a lathicharge, lobbed tear gas shells and used water cannons to disperse the protesting farmers. The injured were admitted to a hospital. The farmers clashed with police near the Rajiv Gandhi thermal power project, Khedar, about 20 km from here. The farmers were demanding that the fly ash emanating from thermal plant should not



be auctioned and be given to them as before. They have been staging a dharna near the power plant for the past several weeks. «A protester, aged around 58, has died. The protesters were heading to block a railway line for which police had put up barricades,» Hisar SP Lokender Singh said over the phone. «While she was on his way to the spot, some youths among

the protesters arrived on tractors and started breaking barricades with tractors. Three policemen and one protester were injured in the process. Later, the injured protester expired,» the SP said. Farmers alleged that till now the fly ash coming out of the plant was being given to them by the power plant but now it is being said that it would be auctioned. Farmers are opposing this decision. The farmers had earlier announced to block the railway track near the Khedar plant in protest. The road was closed by police by putting barricades.

One Term, One pension to combat budget deficit in Haryana

BY DR. HARVINDER KAUR

Teachers, the nation builders, doctors, the lifeline of the economy, bankers and all other workers who work in the public or private sector are not eligible for pension irrespective of their huge productive contribution to the economy, but on the other side, our lawmakers (M.P. and M.L.A.) are eligible for not only one pension but for multiple pensions. The financial security of the common man doesn't matter and this is the biggest loophole in our system. It is a big discrepancy and injustice. If councillors, MLAs, and MPs are elected even for a day, they become eligible for pension. On the other hand, the pension of government employees is very meagre. Spending of huge amounts on pension benefits to elected politicians and their families has initiated debates as recently, the newly-formed Aam Aadmi Party-led government in Punjab has

implemented 'one-term, one pension for the legislators. March 3, 2022 reply to a Right to Information Act query has revealed that the centre spent a total of Rs 99 crore in 2020-21 on pensions to 2,679 former MPs, many of whom are film stars, industrialists and royals. A former MP is eligible to get a monthly pension of Rs 25,000. Additional allowances are added depending on his tenure as a Member of Parliament. According to the current rules, if a former MP or MLA becomes a minister again, he is eligible for a pension as well as his salary as a minister. Also, if an MLA later becomes an MP, he gets the pension of both. After the death of the former member of the House, the spouse or dependents get half the pension. The Haryana Government, as per the RTI reply, spends nearly Rs 29.5 crore annually on pensions for former MLAs and family pensions to spouses of deceased legislators. The Haryana government has to pay Rs

29.51 crores every year on the monthly and family pension of 275 former lawmakers and their family members in the state. As per information provided by the officer-cum-superintendent of Haryana Vidhan Sabha in a reply to an application filed by a Panipat-based activist PP Kapoor under the Right to Information Act, 2005, many politicians in the state are withdrawing pensions for five to seven terms. As per the list, Congress' senior leader and seven-times MLA Capt Ajay Singh Yadav is drawing the highest pension of Rs 2.38 lakh per month, followed by former chief minister Om Prakash Chautala's Rs 2.22 lakh. Even former chief minister late Bhajan Lal's widow, Jasma Devi is getting a family pension of Rs 99,619 besides the Rs 61,800 she is getting for being an ex-MLA. Congress leader Randeep Surjewala is getting a monthly pension of Rs 1.68 lakh, his mother Vidya Surejewala, who is the wife of former Congress

lawmaker late Shamsher Surjewala, is also getting a family pension of Rs 87,975, and the RTI response stated. Savitri Jindal, who is among the top richest women in the country and the mother of Indian billionaire industrialist and Congress leader Naveen Jindal, is getting a monthly pension of Rs 90,600 per month from the state assembly, revealed the information. «The government is spending Rs 26.40 crores on the pension of 147 former MLAs and Rs 3.11 crore on the family pension of 128 lawmakers, while the current monthly pension for one term is fixed at Rs 51,800 besides a monthly allowance of Rs 10,000,» the response revealed. While several former MLAs draw pensions of more than Rs 1.5 lakh. This is in a situation where there is no provision or concept of pension for private-sector employees. The state government has given house building card advance of Rs 32 crores to 68 former and sitting lawmakers

between 2010 and 2021 and an advance of Rs 20.83 crores is due up to January this year, it stated. This also included a pending recovery of Rs 9.96 crores given to the lawmakers from 2004 to 2021. Sitting BJP MP from Kurukshetra Nayab Saini had taken house building advance of Rs 60 lakh when he was an MLA in 2018, and Rs 47.20 lakh are due till January this year, it further stated. Having a maximum number of legislators, the Chautala clan is the biggest beneficiary of the pensions. Besides, the Rs 2.22 lakh pension to OP Chautala, his elder son Ajay Chautala is also getting a pension of Rs 61,800. But in future, Chautala's younger son Abhay Chautala, Ajay Chautala's wife Naina Chautala and his grandson and deputy CM Dushyant Chautala will be new beneficiaries on the list of the pension scheme. Similarly, the family of former CM late Bhajan Lal is also getting a total of Rs 4.14 lakh every month, besides Lal's younger son Kuldeep Bishnoi,

who is getting benefits of sitting MLA and pension benefits of being a former parliamentarian. One minister of Haryana had taken a house building advance of Rs 36.50 lakh in 2013 and Rs 9.64 lakh is still due and former CM Bhupinder Singh Hooda had taken a car advance of Rs 20 lakh in 2016 of which, Rs 7.60 lakh is due. On the other hand state government had stopped the distribution of mustard oil under the public distribution scheme to 11.4 lakh poor families as prices of mustard oil had gone up, but there is no reduction in the pension being paid to the lawmakers. The enlightened citizens of Haryana are demanding the implementation of 'one-term, one pension in Haryana like Punjab. Kamal Anand, a Punjab-based senior advocate and activist, said, «Most politicians call politics a service to people but why do they take such huge amounts and benefits for this service. No doubt the Punjab government's move of 'one-term, one pension is being

praised and now the lawmakers of other states should also set an example by deciding to stop monthly pension.» For both former MPs and former MLAs, even a day as a member of the House makes them eligible for the pension for the rest of their lives. Thereafter, their family members are eligible for some allowances. Also, many leaders who have served as both MPs and MLAs are eligible to draw pensions from both Houses. With the Covid-induced economic challenges and inflation ruining the poor and putting a dent in the savings of the middle class. Questions regarding the gap between the social security for politicians and that of the common man are becoming louder. The government is appealing to people to give up gas subsidies, but MLAs also elected as MPs are not ready to give up one pension. Railways have done away with concessions for senior citizens, but former MPs can travel free of cost in AC first class.

Fadnavis: Maharashtra cabinet expansion soon

A day after the Eknath Shinde-led Maharashtra government won the trust vote in the Assembly, Deputy Chief Minister Devendra Fadnavis said the state cabinet expansion will be done soon.

Speaking to reporters at the Nagpur airport on Tuesday, Fadnavis expressed his determination towards the development of the state's Vidarbha region. "The cabinet expansion will be done soon," Fadnavis said. On his arrival to his hometown Nagpur following the formation of the new government in the state, BJP workers accorded a grand welcome to the deputy CM, who was accompanied by his wife Amruta Fadnavis.

From the airport, the BJP leader embarked on a 'jallosa yatra' (victory celebration) organised here by his supporters. Last month, Shinde



launched a rebellion against the Sena. Majority of MLAs sided with him, which led to the collapse of the Maha Vikas Aghadi government led by Uddhav Thackeray.

On June 30, Shinde was sworn in as the chief minister of Maharashtra, while Fadnavis took oath as the deputy CM.

After winning the trust vote on Monday, Chief Minister Eknath Shinde had said he

will need some time before he and Fadnavis discuss the allocation of cabinet portfolios.

Let us breathe properly. It was quite hectic for us (referring to political activities over the last fortnight). I and Devendra Fadnavis will sit and discuss cabinet portfolios and their allocation. We will also get the allocation vetted from national leaders of the BJP, Shinde had said.

Eknath Shinde wins floor test in Maharashtra VS

Maharashtra Chief Minister Eknath Shinde on Monday won the floor test in the State Assembly. In the 288-member House, 164 MLAs voted for the motion of confidence, while 99 voted against it. Speaker Rahul Narvekar announced that the trust vote has been carried by a majority vote. After the death of a Shiv Sena MLA recently, the current strength of the Assembly is reduced to 287, thus the majority mark is 144. Shinde was sworn in as CM on June 30, a day after Uddhav Thackeray quit the post. BJP's Devendra Fadnavis was sworn in as the deputy CM.



Centre directs leading Edible Oil Associations to reduce prices by Rs. 15 with immediate effect

FW DESK

Department of Food and Public Distribution in a meeting on July 6th 2022 has directed leading Edible Oil Associations to ensure reduction in the MRP of edible oils by Rs. 15/- with immediate effect.

The Centre also advised that the price to distributors by the manufacturers and refiners also needs to be reduced immediately so that the price drop is not diluted in any way. It was also impressed upon that whenever a reduction in price to distributors is made by the manufacturers/refiners, the benefit should be passed on to the consumers by the industry and the Department may be kept informed on regular basis. Some companies which have not reduced their prices and their MRP is higher than other brands have also been advised to reduce their prices.

During the meeting it was discussed that the international prices of imported edible oils are on a downward trend which



is a very positive picture in the edible oil scenario and, therefore, the domestic edible oil industry needs to ensure that the prices in the domestic market also drop commensurately. And, this price drop has to be passed on expeditiously to consumers without in a laggard fashion. Other issues like price data collection, Control Order on edible oils and packaging of edible oils were also discussed in this meeting.

It may be recalled that in May 2022, the Department had convened a meeting with the leading edible oil associations and according to sources, the MRP of Fortune Refined Sunflower Oil 1 litre pack had been decreased to Rs. 210 from Rs. 220 and MRP of Soyabean (Fortune) and Kachi Ghani oil 1 litre pack from Rs.

205 to Rs. 195. The reduction in oil prices came in the wake of Central Government reducing the import duty on edible oils making them cheaper. The industry was advised to ensure that the complete benefit of the reduced duty is passed on to the consumers invariably.

The edible oil prices in the international market are witnessing a dramatic fall, however, the situation in the domestic market is slightly different as the fall in the prices are gradual. The Government of India stepped in and a meeting was convened by the Department of Food and Public Distribution with the leading industry representatives including SEAI, IVPA and SOPA to discuss reduction in the retail prices of cooking oils amid a fall in the global prices. The industry informed that the global prices of different edible oils have fallen by USD 300-450 per tones in the last one month, but it takes time to reflect in the retail markets and the retail prices are expected to come down in the coming days.

PM Modi speaks at first Arun Jaitley memorial lecture



Prime Minister Narendra Modi will speak at the first 'Arun Jaitley Memorial Lecture' here on Friday in which Tharman Shanmugaratnam, a senior minister of the Singapore government, will deliver the keynote address on 'Growth through Inclusivity, Inclusivity through Growth,' the PMO said.

The event will see a panel discussion involving OECD Secretary-General Mathias Cormann and Arvind Panagariya, a professor at the Columbia University. The PMO said the Ministry of Finance has organised the lecture in recognition of Jaitley's invaluable contribution to the nation. A leading BJP functionary, Jaitley was the finance minister in the first Modi government. He was also a close associate of the prime minister. He died in 2019 at the age of 66.

During the event, Modi will also interact with delegates participating in the Kautilya Economic Conclave (KEC), a three-day event being organised from July 8 to 10.

Active coronavirus cases in country rise to 1,22,335 (updated on Saturday Morning)



India saw a single day rise of 18,815 new coronavirus infections, taking the tally of COVID-19 cases to 4,35,85,554, while the active cases increased to 1,22,335, according to the Union health ministry data updated on Friday. The death toll has climbed to 5,25,343 with 38 new fatalities, the data updated at 8 am showed. The active cases comprise 0.28 per cent of the total infections, while the national COVID-19 recovery rate was recorded at 98.51 per cent, the health ministry said. An increase of 2,878 cases has been recorded in the active COVID-19 caseload in a span of 24 hours. The daily positivity rate was recorded at 4.96 per cent while the weekly positivity rate was 4.09 per cent, according to the health ministry.

PM Modi inaugurates midday meal kitchen in Varanasi

In his first visit to his Varanasi constituency after the BJP won the Uttar Pradesh assembly election, Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Thursday inaugurated the Akshaya Patra midday meal kitchen here.

During his visit, Modi will launch and lay foundation stone for development projects worth Rs 1,774 crore focused on improving infrastructure and ease of living, officials said.

The kitchen at the LT College has a capacity of cooking midday meals for around 1 lakh students, they said.

Reacting to the launch, Samajwadi Party chief Akhilesh Yadav said the kitchens



should be started at all 11 places proposed during the SP regime.

"At the time of SP's rule, the Akshaya Patra Yojana was started for providing nutritious and hot food to students. In the last five years, the BJP government kept it closed. But, now fearing the anger of students

and the youth, it is compelled to start this scheme," Yadav said in a tweet in Hindi.

Ailing Lalu taken to Delhi by air ambulance

RJD president Lalu Prasad on Wednesday was taken to Delhi in an air ambulance, a couple of days after falling critically ill.

The 74-year-old former Bihar chief minister was accompanied by a team of doctors and his eldest daughter Misa Bharti, a Rajya Sabha MP who is also an MBBS. His wife Rabri Devi and younger son Tejashwi Yadav had left a few hours earlier to oversee the arrangements in the national capital.

Prasad left for Delhi at around 8.15 PM, nearly 45 minutes behind schedule. The delay was attributed to the air ambulance not reaching here in time.

Crowds were seen at the Paras hospital, where Prasad had been admitted since Monday morning, besides both sides of



the road that led to the airport which was a 15-minute drive.

At the Jai Prakash Narayan Airport, slogans in praise of the messiah of the poor rent the air as the ambulance carrying Prasad sped past the crowds, waiting for their leader despite a drizzle.

Prasad, who turned 74 last month, has been suffering from multiple ailments including renal and cardiac problems besides diabetes. On Sunday last, he had a fall and fractured his shoulder after which the affected area was bandaged.

Jagan's mother quits YSR Congress to side with daughter

Andhra Pradesh Chief Minister YS Jagan Mohan Reddy's mother YS Vijayamma on Friday resigned as honorary president of YSR Congress party to stand by her daughter Sharmila, who is now heading the YSR Telangana party in the neighbouring state.

Announcing her decision to quit, she said she would always be close to Jagan Mohan Reddy. "As a mother, I will always be close to Jagan," Vijayamma maintained, announcing her decision to quit the YSRC, at the party plenary that began here on Friday.



"Sharmila is waging a lone battle in Telangana, to carry forward her father's ideals. I have to support her. I was in a dilemma whether I could be a member of two political parties (in two states). It is difficult for me to continue as honorary president

of YSRC, Vijayamma said. "I never imagined such a situation would ever arise. I don't know why it happened, but I feel it is a decision of God," she remarked. Vijayamma said she was stepping down as YSRC honorary president to avoid any unwanted controversy over her role. For some time now there have been reports that all is not well between Jagan Mohan Reddy and his sister over property related issues. The acrimony between the two had escalated in recent times and Vijayamma has been staying away from her son.

Centre grants IP category 1 license to KFON

The Centre has accorded approval to Kerala Fibre Optic Network (KFON), as certified Infrastructure Provider (IP) in the telecom industry, Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan said on Thursday.

The KFON project aims at providing connections to BPL families and government offices in the state to ensure universal internet access.

Vijayan said the ambitious project will bridge the digital divide and the operations would kickstart once it gets the Internet Service Provider (ISP) license from Department of Telecommunications.

"The Kerala Fibre Optic Network Limited has received Infrastructure Provider Category I Registration Certificate from @DoT_India. It will enable K-FON, Kerala's prestigious project to bridge the digital divide, to obtain an ISP license and kickstart operations in the near future," Vijayan tweeted.

In a statement issued, Vijayan said the Left government's KFON project is a declaration that the Internet

is a right of the people.

"The project, which provides free, low-cost and quality high-speed internet to as many people as possible, is a popular alternative of the Left government to the corporate forces in the telecom sector," Vijayan noted.

As per the official registration with the Department of Telecommunication, KFON will have the authority to acquire, prepare, maintain,

repair, rent, lease or sell fiber optic lines (dark fiber), duct space, towers, networks and other facilities.

He further said the state government launched the KFON project with a determination not to create an opportunity for exploitation by private cable networks and mobile service providers.

The KFON scheme is envisaged to provide free internet to BPL families and 30,000 government offices.

The previous Left government had in 2019 declared internet connection as a basic right and launched the Rs 1,548-crore KFON project.



NC set to fight multi-front battle in J-K says Farooq

Batting strongly for collectivism and better coordination at all levels in the party, National Conference president and former chief minister Farooq Abdullah on Friday said the party is set to fight a multi-front battle in Jammu and Kashmir.

The Srinagar MP also exhorted party functionaries to amplify their efforts to reach out to wider sections of society across Jammu and Kashmir.

"As far as the NC is concerned, it is set to fight a multi-front battle (in Jammu and Kashmir)," Abdullah said while interacting with a number of delegations at his residence here.



Elaborating on the multi-front battle, he said, "On one hand, we are fighting against the forces of terrorism and separatism, while on the other hand, we are fighting against the forces of communalism and casteism."

He said that for the NC to open its roots ever more than before, "it is imperative for our functionaries to value the party workers."

"Strengthening of the bottom-up model holds the key towards making the party stronger to take on the challenges in the future", he added.

"To achieve this goal, the party's moves have to be marked by collectivism and better coordination at all levels," he told the functionaries.

Abdullah exhorted the party functionaries to amplify their efforts to reach out to wider sections of society across Jammu and Kashmir.

He said that for the NC to open its roots ever more than before, "it is imperative for our functionaries to value the party workers."

"Strengthening of the bottom-up model holds the key towards making the party stronger to take on the challenges in the future", he added.

Shah to table political resolution at BJP national executive

Laying out the party's stand on various key issues and setting the tone for its political activities in the coming days, Union Home Minister and senior BJP leader Amit Shah will table the all important political resolution at the party's national executive meeting here on Sunday.

With the executive meeting being held in the backdrop of the Nupur Sharma row and the killing of Udaipur tailor Kanahiya Lal, it is being keenly watched if the party makes any reference to these two incidents in its resolution, which will be seconded by two chief ministers.

In its condolence resolution on Saturday, the party



had paid tributes to Kanahiya Lal and Punjabi singer Sidhu Moosewala besides others.

Assam Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma and Karnataka Chief Minister Basraj Bomai will second the resolution.

It is likely that in the political resolution, the Modi gov-

ernment's welfare measures, the BJP's victory in recent assembly polls and its preparation for upcoming assembly polls will be discussed.

This resolution may also send out a political message to the party's rank and file on various prevailing issues and also for the upcoming assembly polls.

Priyanka slams BJP over attacks on Dalits, tribals

Alleging that atrocities on Dalits and tribals have gone up in BJP-ruled states, Congress leader Priyanka Gandhi Vadra on Tuesday asked why the ruling party remains "silent" on horrific attacks against them. She cited instances of a tribal woman being set on fire in Guna district of Madhya Pradesh over a property dispute and a Dalit youth killed in Lucknow district's Maal area allegedly after an explosion under the cot. A Dalit youth was blown up in Uttar Pradesh and a tribal woman was set ablaze in Madhya Pradesh, Gandhi said in a tweet in Hindi. "Why has the BJP, which is using the names of Dalits-Adivasis for elections, keep silent about these horrific incidents of attacks on Dalits-Adivasis," the Congress general secretary asked.

Jamaat-e-Islami Hind Demands Arrest of Nupur Sharma, Not Apologies

NEW DELHI: While Supreme Court in an oral observation on Friday suggested that suspended BJP spokesperson Nupur Sharma, who made highly derogatory remarks against Prophet Mohammad (peace be upon him) provoking emotions across the country, should apologize to the nation, Jamaat-e-Islami Hind (JIH), one of the biggest Islamic organizations in India, on Saturday demanded her arrest.

The comment was made at a press conference addressed jointly by Jamaat-e-Islami Hind president Syed Sadatullah Husaini and its vice-president Prof. Engineer Mohammad Salim at the JIH headquarters in New Delhi.

Responding to a question from a journalist, Husaini said that if apology replaced punishment, then there is no need of courts and prisons in the country.

The JIH also demanded action against those politicians, TV channels and media houses who are fanning hatred in the country.

The two JIH leaders said that the Udaipur murder and a series of mob lynching incidents in different parts of the country - including beating to death of an elderly Hindu on the basis of a mistaken identity in Ratlam in Madhya Pradesh recently - were interlinked and politicians and media involved in spreading hate were responsible for it.

Husaini welcomed the observations of the Supreme



Court that politicians accused of blasphemous rhetoric were single-handedly responsible for this grave situation in the country and the media promoting such hate speeches in the name of TV debates was also

equally responsible. He said that it was unfortunate that even after causing such havoc, the accused spokesperson and TV anchors we still roaming free.

Husaini demanded enactment of a blasphemy law to pun-

ish those insulting the religious personalities of various faiths.

The two JIH leaders said that unfortunately, the political environment of our country was encouraging aggression and hatred and reducing empathy and tolerance and a section of the media was working hand in glove with such irresponsible political forces. They appealed to all peace and justice-loving citizens of the country to join hands and fight against hatred and violence.

They demanded legal action against those politicians and media houses who are spreading hatred.

In response to a question, Husaini said that there should be no two sets of laws in dealing with accused based on their

religious identity. "There should be no double standard in taking action against those involved in promoting hate," Husaini said, while responding to a question on the police arresting the Alt News website co-founder Mohammed Zubair and allowing former BJP leader Nupur Sharma move freely.

Prof. Salim said that it was highly disappointing that Nupur had not been arrested even after a month of her hate remarks on a TV channel. This, he said, has spoiled the image of India abroad.

He expressed surprise over the arrest of renowned human rights defender Teesta Setalvad and former Gujarat DGP R B Sreekumar simply because he had been arrested before an inquiry

commission that probed the Gujarat 2002 anti-Muslim riots.

Prof. Salim said that Mohammed Zubair was arrested only because he shared the derogatory comments of Nupur Sharma on social media. This indicates the direction in which the country was headed to. He said this is an attack on India's democratic values and freedom of speech.

He said that bulldozing of houses of protesters demanding arrest of Nupur Sharma amounted to muzzling of democracy.

Prof. Salim disapproved of how the fall of the Maharashtra government was engineered by making a mockery of the anti-defection law and the mandate of the people.

Trade & current account deficits hurt rupee more

India's monthly merchandise trade deficit hit a fresh record of \$25.6 billion in June as per preliminary estimates released by the Commerce and Industry Ministry earlier this week. This is the third occasion in seven months and the second month in a row that the trade deficit has widened to all-time highs. In June, the value of outbound shipments grew 16.8%, marginally slower than the 20.6% growth recorded in May, to about \$38 billion — reflecting the third successive month of moderation. Worryingly, four of India's top 10 export items — engineering goods, cotton yarn, drugs and pharma and plastic products — contracted from a year ago. Petroleum exports were up 98% from June 2021, but about \$0.7 billion lower than May 2022. Even as exports growth slid, imports surged by over 51% to \$63.6 billion in June, crossing the \$60 billion mark for the fourth month in a row. Analysts expect the rupee to scale the 82 to a dollar mark by the October to December quarter before recovering and the current account deficit to more than double to around 3% of GDP this year from 1.2% in 2021-22. Robust forex reserves notwithstanding, the persistent outflows of foreign capital from the financial markets have triggered concerns about the balance of payments situation. Last week, the Government imposed a windfall tax on crude oil production that could help bridge concerns about the fiscal deficit. It also placed restrictions on petroleum products' exports and acknowledged that gold imports were hurting the current account by raising customs duties to 15% from 10.75%. This may end up hurting petroleum exports further while import duties may not dent India's unparalleled appetite for the yellow metal as much as hoped. Policy makers may have little room to manoeuvre out of this vicious cycle, but missteps must be avoided and domestic inefficiencies hurting exports reviewed urgently.

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—KEN POIROT

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SANJAY KUMAR EXPLAINS WHY VOTERS ARE SPLIT ON WHAT KIND OF REPRESENTATIVES THEY PREFER VOTING FOR

Defection a non-issue for voters

The reason why a poor record on honesty and frequent switching of candidates from one political party to another (defection) hardly concerns Indian voters is simply that a very large section of the electorate chooses the party and not the candidate during elections. If merits and demerits of candidates had any bearing on voting considerations of Indian voters, many defectors and candidates with questionable records would not have made it to the Indian Parliament or the Assemblies of different States.

In some instances, there may be well-founded reasons for an elected MLA or MP to defect from one party to another. But the reason why many legislators and parliamentarians defect to other parties for purely personal gains is that they know voters will not punish them for their actions and will support them if they contest election on the ticket of any "popular" political party. Similarly, many of them also know that it is the party's ticket and the popularity of its leader that helps them win the election. What they are careful about is to keep themselves accessible to people and help them in getting their work done. When some voters decide to choose the candidate rather than the party during elections, the ability to get work done remains the biggest asset for the candidate, no matter how.

The findings from the National Elections Studies conducted by Lokniti-CSDS indicate, during the 2014 Lok Sabha elections, 58% voters mentioned voting for the party while 33% said they voted for the candidate. The proportion of voters who voted for the party declined slightly to 52% during the 2019 Lok Sabha elections while 37% voters preferred voting for the candidate. There is a slight increase in candidate-centred voting amongst Indian voters during the last few years, but the evidence over the



years for Lok Sabha and State Assembly elections suggests that a large majority of Indian voters vote for the party and not for the candidate. This party-centred approach is prevalent amongst both uneducated as well as educated voters, amongst urban and rural voters and amongst voters with various degrees of media exposure. It is this strong trend of party-centred voting which neutralises any displeasure, if at all, that voters may have about their chosen representatives defecting and contesting again on a different party ticket.

There are numerous examples, of defectors being re-elected, on a party ticket against which they had contested the previous election. Twenty-two sitting legislators of the Congress party, some of them Ministers in the Kamal Nath government, defected to the BJP in Madhya Pradesh in March 2020, of whom 19 were re-elected again to the House as BJP legislators. Another instance that is fresh in our minds is that of Mahesh Iranagouda Kumathalli, who became the MLA of Athani Assembly constituency in Karnataka in 2018 on a Congress ticket, but crossed over to the BJP and got re-elected to the House.

How could one forget Suvendu Adhikari's defection from Trinamool Congress to the BJP, and his subsequent re-election to the West Bengal Assembly, defeating the sitting Chief Minister and heavy weight Mamata Banerjee. These are just few examples from the long list of defectors getting re-elected soon after their defections and occupying prime positions. Let us not forget, Vishwajit Rane, who resigned as Congress MLA of Valpoi, Goa, and the Minister of Health, Agriculture & Craftsmen Training on March 16, 2017, joined the BJP on April 7, 2017 and became part of Parrikar government with health portfolio. While this has been the dominant trend, the 2022 Assembly elections in Goa came as an exception when nine of the 12 defectors lost the Assembly election, some very badly. Nevertheless, it is the broad trend which seems to encourage MLAs and MPs to change parties without any valid reasons except for personal gains.

We can broadly predict when the four seasons — winter, spring, summer and monsoon — set in, but one cannot predict when and where defections are likely to take place. Defection is not new to Indian

politics, and has been around for a long time. Voters have seen it as a routine exercise in Indian politics, and do not consider it an evil practice. There have been several attempts by various governments at different points of time to strengthen laws to curb this menace in politics. It was first introduced in the 4th Lok Sabha in 1967 by the then Prime Minister Indira Gandhi, but the Act finally came into being in 1984 during Rajiv Gandhi government's tenure. Important amendments to Anti-Defection law introduced in 2003 by the Atal Bihari Vajpayee government to strengthen the legislation failed to bring about the desired results. The political drama that recently unfolded in Maharashtra involving 37 Shiv Sena legislators is another example of how Anti-Defection law is being misused by contesting groups/sides and dissident legislators for personal and political gains.

Evidence from the National Election study indicates that the views of Indian voters are divided on what kind of representatives they would prefer to vote for. Many of them do not express strong reservations against candidates with tainted backgrounds or those involved in corrupt practices. While many are happy to vote for an honest but inaccessible candidate (48%), there are others (24%), who are happy to vote for a candidate who is corrupt but accessible.

Similarly, 36% voters are ready to vote for a candidate with criminal background, but gets works done, while 35% are ready to vote for an honest candidate, but can't get work done. I think we are close to answering why defection and corruption do not matter much to Indian voters.

Sanjay Kumar is a professor at the Centre for the Study of Developing Societies (CSDS), Delhi and a political analyst. The views expressed are personal



MILIND KUMAR SHARMA BELIEVES IT IS CRUCIAL TO TAKE LOCAL CONDITIONS AND MARKET DEMANDS INTO ACCOUNT

Problem with our university vision

It has now become an annual ritual in India to discuss the international rankings of higher education institutions (HEI) only when global ranking systems such as the coveted QS World University Rankings are announced. The QS World University Rankings rank HEIs on the following components: academic reputation (40%), employer reputation (10%), faculty student ratio (20%), citations per faculty (20%), international faculty ratio (5%) and international student ratio (5%). The international research network and employment outcomes were 0% for this edition.

While it is heartening to see that the number of Indian institutes among the top 1,000 globally has risen to 27 from 22 last year, and that the Indian Institute of Science (IISc), Bangalore, has moved up 31 places to emerge as the highest ranked Indian institute in the 2023 edition, there is no serious debate on the abysmal performance of Indian universities barring the Institutes of Eminence (IOE). IOEs occupy a special place as they are granted more academic and administrative autonomy, and public IOEs get additional funding. Therefore, their dominance in the top 500 in the QS World University Rankings comes as no surprise.

Among the other HEIs too, there is great inequality. As per the All-India Survey on Higher Education (2019-20), 184 of the 1,043 HEIs in the country are centrally funded institutions. The Indian government generously allocates financial resources to these institutions. However, the financial support provided by State governments to State HEIs is far from adequate even though the number of under-graduate students is largest in State public universities (13,97,527) followed by State open universities (9,22,944) of the total students'



enrollment. State-sponsored HEIs barely manage to pay salaries and pensions.

While the number of universities increased by almost 30.5% in 2019-20 compared to 2015-16, academic and administrative infrastructure has not been strengthened commensurate to this growth. The lackadaisical attitude we see in filling up faculty positions has further worsened the quality of teaching and research in HEIs. In fact, quality education and the world class research output that policymakers expect from State public universities remain elusive as these HEIs have never had financial and other resources to attain academic and professional growth.

On the other hand, the institutions that are generously funded by the Centre perform better than their State-sponsored counterparts on all academic performance indicators — faculty strength, modernised laboratories, building infrastructure, digitised libraries, sponsored research project grants, computing facilities, etc. Therefore, that the State-funded HEIs would not perform well in these rankings was a forgone conclusion. It is a consequence of the unequal and unfair system in the Indian higher

education system, where State-sponsored HEIs are provided step-motherly treatment and positioned poorly vis-à-vis centrally funded institutions. No ranking system seems to rationally rank institutions after examining their administrative challenges, infrastructural constraints and financial predicaments; they only pay attention to performance metrics based on academic strengths and other achievements. For India to perform better on these rankings, we need to pay more attention to the State HEIs.

The National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 has envisaged all HEIs to become multidisciplinary institutions by 2040. The aim is to increase the Gross Enrolment Ratio in higher education, including vocational education, from 26.3% in 2018 to 50% by 2035. The NEP also aims to ensure that by 2030, there is at least one large multidisciplinary HEI in or near every district. This means that single-stream specialised institutions will eventually be phased out.

However, the fact that prominent multidisciplinary universities such as Jawaharlal Nehru University, Delhi University, the University of Hyderabad, and Jamia Millia Islamia have slipped in the QS World University Rankings should compel national think tanks to revisit the NEP's proposal in this regard. A close study of the QS World University Rankings reveals that single-stream specialised HEIs such as the Indian Institutes of Technology and IISc have performed better than their multidisciplinary counterparts. Eight IITs (Delhi, Bombay, Madras, Kanpur, Kharagpur, Roorkee, Guwahati and Indore) are placed among the top 500 globally, in addition to IISc, Bangalore. IIT-Indore ranked highest among the second-generation IITs by securing the 396th position and IIT-BHU made its maiden presence in the 651-700 band.

A plan in the NEP for multidisciplinary education and research universities is also being contemplated in order to achieve the highest global standards in quality education. While everyone is demanding multidisciplinary education, the performance of the specialised HEIs in the QS World Rankings bears testimony to their superiority over multidisciplinary/multi-faculty institutions. The idea of converting a specialised institution into a multi-faculty university does not seem to augur well for an economy driven by specialist professionals. It would be perplexing if the IITs decided to offer courses in physical education and medicine or the National Law Universities ran undergraduate degree programmes in mechanical engineering.

It is crucial to emphasise here that nobody is averse to the idea of multidisciplinary/multi-faculty education if there is a 15% to 20% flexibility in the total academic strength. But converting all HEIs into multidisciplinary institutions is not an idea that holds water given the unique conditions and demands in India. No study or data support the idea of transforming specialised institutions into multidisciplinary/multi-faculty universities either. Such an idea may have worked in the West where HEIs invest substantial resources in multidisciplinary research through private and public research grants and funding. But a 'one size fits all' approach may not be of help to India. The need of the hour is to build and develop our higher education system while taking into account Indian conditions and market demands.

Milind Kumar Sharma is professor at Department of Production & Industrial Engineering, MBM University, Jodhpur, erstwhile, MBM Engineering College, Jodhpur. Views are personal

BOOKS: REVIEW

Book sets the record straight about India's Parsi community

At a time when there are debates about uniform civil code versus religious personal laws, a book analyses who is a Parsi.

Author Prochy N Mehta says the tales "we have heard for generations, and what has been handed down to us as history of the Parsi community in India, have often been rather fictitious". The perception, for example, that the Parsis have always been an affluent community, is a modern-day myth devoid of any true value, she argues.

The story of the arrival of the Parsis in India, the most important chapter in that history, is itself shrouded in mystery, she says.

In "Who is a Parsi", Mehta attempts to "set that record straight and lift the veil from the glorious

history of our people".

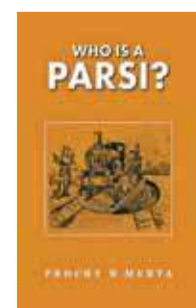
She says she wishes to "handhold the reader in this journey through the lanes and bylanes of our history — from the time of the writing of the poem 'Quissa-i-Sanjan' in 1599, when Parsi recorded history actually begins, to the 20th century".

The author also adds, "As you must be knowing children of Parsi intermarried women face discrimination. In this book I try to show that there is no legal, religious, social or age-old custom on which it is based." The book, published by Niyogi Books, documents through letters, newspaper articles, and court transcripts from cases, the views of prominent Parsis like Dadabhoy Navroji, Ratan D Tata, Ratan J Tata, Sir Dinshaw Maneckji Petit, Sir Jehangir Ca-

'As you must be knowing children of Parsi intermarried women face discrimination. In this book I try to show that there is no legal, religious, social or age-old custom on which it is based'

wasjee Jehangir, Rustomji Byramji Jeejeebhoy, Homi J. Bhabha, K R Cama, and many others who stood up and fought for what they believed in — that Parsi and Zoroastrian meant the same thing.

The author also depicts the dichotomy of the community in the 20th century, between the ortho-



Who is a Parsi?
By Prochy N Mehta
Niyogi Books
488 pages; Rs 795

dox and the reformist groups and explains the anomaly of how the reformists who followed the original Mazdayasna or Parsi religion, constituted the real orthodoxy.

There was a reform movement led by the high priests of the community and the most influential members of society for a return to the pristine purity of the original Zoroastrian religion.

The book also tells how the Parsis found shelter and a peaceful environment to grow and prosper as a community in India and contributed significantly to the society.

In the foreword to the book, vet-

eran Supreme Court advocate Fali S Nariman writes, "A proud boast of Parsis is that they belong to the world's most ancient monotheistic religion. As a matter of historical fact, they do.

"But presently — with the steep decline in birth-rate, the entire community is in jeopardy; it is believed, by many, that Parsi personal law is largely responsible for this plight: which is precisely the theme around which this well-researched and liberally-illustrated book has been written." Mehta has won 71 medals at international athletic meets including 52 gold medals. She is the Asian record holder in 400 metres and triple jump in the women's 40+ age group. She is the first female president of the Calcutta Parsee Club. Her father, the late Rusi B Gimi was a pioneer in outdoor advertising in India. His company Selvel, started in 1945, is now synonymous with Out of Home (OOH) advertising.

Hindustan Power Exchange commences operations

HPX TO BE POWERED BY SAME TECHNOLOGY THAT MAKES BSE THE FASTEST EXCHANGE GLOBALLY

MUMBAI: Hindustan Power Exchange Ltd. (HPX), promoted by PTC India Ltd, Bombay Stock Exchange, and ICICI Bank, today commenced operations after receiving all necessary approvals from Central Electricity Regulatory Commission. Backed by the latest technology and a series of innovative features, the exchange promises to offer speed, transparency, and better price discovery in the execution of trades. The exchange will initially offer trading in Contingency contracts, Green Contingency contracts, and Renewable Energy Certificates. It will steadily increase its product portfolio and provide a wide range of contracts to address the demand of different segments of the electricity market.



are leaders in their respective areas of operations.”

“Almost 90% of India’s electricity is traded via bilateral contracts lasting for 20 years or more between power generation companies and state utilities. These contracts do not provide the flexibility to sector participants to take advantage of market conditions at different times. Power Exchanges provide the market participants a platform with multiple avenues for buying-selling of power and hence

manage their power portfolios efficiently. The introduction of HPX will give a definite push to the development and progress of spot trading in electricity,” he added.

Samir Patil, CBO, BSE said, “Hindustan Power Exchange (HPX) has been envisaged to promote market efficiency through advanced technology and to maximize value for the power market. The cutting-edge technology solutions, efficient price mechanism and the quality of service offered at HPX, would act as the differentiator in the Indian Power Market. With the technology set to be one of the key point-of-difference in the Indian Power Market, BSE looks forward in carving its footprint in the sector, thereby paving the way for a technology-led efficient power market through HPX.”

Spokesperson for PTC India Ltd. said, “Hindustan Power Exchange is indeed going to be an institution that will offer a conducive and com-

petitive marketplace for electricity trade in India. HPX is entirely focused to cater a range of market products to the participants in pursuant to their specific requirements. HPX recognizes the competition and the need to bring other innovative products for industrial as well as distribution sector consumers. It also aims to assure a robust trading mechanism for buyers and sellers where they obtain an efficient and transparent electricity price.”

The Indian power sector is at the cusp of a massive energy transition where the share of renewable energy is steadily rising in India’s power generation mix. Further, more variable power output from wind and solar plants is set to push short-term trading of energy, thereby giving more options to both buyers and sellers. HPX will play a pivotal role in bridging the gap between demand and supply and providing trading at an optimized cost.

both proud and comfortable as they direct their energy to ensure a warm, friendly, and efficient flying experience for all our passengers,” Belson Coutinho, Co-founder and Chief Marketing & Experience Officer of Akasa Air, said.

According to the company, given the mobile lifestyle of crew members and long hours spent standing, Vanilla Moon designed sneakers that are light, and contain extra cushioning from heel to toe to ensure better support. The sneakers’ sole is carved from recycled rubber and manufactured without any use of plastic, it said.

“We are delighted to share this shoe design -- which is sustainably produced, functional, comfortable, gender-neutral and contemporary,”

Akasa Air unveils first look of its crew uniform

Akasa Air on Monday unveiled the first look of its crew uniform as the startup carrier prepares for take-off in the coming weeks.



The airline, backed by ace stock market investor Rakesh Jhunjhunwala, is likely to start services by the end of this month.

It had taken delivery of its first Boeing 737 max aircraft in India on June 21 and plans to conduct proving flights this week, following which it will get the Air Operator Permit for launching commercial operations. In a statement on Monday, Akasa Air said the uniform fit focuses on providing the best possible stretch to ensure their comfort over their busy flight schedules.

The company said it is the first Indian airline to have introduced custom trousers and jackets, with their fabric specially made for Akasa Air (using recycled polyester fabric which is made from pet bottle plastic salvaged from marine waste) and comfortable sneakers for its airline in-flight crew keeping in mind ergonomics, aesthetics and comfort.

“We have designed a uniform in which our team feels

Deepika Mehra, Founder of Vanilla Moon, said. Designed by Delhi-based fashion designer Rajesh Pratap Singh, the jacket draws inspiration from the Indian bandhgala and is forward-looking in a modern version of the garment.

“These uniforms are a perfect amalgamation of style and sustainability and reflect Akasa Air’s core values. From concept to the final outcome, it has been an exciting journey for me to work on these designs and present one of the most unique, sustainable and functional uniforms of our times,” Singh said.

Last November, Akasa Air announced ordering 72 737 Max aircraft from Boeing. The order includes two variants from the 737 MAX family -- 737-8 and 737-8-200.

Britannia shareholders reject Rs 5,000 cr investment proposal

Britannia Industries’ shareholders have voted against a resolution to authorise the board to make investments, give loans and provide guarantees of up to Rs 5,000 crore in the AGM concluded last week.



The special resolution for approval to increase limits for making investments, loans, Special guarantees and security was “not Passed with requisite majority,” said a regulatory filing from Britannia Industries on June 29, 2022.

The Companies Act mandates that a special resolution needs to be passed by a super majority, which refers to at least 75 per cent of the members voting in favour of it.

It received only 73.35 per cent of the total 19.60 crore votes polled, while 26.64 per cent of votes were against the proposal. In the AGM, 71.13 per cent of public institutions and 70.86 per cent non-Public institutions voted against the proposal for making investments, loans, Special guarantees and security of up to Rs 5,000 crore. However, it received 100 per cent support from the promoter and promoter group.

of Keki Elavia as an Independent Director -- were passed.

However, 59.31 per cent of public institutions and 59.90 per cent of Public non-institutions voted against the proposal to hike the remuneration to the Britannia Chairman.

It was passed with 76.94 per cent of the total votes polled with the help of promoters and some other investors. Remuneration of Rs 7.33 crore to Wadia was in excess of 50 per cent of the total annual remuneration payable to all non-executive directors for 2021-22. Shareholders also passed three ordinary resolutions with the requisite majority, including appointing a director in place of Ness N Wadia, who retires by rotation.

Fidel Softech IPO Receives Good Investor Response

Fidel Softech Limited, a Pune-based LangTech company went public on the NSE SME Exchange on June 10. The IPO was oversubscribed by 102 times and was very well received by the investors.



Fidel Softech Ltd. works in the areas of Localization & IT Consulting services and in operations since 2004. It helps clients deliver their technology solutions with local language UI/UX. Its localization services include translations as well as localization of software, websites, multi-lingual data creation for training AI engines, transcription & annotation, video subtitling, natural language processing, testing and automation.

On company’s recent IPO success, Fidel Softech’s CEO, Sunil Kulkarni, thanked all investors, clients, team members, past alumni, supporters & well-wishers. He added, “This was a culmination of our team efforts & support from our clients/partners for over 18+ years. Fidel is the first ‘LangTech’ company from India to go public. It is also one of the first IT & consulting services SME to go public with a focus since inception on Japan-India geography. This is the 70th Anniversary year of the establishment of diplomatic relations between India and Japan & hence very special

for us. Localization is globally a 26 billion USD market and India is well poised to contribute to it.

Further, by focusing on language centric technical consulting services & digital financial literacy solutions, Fidel supports the govt vision of bridging the digital divide. By bringing Technology-Languages-Consulting together, Fidel offers a one-stop solution to its clients.

Prachi Kulkarni, Managing Director, said that this is a step to increase the pace of growth, open new markets, attract talent & develop new competencies. She mentioned that this also was a step to further strengthen security, environmental, social and corporate governance (ESG). Fidel is equal opportunity firm and the team has a 50% diversity ratio almost since its inception.”

MandarInamdar (CFO) mentioned that this fund raise is to scale the growth and that Fidel is

equally focussed on social impact. New job opportunities will be created with an emphasis on tier 2 and 3 cities in India to leverage the local language as well as technology skills. Adequate training in technologies & languages including Japanese will also be provided.

Sushrut Potdar, Chief Technology Officer, is confident about taking Language Technology expertise to new landscape. He said, with the proliferation of smartphones, lowering of data packs and growing aspirations, clients are going Global (Global+Local) and hence want to deliver products & services in local language UI / UX using innovative technical solutions. We support these client initiatives and ensure state of the art technology, video-audio solutions, data analytics, multi-lingual SEO and support 100+ languages including all Indian languages.

Income Tax Department conducts searches on Pharmaceutical Manufacturers and Distributors in Haryana and Delhi-NCR

Income Tax Department carried out search and seizure operations on 29.06.2022 on a group engaged in the business of manufacturing and distribution of Pharmaceutical medicines and Real Estate Development. The search action covered 25 premises in Delhi-NCR and Haryana.



A large number of incriminating documents in the form of loose sheets and digital data have been found and seized. These documents reveal that the group was involved in huge unaccounted sales of pharmaceutical medicines in cash. Large amount of purchases, payments of wages and other expenses were also found to have been made in cash.

(API), surplus stock valued at Rs. 94 crore has been found.

It is also found that the cash generated through unaccounted cash sales has been invested in purchase of immovable properties, and in expansion of manufacturing facilities of Pharmaceutical medicines. The real estate entities of the group are found to be engaged in out-of-books sale and purchase of properties in cash. The group has also been booking bogus Long Term/ Short Term Capital Losses in the securities market to offset the capital gains earned on such property transactions. The amount of such bogus losses is estimated to be around Rs. 20 crore. The search action has also revealed that the group has also floated benami entities to purchase immovable properties in the State of Himachal Pradesh.

This modus-operandi of unaccounted cash sales of pharmaceutical medicines, including cash receipts through hawala for sale of medicines to Afghanistan, has been admitted by a key person involved in such transactions. The preliminary analysis of the seized data indicates that such hawala cash receipts amount to Rs. 25 crore approximately. In the case of one pharmaceutical concern dealing in Active Pharmaceutical Ingredients

So far, unaccounted cash of Rs. 4.2 crore and jewellery/ bullion worth Rs. 4 crore have been seized.

Govt directs steel industry to draw time-bound action plan to lower CO2 emissions

In line with the government’s COP26 commitments, the Ministry of Steel has asked the stakeholders to develop a time-bound action plan to lower emissions in the steel industry.

According to a ministry document, the iron and steel industry globally accounts for around 8 per cent of total carbon dioxide (CO2) emissions on an annual basis, whereas in India, it contributes 12 per cent to the total CO2 emissions. Thus, the Indian steel industry needs to reduce its emissions substantially in view of the commitments made at the COP26 climate change conference.

India will meet a target of net zero emissions by 2070, Prime Minister Narendra Modi said at the COP26 global climate summit in November 2021. In a meeting held recently, Steel Minister Ram Chandra Prasad Singh urged the stakeholders to develop a time-bound action plan and make concerted efforts for lowering the emissions from the steel industry in line with the commitments made by the Government in COP26.”

Discussions were also held on the present scenario, the way forward for promoting the transition towards green steel, various strategies and technologies that can be adopted by the steel industry to produce green steel, and technology readiness levels, among others.

Air travel booms but airlines in trouble

BY NARVIJAY YADAV

During the Covid pandemic, air travel was not possible for a full 2 years, due to which the aviation industry came to a standstill and people had to sit in their homes as no activity was taking place anywhere. Air traffic came to a halt all over the world and due to this airline companies fired several lakhs of their employees. But now that the pandemic is over, and the fear of Coronavirus is also not there, people have started roaming around. As a result, the pressure on the airlines has increased tremendously. Huge crowds have started gathering at the airports. Many people might be thinking that lack of facilities and long queues happen only in India, but they are wrong as the situation is not good in the USA and European countries. Rather, the situation there is worse than in India because the airlines there had laid off employees on a large scale during the Corona period. One figure shows that 23 lakh employees were laid off from the airline industry during the last two years.



by more than 400 percent. On the other hand, pilots, flight attendant security personnel, drivers running airport buses, etc. are falling short. It is not possible to increase the workforce overnight, as it is a lengthy process, which may take several weeks. The way the number of air passengers has increased in the US and European countries has broken the record of the last 40 years.

It is said that happiness is a matter of choice. Being happy is a decision that anyone can take at any time, which is the best policy also. The state of happiness keeps problems smaller, mood lighter, and mental stress at bay. The people of Ukraine understand this formula very well. The whole country has been troubled by the attacks of the Russian armed forces for more than two months now. Yet a comedy club in a western Ukrainian city has been entertaining people through its laughter shows almost every night, where jokes are told about the enemy army. There is no particular co-

median, anybody comes on the stage and shares a joke. One of its objectives is to reduce the tension of the local people by laughing about the enemy and reducing the troubles caused by the on-going war. It also makes them motivated for further fighting. A survey has found that the South Indians are at the forefront of telling jokes in the office. In this matter, the people of Italy are no less if compared with others in the world. A recent LinkedIn survey has revealed that three-quarters of professionals in India consider jokes to be good in the workplace, although many find them unprofessional. Still, most people feel that laughing at the workplace increases productivity, lightens the mind, and keeps the mind stress-free.

The number of adults in India is more than 100 crores, while more than 50 crore people use WhatsApp on their smartphones. That is, almost half the population of the country uses WhatsApp. True too, because WhatsApp has made life very easy. WhatsApp is used for most

interactions because it is fast and easy to send photos and videos in a fraction of a second. However, many people misuse this facility and use it to increase obscenity and crime. For this reason, in view of the country’s IT law, two crores 28 lakh WhatsApp accounts had to be banned in the last year. If we talk about last month, ie May 2022, then WhatsApp blocked 19 lakh 10 thousand accounts.

The WhatsApp report states that the maximum number of accounts was banned in July 2021. The number of such accounts was 30 lakh 27 thousand. WhatsApp bans accounts if someone shares obscene, defamatory, threatening, intimidating, hate speech, or objectionable content against local laws and is reported by another user. Facebook, WhatsApp, and Instagram are owned by the same company - Meta. In the first quarter of 2022, Facebook took action against 2 crores 17 lakh people for posting violent and inciting content and removed 1 billion 88 crores of fake information from the platform. Similarly, 18 lakh posts promoting substance abuse were removed from Instagram as well.

WhatsApp and other social media platforms are there for our convenience to facilitate mutual conversation and communication. These mediums should not be misused. Forwarding or sharing fake information through

them is a crime, which is not in the interest of the country. These days you must have noted that there is continuous action on social media on anti-national or defamatory posts, tweets, etc. and the guilty are being booked. If you have a smartphone in your hand and you have an account on social media, it does not mean that you can write anything and sleep quietly. Think twenty times before writing anything wrong on social media and do not post anything which is illegal or which causes harm to any individual or society. The same caution that is taken in speaking face to face, should also be taken on social media.

Former Punjab Chief Minister and a probable contender for the post of Vice President of India, Captain Amarinder Singh has recently returned from a London hospital after undergoing his spinal surgery, on the other hand, former captain of the Indian Cricket team, Mahendra Singh Dhoni is getting treatment in the jungles of Jharkhand. He is getting his knees treated by a vaidya, who charges a small fee of Rs 40 only. Dhoni has been taking vaidya’s medicine for the past one month, which is prepared from a local herb. It’s a matter of choice, to get treated in the Indian jungle or in a foreign hospital.

The writer is a senior journalist & columnist. Views are personal

NFT support on Facebook will be a game-changer the day it allows users to barter & bid on it: Tapan Sangal

FW DESK
New Delhi

Meta, which was formerly known as Facebook, has launched digital collectibles support on Facebook with select creators after launching NFT support on Instagram. It has introduced a new tab called ‘digital collectibles’, under which the creator can display his/her NFTs. However, creators will not be allowed to cross-post on Facebook and Instagram, nor will they be able to turn digital collectible posts into ads. There are no fees associated with posting or sharing a digital collectible. Needless to add, the news has created a buzz in the NFT - cryptocurrency world.



Tapan Sangal, founder and chief evangelist of P2E Pro, welcomes the news of NFT finding a place on Facebook. He says, “If Meta has launched support for NFTs on Facebook, it will lead to a surge in interest in the world of NFTs and cryptocurrency. After all, social networking sites like FB and Instagram are like a mini universe by itself.

Bajaj Auto begins Rs 2,500 cr share buyback

Bajaj Auto on Monday said it has commenced its Rs 2,500 share buyback programme. In a regulatory filing, the Pune-based company said the buyback initiative has begun with effect from July 4.

The company’s board, at its meeting held on June 27, had approved the proposal for buyback of the fully paid-up equity shares of the company with a face value of Rs 10 each from existing shareholders, except promoters and promoter group, from the open market. The buyback will be carried out at a price not exceeding Rs 4,600 per equity share and for an aggregate amount of up to Rs 2,500 crore, representing 9.61 per cent of the aggregate of the total paid-up share capital of the company, it had stated. Shares of the company were trading 0.43 per cent up at Rs 3,639.30 apiece on the BSE.

Tata Steel Long Products Limited takes over NINL

Neelachal Ispat Nigam Limited (NINL) is a Joint Venture of 4 CPSEs, namely MMTC (shareholding of 49.78%), NMDC (10.10%), BHEL (0.68%), MECON (0.68%) and 2 Odisha Government PSUs, namely OMC (20.47%) and IPICOL (12.00%).

MNINL Strategic Disinvestment transaction has been completed today with the transfer of 93.71% shares of the Joint Venture Partners (4 CPSEs and 2 Odisha Govt. PSUs) to the Strategic Buyer, M/s Tata Steel Long Products Limited. The Enterprise Value paid by the Strategic Buyer is Rs. 12,100 Crores. This payment has been utilized as per the SPA for settlement of dues of employees, operational creditors, secured financial creditors and sellers (operational and financial dues) and for equity of selling shareholders as per SPA.

Following approval of the highest price bid of M/s Tata Steel Long Products Limited on 31st January, 2022, the Letter of Award (LOA) was issued to the winning bidder on 2nd February, 2022. The Share Purchase Agreement (SPA) was signed on 10th March, 2022.



Share markets maintain momentum for 3rd day, log weekly gains

The Sensex and Nifty marched higher for the third session on the trot on Friday as investors continued to accumulate banking, infrastructure and FMCG stocks despite unabated selling by foreign funds.



On a weekly basis, the Sensex advanced 1,573.91 points or 2.97 per cent, while the Nifty climbed 468.55 points or 2.97 per cent.

trading sessions of this week was based on this outlook of probable moderation in inflation, and therefore of rates.

followed by power (1.71 per cent), utilities (1.58 per cent), industrials (1.51 per cent), bank (0.66 per cent) and FMCG (0.54 per cent).

Global equities were mixed as investors awaited key jobs data from the US, which will offer clues on the Federal Reserve's rate hike trajectory.

Passenger vehicle retail sales up 40 pc in June as chip supply improves



Passenger vehicle retail sales in the country rose 40 per cent in June indicating an improvement in semiconductor supplies even as demand, especially for SUVs, remained robust, auto dealer body FADA said on Tuesday.

Gulati said in a statement. Due to chip shortage, however, waiting periods, especially in compact SUV and SUV segments, continue to remain high, he added.

TCS Q1 net profit rises 5.2% to Rs 9478 cr



India's largest IT services firm Tata Consultancy Services (TCS) on Friday reported a 5.2% year-on-year rise in consolidated net profit to Rs 9,478 crore for the first quarter ended June 30.

HDFC Bank records 21.5% loan growth in Q1

Private sector HDFC Bank on Monday said the bank has registered a 21.5 per cent rise in loans to Rs 13,95,000 crore in the first quarter this fiscal.



home loan arrangement with parent Housing Development Finance Corporation (HDFC) Ltd, it said. On April 4, India's largest private lender HDFC Bank agreed to take over the biggest domestic mortgage lender in a deal valued at about USD 40 billion, creating a financial services titan.

Taxes on fuel being subsumed into GST will have to be navigated through the GST council and will take time, says Tarun Bajaj

NEW DELHI: Fuel constitutes a large part of revenue generation for both the center and states so there is some apprehension but in due course it will come into the GST fold, said Tarun Bajaj, Secretary, Department of Revenue, Ministry of Finance, Government of India at an ASSOCHAM Event on GST - Journey of 5 years and road ahead.



increased in the past year. There has been a great deal of formalization that has happened on account of GST. This has a positive impact on other things as well, such as Income tax, because large or even medium scale industries will only do business with someone who is a part of the GST chain because of availability of ITC.

Sale of national flag exempt from GST



Sale of the Indian national flag, irrespective of whether machine made or of polyester, is exempt from the Goods and Services Tax (GST), the finance ministry said on Friday.

PNB receives the National MSME Award from Prime Minister Narendra Modi



Punjab National Bank, nation's leading public sector bank, won the third prize at "National MSME Awards 2022" organized under the Entrepreneur-India programme by the Union Ministry of MSME in New Delhi.

NTPC docks 21.7 pc growth in power generation in June quarter

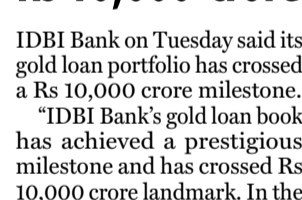
State-run power giant NTPC Ltd on Monday said it has registered a 21.7 per cent growth in electricity generation at 104.4 billion units (BU) in the April-June quarter of this financial year.



eneration was 34.8 BU, higher by 29.3 per cent compared to 26.9 BU in June 2021, indicating an improved performance and an increase in demand for power in the current year, it added.

IDBI Bank's gold loan biz crosses Rs 10,000-crore milestone

NTPC Talcher Kaniha (3000 MW) in Orissa is the top performing thermal power plant with 94.2 per cent Plant Load Factor (PLF or capacity utilisation) between April to June 2022. Overall Plant Load Factor of NTPC Coal stations was 80 per cent from April to June 2022 vis-a-vis 69 per cent in the same period last year, a testimony to the high levels of operational excellence and the expertise of NTPC in Operation and Maintenance of the power plants, it said.



helped in the growth of the gold loan book. Customers complete the transactions generally in 10-15 minutes, it added.

Rupee falls 10 paise to 79.23 against US dollar

The rupee declined by 10 paise to close at 79.23 (provisional) against the US dollar on Friday, tracking the strength of the American currency in the overseas market.

Alarming Debt -GDP Ratio of States and Politics of Freebies

About 20 states of our economy are under alarming debt burden and Punjab is number one followed by Rajasthan, Kerala, Jharkhand, Bengal and Haryana.

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plunged Punjab into debt. With a population of 3 crores, today every individual in Punjab has a debt of Rs 1 lakh. Every child who is born in Punjab already has a debt of 1 lakh rupees on them right after their birth according to AAP leader Raghav Chadha.

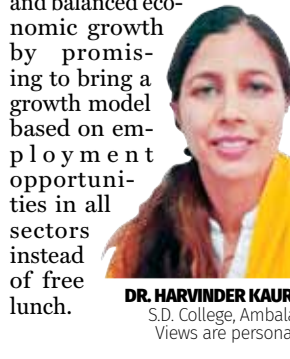


average during the period 2014-15 and 2018-19. The GCS average of capital expenditure to aggregate expenditure increased from 14.02 per cent in 2014-15 to 14.28 per cent in 2018-19.

The first step in this direction can be paying due attention to the industry sector, especially micro, small and medium enterprises (MSME), which have great potential to generate employment.

government have to raise funds by selling (disinvestment in public assets) its assets such as a public sector enterprise or a government-owned bank for more debt.

in efforts to curb the fall of the rupee. The central bank had also said it has been closely monitoring the liquidity conditions in the forex market and has stepped in as needed in all its segments to alleviate dollar tightness with the objective of ensuring orderly market functioning.



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

EAM Jaishankar & Chinese Finance Minister Wang Yi meet in Bali

External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar and his Chinese counterpart Wang Yi held a one-hour meeting in the Indonesian city of Bali on Thursday, focusing on the lingering border row in eastern Ladakh, the issue of return of Indian students to China and resumption of direct flights between the two countries.

The talks took place on the sidelines of a meeting of the foreign ministers of the G20 countries. Jaishankar tweeted that the talks focused on "specific outstanding issues" pertaining to the border situation, in an oblique reference to the over two-year-old military standoff along the Line of Actual Control (LAC) in eastern Ladakh.

"Began my day in Bali by meeting FM Wang Yi of China. Discussion lasted one hour.



Focused on specific outstanding issues in our bilateral relationship pertaining to the border situation," the external affairs minister said.

India has been pressing for quick disengagement of troops

from all the remaining friction points in eastern Ladakh to ensure de-escalation of the situation, asserting that peace and tranquillity along the border are pre-requisite for progress in overall ties.

"Also spoke about other matters including students and flights," Jaishankar said.

Thousands of Indian students were unable to return to China for over two years due to Beijing's COVID-19 restrictions. India has been taking up the issue with China several times.

There have been discussions between the two sides on the resumption of direct flights but there has been no forward movement on the issue. The flight services were suspended due to the pandemic. It was the first meeting between the two foreign ministers since Wang visited India on March 24 and 25. In May, India and China held diplomatic talks on the border row and agreed to hold the next round of the Senior Commanders' meeting at an early date to achieve complete

disengagement from all friction points in eastern Ladakh. However, both sides are yet to decide on the military talks.

The border standoff between the Indian and Chinese militaries erupted on May 5, 2020, following a violent clash in the Pangong lake area.

The face-off escalated after the Galwan Valley clashes on June 15 that year. Both sides gradually enhanced their deployment by rushing in tens of thousands of soldiers as well as heavy weaponry.

As a result of a series of military and diplomatic talks, the two sides completed the disengagement process last year in the north and south banks of the Pangong lake and in the Gogra area. Each side currently has around 50,000 to 60,000 troops along the LAC in the sensitive sector.

Deeply shocked: Jaishankar on attack Shinzo Abe



External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar on Friday expressed shock over the attack on former Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe during a political campaign event and prayed for his recovery.

Abe was rushed to a hospital after he was shot at the event in the southern Japanese city of Nara. Japanese media reports said Abe's condition is grave.

"Deeply shocked by the news about former Japanese PM Shinzo Abe. Join so many

of his friends and admirers in India in praying for him and his family," Jaishankar tweeted.

Abe was prime minister of Japan from 2006 to 2007 and then again for a second stint from 2012 to 2020.

India-Japan ties witnessed a major upswing during Abe's second term in the top office. He has been a strong proponent of closer strategic partnership between India and Japan.

Boris Johnson Resigns after String of Resignations

Boris Johnson resigned as leader of Britain's Conservative party, paving the way for the selection of a new prime minister after dozens of ministers quit his scandal-hit government.

"It is clearly the will of the parliamentary Conservative party that there should be a new leader of that party, and therefore a new prime minister," Johnson said outside 10 Downing Street. Johnson, 58, announced that he would step down after a slew of resignations from his top team in protest at his leadership but would stay on as prime minister until a replacement is found.

The timetable for a Tory leadership race will be announced next week, he said, after three tumultuous years in office defined by Brexit, the Covid pandemic and non-stop controversy over his reputation for mendacity.

Several dead in Copenhagen mall shooting, suspect arrested



A gunman opened fire inside a busy shopping mall in the Danish capital on Sunday, killing several people and wounding several others, police said.

A 22-year-old Danish man was arrested after the shooting. Copenhagen police inspector Soren Thomassen told reporters, adding there was no indication that anyone else was involved, though police were still investigating.

He said it was too early to speculate on the motive for the shooting, which happened in the late afternoon at Field's, one of the biggest shopping malls in Scandinavia, located on the outskirts of the Danish capital. We have several dead and several injured, Thomassen said, though he gave no specific casualty count. He said the suspect was an ethnic Dane, a phrase typically used to mean someone is white.

Danish broadcaster TV2 published a grainy photo of the alleged gunman, a man wearing knee-length shorts and a tank top and holding what appeared to be a rifle in his right hand.

Images from the scene showed people running out of the mall, and TV2 posted a photo of a man being put on a stretcher. Witnesses said people were crying and hid in shops. After the shooting, an enormous contingent of heavily-armed police officers patrolled the area, with several fire department vehicles also parked outside the mall. Copenhagen Mayor Sophie H Andersen tweeted: Terrible reports of shooting in Fields. We do not yet know for sure how many were injured or dead, but it is very serious.

Laurits Hermansen told Danish broadcaster DR that he was in a clothing store at the shopping centre with his family when he heard three, four bangs. Really loud bangs. It sounded like the shots were being fired just next to the store.

The shopping centre is on the outskirts of Copenhagen just across from a subway station for a line that connects the city centre with the international airport. A major highway also runs adjacent to the mall.

'India committed to taking care of its armed forces' veterans'

India is committed to taking care of its armed forces' veterans in the same way as they have taken care of the security of the country, India's Ambassador to the US Tarunjit Singh Sandhu has said as he felicitated the ex-servicemen living in America, including those who fought in the Kargil war.

Recognising the services of Indian armed forces' veterans, the Indian Embassy here organised Varishtha Yoddha, an event to honour these ex-servicemen.

More than 140 people, including some distinguished veterans who had fought in various wars and their families, attended the event here on Sunday, a day ahead of the Independence Day of the United States.

"As India marks 75 years of Independence, privileged to host & felicitate Veterans of Indian Armed Forces in the US & families today. Their devotion & dedication shaped India's Defence & Security and is now shaping the India-US partnership," Sandhu tweeted.

Addressing the event, Sandhu said: Friends, you have served and sacrificed for mother India, with the utmost sense of duty and selflessness. You and your family members as a part of the 4 million-strong Indian community are instrumental in strengthening India-US ties across a diversity of sectors, Sandhu said. We remain committed to taking care of our veterans in the same way as they have taken care of the security of our country, he said.

Sandhu said it was a matter of pride, privilege and honour for him to be a part of the special gathering. While no recognition and award can do justice to your contributions, today's event in a small way expresses our respect and gratitude and tells you that we are here for you, he said in his admiration for the veterans.

"There are people in this room, who have fought for India in 1948, 1962, 1965 or 1971, 1985, the Kargil war in 1999 and in numerous other operations," he said.

Today's Varishtha Yoddha event is our humble effort to recognise the sacrifice and service of our veterans and honour them for their patriotism, dedication and willingness to serve and sacrifice all for the nation."

Sandhu said Indian veterans, wherever they go, carry the highest standards of duty, discipline and professionalism for which Indian armed forces are known.

Our veterans living in the USA remain the flag-bearers of the traditions of our armed forces and continue to inspire the Indian community, he said.



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Russia tries to press its offensive into Ukraine's east

Russian forces tried Monday to press their offensive deeper into eastern Ukraine after taking control of a key stronghold.

The Ukrainian military confirmed that its forces had withdrawn from the city of Lysychansk, the last bulwark of Ukrainian resistance in the Luhansk province, one of the two regions that make up the country's eastern industrial heartland of Donbas. The Russians also control about half of Donetsk, the second province of Donbas.

The General Staff of the Ukrainian military said the Russian forces were currently focusing their efforts on pushing toward the line of Siversk, Fedorivka and Bakhmut in the Donetsk region.

The Russian army also has intensified the shelling of key Ukrainian strongholds of Sloviansk and Kramatorsk deeper in the Donetsk region.

On Sunday, six people, including a 9-year-old girl, were killed in the Russian shelling of



Sloviansk and another 19 people were wounded, according to local authorities. Kramatorsk also came under fire on Sunday.

Russian President Vladimir Putin has made capturing the entire Donbas a key goal in his war in Ukraine, now in its fifth month. Moscow-backed separatists in Donbas have battled Ukrainian forces since 2014 when they declared independence from Kyiv after the Russian annexation of Ukraine's Crimea. Russia formally rec-

ognized the self-proclaimed republics days before its Feb. 24 invasion of Ukraine.

Putin's defense minister reported to him Sunday that the Russian army and its separatist allies now hold all of the Luhansk region after taking full control of Lysychansk.

In his nightly video address, Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy acknowledged the withdrawal, but vowed that Ukrainian forces will fight their way back.

If the command of our army withdraws people from certain points of the front where the enemy has the greatest fire superiority, in particular this applies to Lysychansk, it means only one thing: We will return thanks to our tactics, thanks to the increase in the supply of modern weapons, Zelenskyy said.

Since failing to take Kyiv and other areas in Ukraine's north-east early in the war, Russia has focused on Donbas, unleashing fierce shelling and engaging in house-to-house combat that devastated cities in the region.

As Moscow pushed its offensive across Ukraine's east, areas in western Russia came under attack Sunday in a revival of sporadic apparent Ukrainian strikes across the border. The governor of the Belgorod region in Western Russia said fragments of an intercepted Ukrainian missile killed four people Sunday. In the Russian city of Kursk, two Ukrainian drones were shot down, according to the Russian Defense Ministry.

Outages disrupt services at Japan's No. 2 telecoms carrier

Many users of Japan's No. 2 mobile carrier KDDI Corp were still having trouble making calls Monday after a massive outage throughout the weekend that affected nearly 40 million people, disrupting deliveries, weather reports and other services across the country.

The company said data transmission had largely been restored by Monday morning, but service restrictions were still causing many users to have trouble with making phone calls and sending short messages.

The outage started in the early hours of Saturday during a scheduled maintenance work at a facility in western Tokyo.

It disabled text messaging, phone calls and other services for more than 39 million users of KDDI's mobile services. Parcel deliveries also were disrupted.

Over the weekend, the Meteorological Agency was unable to send weather data at hundreds of stations, dozens of cash machines were disabled in central Japan, and Tokyo and other municipalities had trouble reaching COVID-19 patients



subject to health monitoring at home.

The major outage came just ahead of a July 10 parliamentary election and was seen as embarrassment for Prime Minister Fumio Kishida's government, which has been promoting digitization of the world's No. 3 economy.

The government was quick to address public concern over the problem.

It is extremely regrettable that mobile phone service, which is a crucial infrastructure for social and economic activity, has been unusable for such a long time," Deputy Chief Cabinet Secretary Seiji Kihara told reporters on Monday.

Mahindra XUV700 Debuts In Nepal, South Africa, India waiting touches June 2024

After successfully launching its new gen products in India, Mahindra is now planning to expand its range in international markets.

Mahindra has its subsidiaries in countries like Australia and South Africa, where it has been trying to improve its market share. Interestingly, now its South African website showcases both, XUV700 and Scorpio N in the vehicle gallery. The update seems to be in-line with the official announcements made during the official Indian launch of Scorpio N.

Mahindra's officials had confirmed that they intend to launch Scorpio N in India, South Africa and Nepal almost simultaneously. Later, they intend to expand their offerings to other international markets too. Mahindra's Australian website too now has listings of XUV700 and Scorpio N, however there is a clear call out that these models will launch in 2023.

Ahead of new XUV700 and Scorpio N official launch in Nepal and South Africa, Mahindra has unveiled their two new SUVs in the two countries. Launch is expected to take place in the com-



ing months. In its international portfolio, Mahindra's key products include XUV500, XUV300 Scorpio, Scorpio Pick-Up, Bolero Pick-Up and KUV100. All of the above models have received decent response in Mahindra's target countries. Mahindra has been mindful of choosing countries which have a body styling preference which matches to its product range.

Currently, almost all of its international sales happens via export units from India. Even post the introduction of models like Scorpio N and XUV700, we don't think that Mahindra will get sizable sales numbers in international markets which can possibly make a business case to open an all new plant in any of

its international markets.

In India, Mahindra plans to continue to sell the previous Scorpio as Scorpio Classic. The model is manufactured at Mahindra's Nasik based facility. The all new Scorpio N is going to be manufactured at Mahindra's Chakan facility, which also houses production lines for models like XUV700, KUV100, Bolero Neo amongst others. As of now, Mahindra's Indian Team is working towards making the Scorpio N a huge success, as SUV's bookings are about to commence in upcoming weeks. While Mahindra has announced pricing of its MT 2WD variants, pricing details of Scorpio N's AWD and AT trims are still under wraps.

Pakistan Govt in Talks with Terror Group to end violence

A Pakistan parliamentary panel on Tuesday formally endorsed the talks with the banned Tehreek-i-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) to end the violence in the country, linking the final outcome of the dialogue with the approval of the government.

A meeting of the Parliamentary Committee on National Security, chaired by Prime Minister Shahbaz Sharif, was held at the Parliament House. In addition to the provincial chief ministers, the chief minister of Gilgit-Baltistan, the prime minister of Pak-occupied Kashmir (PoK) and the military leadership attended. The meeting was briefed on national security issues and recent talks with the banned TTP, according to a statement by the PM office.

"With the support of the Afghan government and led by civilian and military officials, the Pakistani government is negotiating with the banned TTP within the framework of the Constitution of Pakistan to strengthen regional and internal peace," according to the statement.

The meeting stated that the final results would be imple-



mented after the completion of the procedure within the limits of the Constitution and the approval of the federal government. "The Parliamentary Committee on National Security formally approved the process of negotiations and approved the formation of a 'Parliamentary Oversight Committee' which would be responsible for overseeing the process within constitutional limits," the statement read. The meeting acknowledged the importance of Grand National Reconciliation and declared the meeting was the first step towards it.

The meeting was held after the Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP) had raised objections over talks with the TTP, which was involved in the killing of Benazir Bhutto.

More Sri Lankans arrive in TN After 3 feet of rain, 32,000 in Sydney area may need to flee

Beleaguered Sri Lankans fleeing the crisis-hit island republic and arriving in the country continued on Tuesday as eight persons, including children, belonging to two families, landed here, unable to manage the "unlivable" conditions back home.

Prior to this, 105 persons have arrived in the country through the sea route here, with Sri Lanka being in the grip of a crippling economic crisis that has resulted in exorbitant prices of essential commodities. On Tuesday, local fishermen spotted the eight members stranded at Arichalmunai, after having travelled there by boat from Sri Lanka, officials said, following which they informed the Marine Police. Police rescued them and brought them to Dhanushkodi for further enquiry after which they will



be sent to the Mandapam refugee camp, they said.

The 8 persons belong to Jaffna in Sri Lanka. One of the Lankans who arrived here today, Lavendran, said that his home country was undergoing an "unlivable" phase with issues including unemployment and skyrocketing prices of essential commodities making life difficult. He said the two families coughed up a huge sum to travel by boat from Jaffna to here.

More than 30,000 residents of Sydney and its surrounds have been told to evacuate or prepare to abandon their homes on Monday as Australia's largest city braces for what could be its worst flooding in 18 months.

Parts of the city of 5 million people are facing a fourth flooding emergency in a year and a half after torrential rain since Friday caused dams to overflow and waterways to break their banks.

The latest information we have is that there's a very good chance that the flooding will be worse than any of the other three floods that those areas had in the last 18 months, Emergency Management Minister Murray Watt told Australian Broadcasting Corp.

The current flooding might affect areas that managed to stay dry during the previous floods, Watt added.

New South Wales state Premier Dominic Perrottet said 32,000 people were impacted by evacuation orders and warnings.

You'd probably expect to see that number increase over the course of the week, Perrottet said.

Emergency services had made 116 flood rescues in recent days, 83 of them since 9 p.m. Sunday, he said. Hundreds more requests for help were made by Monday morning.

Australia's Bureau of Meteorology manager Jane Golding said some areas between Newcastle, north of Sydney,



and Wollongong, south of Sydney had received more than a meter (39 inches) of rain in the previous 24 hours. Some has received more than 1.5 meters (59 inches).

The system that has been generating this weather does show signs that it will ease to-

and the Nepean River in Sydney's west.

The water is flowing really quickly, Golding said. It's dangerous out on the rivers and we do have some more rain to fall which means the flash-flood risk is not over yet.

State Emergency Services Commissioner Carlene York said strong winds had toppled trees, damaging rooves and blocking roads. She advised against unnecessary travel.

Theresa Fedeli, mayor of the Camden municipality on the Nepean River southwest of Sydney, said the repeated flooding was taking a toll on members of her community.

It's just devastating. They just keep on saying devastating, not again,' Fedeli said. I just keep on saying ...

We've got to be strong, we will get through this. But you know deep down it's really hitting home hard to a lot of people," she added.

Perrottet said government and communities needed to adapt to major flooding becoming more common across Australia's most populous state.

We're seeing these flood events more regularly, there's no doubt about that, Perrottet said.

"To see what we're seeing right across Sydney, there's no doubt these events are becoming more common. And governments need to adjust and make sure that we respond to the changing environment that we find ourselves in, he added.



Punjab Chief Minister Bhagwant Mann and Gurpreet Kaur during their wedding ceremony in Chandigarh on Thursday. PHOTOS: PRABHJOT GILL

A cricket loving nation should love women's team equally: Taapsee

With a common goal of equal recognition for women in their career, much like her current on-screen avatar as Mithali Raj, actor Taapsee Pannu says she plunged into her hardest role of the former Indian women's cricket team captain in the biopic *Shabaash Mithu*. Regarded as one of the greatest female cricketers ever, the legendary Indian batter redefined the sport, usually referred to as 'the gentleman's game', in the country. Pannu, known for films *Pink*, *Naam Shabana*, *Mulk*, and *Thappad*, said her and Raj's attempt at making their respective professions a level-playing field for women was the binding force behind the upcoming film. In our country there are two religions cricket and films. If you call yourself a cricket loving nation then you should love women's cricket equally, you are not just men's cricket lov-

ing nation. The cricket should matter and not the gender. Same way, the gender of the protagonist shouldn't matter. It should be about how the film is. You do pre-booking of a movie if it is a male protagonist but wait for reviews for a female protagonist. That is where I connected to her, the 34-year-old actor told PTI in an interview. Pannu said she felt "embarrassed" as she was unaware about the former Indian skipper, her journey and achievements, till Raj expressed her displeasure over comparison to their male counterparts in cricket. On the eve of the 2017 ICC Women's World Cup, Raj was asked who her favourite men's cricketer was between India and Pakistan teams. In a sharp retort, she had asked, Do you ask a male cricketer who their favourite female player is? It is a similar scenario in



the film industry, pointed out Pannu, adding that female actors too are often asked these questions. I have been answering this question for over 10 years. 'Who is your favourite male star? Who do you want to be paired opposite?' I hardly see the male stars answering the (same) question. I felt this will be my connecting thread to her character and from there I will build whatever I need to, to be her, the actor added. Directed by Srijit Mukherji and written by Priya Aven, the upcoming film is a coming-of-age story of women's cricket in India as witnessed by the most successful woman cricketer. It will chronicle the highs and lows, setbacks and moments of euphoria of Raj's life.

POTPOURRI

Hungry for medals, Nikhat hopes boxers win 4 gold at CWG

NEW DELHI: Newly-crowned world champion Nikhat Zareen is hungry to win more medals for the country and expects a record haul of four golds from the Indian boxing contingent at the Birmingham Commonwealth Games starting July 28.

Indian pugilists' best-ever CWG show has been at the 2018 edition at Gold Coast where six-time world champion Mary Kom became the first woman boxer from the country to emerge champion, as they returned with a record haul of three gold, three silver and three bronze medals.



At Birmingham, the new boxing sensation from Telangana would make its much-anticipated CWG debut and she hoped for "at least eight medals" from the 12-member Indian boxing team. "I expect at least eight medals, of which I will take four gold from the boxers. Let's see what happens," the 26-year-old, who won the 52kg flyweight gold at the World Championships in Turkey in May, said in a virtual media interaction arranged by the Sports Authority of India. "We're all experienced boxers. We have World Championship medallists and Olympians. I hope every one gets gold! I still have the same hunger to win a medal for the country, I'm still hungry. "It's difficult to predict a medal before the draw is out, as sometimes you're handed a tough draw and get eliminated in the first round." At Birmingham, India will have a boxing contingent of eight men's and four women's participants.

Quentin Tarantino, wife Daniella welcome second child



Filmmaker Quentin Tarantino and his wife, model Daniella, have become parents to a baby girl. The couple, who also share two-year-old son Leo, welcomed their second child on Saturday. "Daniella and Quentin Tarantino are happy to announce that Daniella gave birth to their baby girl on July 2, 2022, a little sister to Leo, their first child," they said in a statement issued to People magazine. Tarantino, 59, and Daniella, 38, had announced in February that they are expecting their second child. The duo started dating after meeting in 2009 when the director was promoting his film "Inglorious Basterds". They got engaged in June 2017 and married in November 2018. Their son Leo was born in February 2020.

James Cameron says he may pass the baton to trustworthy director for final 'Avatar' films

Celebrated filmmaker James Cameron may not be directing the fourth and the fifth installment of his popular sci-fi franchise "Avatar". In an interview with Empire, the director said he is developing other projects and would like to focus on them after the third or the fourth film in the movie series. The filmmaker is currently awaiting the December premiere of second installment "Avatar: The Way Of Water". "The 'Avatar' films themselves are kind of all-consuming. I've got some other things I'm developing as well that are exciting. I think eventually over time -- I don't know if that's after three or after four -- I'll want to pass the baton to a director that I trust to take over, so I can go do some other stuff that I'm also interested in.

Or maybe not. I don't know," Cameron said. The filmmaker said the movie franchise gave him the canvas to talk about subjects which are important to him in real life -- family, sustainability and climate. Everything I need to say about family, about sustainability, about climate, about the natural world, the themes that are important to me in real life and in my cinematic life, I can say on this canvas. "Avatar: The Way Of Water" is set over a decade after the events of the first film, which released in 2009. It focuses on the Sully family (Jake, Neytiri, and their kids), the trouble that follows them, the lengths they go to keep each other safe, the battles they fight to stay alive, and the tragedies they endure.

Noted filmmaker Tarun Majumdar dies



Director Tarun Majumdar, who is known for making movies based on compelling tales highlighting the life of middle-class families, died in a Kolkata hospital on Monday, family sources said. He was 92. Majumdar has been undergoing treatment at the state-run SSKM hospital with old age ailments for the past few days. Notable among his works are *Balika Badhu* (1976), *Kuheli* (1971), *Shriman Prithviraj* (1972) and *Dadar Kirti* (1980).

Drugs case: Bombay HC grants bail to ex-flatmate of late actor Sushant Singh Rajput

The Bombay High Court on Monday granted bail to Siddharth Pithani, the former flatmate of actor Sushant Singh Rajput, arrested in a drugs case related to the actor's death. Rajput's former girlfriend Rhea Chakraborty, who is already out on bail, is also an accused in the case. A single bench of Justice Bharati Dangle granted bail to



Pithani on a bond of Rs 50,000. Pithani was arrested by the Narcotics Control Bureau (NCB)

in May 2021 from Hyderabad. He is currently in judicial custody. He had been booked under section 27 (A) (financing illicit traffic and harboring offenders) of the Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances (NDPS) Act, among other charges. Pithani had sought bail, claiming he was framed in a false case. He had claimed in his plea that

he was never found in possession of any drugs, and nothing which could suggest he was involved in drug trafficking was recovered from him. Rajput allegedly committed suicide in his Mumbai residence in June 2020. Later, the NCB began a probe, based on some WhatsApp chats, into an alleged drug supply racket in the film industry.

Blenders Pride Fashion Nights arrives in Karnal

Blenders Pride Fashion Nights, a unique travelling experiential property, arrived in the Rice Bowl of India-Karnal- celebrating its boldspirit through fashion and style. A spirit that echoes with Pride and inspires the creators of today to become icons of tomorrow. 'Made of Bold Vibes' edition for Blenders Pride Fashion Nights, brought together a spectacular evening that blended fashion, culture and art of Karnal.



Bringing alive the city's electrifying vibes and multi-layered pursuits through a curated evening at the majestic Noor Mahal, Karnal was designer Rajdeep Ranawat. Heshow-cased his dazzling statement of

glamour and style for the fashion nomad of today through intricately crafted ensembles. The show was elevated with uplifting beats by none other than Punjabi heartthrob and singer-actor Jassie Gill along with Punjabi singer-songwriter-actor Babbar Rai- who together left the audience spellbound through a power-packed performance. The show drew to a finale with Jassie Gill as showstopper for the evening, who captivated the audience in a stunning ensemble by the designer.

Actor Sreejith Ravi held in POCSO case



Popular Malayalam actor Sreejith Ravi was arrested in a POCSO case for allegedly flashing at two children here, police said. The police registered a case based on the complaint of their parents that an unidentified person, who came in a black colour car, had behaved indecently towards the two minors in a nearby park on July 4. During the investigation, police examined CCTV visuals of the area and managed to find the car and finally came to know that it was owned by Ravi. "The complainant children identified the accused. The FIR was registered and he was taken to court," a police officer said here. Various sections of the POCSO Act including Section 11 (1) and 12 have been slapped against the 46-year old actor.

French actor Judith Chemla details domestic abuse ordeal, shares photos from past incident



French actor Judith Chemla has opened up about the domestic abuse she suffered at the hands of a former partner. The 34-year-old actor took to Instagram late Sunday night and posted photos of her swollen face from a domestic abuse incident that happened last year.

"A year ago my face was injured, blue, purple under my eye, I saw myself deformed. A year ago I looked at my face in the mirror and I knew that I could no longer hide my face. My daughter's father. Those who are able to do that must be out of harm's way. But how? I am not ashamed of this photo," Chemla wrote. According to Deadline, film director Yohan Manca, with whom Chemla was previously in a relationship and has a daughter with him, was given an eight-month suspended prison sentence for domestic violence against the actor. In her post, Chemla revealed that she has filed more than one complaint against her abuser. "I have so much evidence that he continues to try and harm me What must it take for him to leave me alone? Really go to jail? He will still play the victim with my daughter and she will suffer from not seeing her father. That I keep this to myself?"



Punjab Chief Minister Bhagwant Mann paying obeisance at Ram Tirath Temple during a function organised by Bhagwan Valmiki Dhunna Sahib Trust to mark the birth anniversaries of Luv-Kush and Guru Gyannath, at Bhagwan Valmiki Tirath, about 15 kms from Amritsar on Tuesday. PHOTOS-PRABHJOT GILL

Indian Budo Kai Do team takes part in WBKF Intl Jiu Jitsu Kyuitsu & Archery Seminar in UK



Indian Budo Kai Do teams are participating in the ongoing WBKF International Jiu Jitsu & Kyuitsu and Archery Seminar, which is being held at ARK John Keats Academy, Bell Lane, Enfield London UK, from July 4 to 14, 2022. London Coach Hanshi Garry Maas, UK Ambassador, World Budo and Kobudo Federation is guiding the participants. The Indian Budo Kai Do players including Ekamveer Singh, Karanveer Singh, Rajesh Kumar,

Suman Lata Sharma, Manpreet Singh, Navpreet Singh, Gurbinder kaur, Lovepreet Singh, Paramdeep Singh, Simranjit Singh, Harmanjeet Singh and Jaskaran Singh are taking part in the seminar under the leadership of Coach R P Sharma, and Team Captain Harpreet Kaur. Sr. Sharanjeet Singh (President of Budo Kai Do Mixed Martial Arts Federation of India) and Mr. Ankur Gupta vice Chairman, Dr Yog Raj Sharma Chairman, National Tournament Board and Bollywood star Rana Jung Bahadur congratulated the players.

Pant surges to career-best number five, Kohli drops out of top-10 in ICC Test ranking

India's star wicketkeeper-batter Rishabh Pant blazed his way into a career-best fifth position in the latest ICC Test rankings announced on Wednesday, even as the out-of-form Virat Kohli dropped out of top-10 for the first time in six years. Pant's meteoric rise in the rankings comes after his heroics in the recently-held COVID-delayed fifth Test between India and England in which he scored 146 and 57 across two innings. It is worth mentioning that Pant scored two tons and three half centuries in his last six Test innings. However, former India skipper Kohli dropped four places to 13th in the batting rankings, thanks to a prolonged lean run. Interestingly, it is for the first time



in six years that Kohli has found himself out of top 10 in the Test rankings. Current Indian captain Rohit Sharma, who missed the Edgbaston Test after testing positive for COVID-19, also dropped one place in the rankings. England batter Joe Root, who reigned supreme at Edgbaston with a sublime 142 in England's second innings, consolidated his position at the top of the rankings with 923 points, with Australians Marnus Labuschagne and Steve Smith taking the second and third positions respectively.

I'm everything that is not 'commercial': Nagesh Kukunoor

Director Nagesh Kukunoor says it doesn't bother him that his wide range of filmography has often been bracketed as "art house" or "offbeat" cinema as he is comfortable about following his instincts. Kukunoor made his directorial debut in 1998 with "Hyderabad Blues" and has since helmed critically-acclaimed films such as "Rockford", "3 Deewarein", "Dor", "Iqbal" and "Dhanak".

In the age of streaming services, movies that used to be attached to movies falling outside the mainstream domain have become "irrelevant", he said. "I have been called so many things. There's parallel cinema, offbeat cinema. At one point of time, there was the multiplex cinema, also the independent cinema and then lastly, art-house cinema. But now these labels don't really matter, especially with the (rise



of) streaming platforms. I'm everything that is not 'commercial

or mainstream," Kukunoor told in a virtual interview. The 55-year-old filmmaker said earlier directors would use such terms to showcase their movies to exhibitors in order to get a decent theatrical release. "You had to give some kind of moniker to your films because you had to go to a distributor to get it to the theatres. And people would look at my film and say this movie does not have any

songs, it is art cinema... "These things have never actively bothered me. The kind of films I make, I know it can't explode and find an audience that'll make Rs 200 crore. So, I'm very comfortable playing in my corner," Kukunoor added. When he started working on his first movie "Hyderabad Blues", the filmmaker said he had no idea about the craft of filmmaking.

A complete **KNOWLEDGE CAPSULE**

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