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'1ST FINANCE AND CENTRAL BANK DEPUTIES (FCBD)' UNDER #G20 INDIA MEETING UNDERWAY IN BENGALURU

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BOLLYWOOD SUPERSTAR RAJINIKANTH OFFERS PRAYERS AT TIRUMALA TEMPLE

Delhi High Court reserves order on plea opposing permission to Sikhs to carry kirpans on flights

No separate law yet to regulate digital media, says IT Ministry

NEW DELHI: The Delhi High Court on Thursday reserved its order on a plea opposing the permission given to Sikhs to carry kirpans while travelling on civilian flights in India.

The plea, filed in a form of public interest litigation (PIL) by lawyer Harsh Vibhore Singh, challenges the Centre's notification issued on March 4 allowing Sikh passengers to carry kirpans having blade length of no more than six inches and total length of no more than nine inches while travelling anywhere in India.

A division bench of Chief Justice Satish Chandra Sharma and Justice Subramonium Prasad said: "Arguments heard. Order reserved. We will pass an appropriate order."



"How can we interfere with such a policy decision? We can't interfere. It is a policy decision of the government of India," it said.

The petitioner claimed that a committee of stakeholders should be constituted to apply its mind to the issue.

At this, the court said: "Your mind might not be the government's mind. Therefore when the government has applied its mind and has come with a policy, we ought not to interfere unless it is so arbitrary."

The court also refused to entertain submissions by certain

MAIN POINT

YOUR MIND MIGHT NOT BE THE GOVERNMENT'S MIND. THEREFORE WHEN THE GOVERNMENT HAS APPLIED ITS MIND AND HAS COME WITH A POLICY, WE OUGHT NOT TO INTERFERE UNLESS IT IS SO ARBITRARY

parties as their applications were not on record.

The plaintiff said that he is not questioning the rights of Sikhs but only wants the stakeholders to examine the issue.

He said: "I admit that Article 25 allows the carriage of a kirpan. But when you are fly-

ing, the regulator must apply its mind. I want a constitution of a committee of stakeholders to examine the issue. If the committee feels that the notification is good, so be it. Not a problem."

Defending his argument, he added that the Bureau of Civil Aviation Security has not formulated the policy but was only following what the government has said.

"Safety measures, including stationing of marshals, have been put in place by the authorities," advocate Anjana Gosain said, representing the respondents.

On August 18, the court had refused to pass an interim order staying the operation of the decision allowing Sikhs to carry kirpans having a blade length of up to six inches on flights.

NEW DELHI: There is no proposal yet to enact a separate law to regulate the digital media, and the matter is currently under consideration, said the Ministry of Electronics and IT on Friday.

To help achieve the aim of making Internet Open, Safe and Trusted and Accountable and to regulate the intermediaries, including social media intermediaries, and in exercise of powers conferred by the Information Technology Act, 2000, the Central Government has made the Information Technology (Intermediary Guidelines and Digital Media Ethics Code) Rules, 2021, said the Ministry in a written reply to Rajya Sabha on Friday.

These rules cast specific obligation on intermediaries to observe diligence and provide that if they fail to observe such diligence, they



shall no longer be exempt from their liability under law for third-party information or data or communication link hosted by them, it said.

Such diligence includes informing the said rules to their users to make reasonable efforts to cause the users not to host, display, upload, modify, publish, transmit, store, up-

date or share, among others, information, including information published by digital media on the intermediary platform or such information shared on it by other users, which threatens the unity, integrity, defence, security or sovereignty of India or public order, or prevents investigation, or violates any law.

It also includes to not host, store or publish any information, including information published by digital media on the intermediary platform or such information shared on it by other users, which is unlawful, prohibited by law in relation to India's sovereignty and integrity, security of the State, public order, contempt of court etc., upon receiving actual knowledge in the form of an order by a court or being notified by the government under the provisions of the IT Act.

Jammu and Kashmir introducing unique IDs for each family



FW DESK

The Jammu and Kashmir administration will allot the families in the union territory a unique alpha-numeric code. According to the officials quoted by the PTI, the database called JK Family ID will be used to determine eligibility of beneficiaries of various social welfare schemes.

"Once the data in the JK Family ID database is authenticated and verified, a beneficiary will not be required to submit any more document to avail a service," Prerna Puri, the commissioner secretary of the Information Technology Department of Jammu and Kashmir, told PTI.

The move is part of the "Digital J&K Vision Document" unveiled by Lieutenant Governor Manoj Sinha. The Bharatiya Janata Party has hailed the move but the other parties have raised privacy concerns. "Creating a unique family ID" for J&K residents is emblematic of the widening trust deficit esp post 2019. Kashmiris are viewed with deep suspicion & this is another surveillance tactic to tighten the iron grip on their lives," PDP president Mehbooba Mufti said.

Allahabad High Court stays proceedings in criminal case against Arvind Kejriwal



LUCKNOW: The Lucknow bench of Allahabad High Court has stayed the further proceedings in a criminal case filed against Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal in Sultanpur district court.

Justice D.K. Singh passed the order on a petition moved by Kejriwal and fixed January 13 as the next date of hearing in the case.

The Delhi Chief Minister said in his plea that the Supreme Court (SC) had already exempted his personal appearance in the case but the trial court at Sultanpur was proceeding further in the case.

As the SC allowed his plea, the trial court proceedings would be futile and, as such, until the top court proceedings were concluded, there was no logic to proceed



with trial in the case, the plea added.

During the Lok Sabha elections in 2014, an FIR was lodged in Sultanpur against Kejriwal, Kumar Vishwas and others for blocking roads, preventing government servants from doing their duty and other offences.

After the charge-sheet was filed, the Sultanpur court had summoned all the accused for trial.

By 2024, Indian Roads to match US Standards: Nitin Gadkari

Union Road Transport and Highway Minister Nitin Gadkari on Friday said that logistics cost, which is 16 per cent of GDP presently, will fall to single digits, by 2024.

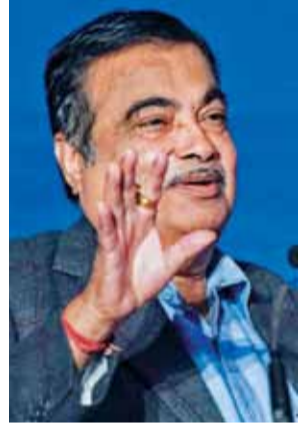
"It is going to help us get more exports", the Minister said, adding that now is the time to increase our business and presence in the international market.

The Minister further stated that before 2024 ends, India's road infrastructure would be equal to the US standards. The Minister was addressing the annual convention and 95th AGM of FICCI.

Gadkari said that India

is the fastest growing major economy in the world and is all set to achieve \$5 trillion GDP by 2024-25. He said India is on the path to building an inclusive Bharat by following the vision of the Prime Minister Narendra Modi by boosting investment, economic growth, and employment creation to achieve sustainable development. However, "we need to have cooperation, coordination and communication between all stakeholders", he said.

In addition, Gadkari noted the research in battery chemistry and said, "We should be the leaders in the sector". He added that the government



aims to double the automobile sector to Rs 15 lakh crore. "This will create new jobs and

make India one of the biggest automobile manufacturers in the world." Moreover, underscoring the importance of sustainability in the construction sector, he noted, "We are trying to minimise the use of cement and steel in construction work by adopting substitutes like fly ash, oil slag, waste plastics, demolition waste."

Minister Gadkari invited FICCI to prepare a comprehensive growth plan for the next fifty years for all sectors.

On the occasion, Sanjiv Mehta, President, FICCI, noted that the "all-inclusive, all-pervasive, and all-round development initiatives" of

the government are transforming India, with each step bringing the nation closer to Aatmanirbhar Bharat. He added that the National Logistics Policy would be instrumental in creating an integrated pathway towards economic development. Moreover, he said, "the increased spending on infrastructure development is leading to a multiplier effect in rejuvenating the aggregate demand in the economy."

"Infrastructure construction alone has the potential to contribute 25 per cent of incremental growth in non-farm jobs by 2030", he added.

Raghuram Rajan Ex-RBI Governor joins Rahul's Bharat Jodo Yatra in Rajasthan

JAIPUR: Former RBI Governor Raghuram Rajan on Wednesday joined Rahul Gandhi's Bharat Jodo Yatra in Rajasthan.

Rahul Gandhi had a more than half-an-hour discussion with Rajan during the yatra, which resumed this morning from Bhadoti of Sawai Madhopur.

Rajan is known for keeping a frank opinion on economic issues. Both put forth their views on the economic issues for a documentary.

Raghuram Rajan was the Governor of the Reserve Bank of India during the second term of the UPA and the initial years of the Modi government.

Officials confirmed that Rahul Gandhi's Bharat Jodo Yatra will have a week-long



break after crossing the Rajasthan-Haryana border. There will be a break in travel from December 24 to January 2.

Congress General Secretary Jairam Ramesh said that on

December 16, on the completion of 100 days of the yatra, Rahul Gandhi will go to Jaipur. All the passengers will participate in Sunidhi Chauhan's music event there.

Congress wants discussion on clashes with China in RS, LS

NEW DELHI: The Congress on Tuesday moved notices in both Houses of Parliament on clashes with Chinese PLA at Arunachal border.

Party MP Manish Tewari has given an adjournment notice in the Lok Sabha while Syed Naeer Hussain has given notice for a short duration discussion in the Rajya Sabha.

Tewari in the notice said, "I wish to draw the attention of the Government to the grave border situation with China emerging from the Tangang sector in Arunachal Pradesh. These clashes took place at a nullah along the LAC near a point called the Yangtze in Eastern Tangang."

"At least 6 of our soldiers have been reportedly injured and taken to Guwahati for treatment. There are also concerns about major gaps in military deployment in certain border

areas of Arunachal Pradesh. These clashes are in addition to what has been happening in Eastern Ladakh where, despite multiple rounds of talks, 16 in total till 30 November 2022, China has vehemently refused to vacate areas it reportedly occupied after the major clash on May 5, 2020. The crises in areas such as Depsang and Demchok remain unresolved. Locals that had hitherto travelled to the Chardung La-Nilung Nalla Junction have been denied access by the Chinese."



Drug smuggled from Pak seized



JAGMOHAN SINGH Amritsar

Border security Force has seized heroin at Indo-Pak border which was smuggled to India from Pakistan side.

In a statement issued here today, BSF official stated that on 14th Dec at about 2125 hrs, Border Security Force troops deployed at border heard buzzing sound of drone entering from Pakistan into Indian Territory in the area falling near Village - Daoke in District - Amritsar. As per drill, the troops tried to intercept the drone by fire. The whole area was cordoned and Police and concerned sister agencies were informed.

Further, during search BSF troops recovered 01 Packet of contraband suspected to be heroin (Gross wt - 4.490 kg) wrapped with yellow tape near Village - Daoke. Further detail search of the area is in progress.

Defeat forces bent on breaking Sikh institutions: Sukhbir Badal

SAYS UNFORTUNATE CENTRE WANTED TO INSTALL ITS RUBBER STAMPS AS HEADS OF SIKH INSTITUTIONS

JAGMOHAN SINGH Amritsar

Shiromani Akali Dal (Badal) president Sukhbir Singh Badal today appealed to the Sikh community to defeat forces bent on breaking Sikh institutions and wresting control over them by installing their puppets at top positions.

Talking to media after participating in the 102nd anniversary of the SAD during the course of which he participated in the 'Ardas' (prayer) following completion of Akhand Path at Gurdwara Shaheed Baba Gurbaksh Singh ji in the Sri Akal Takth Sahib complex, the SAD (Badal) president said it was unfortunate that the centre wanted to install its rubber stamps as heads of Sikh institutions. He asserted that no one should interfere in the internal matters of the community. "We have a right to religious freedom. It should

be respected".

He stated that the SAD had always trodden the path shown by the Guru Sahiban and would continue to work on the maxim of 'sarbat da bhala'. "We know there can be progress in Punjab only if there is respect for all religions and communities and we are committed to taking everyone together to achieve this".

Answering a query, he said the law and order situation had collapsed completely and that the SAD was holding a meeting of its core committee tomorrow to decide on the next course of action to force the AAP government to wrest control of the State from the hands of gangsters. He detailed how he had visited many families affected by the recent spate of extortions and killings and been told that the police force was completely ineffective. "Investment has already stopped coming into Punjab.



Even ordinary businessmen are shifting base to Haryana. Extortion calls have become a norm and people are too afraid to go to the police. Such a state of affairs has never been witnessed in Punjab".

In reply to another question, he said it was shameful that Transport minister Laljit Singh Bhullar had referred to all transporters as mafia. He said Punjabis had excelled in the transport sector in the country and even abroad. "They

have done so by the dint of their hard work". He said it was condemnable that they were being tagged as 'mafia', a word associated with criminals. Speaking about the utterances of the Transport minister against the transport companies of the Badal family, he said "our family has been working in the transport sector since independence. Never have we been accused of any illegal activity. Attempts have been made by the erstwhile Transport minis-

ter Raja Warring and the present government also to stop our buses from plying but we have got relief from the High court. Now also we will serve a legal notice to the Transport minister for implying we are indulging in illegal activity and follow all legal remedies to ensure justice it done to us.

The SAD president also castigated chief minister Bhagwant Mann for failing to protect the rights of Punjab. He said first the chief minister failed to protect Punjab's rights vis a vis management of BBMB and later on the issue of allocation of land to Haryana in Chandigarh to construct a separate Vidhan Sabha. "Now the AAP government has also failed Punjab officers posted in Chandigarh who are being marginalized to insignificant posts and even being relieved from duty as in the case of Punjab cadre officer Kuldeep Chahal who was removed as SSP, Chandigarh.

'Made in Pakistan' toffees with beef gelatine seized in Rajasthan

JAIPUR: Rajasthan government officials have seized 'Made in Pakistan' toffees made with beef gelatine which were being sold in a shop in Udaipur.

In the wake of complaints made by several people, a team under the Food Inspector checked a shop named Chocolate and Birthday Decoration Items located in the city's Delhi Gate Square area.

Three big packets were found in the shop. While two closed packets contained 24 'Chili-Mili' toffees each, an open packet had 23 of the candies. The team then sent samples of the toffees to a lab for examination on Wednesday evening. Results of the test are awaited.

It is being said that from this shop, goods are also supplied to other stores in the city.

Priced at Rs 20, the toffees come in a colourful pouch which has 'Made in Pakistan'



written on it. The address on the pouch is Baii Ismail Industry Limited C-230, HITE Hub, Balochistan, Pakistan, with additional information in Urdu language. Along with this, there is also a red mark on the toffee, which is used for non-vegetarian items.

Food Inspector Ashok Kumar Gupta said that the toffees were seized on the basis of a complaint, as beef gelatin is mentioned as an ingredient. Food safety lab in-charge Dr Ravi Sethi said that an investigation will be made based on label.

Solar power won't offer solutions to all energy needs

At the core of India's energy transformation is its bet on solar power. Based on a commitment to address the global climate crisis, India has promised to source nearly half its energy from non-fossil fuel sources by 2030 and, in the shorter term, source of at least 60% of its renewable energy from solar power. However, a disclosure in Parliament by the Minister for Power, New and Renewable Energy suggests that India faces a significant headwind in this quest. A key central policy to source solar power is facilitating the establishment of large solar parks; small solar power projects usually translate to higher per-unit production costs. And so, in 2014, the Centre announced the 'Solar Parks and Ultra-Mega Solar Power Projects' policy to facilitate the creation of large parks. The initial plan was to set up 25 parks capable of generating at least 20,000 MW by 2019. In 2017, the Government scaled this to 61 parks with a target of 40,000 MW. It emerges, however, as of 2022, that only a fourth of the capacity has been achieved as projects worth 10,000 MW have been commissioned. Four projects have been cancelled due to tardy progress. The roadblocks, in the Centre's estimate, have been challenges in acquiring land with a clear title, setting up the infrastructure necessary to transmit power produced at these parks to the grid and, in an unusual disclosure, "environmental issues" in Rajasthan and Gujarat, where projects have been halted because their transmission lines encroach upon the habitat of the critically endangered Great Indian Bustard. Notwithstanding its claims on international podium that it is on track to meet renewable energy targets, it is no secret that India is lagging behind. Also, solar power may be a valuable tool in India's energy transformation story, but it cannot be the panacea for all requirements.

LETTERBOX

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PULAPRE BALAKRISHNAN EXPLAINS HOW THE CENSUS OF INDIA HELPS IN FLAGGING THE ROADBLOCKS LYING AHEAD

Census: A mirror of past & present

A recent study of India's experience under colonial rule by Dylan Sullivan and Jason Hickel concludes that data from the Census of India reveal that between 1880 and 1920 approximately 100 million Indians died due to British policy in India. Their method is to calculate the excess mortality, being the difference between the actual deaths and the deaths that may be expected on the basis of some benchmark. While they used Census data for actual deaths, the duo arrived at the deaths to be expected using two alternative benchmarks - the mortality rate for India in 1880 and that for England in the 16th and 17th centuries.

The assumption implicit in the choice of the latter as a benchmark is that before colonial rule, the mortality rate of India is unlikely to have been very different from that of contemporary England. The resulting estimates for excess deaths during 1880-1920 are 50 million in the first case and 160 million in the second one, respectively. The authors settle for the midway figure of approximately 100 million for the deaths caused in India due to colonial policy. For perspective, they point out that this figure is greater than the death from famine in "the Soviet Union, Maoist China, North Korea, Pol Pot's Cambodia, and Mengistu's Ethiopia". In their view, this provides a direct assessment of the consequences of the Raj for India.

Attempts to quantify the impact of colonial rule in India have mostly relied on the change in national income. But reliable income data for the nineteenth century are almost non-existent. Population figures, though, are available from the time of the first Census of India in 1871. The age-wise population distribution in the census has been used to estimate the mortality rate, which Sullivan and Hickel utilise to draw conclusions about the evolution of economic conditions in colonial India. Their figure for excess deaths is of course only as good as the benchmarks chosen, and the mortality rate itself is the result of estimation and not enumeration, for the registration of births and deaths became established practice in India only much later on.

Subject to these caveats, the Sullivan-Hickel study does draw attention to something not so widely recognised. The mor-



tality rate in British India is seen to rise steadily after 1881, recording an increase of close to 20% by 1921. As it is unusual for the mortality rate of a country to rise continuously due to natural causes, this suggests that the living conditions worsened during this period. The mortality rate dipped in 1931, which was the last census conducted in British India, but the last famine recorded in the country was yet to come. It took place in Bengal in 1943, in the last five years of the close to two centuries of British colonial rule.

Recurring famines

British arguments for the empire, including "English forms of land tenure, the English language, banking, the common law, Protestantism, team sports, the limited state, representative assemblies, and the idea of liberty", have been advanced by the Harvard historian Niall Ferguson. But in this statement, there is no mention of the famines which started almost at the onset of rule by the East India Company in Bengal, the de-industrialisation of India in the nineteenth century, the drain of wealth, or the worsening food security as India's peasants were forced to grow commercial crops for export so that Britain

could balance its trade. Indian economic historians have recorded and astutely analysed these developments. Yet, by drawing our attention to a sustained rise in the death rate at the height of the Raj, the Sullivan-Hickel study vindicates Dadabhai Naoroji's claim of the immiseration of India under British rule.

The belief that British policy in India caused repeated famines is bolstered by the fact that there has not been a single famine since 1947. This is despite a population explosion following a sharp fall in death rates. The decline in the mortality rate surely signals improved living conditions. The Census shows that in the 1950s, life expectancy at birth of Indians increased by more than it did in the previous seventy years.

A double-edged sword

But the Census, from which we know all this, can be a double-edged sword in the hands of nationalists. The population numbers recorded after 1947 point to the extent to which the lives of Indians improved since the end of colonial rule in dimensions other than mere income. However, the mirror it holds up is not always flattering to us. It points to worsening gender inequality in India. A simple

indicator of this would be the ratio of females to males in the population. It is believed that in the absence of factors that lower the life chances of women, including foeticide, this ratio would tend to one. The Census of India shows that we have not attained that level in our recorded history, except in pockets within the country.

While this is disturbing in itself what is more so is that this ratio has steadily declined after 1947. After declining for four decades from 1951 it started inching up in 1991. But in 2011, it was yet lower than what it was in 1951. So, even though life expectancy increased soon after Independence, in the early years at least it increased faster for men than it did for women. So, though India became free of foreign rule, some Indians grew more free than others. As India chants Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam at the G-20, implying that the nations of the world are a family, it behooves us to ensure that all the persons in our own family enjoy the same freedoms.

Pulapre Balakrishnan is Professor of Economics, Ashoka University and Senior Fellow, Indian Institute of Management, Kozhikode. Views are personal



INSECTS AND MOTHS USED TO BE THE BASIC FOOD OF MOST BIRDS. OBVIOUSLY, THE NUMBER OF BIRDS THAT SURVIVE BY FEEDING ON INSECTS HAS ALSO DECREASED. THIS HAS HAPPENED DUE TO THE EXCESSIVE USE OF PESTICIDES IN AGRICULTURE FIELDS.

75 per cent of insect species wiped out

NARVIJAY YADAV

Have you ever noticed that there are very few species of birds seen now around us? The number of avian species that we used to witness three-four decades ago has decreased to an alarming level. Many species of birds have disappeared from the urban surroundings completely. One of the major reasons behind this change is the declining number of insects and moths, as a heavy amount of chemical fertilizers and insecticides are used in farming. This trend is seen as a global phenomenon. It is estimated that 75 per cent of insect species have been wiped out from the agriculture fields. These insects and moths used to be the basic food of most birds. Obviously, the number of birds that survive by feeding on insects has also decreased. This has happened due to the excessive use of pesticides in agriculture fields. This practice not only killed the pests but also deteriorated the quality of agricultural soil.

Sadhguru Jaggi, the founder of the Isha Foundation, traveled to many countries to create awareness about the deteriorating condition of the soil early this year. His 'save soil' movement has gained wide ac-



ceptance globally. He says that due to overuse and exploitation of agricultural land soil has been losing its quality. The greedy tendency of humans has played a big role in spoiling the state of the environment. In the name of development, more than 1.3 million square miles of forest were cut in the last 25 years. The World Bank estimates that humans have destroyed 10 million square miles of forest since the

beginning of the 20th century, which has also destroyed biodiversity and is the reason behind the increase in the temperature on Earth. During the pandemic period (2020-21), nature in many ways attracted the attention of humans to the point that if the earth is harmed, then nature has to balance in its own way.

From individuals to companies, governments, and nations, efforts have to be made

at every level to save the environment. For this, the Sustainable Development Goals have been issued by the United Nations. Information about this has been given in the latest report of Hurun India. According to the report, 29 of India's top 50 companies that have taken measures in this direction include ITC, Infosys, Cipla, Adani Port, Mahindra & Mahindra, UltraTech Cement, Hindustan Zinc and Tech Mahindra. Inspired by this list, other companies can step up their efforts. Many companies are constantly turning to such energy sources, which cause the least harm to the environment. For this, water recycling plants and solar energy plants are being set up. Adani group has planned to set up a huge air turbine in Gujarat, higher than the statue of Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel. The turbine is believed to generate electricity enough to light up a few hundred villages in the state. By taking the green steps, not only will the environment be safe, but the cost of companies will also be reduced....-The writer is a senior journalist and columnist., views are personal

Narvijay Yadav is a senior journalist and columnist. Views are personal

BOOKS: REVIEW

New book tries to explore friendship, love, grief

Author Nilanjana S Roy's new offering "Black River" is a fast-paced police procedural which explores themes of friendship, love and grief.

In the village of Teetarapur, a few hours from Delhi, Chand's peaceful life is shattered as he is forced into a dangerous quest for justice. The body of his eight-year-old daughter Munia was found hanging from a tree.

Chand was the world to Munia. She used to talk only to her father - telling him everything, the conversations she overhears, stories she has made up.

Quiet with strangers and with family, Munia was an explorer at heart, fond of illicit excursions, absorbed in the games she invented, and played with birds and insects.

Chand was left shell-shocked

when he saw his daughter "with a rope around her neck, her feet dangling far above the earth, hanging from the jamun's thickest branch".

He tries to call her but his mouth is dry from shock and from the heat. He forms the syllables of his daughter's name and whispers it into the heavy air.

Kneeling on the ground, his white salwar streaked with dust and mud, he holds on to Munia's limp feet, crying like a child, his breath rasping and hard.

"The girl's eyes are closed, her lashes resting lightly on her cheeks, purple stains on her curled fingers. She could be holding her breath, except for the tilt of her neck, the coil of rope, the swing dangling at a crazy angle, a heavy wooden counterweight. She will open her eyes, her father thinks, she will smile at me and

'The older residents say proudly that their village is not known to have inspired a line in a film song or even a 'mithai', has never produced so much as a celebrity or a famous politician. They cherish its anonymity, though the younger generation would have preferred a more rousing history'

put out her arms to be helped down, and then I will carry my Munia inside one more time," the book says.

At the police station house whose jurisdiction extends to Teetarapur and the neighbouring villages, sub-inspector Ombir



Black River, By Nilanjana Roy, Context, 330 pages, Rs799

Singh, who has known Munia since she was born, wrestles with his conscience and the vagaries of his personal life as the increasingly murky case unfolds under the watchful eyes of the 'Delhi boy', SSP Pilania.

Meanwhile, in the rough by-lanes of Bright Dairy Colony, Chand's old companions Rabia and Badshah Miyan fight for their right to home and country as the politics of religion threaten to overwhelm their lives.

According to Roy, there is nothing Teetarapur is famous for.

"The older residents say proudly that their village is not known to have inspired a line in a film song or even a 'mithai', has never

produced so much as a celebrity or a famous politician. They cherish its anonymity, though the younger generation would have preferred a more rousing history," she writes in the book, published by Context, an imprint of Westland Books.

Nilanjana S. Roy is a novelist and a columnist on books and the reading life for the Financial Times.

Her first two novels, The Wildings and The Hundred Names of Darkness, are award-winning works of fantasy for young adults.

Black River grew out of her years of reporting on gender from New Delhi and the surrounding states for the New York Times, and from four years of exploring the capital and the Yamuna river on long walks.

She has edited several anthologies on subjects ranging from the freedom movement to Indian food. She has lived in New Delhi, Kolkata and Goa.

Black River is her first novel for adults. She is working on her next, which explores power and greed in Delhi.

'1st Finance and Central Bank Deputies (FCBD)' under #G20 India meeting underway in Bengaluru

THE G20 FINANCE TRACK, LED BY FINANCE MINISTERS AND CENTRAL BANK GOVERNORS OF THE MEMBER NATIONS, FOCUSES ON ECONOMIC AND FINANCIAL ISSUES

ARUN KUMAR RAO
Bengaluru



"1st Meeting of G20 Finance Track under #G20 India. The three-day meeting which marks the start of discussions on Finance Track agenda under the Indian G20 Presidency began in Bengaluru jointly hosted by the Union Minister of Finance and the Reserve Bank of India (RBI). The first G20 Finance and Central Bank Deputies (FCBD) meeting with an aim of forging a common path on global priorities through the theme

of "The World is one Family". The G20 FCBD meeting that began is co-chaired by Ajay Seth, Secretary, Department of Economic Affairs and Dr Michael D Patra, Deputy Governor of RBI. The G20 Finance Track, led by Finance Ministers and Central Bank Governors of the member nations, focuses on economic and financial issues. Their coun-

terparts from G20 member countries, and from several other countries and international organisations invited by India, are participating in the meeting. According to officials statement Discussions will focus on the agenda for the Finance Track under the Indian G20 Presidency, including reorienting international financial

institutions to meet the shared global challenges of the 21st century; financing cities of tomorrow; managing global debt vulnerabilities; advancing financial inclusion and productivity gains; financing for climate action and SDGs a globally coordinated approach to unbaked crypto assets; and advancing the international taxation agenda. Meanwhile, the First Finance Ministers and Central Bank Governors Meeting will be held from February 23-25, 2023 in Bengaluru.

Official release said, The G20 Finance Track discusses key issues of relevance for the global economy, encompassing the global economic outlook, the international financial architecture, infrastructure development and financing, sustainable finance, global health, international taxation and financial sector issues, including financial inclusion.

Nov retail inflation rate may be down, battle continues

NEW DELHI: With core inflation continuing to be high, credit rating agencies like Acuite Ratings & Research and CARE Ratings do not expect any significant downturn in the retail inflation for the next few months.

"It is a pleasant surprise to see the headline CPI inflation print at 5.88 per cent in Nov-22 from 6.77 per cent in Oct-22 since most market participants estimated it to be above 6.0 per cent. This is an eleven-month low figure and is clearly driven by the faster-than-expected decline in food inflation which stood at 5.1 per cent in the previous month," Suman Chowdhury, Chief Analytical Officer said.

According to Chowdhury, the fall in retail inflation has been due to the quick drop in vegetable prices which is a seasonal phenomenon apart from the continuing softness in edible oil prices.

"Nevertheless, the core inflation figure remains high for RBI's comfort and has in fact moved up further to 6.29 per cent in Nov-22 from 6.23 per cent in Oct-22; on an MoM basis, the core inflation went up by 0.43 per cent, highlighting the embedded nature of the current inflationary environment," Chowdhury said.



Prices of Petrol & Diesel have not been increased by public sector OMCs since 6th April 2022, despite record high international prices says Puri



FW DESK

India imports more than 85% of its crude oil requirements. Therefore, the prices of Petrol and Diesel in the country are linked to their respective prices in the international market. The retail prices of Petrol and Diesel depend on various factors viz. crude oil purchase price, exchange rate, shipping charges, inland freight, refinery margin, dealer commission, central taxes, state VAT and other cost elements. While the average price of Indian basket of Crude oil increased by 102% (from \$43.34 to \$87.55) between November 2020 and November 2022, the retail prices of Petrol and Diesel have increased in India by only 18.95% and 26.5% during this period.

The moderately healthy, if not strong, momentum in domestic demand is leading to the holding up of the core inflation. Also, the base factor was

relatively an advantage for the Nov-22 print which may not be the case for Dec-22. Therefore, we don't expect any significant trend downward for the CPI inflation for the next few months, Chowdhury said. "Given the core inflation trajectory, we continue to forecast an average figure of 6.7 per cent for CPI inflation in FY23. We also continue to expect another round of modest hike in Feb-23 which will take the terminal rate to 6.5 per cent or higher," Chowdhury said.

We are confident of achieving textile export target of USD 100 billion by 2030: Piyush Goyal



FW DESK
New Delhi

Union Minister of Textiles, Consumer Affairs, Food and Public Distribution and Commerce and Industry, Piyush Goyal said that India was confident of achieving textile export target of USD 100 billion by 2030. He was interacting with media persons during the two-day 'Kashi Tamil Samagam' in Varanasi, Uttar Pradesh today. The Minister announced that a unique, one of its kind exhibition, 'VIRAASAT' will be organized in New Delhi to celebrate 75 handwoven saris of India. He said that in the festival 'My Sari My Pride' handwoven saris ranging from Patola, Banarasi, Paithani, Kanjivaram and others will be exhibited. He added that weavers from across the country will participate in the festival which will start from December 16th at Janpath Haat, New Delhi. Goyal noted the profound connection that Kashi had with Tamil Nadu and said that he is reminded of Dev Deepavali firecrackers burst in Kashi which must have been produced in Sivakasi.

IREDA inks Rs. 4,445 crore loan agreement with SJVN Green Energy Ltd. for 1,000 MW Solar power project



FW DESK

Indian Renewable Energy Development Agency Ltd. (IREDA) signed a historic loan agreement for Rs. 4,444.71 crore with SJVN Green Energy Ltd. (SGEL, a subsidiary of SJVN Ltd.) today, for a 1,000 MW Solar power project at Bikaner, Rajasthan. The IREDA funded project will connect to 400/220 KV substation Bikaner-II (near Bikaner). SJVN has bagged the project through the tender floated by IREDA under the CPSU Phase-II (Tranche III) Scheme for development of Grid connected Solar PV Power Project through competitive Bidding Process based on VGF support. Speaking on the occasion, CMD, IREDA said: "We are pleased to sanction IREDA's highest loan amount to SGEL for development of 1,000 MW Solar project. We will be able to support Govt. of India to achieve its targets of 50% share of energy from non-fossil fuels by 2030 through this kind of cooperation. Also, this partnership will encourage green investment and generate both direct and indirect employment opportunities."

“ We are pleased to sanction IREDA's highest loan amount to SGEL for development of 1,000 MW Solar project. We will be able to support Govt. of India to achieve its targets of 50% share of energy from non-fossil fuels by 2030 through this kind of cooperation ”

Ministry of Textiles working towards GI Tag to weavers and inclusion in FTAs says Nirmala Sitharaman

FW DESK

Ministry of Textiles is working towards including GI Tag to weavers and Free Trade Agreements (FTAs) which sends a strong message that the Government of India is supporting our weavers and their families, said Nirmala Sitharaman, Union Finance Minister while inaugurating 'VIRAASAT, Celebrating 75 handwoven saris of India', an exclusive weave-based Handloom Sari Festival "My Sari My Pride" here today. She said that the Ministry of Textiles has taken unique step by organizing such an event in the Central Delhi which exhibits country's weavers and India's tradition. She further said that the Ministry has sourced 75 handwoven saris which are exhibited in the exhibition here. FM Sitharaman said that the Prime Minister in 2014-2015 gave the vision of 5 F, from Farm to Fibre to Fabric to Fashion to Foreign. This vision has become a principle objective of the Ministry of Textiles under which this exhibition is organized and weavers are promoted to display their work. Sitharaman applauded that to provide information about these saris, a touch screen display has been put to impart information about the traditional significance of handwoven saris and the weavers involved in mak-



ing these exquisite pieces. She said that while women parliamentarian are present during the inauguration, she invited all men parliamentarian as well to get introduced to the weavers and witness the traditional handwoven saris of the country terming the exhibition as My Handloom Sari, My Sari, My Pride. Present on the occasion was DarshanaJardosh, Hon'ble Union Minister of State for Textileswho enumerated the traditional handwoven saris that are displayed in the exhibition. Coinciding with the 75 years of Independence, "AzadikaAmritMahotsav" there will be an exhibition-cum-sale of Handloom Saris by 75 handloom weavers belonging to 16 States/UTs. The festivalis being organized in two phases from 16th to 30th December 2022 and 3rd to 17th January 2023 (11AM to 8 PM) at Handloom Haat, Janpath, New Delhi. Handloom sector is a

symbol of our country's rich and varied cultural heritage, besides being one of the key sectors providing employment to a large number of people, especially women. With a view to showcase the Handloom heritage of India, a Handloom Saree festival is being organized by the Ministry of Textiles. The handloom sector of India engages more than 35 lakh persons. The art of handloom sari weaving has traditional values attached to it and each region has exquisite saris varieties. The uniqueness of saris such as Paithani, Kotpad, Kota doria, Tangail, Pochampally, Kancheepuram, Thirubuvanam, Jamdani, Santipuri, Chanderi, Maheshwari, Patola, Moirangphee, Banarasi Brocade, Tanchoi, Bhagalpuri Silk, BawanButi and Pashmina Sari Sari etc. to name a few attracts customers across the globe with exclusive art, weaves, designs and traditional motifs.

BharatPe CEO enjoying life with money I raised but fails to grow company: Ashneer



FW DESK

Despite Delhi High Court's order to restrain from making defamatory statements against the company and its executives amid the ongoing Rs 88.6 crore fraud case, former BharatPe Co-founder and Managing Director Ashneer Grover on Monday took a serious dig at CEO Suhail Sameer, saying the CEO allegedly spent money on personal expenditures that he raised, but is unable to help the fintech firm grow. In a tweet, Grover alleged that Sameer allegedly spent money raised by him to travel to Australia for the recently-concluded T20 World Cup. "Suhail (CEO) -- bahut aish kar li Ashneer ke raised funds pe. Ladkiya bhi ghuma li Australia. Par hai to hum nalle - hiring, product, tech, UNITY bank, PA license, mkt share -- kuchh nahi hil raha humse. Kya kareng? (Had a gala time with money Ashneer raised in Australia but I am unable to help the company on the hiring, product, tech, UNITY Bank, payment aggregator (PA) license and market share fronts, what to do?), tweeted Grover. Grover then targeted Sumeet Singh, a partner with Shardul Amarchand Mangaldas who joined BharatPe as its general counsel (GC) last year. "Sumeet (GC): Case kareng ! case kareng ! Case kareng ! (But Sumeet went ahead to file case (against me), Grover further posted. The Delhi High Court last week issued notice and summons to BharatPe's former Managing Director and his kin in a plea filed by the company, seeking orders to restrain them from making defamatory statements against the company. In April this year, Grover had threatened legal action against CEO Sameer and the board for his comments on professional networking platform LinkedIn against his sister Ashima Grover, along with seeking a resignation from Chairman Rajnish Kumar. Grover last week attacked the fintech platform's co-founder Shashvat Nakrani, saying he once asked him to bunk office for a whole year in order to complete his IIT degree while remaining on the payroll. He also alleged that his book "Doglapan" created panic among BharatPe executives and this is the reason the fintech company had apparently filed cases against him.

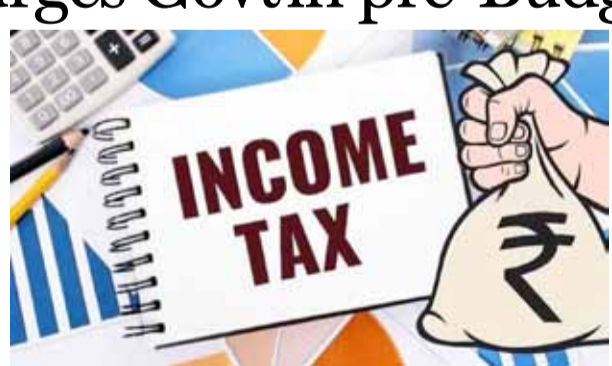
Raise IT exemption limit to Rs 5 lakh and pluck low hanging fruit : ASSOCHAM urges Govt in pre-Budget recommendations

FW DESK
New Delhi

In its pre-Budget recommendations, ASSOCHAM has said the government should increase the exemption limit for income tax to at least Rs 5 lakh so that more disposable income is left in the hands of consumers and the economy gets a consumption boost and further leg-up in the recovery. Without accounting for rebates, the present exemption limit is Rs 2.5 lakh for the assessee. In a media interaction, ASSOCHAM President Sumant Sinha said buoyancy in both the direct and indirect taxes should give enough elbow room to the government for raising the income tax exemption limit. The government must respond to the proactive steps other nations are doing to support the production of green hydrogen as India strives to become a major energy producer. Attention should be given to sustainable and green industries to promote job growth and a green economy. Economy security bigger than manufacturing security, he said. Advancing the green economy, achieving energy independence, making

investments in green industries, and reducing the use of fossil fuels are all steps for Atmanirbharta. "Boosting consumption by leaving more money in the hands of the consumers, is a low hanging fruit for a further recovery in economic growth," said Deepak Sood, Secretary General ASSOCHAM. The chamber said along with the consumption, the other path to a sustainable growth would be further promoting investment. In this direction, the ASSOCHAM said that 15% corporate tax rate for new investments in manufacturing can be extended to all sectors, including services. Suggesting another relief measure, it said the interest for late payment of the GST should be reduced to 12 per cent from 18 per cent. "The penal interest rate of 18 per cent is too high, particularly for the MSMEs."

Measures like Production-Linked Incentive (PLI) scheme, with an outlay of around Rs 2-lakh crore for 13 sectors, were introduced in 2021. PLI has done much to boost domestic manufacturing, investment as well as job creation. It is therefore advised that the government should continue to focus on



it. Reports suggest proposals are in works to extend the Rs 35,000 crore PLI scheme to various sectors. While exporters are asking for credit at affordable rates, MSMEs are asking for restructuring of existing loans, giving them room for a fixed term of one year of moratorium and two years additional timeline to repay term loans. They have also asked for extension of the NPA (non-performing assets) classification period to 180 days from 90 days as they struggle to get timely payments from their buyers, leading to defaults in payments. There is also a need to identify new sectors in MSMEs, like the travel and tourism industry. By prioritizing tourism infrastructure development, it will lead to employment creation as well as growth of MSMEs. In addition, opportunity, innovation, new tech goods, and leveraging tech solutions to the global market should be used for increasing economic activity and employment. It is necessary for MSME to be more connected to the world. What is needed is a transparent, paperless, end-to-end system to facilitate on-time payment, which will not only inject liquidity into the market but also encourage businesses to reinvest. This is part of a collective effort to popularise and increase acceptance for the "Make in India"

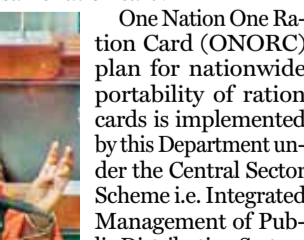
and volatile energy prices, India remains resilient helped by pragmatic government policies, food security, financial stability and the never-say-die spirit of our people. The IMF has projected that more than one-third of the global economy will contract in 2022 or next year. Economies such as the US have seen inflation unprecedented for several decades. The US inflation is well above seven per cent, forcing the Federal Reserve to revise interest rates several times, keeping upward of 4 per cent. This had implications for the emerging economies including India which have been witnessing flow of global funds to the US dollar as an asset class. The recent pressure on the Indian rupee was a result of these developments, but the RBI rose to the occasion managing the situation pretty well. The INR is quite stable now; in fact the fund flow is reversing inward again, taking all the components together. So, our macro economy remains not only stable but also growing upward of six per cent. According to the latest RBI estimates, the Indian economy is projected to grow by 6.8 per cent for the FY'23. We largely agree with the RBI assessment,

with an upward bias. As for inflation, while the signs of peaking have started appearing for the major economies as well, these are still tentative. However, as the drop in CPI to 11 month low of 5.88 per cent for November shows, inflation in India is more likely to have peaked, though remains above the RBI comfort level of 4 per cent. But it has come down below the RBI upper end of 6 per cent. The 6.3 per cent GDP growth for the second quarter of the current financial year had a large contribution from the catch-up recovery in services like trade, hotels and transport in the post-Covid period. However, there was a contraction in manufacturing by 4.3 per cent. The contraction in manufacturing continues even in the latest numbers of industrial production for October. Manufacturing contracted by 5.6 per cent in October 2022 over the corresponding month of the previous year. While the government has extended several schemes like PLIs, extension of lower corporate tax 15 per cent up to March 31, 2024, global disruption in supply chain, rising prices of raw material would have made an impact on the manufacturing.

One Nation One Ration Card: Financial assistance of Rs. 46.86 Cr released to States

FW DESK

Union Minister of State for Consumer Affairs, Food and Public Distribution, Sadhvi Niranjana Jyoti in a written reply to a question in Lok Sabha today shared that through technology-driven One Nation One Ration Card (ONORC) system, all beneficiaries under National Food Security Act, 2013 (NFSA), particularly migrant beneficiaries, can lift their monthly entitled foodgrains, either in parts or full, from any electronic Point of Sale (ePoS) enabled Fair Price Shop (FPS) in the country by using their existing ration card or Aadhaar number with biometric authentication. Their family members back home, if any, may also lift the part/balance foodgrains on the same ration card. One Nation One Ration Card (ONORC) plan for nationwide portability of ration cards is implemented by this Department under the Central Sector Scheme i.e. Integrated Management of Public Distribution System (IM-PDS), which was sanctioned in April 2018 with total outlay of Rs. 127.3 Crore. The scheme is extended till 31st March 2023. So far, financial assistance of Rs. 46.86 Crore has been released to States/UTs, NIC/NICSI, etc. during last three financial years 2020-21 (Rs.12.65 crore), 2021-22 (Rs.23.76 crore) and 2022-23 (Rs. 10.45 crore). The One Nation One Ration Card (ONORC) plan, for nation-wide portability of the National Food Security Act 2013 (NFSA) beneficiaries is presently enabled in all the 36 States/UTs across the country, covering entire NFSA population (around 80 Crore NFSA beneficiaries) in the country.



India has to counter 'radicalisation' at home

FW DESK

The G20 Presidency offers India a rare opportunity of rising as a leading contributor to the global recovery from the Covid pandemic, as an advocate of collective action in tackling environmental challenges and climate change, and as an active participant in the efforts to pull the world out of economic stagnation in general and the food and energy crisis caused by the Ukraine-Russia military conflict in particular.

India's sane voice on various global issues has been heard and appreciated by the world community and there is little doubt that while steering the G20 Presidency through the year ahead, India under Prime Minister Narendra Modi would further strengthen its position as a major world power and as a trustworthy global counsel.

The country's handling of economic development has served our national interests well, however, a major challenge is to safeguard our internal security against the threats of terrorism and radicalisation.

Although the democratic world is united against the new faith-based terror, India is left on its own to strategise against the threats posed by the Sino-Pak alliance working specifically against the country. Even the US is not excessively bothered with



the added threat of terrorism from the Pak-Afghan belt after the return of Taliban Emirate at Kabul - following the withdrawal of American troops from the war-torn Afghanistan - or with the adverse impact of the consolidation of strategic links between China and Pakistan in a situation where geopolitical hostility between US and China was coming to the fore.

The two adversaries of India are our neighbours as well, and apart from the mischief they can cause on the borders, they have every intention of using an opportunity of disturbing India's internal peace and cohesion. India has to take preventive measures on multiple fronts to deal with this situation. India

is now militarily prepared to respond to any Chinese aggressiveness on LAC particularly in eastern Ladakh and is an active partner in the US-led Quad to work for 'rules-based order' in the Indo-Pacific and strategically counter Chinese designs against India on the marine front.

In regard to Pakistan, India wields the deterrent of a 'surgical strike' against any Pak mischief on LoC or International Border. Pak ISI is now more determined to encourage 'radicalisation' for instigating communal militancy in India and fomenting faith-based terrorism as its upshot. China is extending full support to Pakistan in the latter's covert operations in

Kashmir and Punjab. To deal with the likely accentuation of the threat from Islamic radical outfits of Pak-Afghan belt, India has among other foreign policy initiatives, struck close bonds with Central Asian Republics (CARs) through meetings held by our NSA with his counterparts from these countries, at Delhi. These neighbours of Afghanistan, with predominantly Muslim population are firmly opposed to radicalisation and extremism and want to strengthen India's hands in countering the spread of terror in the name of Islam.

Apart from the global initiatives, however, India needs to take comprehensive steps to strengthen our internal se-

curity. Many of these suggest themselves.

First, mobilisation of leaders and institutions of the Muslim minority is required to get them to expressly declare that in democratic India - run on the triple guarantee of 'one man one vote', equal opportunity to everybody for economic development and the same protection of law for all citizens - there was no room for advocacy of Jihad for solving any problem facing the community or looking for support from outside of the nation for that purpose.

India can follow up on the statement of R20- the forum launched by Indonesia at Bali in the run up to G20- that favoured inter-faith dialogue, presented Islam as a religion of peace and sought to promote inter-religious harmony and respect for all faiths. This meet firmly rejected radicalisation.

The timely initiative of India's NSA to convene the bilateral security dialogue with his Indonesian counterpart at Delhi, to which Ulema and spokespersons of other religions from both sides were also invited, has laid the turf for a concerted effort in India - to get institutions like Darul Uloom Deoband and Nadwatul Ulema Lucknow to call for inter-faith harmony, highlight the commitment of Islam to peace and disapprove of radicalisation and terrorism.

World not 'stupid' when it comes to recognising Pak as 'epicentre' of terrorism: Jaishankar

The world is not stupid, the world is not forgetful" when it comes to recognising Pakistan as the "epicentre" of terrorism, India's External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar said.

Pakistan, therefore, has to clean up its act and take up the global agenda of development instead of terrorism, he said on Thursday at a news conference outside the UN Security Council chamber where he had just wrapped up a special session that heard briefings on counterterrorism.

Responding to a question from a Pakistani TV journalist about how long would it take for terrorism to end in South Asia, Jaishankar said: "You're asking the wrong Minister!" "It is the minister of Pakistan who will tell you how long Pakistan intends to practice terrorism," he said.

Pakistan cannot confuse anyone any longer because "people have figured it out" that is the "epicentre" of terrorism, the Minister added. "So my advice is, please clean up your act to be a good neighbour. Please try and contribute to what the rest of the world is trying to do, which is economic growth, development." Jaishankar added that



he hoped to get this message across through the journalist's TV channel.

Asked about Pakistani Interior Minister Rana Sanaullah preparing a dossier on what he called India's involvement in terrorism, Jaishankar said it is ironic he should be making the claim.

It is because about a decade ago when Rana was a Minister, Hillary Clinton who was visiting Pakistan warned him about terrorism and said that if you have snakes in your backyard, you can't expect them to bite only your neighbours because eventually, they will bite the people who keep them, Jaishankar said.

But Pakistan is not good at taking advice, he added. At the time of the visit by

Clinton who was then US Secretary of State, Rana was Law Minister of the Punjab province.

Jaishankar said that at the end of Thursday's meeting, the Council adopted a presidential statement that affirmed that any act of terrorism or crime is unjustifiable regardless of the motivation and who committed it.

The statement also stated that "terrorism in all its forms and manifestations constitutes the most serious threats to international peace and security", he said.

A presidential statement is adopted by consensus and although it does not have the power of enforcement like a resolution, it carries moral authority.

Canada's immigration backlog shrinks to 2.2 mn: IRCC



Canada's immigration backlog came down to just over 2.2 million from last month's 2.4 million, according to new data revealed by the Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada (IRCC).

With this, the citizenship inventory stands at 3,14,630 applicants as of November 30, compared to 3,31,401 on October 31, CIC News reported.

The permanent residence inventory stands at 5,12,342 people as of December 2, compared to 5,06,421 as of November 3. The biggest reduction was seen in the temporary residence inventory, which stood at 14,16,125 people on December 2, compared to 15,37,566 persons as of November 3.

As of December 2, there are 43,326 applications for Express Entry programs waiting in the queue -- an increase of over 3,500 since November 3 data, which stood at 39,589.

The inventory for all family class immigration programs has dropped slightly to 1,27,091 compared to November 3 when it was 1,28,112.

The Spouses and Partners sponsorship program is among the largest inventories among all lines of business, at 62,106, a minimal increase compared with November 3.

The Parents and Grandparents Program (PGP) has an inventory of 53,770 persons compared to 55,653 persons waiting for decisions in November.

September 30 data showed that there were 1.5 million applications in the backlog, meaning that IRCC cleared over 3,50,000 applications from the backlog.

This comes while the number of applications in inventory has risen for permanent residency, CIC News reported.

IRCC says that between January and October 2022, they produced 4.3 million final decisions for permanent residents, temporary residents and citizenship compared to 2.3 million final decisions in the same period last year. The Canadian citizenship body says it wants to have a less than 50 per cent backlog across all lines of business by the end of March 2023.

Indian-American duo to pay over \$420,000 to settle kickback charges

NEW YORK: An Indian-American couple has agreed to pay \$422,789 to resolve allegations that they received illegal kickbacks in return for referring patients for laboratory testing.

Dr Vijesh Patel and his office manager and wife Laju Patel of Texas, received kickbacks in violation of the Anti-Kickback Statute in return for the doctor's referrals to three laboratories in New Jersey, Texas and South Carolina.

The Anti-Kickback Statute prohibits offering, paying, soliciting, or receiving remuneration to induce referrals of items or services covered by Medicare, Medicaid and other federally funded healthcare programs.

From December 2016 to July 2018, Vijesh allegedly received thousands of dollars in payments from a purported management service organisation (MSO) named Indus MG LLC in return for ordering laboratory tests from True Health Diagnos-



tics LLC, a clinical laboratory in Frisco, Texas.

The Indus MSO's payments to Vijesh allegedly were disguised as investment returns but in fact were based on, and offered in exchange for, his referrals to True Health, a Department of Justice statement read.

From August 2018 to August 2021, Vijesh allegedly received thousands of dollars in kickbacks disguised as investment returns from a purported MSO named Avior Group LLC in return for ordering laboratory tests from New Jersey-based RDX Bioscience, Inc.

In addition, from December 2018 to August 2022, his wife

Laju allegedly received kickbacks from RDX in the form of commercially unreasonable fees to purportedly collect urine specimens for testing that Vijesh referred to RDX.

Vijesh also allegedly received hundreds of dollars per month from August 2019 to December 2021 in return for ordering laboratory tests from Labtech Diagnostics LLC (Labtech), in Anderson, South Carolina.

"Kickbacks can undermine a physician's medical judgment, result in unnecessary testing, and increase health care costs borne by taxpayers," said Principal Deputy Assistant Attorney General Brian M Boynton, head of the Justice Department's Civil Division, in a statement.

"We will continue to pursue physicians, laboratories, and others responsible for schemes that violate rules intended to safeguard the integrity of federal health care programmes," Boynton added.

UK economy rebounds in Oct but recession still looms



The British economy is estimated to have grown by 0.5% between September and October, statistics showed, but a lengthy recession is still expected in the UK.

October's rebound followed a fall of 0.6% in September, which was affected by the extra bank holiday for the funeral of Queen Elizabeth II, Xinhua news agency quoted the Office for National Statistics (ONS) as saying on Monday.

Car sales rebounded after a very poor September, while the health sector also saw a strong month, said ONS director of economic statistics Darren Morgan.

Meanwhile, construction continued its strong trend over the last year and stands at its highest level on record, with new housebuilding driving growth, he added.

At least 0.3 percentage points of the rise was due to a return to the normal number of working days in October after September's bank holiday, making the economy look stronger than it really is, said Ruth Gregory, senior UK economist at Capital Economics consultancy.

However, aside from this factor, the country's gross domestic product (GDP) probably rose by 0.2 percent month on month, so it appears that GDP growth had more momentum at the start of the fourth quarter than previously thought, Gregory added.

Despite the monthly rebound, concerns mounted. Looking at the broader picture, the UK's GDP fell by 0.3 per cent in the three months to October compared with the three months to July. A decline was also seen across services and manufacturing, Morgan noted.

"The trend still is downward sloping," said Samuel Tombs, chief UK economist at Pantheon Macroeconomics consultancy. Tombs noted that activity indicators from S&P Global, Lloyds and the Confederation of British Industry (CBI), as well as the extremely low level of GfK's consumer confidence index, are all consistent with falling GDP.

The S&P Global / CIPS Flash UK PMI Composite Output Index posted 48.3 in November. It has registered below the crucial 50.0 no-change value for four consecutive months.

Netherlands taps into gas reserves as cold wave boost heating demand

Dutch energy firms have been forced to tap into the country's gas reserves as the cold wave is boosting demand.

Temperatures in the Netherlands have hovered around or below freezing since early December, and the cold spell is expected to continue at least until the end of this week. As a result, the gas consumption of Dutch households and companies has risen significantly recently and the country has had to resort to its stored gas reserves to satisfy demand, a spokesperson for Dutch energy network operator Gasunie told Xinhua news agency on Wednesday.

Gasunie estimated that the Netherlands consumed 1.5 billion cubic meters of gas over the last cold week, more than doubling the average weekly usage of about 0.61 cubic meter this year until the end of November. Hence the



need to tap into the reserves. "It is normal at this time of the year and therefore not alarming," the Gasunie spokesperson told Xinhua.

Despite the cold, the Dutch have used less gas than they normally would in cold weather in order to save costs. About 20 percent less gas was used than in previous years under the same winter conditions. "This applies not only to regular consumers, but also to companies," the spokesperson said.

"Everyone feels it in their wallet and thinks twice before turning up the heating. Instead of 20 degrees Celsius at home, the temperature

Cambodia marks 30 years of Angkor inscription on Unesco world heritage list

Cambodia on Wednesday held events here to mark the 30th anniversary of the inscription of the Angkor Archaeological Park on Unesco's World Heritage Sites list.

Speaking to hundreds of participants at the "Angkor Thanksgiving" ceremony, one of the events planned to be held for three days, Deputy Prime Minister Men Sam An said that 30 years after the inscription on December 14, 1992, the Angkor Archaeological Park has been well protected, preserved and developed, and has become one of the most popular tourist destinations in the region and beyond, reports Xinhua news agency.

"Currently, visits to the Angkor have returned to normalcy under the shade of peace and political stability as well as the successful control of the Covid-19 pandemic," she said.

"This event is to promote our cultural potential and tourism to the world." Minister of Culture and Fine Arts Phoeurng Sackona said the celebratory events would provide an opportunity for the public to visit and learn about the work of protection, preservation and development of the Angkor.

"It is a message to our compatriots to join in safeguarding and preserving the Angkor and other national heritage for common interest," she added.

According to the event organiser the APSARA National Authority (ANA), over the course of three days, visitors will enjoy

NZ logs over 40,000 new Covid cases last week

New Zealand recorded 40,098 new community cases of Covid-19 and 35 more deaths from the pandemic over the past week, the country's Ministry of Health said on Monday.

On average, new cases per day reached 5,721 in the last week. The country has seen the number of daily cases going down steadily from over 10,000 cases nationwide in early July, Xinhua news agency reported.

With the fresh cases, New Zealand has reported 2,019,685 confirmed cases of

Covid-19 and 2,257 Covid-19-related deaths since the pandemic hit the country in early 2020, the ministry said.

Currently, 514 Covid-19 patients are being treated in hospitals in the country, including 14 in intensive care units or high dependency units, according to official data.

and development of the Angkor, the ANA said.

Situated in northwest Cambodia's Siem Reap province, the 401-sq-km Angkor Archaeological Park is the most popular tourist destination in the Southeast Asian country.

Prior to the pandemic, the ancient site attracted up to 2.2 million international tourists in 2019, generating a gross revenue of \$99 million from ticket sales, according to the state-owned Angkor Enterprise.

From January to November 2022, the site received more than 225,000 foreign tourists, earning \$9 million in revenue, the Angkor Enterprise said.

free art performances and films at some designated temples. Also, they will be given free tours of several sites and museums so that they can learn more about the work of conservation

Superstar Rajinikanth offers prayers at Tirumala temple



THE FATHER-DAUGHTER DUO HAD ARRIVED IN THE TEMPLE TOWN ON WEDNESDAY AND AFTER THE NIGHT HALT, HAD AN EARLY MORNING DARSHAN

Superstar Rajinikanth on Thursday offered prayers at Sri Venkateswara temple atop Tirumala here.

Accompanied by his daughter Aishwarya, the actor participated in suprabhata seva. Guided by the priests, they performed different rituals. Later, they were offered

Veda Ashirvachanam at Ranganayakula Mandapam.

Earlier, officials of Tirumala Tirupati Devasthanam (TTD), which manages the affairs of the hill shrine, welcomed Rajinikanth and Aishwarya on their arrival at the main gate of the temple.

The father-daughter duo had arrived in the temple

town on Wednesday and after the night halt, had an early morning darshan.

Rajinikanth visited the temple three days after he turned 72. Visuals of his visit to the temple along with the daughter went viral on social media.

The superstar will visit Pedda dargah at Kadapa later in the day. He, along with his daughter, will offer prayers at Ameen Peer dargah, popularly also known as Pedda dargah.

On the work front, Rajinikanth is currently shooting for Nelson Dilipkumar's 'Jailer'. The film is likely to hit the screen in the first half of 2023. He is also playing a cameo role in his daughter, Aishwarya's upcoming film, Lal Salaam.

Rajinikanth, who was last seen in Annaathe (2021), recently signed a two-film deal with Lyca Productions. His next film is likely to be titled Cibi Chakravarthy or Desingh Periyasamy.



A SNEAK PEAK AT DEEPIKA & SHAH RUKH'S STYLE IN PATHAAN

NEWDELHI: Shaleena Nathani is the top stylist of our country today and she has belted out jaw-dropping looks for Shah Rukh Khan and Deepika Padukone in Pathaan's first song Besharam Rang that everyone is raving about. The verdict is out -- the two are looking their hottest best in Pathaan and Shaleena decodes how she curated these epic style statements that will be etched

in the hearts and minds of people forever!

Shaleena says, "The brief started off with Sid (Siddharth Anand) telling me what the mood of the song was because this is in the film. It's connected to the story of the movie so it's kind of a part where she is very carefree and both of them were supposed to look like they've never been presented like this before."

She adds, "SRK is supposed

POTPOURRI

Asees Kaur all set to 'lighten-up' the mood with her romantic song 'TU TAN MAIN'



Ace singer Asees Kaur talks about her latest romantic track 'Tu Tan Main' in collaboration with Luvdeep Saini.

It features Rumman Ahmed and Luvdeep. Asees, who became popular for her songs such as 'Raatan Lambiyan' from 'Shershaah', 'Tere Bin' from 'Simmba', 'Bolna' from 'Kapoor&Sons', says she hopes to get positive feedback for the song which brings out a romantic chemistry between two lovers and how they enjoy every moment of togetherness.

'Besharam Rang' row: Take back song or face boycott, says Sri Rama Sena in Karnataka

BENGALURU: The Sri Rama Sena in Karnataka on Thursday urged the production house of Shah Rukh Khan-Deepika Padukone starrer 'Pathan' to roll back the "Besharam Rang" song or face a boycott.

Pramod Muthalik, founder of the Sri Rama Sena, stated on Thursday that these are not like old times. Change and awareness have come. The boycott calls on Bollywood movies have worked. If the Besharam song is not withdrawn, a boycott 'Pathan' campaign will be launched, he warned.

He charged that the 'Besharam Rang' song is indecent and vulgar. The song says the saffron colour is shameless. Bollywood is in the hands of Dawood Ibrahim, communists and atheists. They have been targeting Hindus and attacking their belief system,



Muthalik stated. He said that the Hindi movie PK showed Hindu Gods in a distasteful manner. "Let them show burqa clad people dancing or a dance in the church. These kind of films set mindsets for living together, love jihad, rape and kidnaps. Must take it seriously," he said.

Meanwhile, veteran south Indian actor Prakash Raj has reacted angrily to the controversy surrounding Hindi film industry superstar Shah Rukh Khan and popular actress Deepika Padukone's new release 'Pathan's 'Besharam Rang' song.

"#Besharam Bigots.. So it's okay when Saffron clad men gander rapists.. give hate speech, broker MLAs, a Saffron clad swamiji rapes Minors, But not a DRESS in the film?? #justasking," Prakash Raj's tweet reads. Pramod Muthalik has questioned Prakash Raj on his remarks. "It is Hindus who are showing patience and tolerance though they have been attacked," he said. The Besharam song has become an instant hit after its release, crossed 2 million views in two hours and has now crossed 42 million views. The Hinduva activists across the country have raised objections to the song and stated that the attire of actors encourages love jihad. They had objected to the dance sequence where Shah Rukh Khan is wearing a green colour shirt and Deepika is flaunting a saffron outfit.

'Reputation being tarnished': Nora Fatehi files defamation suit against Jacqueline Fernandez



NEW DELHI: Bollywood actor Nora Fatehi has filed a defamation case in a court here against actor Jacqueline Fernandez, alleging that the latter made defamatory allegations against her for "malicious reasons" and to destroy her career.

According to Fatehi, Fernandez sought to criminally defame her in order to destroy her career to further her own interests, since they are both working in the same industry and have similar backgrounds, amongst other reasons.

Contending that her image is being tarnished, Fatehi, stressing that artistes' career is solely based on their reputation, alleged that defamatory

"Jacqueline Fernandez is also an actress, and is pretty well known in the film industry. She has also been made an accused in the Suresh Chandrashekar Rs 200 crore money-laundering case by the Enforcement Directorate"

remarks were made against her by Fernandez to ensure her financial, social, and personal downfall.

In the complaint accessed by IANS, she also claimed that Fernandez has also maliciously attempted to absolve herself from her actions in another criminal proceedings which

are absolutely unrelated to her. "Jacqueline Fernandez is also an actress, and is pretty well known in the film industry. She has also been made an accused in the Suresh Chandrashekar Rs 200 crore money-laundering case by the Enforcement Directorate. That the defamatory imputations were made by Fernandez due to malicious reasons. Apart from that, Fernandez sought to criminally defame the complainant in order to destroy her career to further her own interests since she is also in Bollywood," read the complaint moved by Fatehi through her counsel advocate Vikram Chauhan.

Fatehi has further alleged that Fernandez made a false statement against her despite being an actress too.

"Fernandez has unnecessarily dragged and defamed me as I am in the same industry. She is fully aware that the business of any artiste and their career is solely based on their reputation. This clearly establishes that the said imputation has been made with the intention and knowledge that such imputation will harm the reputation of the complainant," her plea read.

Bobby Deol wraps up shoot of Kunal Kohli's 'Shlok - The Desi Sherlock'



Actor Bobby Deol, who has had an eventful year with his performance in the OTT world with 'Ashram Season 2', has wrapped up shooting for his upcoming film 'Shlok - The Desi Sherlock', which he had announced earlier this year.

'Shlok - The Desi Sherlock' is directed by Kunal Kohli and marks the debut of Ananya Birla in Bollywood.

Bobby now has taken to his official social media account to announce the wrap-up of 'Shlok'. The actor said: "And it's a wrap for #Shlok. Had a wonderful time working with

the A-team, some of the most amazing people I've worked with."

'Shlok - The Desi Sherlock' is a spy thriller and Bobby will be taking the audiences by surprise as this is the first time we will see him on screen in this avatar.

Apart from 'Shlok - The Desi Sherlock', Bobby will be soon seen in Ranbir Kapoor's 'Animal', 'Ashram' Season 3 and 'Penthouse'.

The actor was last seen on screen in the thriller film 'Love Hostel'. It also stars Vikrant Massey and Sanya Malhotra. It is directed by Shanker Raman.



"Indian Female Cricketers aroused a very special place in my heart forever": Actress Kashika Kapoor

"Indian Female Cricketers aroused a very special place in my heart forever", says actress Kashika Kapoor who presented the Player of The Match award at the 3rd T20 India Women VS Australia Women Cricket Match

Kashika Kapoor was just 19 when she stepped into the world of glamour, and since then the actress has had no way of looking back. Kashika Kapoor is one such star who is climbing the ladder of success and has established her

name and place in the entertainment field with her back-to-back power-packed performances that garnered the audience's affection.

Last night, Kashika Kapoor attended the India Women vs. Australia Women 3rd T20 Match at the stadium, and the actress presented the player of the match award to the winning Australian female cricketer, Ellyse Perry. Ellyse Perry helped Australia set a target of 173 runs, and her innings were also filled with nine

fours and three sixes.

Talking about Kashika Kapoor's look, the actress looked gorgeous in complete formal attire, giving us complete boss lady vibes; the actress donned a white shirt, which she paired with formal pants and shoes, Kashika made sure to keep her look very simple yet very elegant. On presenting the award to the Indian Female cricketer, Kashika Kapoor couldn't be more proud than anything else the actress says, "

'The Kashmir Files' helmer Vivek Agnihotri starts shooting 'The Vaccine War'

Director Vivek Ranjan Agnihotri, who tasted massive success with his 'The Kashmir Files' this year, has started shooting for his next project titled 'The Vaccine War' in Lucknow. The director took to his social media on Wednesday to share the update with his followers.

He shared a picture of the script of the film with a clap from the mahurat shot on his social media. He wrote in the caption, "GM. We live for new things. New happiness. New



laughters. New challenges. Yet, we feel comfortable in the old & established and stick to it. This contradiction gives suffering. Fastest and surest way to find happiness: Jump into uncertainty. The unknown. #CreativeConsciousness (sic). A few days back, Vivek had shared a glimpse of the research work of the film.

The 'Vaccine War' pays tribute to the endless support and dedication of the medical fraternity and scientists during the uncertain times of the Covid-19 pandemic.

The director has shared earlier that it took around one year to research the subject and present the correct facts to the audience. The story of the film is written on 3200 pages and 82 people worked on the story day and night.

Taapsee calls up 'Blur' director after watching his 'Section 375'

MUMBAI: Actress Taapsee Pannu, who is receiving a lot of positive response to her recently released streaming movie 'Blur', "badly" wanted to work with the film's director Ajay Bahl, who is known for films like 'B.A. Pass' and 'Section 375'.

Taapsee, as once mentioned by director Anurag Kashyap, is known for chasing projects with potential and putting them together - 'Badla', 'Dobaaraa' and 'Blur' are some of the examples. For 'Blur', the actress approached Ajay through her co-producer Vishal Rana and asked him to work on 'Blur' as a director with herself serving as the co-producer.

Talking about the same, she told media, "Ajay sir is one of those directors I badly wanted to work with! I remember messaging him after watching 'Section 375' about how much I admired his work and craft. After becoming a co-producer on 'Blur', I recommended Vishal (co-producer) to reach-out to Ajay Bahl and crossed my fingers that he agrees to direct it."

She further mentioned, "So many times I have reached out to directors whose work I am fond of but not every time it materialises into a film. This



was the first time I managed to do it because now I am in the capacity of a producer. I am so glad he gave it a nod because he was my first choice for this kind of a film."

The film presents the story of a woman, Gayatri (played by Taapsee), who finds out about the untimely death of her twin sister, who was visually impaired. She then tries to uncover the mystery behind the death while struggling with her own eyesight.

While the film presents an intense narrative, it was Taapsee's co-actors in the film which kept her cool allowing her some downtime and not being overwhelmed with the emotional impact of the role and also her duties as a producer.

She shared with media, "I think the rest of the cast in-

cluding Gulshan Devaiah are the people who actually made it lighter for me. While I was doing intense stuff in front of the camera, they really helped me reduce my anxiety because there was so much happening in my head being the producer along with this dual role."

"There was so much intensity in front of the camera, I really needed some happy moments off screen and Gulshan and my supporting cast did help me bring about that off the camera", she added. When asked what sensibilities did she have to keep in mind for 'Blur' as a producer, she replied, "I just wanted a good quality film because firsts are always special. You never get a chance to do 'the first' again so when people talk about your first film they should remember it for years."

Urvashi Rautela is famous for her airport look but recently she was Looking Gorgeous In her Wild, Animal Print Airport Look.

Urvashi Rautela Looks Gorgeous In This Wild, Animal Print Airport Look!



Urvashi Rautela, the youngest Bollywood superstar wearing Wild, Animal Print Airport Look!, the actress usually attracts attention due to her alluring appearance and charm. she is the celebrity whose airport looks are always on point and yet once again she makes a dazzling appearance at the airport with these high-end brands which will definitely make your jaw drops looking at this scintillating beauty.

Urvashi Rautela got captured

in the eyes of paparazzi at the International Airport in Mumbai, on her way headed out of the city for a shoot. The actor donned a cowl neck leopard print long dress with a cut that flaunted her toned legs, and she paired the look with Louis Vuitton shoes and also accompanied her look with a Fendace handbag worth \$600 which is INR 50 thousand and Fendace passport keeper, keeping the look basic with soft curls and minimal makeup, looking absolutely chic as she spared some time to pose for the cameras.

Can we just say Urvashi Rautela has the best airport looks in the industry!!! no doubt she is a fashion icon and continues to amaze the audience with her looks and appearances.

On the work front, Urvashi has signed a deal with Pushpa 2 producer to co-star with Chiranjivi, a South Indian actor in the action comedy "Waltair Veeerayya". "She will appear in a movie with actor Ram Pothineni. In 'Inspector Avinash', Urvashi will appear with Randeep Hooda. Along with Michele Morrone, who starred in 365 Days, she is also making a significant Hollywood debut. The film will be produced by Tomasz Mandes, Barbara Bialowas, and Netflix.

A complete **KNOWLEDGE CAPSULE**

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