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UTTAR PRADESH TO MAKE NEW POLICY FOR COVID MANAGEMENT: CM YOGI ADITYANATH



PRIVATE CRYPTOS WILL TRIGGER NEXT FINANCIAL CRISIS IF ALLOWED TO GROW: RBI GOVERNOR



'RAM SETU' TO MAKE STREAMING DEBUT ON PRIME VIDEO ON DECEMBER 23

Covid scare: PM urges people to wear mask, No need to panic, not a single follow all covid 19 protocols, get jabbed case of Covid BF.7 : Delhi CM

YOGESH KANT
New Delhi



Prime Minister on Thursday urged people to follow Covid appropriate behaviour at all times, especially in view of the upcoming festive season, including wearing masks in crowded public places. He also urged that that precaution dose may be encouraged especially for vulnerable and elderly groups.

He stressed the need to ensure that the entire Covid infrastructure at all levels is maintained at a high level of preparedness in terms of equipment, processes and human resources.

He advised States to audit Covid specific facilities to ensure operational readiness of Hospital Infrastructure, including Oxygen Cylinders, PSA

plants, ventilators and human resources.

He directed officials to ramp up testing and also genomic sequencing efforts. States have been asked to share a larger number of samples with the designated INSACOG Genome Sequencing Laboratories (IG-SLs) for Genome Sequencing

on a daily basis. This will support timely detection of newer variants, if any, circulating in the country and facilitate undertaking requisite public health measures.

PM Modi on chaired a high-level meeting to assess the Covid-19 situation in the country, preparedness of health infra-

structure and logistics, status of the vaccination campaign in the country and the emergence of new Covid-19 variants and their public health implications for the country. This high-level review meeting comes in the backdrop of spike in COVID19 cases in some countries.

A comprehensive presentation was made regarding the rising cases in countries by Secretary, Health and Member, NITI Aayog. Prime Minister was briefed that India has been witnessing a steady decline in cases with average daily cases falling to 153 and weekly positivity down to 0.14% in the week ending 22nd Dec, 2022. However, 5.9 lakh daily average cases have been reported globally since the last 6 weeks.

YOGESH KANT
New Delhi

There is no need to panic as the national capital does not have a single case of the COVID-19 Omicron sub-variant BF.7, said Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal on Thursday. He also highlighted that the government is fully geared up to tackle any situation.

He said, "Right now we have 8,000 beds allotted for Corona; in the previous peak there were 25000 beds, now we have prepared for 36000 beds. At present we have 6,000 reserve oxygen cylinders and 15 oxygen tankers as well as a capacity to store 928 metric tonnes of oxygen. In Delhi, almost 100 percent people have got the first and second dose, but only 24 percent people have got their precaution dose. With



folded hands, I request all the people of Delhi to get their precaution dose administered as soon as they can."

Addressing a press conference, Kejriwal said the dominant sub-variant in Delhi is XBB that has been detected in 92 per cent of the samples till now. Kejriwal had convened a meeting at his residence on the Covid situation

amid a surge in cases in many countries. At the moment, 2,500 tests are being conducted and these can be increased to one lakh if there is a surge in Covid cases. "We have 8,000 beds ready for Covid patients. At the time its peak, we had readied 25,000 beds but the bed capacity can be increased to 36,000. "The government has also widened the

scope of testing and those with SARS and breathing issues are being compulsorily tested using the RT-PCR method," he added.

He said only 24 per cent of the eligible population have taken the precaution dose and urged people to get the jab. The new variant BF.7 of the novel coronavirus, which is believed to be linked to the surge in Covid cases in some countries, has been detected in some parts of the country. Asked whether there are plans to bring back the mask mandate, he said they are awaiting Centre's directions. He added, "One of the main problems during the pandemic last year was the availability of oxygen.. This time we have ramped it up and we can store up to 928 metric tons of oxygen. Another key issue faced the last time around was the lack of oxygen cylinders.

French serial killer Charles Sobhraj released from Nepal jail, set to be deported to France

KATHMANDU: Charles Sobhraj, the notorious French serial killer of Indian and Vietnamese parentage who committed a string of murders across Asia in the 1970s and was sentenced to life, was released from a Nepalese prison on Friday and will be deported to France on the apex court's order. Sobhraj, 78, was released from the Central Prison here and handed over to the immigration authorities to process his travel documents, officials said. His lawyer Gopal Shivakoti Chintan told to media that Sobhraj will be deported to France this evening. Media reports here also confirmed that he will be deported to France and barred from returning to Nepal for the rest of his life. According to a report in Online Khabar Nepal citing a source, Sobhraj will first fly to Doha and then to Paris on Qatar Airways tonight. The Kathmandu-Doha flight will take off from Kathmandu airport.

Delhi L-G seeks recovery of Rs 97 cr AAP spent on political ads in garb of govt ads

NEW DELHI: Delhi Lt Governor V.K. Saxena on Tuesday directed the Chief Secretary to recover Rs 97 crore spent by Aam Aadmi Party on political advertisements which it published as the government advertisements.

The L-G has directed Chief Secretary to implement the September 2016 order of the Supreme Court appointed Committee on Content Regulation in Government Advertising (CCRGA) and the pursuant order of Directorate of Information & Publicity (DIP), GNCTD, directing AAP to pay Rs 97, 14, 69, 137 plus interest, to the state exchequer, for political advertisements that it got published/telecast in the garb of government advertisements.

This, apart from being a gross case of misappropriation of Government funds for the benefit of a political party, also amounts to contempt of the Supreme and High Court, said LG Secretariat.

The Supreme Court in its order in 2015, while disposing



a Writ Petition (Civil) of 2003, with regards to "restraining the Union of India and all State Governments from using public funds on Government advertisements which are primarily intended to project individual functionaries of the Government or a Political Party.. and laying down of appropriate guidelines by this Court..", had postulated guidelines to regulate Government Advertising and eliminate unproductive expenditure.

Pursuant to this order, a three-Member Committee on CCRGA was constituted by Ministry of Information & Broadcasting to regulate the content of Advertising and eliminate unproductive expenditure of Government

Revenue.

The CCRGA, thereafter, in compliance of orders of the Delhi High Court, investigated the advertisements published by DIP, and issued orders dated September 2016, identifying specific advertisements published by GNCTD that were in stark violation of the guidelines set by the SC and directed the Directorate of Information & Publicity, GNCTD to quantify the amounts spent by it in such advertisements, and recover the same from the Aam Aadmi Party.

In compliance of the said order, the DIP, ascertained and quantified that an amount of Rs 97, 14, 69, 137 had been spent or booked on account of non-conforming advertisements that violated the Supreme Court order.

Of this, while payments amounting to Rs 42, 26, 81, 265 had already been released by DIP, Rs 54, 87, 87, 872 for advertisements published, were still pending disbursement.

Govt ran away from debate on China, inflation, unemployment: Kharage



NEW DELHI: Congress president Mallikarjun Kharge on Friday accused the government of running away from a debate on issues such as Chinese transgressions, inflation and unemployment and said this shows its "governance failure".

He also alleged the Modi government is "rattled" by the "immense support" the Bharat Jodo Yatra is getting, and is finding excuses to stop it.

Chairing a meeting of top leaders on ways to strengthen the organisation and to take forward the party's soon-to-be launched outreach initiative as a follow-up to the Yatra, Kharge said the Opposition put forward 16 major issues during the Winter Session but the Modi government did not agree to hold a debate on even one of them.

16 Army personnel killed in Sikkim accident

NEW DELHI: Sixteen Army personnel lost their lives after an Army truck met with an accident in north Sikkim on Friday. "The ill-fated vehicle, which was part of a convoy, skidded down a steep slope at Zema while negotiating a sharp turn," the Army's Eastern Command said in a statement. Four injured soldiers, who were evacuated by air, are being treated at a military hospital in Siliguri, officials said.

Expressing condolences to the bereaved families, Defence Minister Rajnath Singh said he was "deeply pained" by the loss of lives of the personnel. "The nation is deeply grateful for their service and commitment," he tweeted.

The bodies of the deceased will be transported to their respective native places by air and road on Saturday, a defence spokesperson said in Guwahati.

Wreath laying on the mortal remains of the 16 Army personnel who died in the tragic accident at Zema in North Sikkim will be held at Bagdogra airport on Saturday, the Army said. "In a tragic road accident, in-



volving an Army truck on December 23 at Zema in North Sikkim, 16 brave hearts of the Indian Army have lost their lives," the Army said in the statement.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi expressed grief at the death of the Army personnel.

Quoting Mr. Modi, the PMO tweeted, "Pained by the loss of lives of our brave army personnel due to a road mishap in Sikkim. Condolences to the bereaved families. May the injured recover soon." The Army said the truck was part of a three-vehicle convoy that moved from Chatten in the morning towards Thangu.

"Enroute at Zema, the vehicle skidded down a steep slope while negotiating a sharp turn. A rescue mission was immediately launched, and four injured soldiers have been air evacuated," the Army said.

"Unfortunately, three Junior Commissioned Officers and 13 soldiers succumbed to the injuries sustained in the accident. Indian Army stands firm with the bereaved families, at this hour of loss," it said.

A defence spokesperson said later that mortal remains of the deceased will be sent to their homes from Bagdogra airport in West Bengal on Saturday.

China woefully underprepared for Covid chaos: Report



BEIJING: China is woefully underprepared for the chaos that is inevitably unfolding since the Covid controls were lifted, as seen in other countries, the media reported on Friday. According to South China Morning Post, Since Beijing's sudden U-turn on ending the zero-Covid policy more than two weeks ago, "Chinese officials and state media have struggled to put a positive spin on the decision". Hospitals in China are overwhelmed with patients after Covid controls were eased for the first time last month, and then earlier this month.

Kashmir's harshest winter period 'Chilla-i-Kalan' begins

FW DESK

December 21 marks the beginning of Chilla Kalan, the 40 day period of the harshest cold. The night temperature in the Valley has plunged below freezing point at over minus 6 degree celsius and now it is likely to plunge further.

The Valley is currently in the grip of severe cold wave, aggravated by the lack precipitation. According to the meteorological department dry weather in Jammu and Kashmir will likely continue till December 24.

The department has predicted the possibility of rains or light snowfall in some parts of Kashmir around Christmas.

The region's Power Distribution Corporation announced



a 31-hour to 56-hour per week power curtailment schedule. This has further reduced the electric supply. People across the Valley are complaining of longer and unscheduled power cuts. The power department has already hiked monthly power bills by 8 to 22 percent. The demand right now in

Kashmir is over 1900 MW and it is expected to peak beyond 2000 MW in January. But the supply is only 1600-1700 MW, a majority of which is brought from the central pool.

The local production has dwindled to just 150 MW due to the reduction in the water level in river Jhelum.

Delhi HC dismisses plea opposing permission to Sikhs carrying kirpans on flights

NEW DELHI: The Delhi High Court on Thursday dismissed 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, challenged 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.

On December 15, the HC reserved its order on the plea. A division bench of Chief



Justice Satish Chandra Sharma and Justice Subramonium Prasad had said: "How can we interfere with such a policy decision? We can't interfere. It is a policy decision of the Government of India."

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

At this, the court had said: "Your mind might not be the government's mind. There-

fore 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 had also refused to entertain submissions by certain parties as their applications were not on record. The plaintiff had said that he was not questioning the rights of Sikhs but only wanted the stakeholders to examine the issue.

He had said: "I admit that Article 25 allows the carriage of a kirpan. But when you are flying, 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 argued 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 had 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.

British-Sikh MP seeks probe into 'bullying culture' at UK hospital

LONDON: British Sikh MP Preet Kaur Gill has called on the Health Secretary to initiate an independent inquiry into the alleged bullying culture at University Hospitals Birmingham (UHB), which is seriously impacting the staff and patient care.

In a letter to Steve Barclay, Gill said she has been inundated by messages from the UHB staff, who have shared their experiences of what has been repeatedly described as a «toxic culture».

«Staff have been bullied and demeaned for raising concerns about policies and practices that they believe have compromised patient care, and in some cases



even led to deaths, « the MP for Birmingham and Edgbaston wrote in her letter.

Gill said that whistle-blowers have told her about a «put up or shut up» culture, which has often veered into outright bullying.

Staff and former staff members have described to Gill as being harassed over several years,

leading to counselling, depression and extended periods off work. «Some staff described a culture of fear so draconian that staff were afraid to go to the toilet, « the Shadow International Development Secretary said.

Highlighting the case of Queen Elizabeth Hospital doctor Vaishnavi Kumar, who took her own life after feeling «belittled» at work, Gill said that «this must be a turning point for the Trust». An inquest found last month that the 35 year-old Indian-origin doctor ended her life after she struggled to cope up with «bullying and condescension at work», and often returned home crying.

AAP prepares pitch for 2024 at National Council met, expresses concern over national security

NEW DELHI: With the Aam Aadmi Party attaining national status, the party's National Council met for its 11th meeting here on Sunday, to discuss its growth in the last decade and its plan going forward nationally.

The meeting concluded with the National Council noting the party's achievements over the last decade and passing resolutions against rising inflation and unemployment and Chinese aggression.

Preparing the pitch for 2024 elections, national convenor and Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal said: "I have a vision for the whole country... AAP is only the



medium that will help achieve the vision. I envision an India that is a global education hub, where no one sleeps hungry, where underprivileged get top-class education, healthcare and become rich. In our vision for India, there is no scope for caste-religion divides, if the nation can't unite for once and

for all, it won't be able to progress."

He said that this has been a successful year for us for several reasons and "I would like to congratulate you all for your hard work and all your efforts".

"In the last one year, we went on to win the state elections in Punjab and form the government over there. We fought the state elections in Goa and have two MLAs in the state. We also fought in the recently concluded state elections in Gujarat and were successful there as well, so I would like to thank the people of Gujarat for trusting us and giving us such support in our first election in the state," Kejriwal said.

Delhi records season's coldest morning on Dec 23



NEW DELHI: A shallow layer of fog engulfed parts of Delhi on Friday morning, reducing visibility to 500 metres, as the city recorded the season's coldest morning with the mercury dipping to 5.3 degrees Celsius. The fog

disrupted road and rail traffic with a railways spokesperson saying 21 trains were running late by 1.30 to 4.30 hours. The maximum temperature, which settled one notch below normal at 20.1 degrees Celsius, was also the lowest this winter.

Demand to bring out Panipat and Karnal districts from NCR

SATISH HANDA

The residents, industry owners and political leaders of Panipat and Karnal districts has demanded to bring these districts out from the National Capital Region (NCR) likely to suffer industrial developments in the area badly due to strict pollution control rules and restrictions being imposed on industry by the government as such industry in these areas will be adversely affected in future. Talking to media persons Sanjay Bhatia Member Parliament of area told that he will raise this question in Lok Sabha session also. He said there are thousands of Micro, Small and Medium industry units in Karnal and Panipat districts which would be adversely affected due to government decision to ban use of diesel and in lieu use PNG to avoid increase of



pollution in the area as well as Delhi as a result large of industrial units using diesel in diesel generating sets, machinery and boilers will be compelled either to close down their shutters or shift to other districts or states. Information reveals, out of 22 districts in Haryana state as many as 14 districts have been included in NCR are likely to be adversely affected with revised rules not to use diesel in

generating sets, boiler and other machines in which diesel used as fuel even in industry situated in open rural areas in the districts Karnal, Panipat, Sonapat, Bhiwani, Mohindergarh, Jind, Charkhi Dadri and Rohtak will have to follow similar rules as applicable to industry in NCR at Faridabad, Gurugram, Noida, Ghaziabad and Delhi. Information also reveals, Haryana Chief Minister Manohar Lal Khattar during last NCR

Planning Board meeting had demanded to bring above districts in Haryana state out of NCR area but no action has been taken so far and industry entrepreneurs in these area are facing the threat of such hard norms imposed by State Pollution Control Board in spite of the fact there is much lesser pollution in atmosphere at these areas as compared to pollution in NCR around capital Delhi where Board has directed to use PNG in generating sets, boilers and other machinery in which fuel used. Industry owners in Haryana state declared falling in NCR area where PNG is not available were advised to seek permission from Pollution Control Board by January 2023 failing which their industrial units will not be permitted to function as such most of the industrial units will have to close down their shutter. According to industry own-

ers where PNG is available told that it is very costly and most of the industry owners may not be able to afford additional financial burden which would increase their production cost during present age of heavy competition where they are working on a nominal margin to meet competition. Bhatia said that industry owners in such Haryana districts declared in NCR (where PNG is available) will have to meet additional financial burden since it is being sold at the rate Rs 53 per kilogram where in NCR where available and most of the industry owners will not be in a position to afford. According to Bhatia, for converting boilers as well as other machines on PNG small scale industry owners will not be able to afford heavy amount on conversion kit, moreover question arises about the availability of such a large number of kits.

Uttar Pradesh to make new policy for Covid management: CM Yogi Adityanath

LUCKNOW: Uttar Pradesh government will formulate a fresh policy for the prevention and management of Covid-19 in consultation with the state-level health advisory committee, Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath said.



He added, "With no fresh Covid cases in the state in the last 24 hours and the situation well under control, the changing trend of Covid should be closely monitored. Medical Education and Health Department should do preparations with better coordination. The new policy will be decided in consultation with the state-level health advisory committee." He said, "Even as the increase in new Covid cases is being seen in different countries for the last one week, the situation remains in control in Uttar Pradesh. The Covid-positivity rate of the state in December has been 0.01 per cent. At present, the total number of active cases in the state is 62. In the last 24 hours,

27, 208 tests were done and not a single new patient was confirmed. During the same period, 33 people recovered." The Chief Minister directed officials that under the guidance of Prime Minister Narendra Modi, the strategy of trace, test, treat and vaccinate to prevent Covid-19 has proved successful. "Covid protocol must be strictly followed. Make people aware about wearing face masks in crowded public places like hospitals, bus, railway stations and markets. Activate the public address system," he added. He also said that the new variant of Covid-19 should be continuously monitored. Whatever and whenever new cases are found, their genome

sequencing should be done. Daily testing should be increased. People suffering from serious, incurable diseases, and the elderly will have to take special precautions, the Chief Minister added. Regarding rural areas, he said: "In accordance with the spirit of the Prime Minister's mantra of 'Jahan Bimar, Wahan Upchar' (providing sick people treatment closer to their homes), cooperation of village heads, Asha, Anganwadi workers and ANMs should be taken. These people have played a valuable role in the fight against Covid-19 so far. They need to contribute effectively again to track sick people with Covid symptoms in their areas and provide immediate hospital/doctor services as per the need." The Chief Minister added that new posts of specialist doctors must be created by examining the updated requirements of medical institutions and the old posts must not be scrapped.

Dense fog envelopes Delhi, reduces visibility



NEW DELHI: Dense fog enveloped Delhi and parts of northern India on Tuesday, lowering visibility to 25 metres in the national capital and affecting traffic movement. "The lowest visibility reported at 5:30 hours IST Dated 20.12.2022: Bhatinda: 00; Amritsar: 25; Ganganagar: 25; Patiala: 25; Delhi (Palam): 25; Lucknow: 25; Delhi (SFD): 50; Pune: 50; Ambala: 200; Agra: 200; Gorakhpur: 300; Bareilly: 500; Patna: 500; Gaya: 500; Kolkata: 500," the India Meteorological Department (IMD) tweeted.

The IMD has also issued a 'cold wave' alert in many other states, including Uttar Pradesh and Punjab. As per the Department, the minimum temperature in Delhi on Tuesday was 6 degrees Celsius, and the maximum temperature is expected to be 22 degrees. "Following the light winds at lower tropospheric levels over the Indo-Gangetic plains and moisture, dense to very dense fog is very likely to be in some pockets over Punjab, Haryana, Chandigarh, Delhi, Himachal Pradesh, and Uttar Pradesh during the next three days in the night and morning hours and dense fog in isolated pockets for subsequent two days," an IMD official said on Tuesday. The Department also said that some parts of Bihar, West Bengal, and Sikkim may also experience dense fog during the next two days. Minimum temperatures are in the range of 2-4 degrees Celsius over Punjab, Haryana and north Rajasthan. "Due to dry north/northwesterly winds from the Himalayas, cold wave conditions are likely to continue in isolated pockets over Himachal Pradesh, Punjab, Haryana, and north Rajasthan during the next 4-5 days," it said.

Haryana police busts immigration gang with 5 held, Rs 37 lakh, 6 luxury cars & 111 passports



Addressing a press conference SP Ambala Jashandeep Singh Randhawa said the nexus came to light when Narender Singh a resident of Ambala district filed a complaint against Gagandeep Singh alias Hunny resident of Topkhana Bazar in Ambala Cantonment area running a confectionery shop presently on five days police remand and his brother Harsimran Singh alias Ginni yet absconding allegedly duping him of Rs 2-lakh taken as advance on the pretext of settling his family of three to U K against a deal finalized in Rs 20 lakh. Information reveals that meanwhile several complaints of cheating youths by the interstate racket from Kaithal, Jind, Panipat, Kurukshetra have also been received.

12 lakh new properties identified in Haryana to earn 450 crore revenue: CM Khattar

SATISH HANDA

Haryana Chief Minister Manohar Lal Khattar told media persons that according to Dr Kamal Gupta Minister for urban local bodied department in the state nearly 12 lakh properties have been identified not in order for property tax in urban areas in the state, besides nearly 43 lakh properties called upon to pay property tax within this month under the government's tax waiver scheme. He advised property owners or occupiers should take full advantage of the scheme by depositing all dues of property tax before December 31, 2022 under the house tax interest waiver scheme implemented by the government in urban areas. He said, under this



scheme complete interest is being waived on the outstanding house tax amount adding that about 33 lakh property IDs have been made. Information reveals that after a survey, out of the total 43 lakh properties, more than 23.50 lakh new properties were identified, out of which 1.98 lakh objections were registered and nearly a lakh objections had been resolved, nearly 60,000 objections cancelled and about 30,000 still pending and now officers below the rank of district municipal commissioner

have been authorized to remove these objections so that these can be resolved quickly. Information also reveals that decision has been taken for parking areas at crowded places in 11 cities Gurugram, Faridabad, Yamunanagar, Panipat, Karnal, Rohtak, Hisar, Panchkula, Sonapat, Manesar and Ambala in the state for two-wheelers and four-wheelers. Chief Minister told media that that during property survey by a Jaipur based company Yashi Consultant nearly 12 lakh properties were found having incorrect data about the property provided by the owners in order to save property tax causing revenue loss to the government worth Rs 540 crore on nearly 30.82 lakh properties in the state every year.

Anil Vij inaugurates Psychiatrist OPD and Telemental Health Services at Ambala

SATISH HANDA Ambala

Addressing media persons here Haryana Health and Family Welfare Minister Anil Vij said that an agreement would soon be signed with PGIMER, Chandigarh for better treatment of children under which health related treatment of children would be easier. He said that I want that children can get good treatment, children are born healthy and they stay



healthy and live a healthy life, so this agreement will be signed. While addressing addressing on the occasion of inauguration of Psychiatrist OPD and Telemental

Health Services in collaboration with PGI Chandigarh at Civil Hospital Ambala Cantonment Vij said that every Wednesday OPD would be conducted here through the doctors of PGIMER Chandigarh. He said, these doctors would also work for providing training to entire Haryana through telemental and would also provide their services to the patients along with OPD. Health Minister Vij himself started OPD services by sitting the doctor on

his seat. Health Minister told that a 'Dharamshala' is also being built in the premises of the Civil Hospital so that the people accompanying the patients can get facilities. Apart from this, a 50-bedded critical care center will also be set up here, apart from this, work on nuclear medicine will also be started soon and a spinal injury center will also be set up in Ambala Cantonment hospital.

Big fishes suspected involved in 225 kg rice & 6500 kg wheat scam in Haryana

SATISH HANDA

Senior IPS officer Shrikant Jaghav ADGP Ambala police range has constituted three members Special Investigation Team (STI) led by police officers of ASP and DSP rank to investigate over Rs 9.37 lakh fraud in which 225 quintal rice and 6500 kg wheat sent from Food Corporation of India (FCI) godown at village Dukheri near Ambala was sent to Chander Pura in Maharashtra state in a sealed bogie of a goods train from Ambala Cantt railway station by HAFED for supply to families below poverty line under various government schemes, which was found short when reached destination in spite of the fact seal on the bogie in which it was kept was found intact. A team of three officers was sent to Chander Pura in Maharashtra to investigate the matter which confirmed that the stocks of food grains supplied from FCI godown, Dukheri were found short and the material was removed from the bags and to fill up the gap of short supply water was sprinkled on the bags in order to increase the weight since large number of bags were found wet. HAFED Managing Director A. Srinivas was lodged a complaint with Parao Police Station Ambala Cantt suspecting fraud and FCI also suspended store



keeper of their godown with immediate effect, whereas involvement of senior officers as well as a rice miller is also suspected in this fraud. Sources reveal that big fishes involved in this fraud have now started efforts to save their skin. Preliminary investigation on the order of Amit Bhushan General Manager FCI told that food grains kept in FCI godown Dukheri were dispatched to Bihar, Uttar Pradesh, Gujarat and Assam for supply to weaker section families in these states under various government welfare schemes and a three members committee sent to Chander Pur in Maharashtra to investigate the matter submitted their report on 11th Decem-

ber, 2022 confirming that rice was stolen from the bags kept in FCI godown and water was sprinkled on the bags in order to increase the weight of food grains in these bags mixed with fortified rice stocks under a planned conspiracy. When matter related to the shortage of huge quantity of rice and wheat stocks in bags exposed to FCI officers at Ambala, Karnal and Chandigarh they tried to dump this issue which had already attracted headlines in newspapers. Shrikant Jaghav ADGP Ambala police range told that SIT has been directed to investigate this case thoroughly and those involved in this scam even not spared families unable to get both end meals will not be spared at any cost.

Death sentence to 2 youths gang raped, brutally killed 19 years old



SATISH HANDA Sonapat

In the well-known case of gang rape and murder of Nirbhaya at Delhi a similar case of gang rape and murder was reported at Sonapat about five years ago in May 2017 when two youth identified as prime accuse Sumit and his friend Vikas abducted 19 years old girl (to be called as Nirbhaya of Panipat a resident of Kalapur Chungi area working in a pharmaceuticals manufacturing firm in industrial area. The court of Additional District and Sessions Judge RP Goyal sentenced two convicts to death. After sexually harassing a couple of days while she was on way to her work place a couple of times by Sumit resident of Kirti Nagar she slapped him on May 4, 2017 when after two days Sumit along with his friend Vikas Yadav a resident of Kabirpur beaten her while she was on way to factory along with one of her colleague on May 9, 2017 and abducted her, took her to Rohtak where she was gang raped by both and brutally murdered in Rohtak when a complaint was lodged with police by her mother.

Rs 1 lakh fine on contractor, Pantry Manager in Sadbhavna Express train



SATISH HANDA Ambala

Ambala Rail Division took action against the contractor as well as Pantry Manager in Sadbhavna Express train (NO. 12234) on the complaint of a passenger Shivam Bhatt travelling from Chandigarh to Shahjahan Pur allegedly overcharging by staff of Pantry car in the train. According to Hari Mohan Senior Divisional Manager Ambala Rail Division at Ambala the complainant had sent message on WhatsApp up to Union Railway Minister with a copy to him as well as to Indian Railway Tourism & Catering (IRCTC) department that an employee of Pantry car in the train Dinesh without having uniform and name plate had charged from him Rs 20 instead of Rs 15 when he ordered a bottle of Rail Neer water.

Midwife working as agent to detect sex of unborn child arrested



SATISH HANDA Ambala

Dr Kuldeep Singh Chief Medical Officer Ambala district on getting clue as regard a midwife identified as Santosh a resident of Lalru in Punjab near Ambala City working as an agent in the area to find out the sex of unborn child in pregnant women deployed a team of health department doctors led by Dr Balwinder Kaur Deputy CMO who prepared a pregnant woman to contact Santosh to find out the sex of child in her womb and the deal was finalized at Rs 20000 and the woman agent called her at Lalru bus stand. Health department team paid amount to pregnant woman and chased

her in a car when she was on way to Lalru as fixed. Santosh took pregnant woman to Multi Diagnostic Centre at Derabassi nearby for a ultrasound test to find out sex of unborn child, however the doctor was not present at the time of ultrasound test and after time the agent Santosh when got a message on her mobile phone arrived and demanding Rs 500 tip for sweets congratulated pregnant woman saying that she was carrying a male child. Meanwhile, health department team arrived and arrested Santosh and during checking recovered Rs 10500 in her purse which she told that she took Rs 10000 as her commission and Rs 500 taken for sweets.

Couple in UP booked for forced conversion to Christianity



SITAPUR: A couple, visiting Sitapur along with tourists from Brazil, has been booked under the UP Prohibition of Unlawful Conversion of Religion Act for allegedly forcing people to convert to Christianity. The main accused, David Ashthana, was arrested late on Monday night. Naimish Gupta, a resident of Sehbajpur village, lodged an FIR alleging that a couple from Lucknow, David Ashthana and Rohini Ashthana, reached their village with Brazilian tourists, identified as Rivaldo Jose DaSilva, Magnolia Maro Laronzera, Gulheram Nasimento Edalgo and Alexander D'Silva. "They met the villagers and tried to force them to convert," Gupta said. Circle Officer Mahmoodabad, Ravi Shankar Prasad, said, "A police team reached the village after getting information from Naimish Gupta.

2 kg 700 gm opium recovered from drug smuggler at Ambala

SATISH HANDA Ambala

CIA In-charge Joginder Singh on a secret information about a drug smuggler from Jharkhand supplying opium to a supplier near old railway reservation complex near Ambala Cantt railway station conducted raid and arrested Pancham Yadav (23) resident of Jharkhand while supplying 2 kg 700 gm opium to a supplier Babu Khan resident of village Ratoli in Sadhoura police station in Ambala district arrived in a Maruti Alto car bearing registration no. HR-10 P-0145 when police team arrested both while making supply. A case was registered against both at GRP police station Ambala Cantt railway station. During preliminary investigation Pancham Yadav admitted that he made six to seven transactions for supply of drugs in past also and carry



the consignment of drugs while travelling in the train for which he is being paid Rs 30000 each time. CIA In-charge told that a special campaign against drug smuggling has been launched by DSP Dheeraj Kumar on the orders of Ms Sangeeta Kalia SP Railways Haryana since most of the drug smugglers carry drugs while travelling in the train.

Pancham Yadav told that he had to supply opium also to another supplier a resident of village Bhogpur in Sadhoura police station but he did not come to collect opium consignment. A case was registered at GRP police station Ambala Cantt against both under NDPS Act. The accused were produced in the court today and remanded to police custody.

Bhutto has lost mental sense, people in Pakistan dying of hunger now running terrorism factories: Vij

SATISH HANDA Ambala

Haryana Home & Health Minister Anil Vij while addressing media persons at PWD Rest House during 'Janta Durbar' on Saturday in which nearly 7000 persons arrived from all over Haryana state, listened to their grievances till late night and sorted out most of the public grievances at the spot contacting concerned officials on mobile phone. On the issue of Bhutto's comments on our Prime Minister, Vij said, Bhutto has lost mental sense because of situation of Pakistan turning bad to worst day by day since people in Pakistan are dying of hunger and country is functioning like a factory spreading terrorism and such circumstances have made Bhutto mentally sick making useless statements out of frustration. Vij said, Chankya had truly stated that when a person gets defeated or on way to defeat starts speaking



nonsense under the condition of mental sickness like Bhutto. Vij in reply to a media question regarding attitude of leaders of few political parties in opposition in the country, expressing concern said that a couple of such parties are involved in anti-government activities and he is not prepared to admit statement made by Congress leader Rahul Gandhi that China is preparing for war against our country and in a recent incident our

brave army men strongly pushed Chinese army men behind during this recent incident when they attempted to enter into our area at the border which was seen by people all over in the country on television, whereas few political parties in opposition are raising question on this issue again and again and the question arises if our army at the border should either make reply to them or to the enemies across the border.

PM calls for focus on wealth generation, peace for development of Northeast

Prime Minister Narendra Modi underscored the need to focus on eight pillars of Lakshmi (wealth), peace, power, tourism, 5G connectivity, culture, natural farming, sports and potential, for further development of the eight Northeastern states. Addressing a meeting of North Eastern Council (NEC) in Shillong, Modi said that the Government has gone beyond conversion of 'Look East' policy to 'Act East', and now its policy is 'Act Fast for Northeast' and 'Act First for Northeast'. The meeting marks the golden jubilee celebration of the NEC. It was formally inaugurated in 1972.

Hailing the contribution of NEC in the development of the Northeastern region, the Prime Minister said that the region is the gateway to Southeast Asia and can become a centre for development of the entire region.

"And to realise this potential of the region, work is going on the projects like Indian-Myanmar-Thailand trilateral highway and Agartala-Akhau-



ra rail project," the Prime Minister said. Highlighting the success of peace initiatives in the region, he said that many peace agreements have been signed, inter-state boundary agreements have been done and there has been a marked reduction in instances of extremism. Discussing India's commitment towards net zero, the Prime Minister said that the Northeast can become a powerhouse of hydropower. This it said, will make the

states of the region power surplus, help in expansion of industries and generate a large number of jobs. Discussing the tourism potential of the region, the Prime Minister said that both culture and nature of the region are attracting tourists from across the world.

He added that tourism circuits are being identified and developed in the region also.

Talking about boosting connectivity in the region, the Prime Minister said that iconic

bridge projects which were pending since several decades have now been completed.

In the last eight years, number of airports in the region has jumped from nine to 16, and the number of flights have increased from about 900 before 2014 to around 1,900.

Many Northeastern states have come to railway map for the first time and efforts are being made to expand the waterways also. The length of national highways has in-

creased by 50 per cent since 2014 in the region. He said that with the launch of the PM-DevINE scheme, the infrastructure projects in the Northeast have gained more momentum. He added that the government is also working on improving digital connectivity in the Northeast by increasing the optical fibre network.

Talking about development of 5G infrastructure, he said that it will help further development of startup ecosystem, service sector among others in the region.

Cold wave grips North India, dense fog engulfs several areas

NEW DELHI: Cold wave continued to grip northern parts of the country and dense fog engulfed the Indo-Gangetic plains, including Delhi, for the fifth consecutive day on Friday.

According to officials, in Delhi a minimum temperature of 7.9 degrees Celsius was recorded at Palam; Lodhi Road had 7.3, Aya Nagar - 5.6; Ridge (Civil lines) - 5.3, Najafgarh - 9.1 while Pitampura, Akshardham's Sports Complex, Mayur Vihar recorded a minimum temperature of 10, 10, and 8.7 degrees Celsius.

"Dense to Very Dense Fog conditions are likely to continue over Punjab, Haryana, Chandigarh and Uttar Pradesh during next 48 hours and decrease in intensity & spread thereafter," tweeted the India Meteorological Department (IMD). Around 20 trains were delayed due to the fog and low visibility. According to an IMD official, due to moisture and light winds at lower tropospheric levels over Indo-Gangetic plains, very dense fog in many/most pockets is very likely over Punjab and



Himachal Pradesh in night/morning hours during the next 48 hours. "Dense fog in isolated pockets is also very likely over Himachal Pradesh, Uttarakhand, north Rajasthan, Bihar, Sub Himalayan West Bengal, Sikkim and Tirpura for the next 2-3 days," said the official.

A drop in temperature has been also recorded in states of North India, including Delhi, Uttar Pradesh, Punjab and Bihar. "Due to dry north/northwesterly winds from Himalayas over plains of northwest India, cold wave conditions are very likely in

isolated pockets over Punjab, Haryana and north Rajasthan during December 24 to 26," said the official.

"Cold day to severe cold day conditions are also very likely over Punjab, Haryana and Uttar Pradesh in the next two days," predicted the IMD. Intense cold wave swept Ladakh and Kashmir as the 40-day long period of harsh winter cold known as 'Chillai Kalan' entered its third day. In the J&K union territory, Srinagar had minus 4.8, Jammu had 6.3 degree Celsius.

In Ladakh region, Kargil had minus 13.1 and Leh minus 13.8 as the minimum temperature.

Social activists like Raj Narain needed in every corner of the country, says MP Sanjay Singh

HE WAS SPEAKING AT THE LAUNCH OF THE BOOK 'RAJ NARAIN - EK NAAM NAHI ITIHAAS HAI' WRITTEN BY SHAHNAWAZ QADRI



FW DESK
New Delhi

Today we need social activists like Raj Narain in every corner of the country who could question the establishments and governments when required, said Rajya Sabha member Sanjay Singh during a book launch ceremony.

Also present at the launch of the book 'Raj Narain - Ek Naam Nahi Itihaas Hai' written by Shah Nawaz Qadri were Socialist leader and thinker Raghav Thakur, former Rajya Sabha MP Obaidullah Khan Azmi, Professor Raj Kumar Jain and Prof Ramesh Dikshit, among others.

Raj Narain -- an Indian freedom fighter and politician -- had won a famous electoral malpractice case against the then Prime Minister Indira Gandhi, which led to her disqualification and imposition of Emergency in India in 1975. He had defeated Indira Gandhi during the 1977 Lok Sabha elections.

Raj Kumar Jain, who wrote a 27-page chapter in the book, said, "There must be something in Raj Narain's personality that such a huge number of people have gathered here to pay tribute to his contributions to the society, particularly the downtrodden."

The event was held at Gandhi Peace Foundation in New Delhi.

Plan afoot for single window clearance for infra projects within 100 km from LAC



NEW DELHI: The Indian Army has identified 130 villages in border areas in Arunachal Pradesh and Sikkim for boosting infrastructure, Eastern Army Commander Lt Gen Rana Pratap Kalita said on Friday against the backdrop of increasing concerns over China's expansion of civilian settlements close to the Line of Actual Control (LAC).

Lt Gen Kalita, addressing an event, also said efforts are underway to have some sort of a "single window system" for

according approvals for development of any infrastructure within 100 km from the LAC as time taken for obtaining various regulatory clearances results in delays in implementation of key projects.

The Commander said many areas along the LAC in Arunachal Pradesh and Sikkim fall under ecologically sensitive zones, wildlife protected regions and reserved forests and obtaining various approvals for projects become challenging at times.

Cancel case against Sikh youth registered due to photo of Sant Bhindranwale in Madhya Pradesh : SGPC

AMRITSAR: Shiromani Gurdwara Parbandhak Committee (SGPC) President Harjinder Singh Dhami has strongly condemned the arrest of a Sikh youth after registration of a case against him for placing a photo of Sant Jarnail Singh Khalsa Bhindranwale on a tractor during Nagar Kirtan (religious procession) at Jabalpur in Madhya Pradesh (MP).

SGPC President said that this action taken by the MP police is a big injustice and excess on



the minority Sikhs, which has hurt Sikh sentiments. He said that India is a multi-religious

country, in which everyone has religious freedom as per the Constitution.

Harjinder Singh Dhami said that Sant Jarnail Singh Khalsa Bhindranwale is a martyr of the Sikh community, who attained martyrdom in June 1984 while struggling against the desecration of Sachkhand Sri Harmandir Sahib.

"Placing the photo of Sant Jarnail Singh Bhindranwale is not a crime, so the case against the Sikh youth in Jabalpur should be canceled immediately", said SGPC President. SGPC President appealed to

Madhya Pradesh Chief Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan and Home Minister Narottam Mishra to intervene in this matter and issue instructions to cancel the case registered against the innocent Sikh youth.

He also appealed to the representative Sikhs of MP, Kendri Sri Guru Singh Sabha, MP and other Gurdwara committees to raise this issue vigorously at the local level so that the Sikh youth can get justice.

Terror incidents in Jammu and Kashmir down by 168 per cent: Anurag Thakur



FW DESK

Union Minister Anurag Thakur Monday said that "terror incidents in Jammu and Kashmir decreased by 168 per cent" since the Modi government came to power.

"The government undertook decisive actions which yielded definitive results," Thakur said adding that Modi government has a "zero tolerance policy towards terrorism".

"Surgical strikes in 2016 were in response to the Uri attack. Balakot Air strikes in 2019 were in response to the Pulwama bombing, so all these decisive actions yielded definitive results," he told reporters here.

Giving details of the decline in violence since Modi government came to power in 2014, Thakur said terror incidents has come down by 80 percent, and civilian deaths have decreased by 89 percent.

NDTV founders to sell most of their stake in broadcaster to Adani Group



NEW DELHI: NDTV founders Prannoy Roy and his wife Radhika Roy on Friday said they will sell 27.26 % out of their remaining 32.26 % shareholding in the news broadcaster to Adani Group.

This follows Adani Group becoming the single largest shareholder in New Delhi Television Ltd (NDTV) after first buying out a company backed by the founders and then acquiring more shares from the open market.

"Consequently, with mutual agreement we have decided to divest most of our shares in NDTV to (Adani Group firm) AMG Media Network," the founders said in a statement to stock exchanges.

Disallowing debate on China disrespect to democracy, says Sonia Gandhi

NEW DELHI: In a meeting of party MPs, Congress Parliamentary Party (CPP) Chairperson Sonia Gandhi on Wednesday accused the Centre for disrespecting democracy by not allowing a debate in Parliament on the recent China transgressions.

"This refusal to allow a parliamentary debate on such a matter of grave national concern shows disrespect for our democracy, and reflects poorly on the government's intentions. It demonstrates its inability to bring the nation together," she said.

"On the contrary, by following divisive policies, by spreading hatred and targeting some sections of our society, the government makes it harder for the country to stand up as one against foreign threats."

"Such divisions weaken us and make us more vulnerable. At times like this it must be the government's endeavour and responsibility to unite our people, not divide them as it has been doing these past several years," the senior leader added.

Sonia Gandhi said the country continues to face significant internal and external challenges like inflation, unemployment, social polarisation, weakening of democratic institutions and repeated border incursions.

"As the principal opposi-



tion party, we have a great responsibility and we must continue to strengthen and renew ourselves to fulfil it."

She alleged that the economic situation continues to be distressing, despite the government's repeated insistence that all is well.

"The price of daily commodities continue their intolerable rise, placing a heavy burden on crores of households. The inability to provide jobs, especially for the youth, has been a feature of this government's tenure."

"The unemployment situation is worse even though as the Prime Minister hands over appointment letters for a few thousand, crores more face an uncertain future with government vacancies unfilled, exams unreliable, and PSUs being privatised."

"Small businesses, which generate the bulk of employment in the country, are still struggling to survive after the

repeated blows of demonetization, a poorly implemented GST, and a mismanaged response to the Covid-19 pandemic. Farmers face rising costs, especially of fertilizers, uncertain prices for their crops, all these made worse by increasingly erratic weather conditions," the Congress leader said.

She alleged that farmers also seem to be no longer the Centre's priority after its misguided attempt at forcing down the three farm laws.

"A troubling new development is the calculated attempt underway to delegitimise the judiciary. Ministers, and even a high constitutional authority, have been enlisted to making speeches attacking the judiciary on various grounds. It is quite clear that this is not an effort to provide reasonable suggestions for improvement. Rather, it is an effort to reduce the standing of the judiciary in the eyes of the public."

BSF thwarts infiltration by Pak drones at Punjab international border

NEW DELHI: The Border Security Force (BSF) foiled Pakistan's attempt of smuggling drugs and weapons across the border through drones. BSF apprised that the drone tried infiltration twice at different posts along the international border of Punjab.

BSF said that the drone was fired upon by the jawans at the border in Gurdaspur in Punjab, late on Sunday night.

According to the information, the drone's activity was detected at Chandu Batala outpost around 10:20 p.m., in response of which the security force fired 6 illumination bombs and 26 rounds of rapid fire.

BSF informed that the drone tried to infiltrate Indian territory again at 10:48

p.m. near the Kasowal post in the sector.

The force retaliated by firing around 72 rounds in cross fire and 4 illumination bombs. The drone was then seen going back towards Pakistan from above the fencing.

Senior officials were informed after the incident and search operations are underway in the area. Gurdaspur DIG Prabhakar Joshi inspected the spot and interacted with the locals including jawans. He said that the entire area was being intensively searched by the BSF and the police.

Joshi added that Pakistani drone activity has been observed three times in the last 2 days and claimed that a befitting reply to the attempts was given by the jawans.



Raghav Chadha seeks discussion in Parliament on COVID surge; demands ban on flights connecting India, China

FW DESK
New Delhi

Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) leader Raghav Chadha on Thursday gave a Suspension of Notice under Rule 267 of the Rules of Procedure and Conduct of Business in the Rajya Sabha to hold a discussion on rising COVID-19 cases in China and its impact on India.

In his written notice, Raghav Chadha said, "I hereby give notice under Rule 267 of the Rules of Procedure and Conduct of Business in the Council of States (Rajya Sabha) of my intention to move the following motion for suspension of Question Hour listed for 22nd December 2022: "That in pursuance of Rule 267 of the Rules

of Procedure and Conduct of Business in the Rajya Sabha, this House do suspend Rule 38 of the said Rule in its application to the discussion on RISING CORONA CASES IN CHINA AND IMPACT ON INDIA." China is witnessing an alarming surge in fatal COVID infections from a sub-variant of Omicron.

Epidemiologists predict at least three waves of the virus to hit the country during the following months and cause over a million fatalities. The virus has already wreaked havoc in China pushing its healthcare system into chaos reports suggest that there are no beds in hospitals, medicines are running out of stock and mortuaries have run out of



space. Videos of the devastation caused by the pandemic are flooding social media and alarming people.

Expressing concern over detection of four cases of this new variant in India, Chadha said

that the world is on high alert. "As a nation, we can neither afford complacency nor manage a lethal pathogen with just reassuring headlines."

Seeking a ban on flights from China, he said that given

the seriousness of the situation, the Ministry of Health, Government of India has issued an advisory to the States, but stronger measures were needed. "The need of the hour is to immediately ban any connecting flights from China to India via Asian countries and consider a mandatory institutional quarantine for international passengers from affected countries," he said.

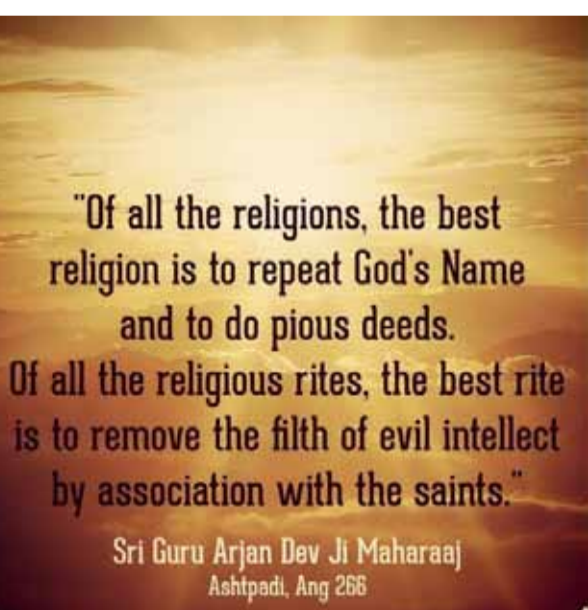
He stressed that managing a pandemic is the collective responsibility of the union and all state governments. Therefore, a discussion in the Parliament on the impending threat from the new variant and the Government's preparedness to tackle the same is highly needed.

New strain invites fresh strategy for Covid vaccination

The spurt in coronavirus cases reported out of China has triggered global alarm. India's Health Ministry has issued a directive to States to send positive samples to the Indian SARS-CoV-2 Genomics Consortium (INSACOG) to check for new, concerning strains. The Health Minister, too, has called for a review meeting of the coronavirus situation in India. India's official numbers suggest that, thus far, there is little to worry. There are only 3,408 active cases. Only one district has a test positivity rate of over 10% and only four between 5 and 10%, as per the latest available weekly data. India's COVID-19 vaccination coverage has exceeded 219.33 crore, and there are no signs of distress being reported out of hospitals. The prevalent opinion is that the lifting of curbs, after almost three years of some of the most restrictive containment measures, has now exposed a large swathe of people who lack 'natural immunity'. Some mathematical modelling projections calculate a million COVID-19 cases in the coming days in China. Given that much of the world has moved to normalcy in terms of travel, the concern is that this surge is likely to reverberate globally with many more infections, even in India, inevitable. There are two key lessons that can be derived from the Chinese experience: long lockdowns cannot eliminate the virus or prevent the development of new strains, and the only reasonable defence possible against severe disease is via vaccines. China has largely depended on home-grown vaccines such as CoronaVac and Sinopharm vaccines that rely on the inactivated virus technology. Despite 90% of the population receiving a single dose, and half, a second dose, the numbers in China suggest that waning immunity is a fait accompli. The big lesson for India is to not only establish the prevalent coronavirus variants but also whether the administered vaccines continue to be efficacious.

LETTERBOX

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PRABHASH RANJAN EXPLAINS HOW THE US IS MOVING TOWARD GROWING PROTECTIONISM

Lawlessness in global trade



In a significant development in international trade law, four separate World Trade Organization (WTO) Panel reports have ruled that the tariffs of 25% and 10% on steel and aluminium, respectively, that the United States (U.S.) had imposed during the presidency of Donald Trump are inconsistent with WTO law. The cases were brought by China, Norway, Switzerland, and Turkey.

The WTO panellists held that these tariff rates breached the U.S.'s obligations under Article II.1 of the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT), which obligates countries not to impose tariffs beyond bound rates. Further, these tariffs breached Article I of GATT because they discriminated between some foreign producers of steel and aluminium over others. Importantly, the U.S. tried to justify its tariff hikes under Article XXI of GATT which allows countries to deviate from their trade obligations on grounds of national security. Specifically, Article XXI(b)(iii) of GATT allows a country to take any action 'which it considers' necessary for the protection of its essential security interests taken in time of war or other 'emergency in international relations'. Contrary to the U.S.'s flaccid assertion, the panel held that the national security rule in Article XXI is not entirely 'self-judging'. A panel can review the action of a state taken purportedly to protect its national security. The Panel's decision on this point is consistent with previous WTO jurisprudence laid down in the Russia-Transit and the Saudi Arabia- IPR cases.

The Panel rejected the U.S.'s argument that it increased the tariff rates due to global excess capacity, which could lead to excessive imports of these two commodities used in defence production, thus compromising the U.S.'s national security. The Panel held that the situation the U.S. referred to does not constitute an 'emergency in international relations' under Article XXI(b)(iii) because it lacked severity.

Neoliberal to geoeconomic order

For a deeper understanding, one needs to appreciate the larger political context in which this dispute arose. Anthea Roberts, Henrique Choer Moraes, and Victor

Ferguson argue that the international economic order today is moving away from the post-Cold War neoliberal order toward a new geoeconomic order. In the neoliberal order, arguably, economic and security interests are relatively independent tracks. Neoliberalism is based on principles such as non-discrimination in international economic relations and a peaceful settlement of disputes through neutral international courts. It champions interdependence. These principles are achieved by legalising the neoliberal order through the creation of global institutions such as the WTO and a plethora of free trade and investment treaties. When the neoliberal order reigned supreme, the U.S. as the undisputed hegemon, supported free trade because it did not fear the growth of its strategic rivals such as China.

Although the neoliberal order is not dead, the avowedly independent economic and security tracks have started to converge, thus heralding the geoeconomic order. As the difference between the size of the Chinese and American economies

began to shrink at a rapid pace, the U.S. seems to be giving up on championing free trade and swiftly embracing protectionism. The Trumpian tariffs wrapped in the cloth of national security, which the Joe Biden administration also backed, is a classic example of an American consensus on the geoeconomic order. The increasing use of the national security legalese to justify such economic nationalism is an attempt to blunt the possibility of international courts reviewing state action. This partly explains the U.S.'s erroneous argument that the national security defence is 'self-judging' and 'non justiciable'.

International trade lawlessness

The geoeconomic order will inevitably lead to what James Bacchus calls 'international trade lawlessness'. The Biden administration has rejected the WTO Panel's ruling calling it 'flawed'. Consequently, the U.S. will not remove the illegal tariff rates. Regrettably, the U.S. is using this ruling to double down on its unsound agenda of asking for reforms in the WTO's dispute settlement mechanism,

which has been a shining star in the otherwise dull sky of international dispute settlement. The fear of being called out for economic nationalism by the WTO's dispute settlement mechanism has led the U.S. to block the appointment of judges to the Appellate Body — the highest court in the WTO — for the last several years.

The U.S. which always lectures countries such as Russia and China to steadfastly follow international law is turning its back to the rule-based order. This will only embolden other countries to brazenly pursue unilateralism and economic nationalism. In many ways, this unilateralism is reminiscent of the economic nationalism of the dark decades of the first part of the 20th century that led to the Great Depression and the Second World War. The days ahead will be trying times for the post-war liberal trade order because its most important chieftain seems to have lost interest in it.

Prabhash Ranjan is Professor and Vice-Dean, Jindal Global Law School, O.P. Jindal Global University. The views expressed are personal. Views are personal



LET'S MAKE A RESOLUTION NOT TO EAT JUNK FOOD FOR THE NEXT YEAR AND PLAN A TRIP TO NATURAL PLACES. YOU CAN START SAVING MONEY FOR YOUR FUTURE NEEDS AND EMERGENCIES. YOU CAN ALSO WORK ON A PLAN TO SPEND MORE TIME WITH YOUR FAMILY.

Best time to make resolutions for the New Year

NARVIJAY YADAV

The current year is coming to an end and the New Year is about to enter in our lives with a bang. It's the best time to press the reset button of our lives to get rid of bad habits and start something new and wonderful. By the way, the clock of time keeps on moving at its own pace. But as soon as the yearly calendar changes, everything seems to have changed. As if the previous train left the station and a new train is standing on the platform to take us to the new destination. It is the last fortnight of the passing year and what better time to move ahead with full enthusiasm with new resolutions. The best way to make your New Year's resolutions come true is to choose one goal at a time, work towards it patiently, reshape your working style, and always remember that «change isn't a one-night show». Change happens slowly and it takes a long time to mature things or thoughts. It is an ongoing process that happens every day.

Every New Year, people start thinking about creating a better edition of them. New Year is a time of new beginnings, new resolutions, and new dreams. With



the passing of a year, the speed of the old resolutions gets down, everything seems decreasing, as if the engine is exhausted, or something is missing. In such a situation, the New Year comes like a reset button, a new beginning. Abraham Lincoln once said - "Always keep in mind that your own determination to be successful is more important than anything else." We can give direction to our great resolve by taking one small step every day. Keep noting down

your everyday progress in a diary and give yourself some rewards when you reach a certain point. This keeps the excitement going and the engine doesn't go down.

The year 2022 has been comparatively better than the previous two years, i.e. 2020-21. This year also has reminded us of the importance of health, family, relations, saving money, and building a support system. The world has learned that one should live in the present moment

only because life is very unpredictable and nothing is certain about the future. Everything in the world and in life is temporary. The bad time also taught people a lot about kindness, living together, helping each other, seeking help from each other, and being compassionate. In the time of the pandemic, even new-age kids who couldn't think ahead of pizza and burgers learned that natural living, Ayurveda, and centuries-old Indian food have the power to heal. We are aware now that to build immunity, one can rely on coarse grains, vegetables, and fruits. Vegetarian food is the main diet of human beings. Killing and eating animals is not real human behaviour. The bad time also explained the increasing pressure on the Earth's atmosphere and the importance of water, forest, land, and wild animals and birds. We are aware that health is the real wealth. Therefore, make a resolution not to eat junk food for the next year. You can plan a trip to natural places. You can start saving money for your future needs and emergencies. You can work on a plan to spend more time with your family.

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

BOOKS: REVIEW

Book recaps untold stories of freedom struggle in N-E

Did you know that a 12-year-old girl from Assam by the name of Tuleswari Barua is the youngest martyr of India's freedom struggle? Or that General Thangal of Manipur is the oldest martyr of India, having been hanged to death at the age of 80?

A new book titled 'Untold Stories of the Freedom Struggle from Northeast India' written by veteran Guwahati-based journalist and author Samudra Gupta Kashyap, has not only rediscovered these two stories, but has also brought together numerous other stories of patriotism, courage and sacrifice from across the northeastern region.

The book has been published recently by the Publications Division of the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting, as part of 'Azadi ka Amrit Mahotsav'.

Divided into seven chapters each dealing with one of the seven states of the northeast, the book brings to the fore hitherto unrecognised battles that freedom-loving tribal communities of the region fought against the heavily-armed, repressive, exploitative British.

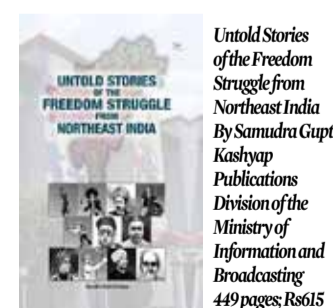
It begins with the story of the first revolt led by Gomdhar Konwar two years after the British annexed Assam in 1826, records the execution of Piyoli Phukan and Jiuram Duliya Barua in 1830 and then unfolds, in a chronological manner, a series of incidents of the anti-colonial resistance till 1947.

The Maniram Dewan story and massacre of over 185 Hindustani sepoys in 1857, which had so long remained neglected at the national level, the subcontinent's first peasants' uprising at Phulaguri

The book has been published recently by the Publications Division of the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting, as part of 'Azadi ka Amrit Mahotsav'

(1861) against the British, the Patharughat massacre (1894), the role played by women (including attainment of martyrdom by over a dozen of them), the Dhekiajuli massacre (1942), -- all of Assam -- come together in this well-researched book.

Likewise, the amazing manner in which the Khanti, Singpho, Adi, Mishmi and Wanchoo communities of present-day Arunachal Pradesh, the Khasi, Jaintia and Garo tribals of pres-



ent-day Meghalaya, the Angamis of the Naga Hills, the Lushais of present-day Mizoram and the Kuki and Zeliangrongs of Manipur were engaged in bloody battles to protect their respective homelands from British subjugation have been brilliantly described.

Yet another episode described in detail is the Anglo-Manipuri War of 1891. The full-scale war the British waged on Manipur, the armed resistance leading to the killing of five top British officers, the martyrdom of Bir Tikendrajit, General Thangal, Kajao Singh, Chirai Naga and Niranjan Singh, the Battle of Khongjom and the heroism of

Paona Brajabasi, Nupi Lan or Manipur's women warriors, takes the reader back in time to the dark days of British expansionism in the northeast.

The author has also described in detail the Muslim League conspiracy to include Assam in its Pakistan plan by way of engineering a silent demographic invasion, and how the Assamese leaders under Lokapriya Gopinath Bardoloi stood up against the silence of the All India Congress Committee to this issue.

"Bringing out all these from across the northeast was a huge challenge, especially because of lack of proper documentation of most of the incidents. In fact, barring Assam, Manipur and partially Meghalaya, the anti-colonial resistance movements in the other states have been hardly researched and documented. In many cases, one had to take help of British documents and reports and then recreate the stories from the opposite angle," Kashyap, who is currently a State Information Commissioner in Assam.

Haryana to develop five industrial towns to ease industry traffic at Delhi

SATISH HANDA

Haryana state known for agriculture production in the country in past years is likely to bring industrial revolution in future with the decision of Haryana state government to develop five industrial towns on both sides of Kundli-Manesar-Palwal Express way (KMP) in view of increasing population in future, which will also provide relief to industry entrepreneurs at Delhi having manufacturing units situated in thickly populated areas as well as residents of Delhi suffering from severe pollution, smoke in the atmosphere round the clock. The decision will also be beneficial for Haryana state to bring prosperity as well as sources of employment in the state, besides reducing industrial population, pollution and improvement in traffic conditions at Delhi.

Talking to media persons Haryana Chief Minister Manohar Lal Khatter told that there is



a proposal to develop five industrial towns on both sides of 136 km long KMP by HSIIDC similar to Scotland and Singapore, besides a proposal already finalized by Haryana state government to develop an Iconic building similar to Universal Studio and Burj Khalifa at Gurugram for which land has already been procured. According to the proposal, decision has been taken to develop five industrial towns in 50000 hectare area each on both sides of KMP near Bahadurgarh, between Kundli and Kharkhoda, near Sohna and Mewat in dis-

tricts Faridabad, Palwal, Gurugram, Nuh, Rohtak and Jhajjar. Chief Minister told that HSIIDC officers have been directed to take prompt action in this regard providing best possible facilities to those setting up industry in proposed five industrial towns. He said, international level investors and consultants have been invited enabling Haryana to become a state of industrial towns in the country.

While interacting media, Chief Minister told that in past eight years BJP rule in Haryana state fresh industrial investment of

value Rs 18422 crore has been invited in the state, whereas 1,59,622 new industrial units have been set up in the state in this period provided employment to 12,60,000 persons since industrial entrepreneurs were impressed by the developments in the state including construction of Kundli-Manesar-Palwal Express way, construction of rail track between Palwal and Sonapat and Haryana Arribal Rail Corridor presently under construction as such large number of industrial entrepreneurs are willing to set up industry in Haryana. Khatter said, there is likely of large number of industrial units situated in thickly populated areas at Delhi may shift their units to these five newly proposed industrial towns in Haryana having a network of roads and three to four highways connected with Express way near Delhi.

Khatter told media persons that large number leading industrial houses as well as

foreign companies are setting up Mega Projects in Haryana with heavy investment worth Rs 20971 crore during current year 2021-22 which include Flipcart Group setting up a unit at Hazipur (Manesar) in 140 acre area with investment of Rs 1389 crore likely to provide employment to more than 16000 persons. Chief Minister said that among other major projects arrived or likely to invest in the state include Maruti Suzuki setting up a plant on 800 acre area with Rs 18000 crore investment at IMT Kharkhoda. Suzuki Motorcycle manufacturing company also setting up a plant at IMT Kharkhoda in 100 acres area, Birla Group setting up industry in 70 acre area at Panipat with the investment worth Rs 1100 crore, Amprex Technologies Limited setting up a plant in 178 acre area with the investment of Rs 7083 crore likely to provide employment to nearly 7000 persons.

Instacart cofounder Apoorva Mehta stole trade secrets, alleges lawsuit

NEW DELHI: Apoorva Mehta, the Indian-origin cofounder of grocery delivery company Instacart, has been accused of using stolen trade secrets to build a healthcare startup promoting weight loss.

Hello Logistics, which operates under the name NextMed, has sued Mehta, his business partner Tejasvi Singh, and their company Cloud Health Systems, reports The American Bazaar.

Indian-Canadian businessman Mehta, who announced to step down as executive chairman of Instacart in July this year, has been sued over allegations of misappropriation of trade secrets, copyright infringement and other claims.

According to the lawsuit, Singh collected some of NextMed's trade secrets under the guise of gathering the information as part of "due diligence for investors". Mehta and Singh then used the information to create a company that "does business as Sunrise, with a copycat website", according to the complaint. They also allegedly implemented NextMed's highly confidential customer acquisition and other strategies, "in mere weeks".



Mehta's new healthcare company has raised \$30 million from two venture capital firms.

In July, the US-based Instacart's Founder and Executive Chairman Mehta announced to step down from the online grocery delivery service he founded nearly a decade ago. Instacart announced that

CEO Fidji Simo has been appointed as Chair of the Board of Directors, effective as Mehta moves out from the board once Instacart becomes a public company.

"Since I transitioned from CEO to Executive Chairman a year ago, I realised that I want to pursue a new mission and I want to do it with the same singular focus that I had while building Instacart. Stepping off the board will allow me to do just that," Mehta had said in a tweet.

India supplies 124 SUVs to Sri Lanka police



NEW DELHI: India has handed over 125 SUVs, as part of planned supply of 500 vehicles for Sri Lankan law enforcement agencies and armed forces under an on-going Line of Credit of US\$ 100 million.

Manufactured by Mahindra and Mahindra Company of India, the fleet of vehicles were handed over ceremonially by the High Commissioner of India to Sri Lanka, Gopal Baglay to Public Security Minister, Tiran Alles on Thursday.

"These vehicles with state-of-the-art facilities will help address Sri Lanka's requirements and augment capacities across the country. India and Sri Lanka enjoy a multi-faceted and multi-sectoral partnership," Indian High Commission in Colombo said in a statement.

Acting in line with 'Neighbourhood First policy', the Indian government has assisted financially troubled Sri Lanka in various projects under concessional Lines of Credit to tide over the economic crisis.

The Indian Government has helped Sri Lanka with a massive \$3.2 billion line of credit since January this year and the financial assistance had been extended to diverse sectors including railways, infrastructure, defence, renewable energy, supply of petroleum, fertilisers and among others.

Additionally in March 2022, the Indian Government also extended a concessional Credit Facility of \$ 1 billion to Sri Lanka through the State Bank of India for supply of essential items like food, medicines, fuel, the High Commission stated.

HRtech SaaS platform BetterPlace raises \$40 mn in deepening funding winter

NEW DELHI: In a challenging funding scenario, HRtech software-as-a-service (SaaS) platform BetterPlace on Tuesday said it has raised \$40 million as part of Series C+ fundraise from several new investors as well as existing investors Jungle Ventures and British International Investment.

The platform said it clocked a five times growth in FY22 on an annual basis, and is eyeing an annual recurring revenue (ARR) in excess of \$100 million in FY23.

"The frontline workforce management market in Asia is a \$400 billion opportunity and we are the only full-suite horizontal SaaS for enterprises and a platform catering to this segment in the region," said Pravin Agarwala, Co-founder and Group CEO, BetterPlace.

Over 1,100 large enterprises currently use the Cloud-based SaaS and its microservices architecture to manage over four million frontline workers monthly.

Punjab CM visits Chennai, Hyderabad to woo big industrialists for investment in state

CHANDIGARH: In order to further propel industrial growth in the state, the Punjab Chief Minister Bhagwant Mann visited Chennai and Hyderabad to woo the industrial giants for investment in state.

Punjab Chief Minister reached Chennai where he met the business delegations and prominent companies to rope in investments and strategic tie ups in key sectors. Likewise, Bhagwant Mann will be having interactive meeting with captains of industry at Hyderabad. This was crucial two day visit of the Chief Minister is likely to immensely benefit the state in roping in huge investments, Technical know how and expertise from big companies.

Punjab Chief Minister also extended invitation to the industrialists for the Investment Summit being organised by the state government on February 23-24 at SAS, Nagar, Mohali. Meanwhile, Bhagwant Mann reiterated his firm commitment to emerge state as an indus-



trial hub adding that the state government will leave no stone unturned for it. He said that every effort is being made to put state on the orbit of high growth trajectory of industrial development.

Chief Minister Punjab envisioned that the tour to big industrial hubs of the country will further accelerate the industrial growth of state on one hand and open new vistas of employment for youth on the other. Bhagwant Mann said that he will personally showcase Punjab as land of opportunities and growth to the entrepreneurs. He expressed hope that this tour will prove to be a milestone towards giving a major fillip to industrial growth of state.

Auto Expo- The Motor Show 2023 - 'Explore the World of Future Mobility'

KULBIR SINGH KALSI
Chandigarh

India's largest biennial spectacle of the automobile industry, Auto Expo - The Motor Show 2023, will take place from January 13th to 18th 2023 at the India Expo Mart in Greater Noida, Uttar Pradesh. The inauguration ceremony will be held on January 12.

Since its inception, the Auto Expo has served as a launching pad for automobile companies seeking to establish a presence in India.

The theme of this 16th edition of the exhibition is 'Explore the World of Mobility', which coincides with the industry's vision of the most advanced futuristic green technology for a safer, cleaner, greener and connected tomorrow. It will provide visitors with an understanding of the changing and evolving mobility eco-system, offering newer and improved solutions



that are future ready.

Rajesh Menon, Director General of the Society of Indian Automobile Manufacturers (SIAM), invited media persons to visit the expo and said, "This year at Auto Expo, the industry aims to offer a new dimension and experience to visitors, allowing them to 'Explore the Greener World of Indian Mobility'". Auto Expo 2023 is providing a platform for companies to showcase ad-

vancement in new generation Electrified Technologies and would provide experience to consumers on how the Auto Industry has geared up for transformation of mobility that would be carbon benign, safe and connected. There would also be a special focus on Ethanol. There is already a lot of excitement and anticipation surrounding the upcoming auto show. We are hopeful about putting up a great exhibition for

Health experts discuss lung health measures as India continues to have poor air quality in ASSOCHAM Webinar

FW DESK
New Delhi

The Associated Chambers of Commerce and Industry of India (ASSOCHAM), an apex body, organized a webinar on "Air Pollution & Smog - Health & Prevention" with the paramount objective to cascade awareness and disseminate knowledge about taking care of air pollution and smog, to lead a healthier, happier, and prosperous life. The webinar, which is a part of the Illness to Wellness initiative, highlighted about what are the Health effects of air pollution & smog.

Air pollution is hard to escape, it is all around us & smog is serious problem in most big urban areas. Health effects of air pollution & smog are serious. One third of deaths from stroke, lung and heart disease are due to air pollution. Smog can irritate the eyes, throat, and also damage the lungs.

Anil Rajput Chairperson, ASSOCHAM CSR Council in his welcome speech said, "poor air quality or air pollution has been a constant and deeply concerning matter." Highlighting the challenges of smog that hangs over cities to smoke inside the home, Mr Rajput stated that, this poses a major threat to health, affecting the cardiovascular respiratory system and compromising a host of other bodily functions, resulting increase in morbidity and mortality. "Therefore, a no-regret strategy containing all possible preventive measures is imperative to address this global public health emergency", he added.

In his address Dr. G C Khilnani MBBS, MD - General Medicine General Physician said - "Quality of life and Quantity of life is affected by air pollution. The most common diseases caused by air pollution include ischemic

heart disease, stroke, chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD), lung cancer and acute lower respiratory infections in children.

He emphasised Particulate matter, carbon monoxide, ozone, nitrogen dioxide, and sulphur dioxide are pollutants of great public health concern. Indoor and outdoor air pollution are significant contributors to morbidity and death and are known to induce respiratory and other illnesses.

Children are most vulnerable to the harmful consequences of air pollution, says Dr. Anurag Mahajan, Senior Consultant Internal Medicine and Vice Chairman of the Critical Care Department, PSRI. The likelihood of birth deformities, infant mortality, neurological problems, obesity, problems with lung development, pneumonia, and asthma is raised as a result of these impacts.

Delhivery acquires Pune-based Algorithm Tech to boost supply chain

NEW DELHI: Fully-integrated logistics service provider Delhivery on Tuesday said it is acquiring Pune-based Algorithm Tech for an undisclosed sum.

Algorithm Tech delivers planning and optimisation solutions for enterprise supply chain operations.

The company said the transaction is expected to be completed by January 31 and post the acquisition, Algorithm Tech will operate as a wholly-owned subsidiary of Delhivery Ltd.

"Algorithm Tech's supply chain management (SCM) software products will enhance our supply chain solutions offering with value-added services and also drive cost optimisation in service delivery," said Sandeep Kumar Barasia, Executive Director and Chief Business Officer, Delhivery.



Founded in 2003 by Abhaya Borwankar, Ajit Singh, and Sandeep Pendurkar, Algorithm Tech offers end-to-end supply chain planning and execution products to clients across FMCG, pharma, steel, auto and telecom sectors, through its proprietary aceRhythm 3.0™ platform.

"Delhivery has made great strides to emerge as the largest logistics provider in India in a decade and we can think

of no better team or company to work with to accelerate our joint vision for the future," said Ajit Singh, Co-founder, Algorithm Tech.

Delhivery has fulfilled over 1.7 billion shipments since inception and works with over 28, 000 customers.

The logistics services provider's network is now live on the government's Open Network for Digital Commerce (ONDC) platform.

Hotels in Kashmir booked in advance for Christmas, New Year celebrations

SRINAGAR: Crowds of tourists have started to gather in the Valley ahead of Christmas and New Year with most hotels registering full bookings.

All the hotels in the popular tourist destination of Gulmarg have been booked in advance.

Year 2022 has been a good year in terms of tourism for Kashmir. According to the official data, more than two million tourists visited the Valley till the end of November.

According to the President of the Travel Agents Association of Kashmir, Farooq Ahmad Kathu, there has been an increase in the arrival of tourists for the last two weeks due to the arrival of the Christmas



and New Year. Hotels in Gulmarg and Pahalgam are 100 per cent booked for Christmas and New Year.

Kashmir is always teeming with tourists during Christmas

and New Year and this is an indication that this time too a large number of tourists will visit the Valley, and hotel owners are taking the opportunity to attract tourists. The hotel

owners have also announced special packages for gala dinner and other entertainment.

In the last two years, all the activities of international tourism were suspended due to the global pandemic of coronavirus. But now all these restrictions have ended, due to which there is a wave of happiness among the people associated with tourism.

The tourism department of J&K government has also planned Christmas and New Year celebrations in Gulmarg and Pahalgam to woo tourists. Director Tourism Fazlul Hasseeb said that the department will celebrate the winter carnival and New Year in Gulmarg and Pahalgam on December 25. Events will also be held at Doodhpathri and Yusmarg.

India opts for Ease-commerce to shop #HarOccasionKaFashion: Flipkart shares consumer Wedding trends

FW DESK
New Delhi

Indians are known for their spirit of celebration and their grandeur and panache for weddings. It is a one of a kind occasion for every couple looking to make it larger than life and a day to remember. As pandemic posed restrictions, the industry transitioned into intimate wedding ceremonies. But the setback was short lived, the world's largest wedding market bounced back in panache and is expected to reach \$0.5 trillion over the next decade according to a report.

A new wave of 'wedtech' weddings came into picture during the pandemic, revolutionizing the wedding planning process. Due to easy accessibility, wide selections and user friendly



browsing, Flipkart witnessed a surge in wedding shoppers on the platform, making it the go-to destination for all their wedding needs. As the season of pheras and vows begins, Flipkart Fashion has marked an year-on-year increase of 31.6% for wedding related attire category and an uptick of 29.3% growth in unit terms. The most preferred colors this season are gold, black and pink.

To add to the ongoing festive cheer, Flipkart has introduced

'#HarOccasionKaFashion' to display the great selection offered on the platform at great value. In this campaign, popular TV celebrities like Hina Khan and Surbhi Jyoti can be seen browsing through the selection and adorning their favorite pieces from Flipkart Fashion in minute-long videos. The celebrities inspire consumers to glam up for a wedding selfie marathon with the tagline "Wedding selfies for all your functions with all your favorite baratis".

For wedding trousseau shopping, the 25-35-year-old age group women shoppers comprise the majority, scouting through the wide portfolio of products with Sequins, embroidery, bandhani, gota patti, banarasi and kanjivaram being the most sought after products.

Private cryptos will trigger next financial crisis if allowed to grow: RBI Governor

NEW DELHI: As millions of investors face uncertainty in global crypto meltdown, the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) Governor Shaktikanta Das said on Wednesday that the next financial crisis will come from crypto collapse if private digital coins are allowed to grow.

Addressing a group of banking sector leaders and lawmakers, Das emphasised that cryptocurrencies have no "underlying value" and pose great risks for global macro-economic and financial stability. "After the development of the last one year, including the latest episode surrounding FTX, I don't think we need to say anything more," Das said. "Crypto or private cryptocurrency is a fashionable way of describing what is other-

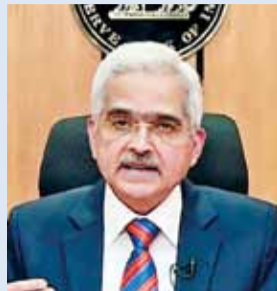
wise a 100 per cent speculative activity," he added. After the collapse of crypto exchange FTX, US authorities have arrested its former CEO San Bankman-Fried in the Bahamas and officially charged him with defrauding equity investors.

According to the US Securities and Exchange Commission (SEC) complaint, since 2019, FTX raised more than \$1.8 billion from equity investors, including approximately \$1.1 billion from approximately 90 US-based investors.

The RBI last month kick-started a pilot project to launch its own digital rupee in the wholesale segment and subsequently plans to roll out another one in the retail segment within a month, with an aim to enhance financial inclusion

Underlying economic activity continues to be strong, but external sector to dent growth: RBI

MUMBAI: Reserve Bank Governor Shaktikanta Das on Wednesday said underlying economic activity in India continues to be strong, but external factors will cause some "dent" to the economy. Speaking at the BFSI Insight Summit 2022 organised by Business Standard, Das said the RBI tracks 70 fast moving indicators and most of them are in the "green box". It is the external sector, mired by a fear of recession or clear visibility about slowing growth in a



large part of the world, where the challenges lie, he said, adding that the impact of external demand will "dent" the economy.

and move towards a less cash digital currency (CBDC). The CBDCs can boost in-

novation in cross-border payments, making these transactions instantaneous and help overcome key challenges relating to time zone, exchange rate differences as well as legal and regulatory requirements across jurisdictions. Additionally, the interoperability of the CBDCs presents means to mitigate cross-border and cross-currency risks and frictions while reinforcing the role of central bank money as an anchor for the payment system.

Therefore, the potential use of the CBDC in alleviating challenges in cross-border payment is one of the major motivations for exploring its issuance. Meanwhile, the government's bill that seeks to prohibit all private cryptocurrencies in India is yet to be tabled in Parliament.

Bank of England unveils design of King Charles banknotes

LONDON: The Bank of England on Tuesday unveiled the design of banknotes featuring King Charles III.

In a statement, the central bank said the portrait of the King will appear on existing designs of all four polymer banknotes (5, 10, 20 and 50 pounds), with no other changes to the existing designs. The King's image will appear on the front of the banknotes, as well as in cameo in the see-through security window. The new notes are expected to enter circulation by mid-2024. All polymer banknotes carrying a portrait of the late Queen Elizabeth II remain legal tender, and the public can continue to use these as normal, the statement said.

"In line with guidance from the Royal Household, to minimise the environmental and financial impact of this change, new notes will only be printed



to replace worn banknotes and to meet any overall increase in demand for banknotes. "Notes featuring Queen Elizabeth II and King Charles III will therefore co-circulate," it added.

Speaking ahead of the release, Bank of England Governor Andrew Bailey said: "I am very proud that the Bank is releasing the design of our new banknotes which will carry a portrait of King Charles III. This

is a significant moment, as the King is only the second monarch to feature on our banknotes. People will be able to use these new notes as they start to enter circulation in 2024."

Queen Elizabeth was the first and only monarch to appear on circulating Bank of England banknotes, starting in 1960.

Notes issued by Scottish and Northern Irish banks do not depict the monarch.

Apollo LogiSolutions divests KIFTPL for Rs 156 crore



NEW DELHI: Apollo LogiSolutions on Friday said it has divested KSHIPUR Infrastructure and Freight Terminal Pvt Ltd (KIFTPL) to Gateway Distriparks for Rs 156 crore.

The move is part of a strategy to add significant strength and boost market share in contract logistics. KIFTPL was a non-core, standalone asset which did not form part of the company's future strategic roadmap, Apollo LogiSolutions said in a statement.

"The long-term business strategy is to focus on assets and capabilities that will enable us to unlock the next big wave of business growth," Apollo LogiSolutions Chairman and Managing Director Raaja Kanwar said.

President of India, Droupadi Murmu Inaugurates PNB's revamped branch at President's Estate

KULBIR SINGH KALSI
New Delhi

Punjab National Bank, nation's leading public sector bank, revamped its President's Estate branch situated within the premises of Rashtrapati Bhawan. The branch was inaugurated by Hon'ble President of India, Droupadi Murmu in the august presence of Union Minister of Finance and Corporate Affairs, Nirmala Sitharaman.

Minister of State for Finance, Dr. Bhagwat Kishanrao Karad, Secretary of DFS, Vivek Joshi; Joint Secretary DFS & PNB's Nominee Director, Pankaj Sharma and MD & CEO of PNB, Atul Kumar Goel were also present on the occasion.

Hon'ble President of India, Droupadi Murmu expressed, "It



gives me pleasure to inaugurate renovated building of the President's Estate branch of Punjab National Bank which has a rich history. I hope that this branch will adequately serve the banking needs of people. I wish this branch success in its future endeavors."

PNB assures one of the best

banking service delivery, infrastructure, and a strong branch network of 10,000 plus in the country, enabling seamless customer service and ready access to a diverse range of tailor-made financial products to more than 18 crores customers across the country.

Jio completes acquisition of Reliance Infratel, pays Rs 3,720 cr to lenders

MUMBAI: Reliance Jio Thursday completed the acquisition of Reliance Communication Ltd.'s (RCOM) tower and fibre assets by paying Rs 3,720 crore to the lenders.

According to sources, the company has deposited Rs 3,720 crore in the escrow account of the State Bank of India (SBI).

In November, the National Company Law Tribunal (NCLT) had given its approval to Jio for the acquisition of Reliance Infratel (RITL), an RCOM subsidiary that houses the tower and fibre assets.

The tribunal had allowed Jio to deposit Rs 3,720 crore in the escrow account of SBI.

On November 6, Jio moved a petition in the NCLT Mumbai



proposing to deposit Rs 3,720 crore in an escrow account of SBI to complete the acquisition of Reliance Infratel. In November 2019, Jio had placed a bid of Rs 3,720 crore to acquire the tower and fibre asset of RCOM.

The Committee of Creditors has already approved the reso-

lution plan by Jio on March 4, 2020, with a 100 per cent vote, but the acquisition process could not reach finality due to the differences between the lenders over the distribution of funds.

According to an application moved by Reliance Projects and Property Management Services,

a subsidiary of Jio, the company had said that due to the pendency of the proceedings over the distribution of the 'no dues' certificate, implementation of the resolution plan is delayed.

The petition said, "Such delay is causing severe harm to the interest of the corporate debtor as well as the resolution applicant, and such delay will deteriorate the value of assets."

RITL has fibre assets of around 1.78 lakh route kilometers and 43,540 mobile towers across the country.

According to the NCLT order, the funds will be distributed amongst the lenders once the inter-creditor dispute over the distribution of resolution funds is settled.

Retail industry sees 19 pc rise in sales during Apr-Nov 2022: Report

NEW DELHI: India's retail industry saw a 19% rise in sales over pre-pandemic levels during the April-November 2022 period riding on the back of strong performance of segments such as quick service restaurant and footwear, Retailers Association of India (RAI) said on Friday.

Region wise, the eastern part clocked the highest growth at 21 per cent as compared to the same period in 2019, RAI said in a statement.

North India followed with a 19% growth while both western and southern parts witnessed an 18 per cent rise each, it added.

Air passengers will get compensation for involuntary downgrade of booked tickets



NEW DELHI: Passengers will soon be compensated for any involuntary downgrade of their tickets for a particular class by an airline, with aviation regulator DGCA preparing to put in place new norms.

Once the norms come into force, the airline concerned will have to refund the full value of such tickets, including taxes, and also the affected passenger will be flown free of cost in the next available class, according to DGCA.

Against the backdrop of complaints from air travellers about their tickets booked for a particular class being downgraded by airlines, the Directorate General of Civil Aviation (DGCA) is now in the process of amending the existing regulations to address passenger grievance.

Gold, silver prices rise in United States

Gold and silver prices in the US on Tuesday rose by more than 1%, fuelling expectations of a sharp rise in their prices in India.

Gold prices in the US bullion market rose to \$1,823, up by 1.73 per cent and silver prices rose to \$24.09, up by 1.03 per cent over previous close, mainly due to long term speculation over rate hikes by US Federal Reserve.

The US Federal Reserve is expected to announce another round of hikes in its first meeting in the new year, scheduled for February 1, 2023.

Rise in prices of yellow metal and silver in global markets are likely to impact domestic prices and they may see a rise in India.

Any global movement in the price of gold affects the price of the yellow metal in India.

This mainly derives from the fact that India is one of the largest importers of gold and as such when the import prices change due to global

Gold declines Rs 372; silver flat at Rs 69,273 per kg



NEW DELHI: Gold prices declined by Rs 372 to Rs 54,853 per 10 grams in the national capital on Friday amid weak trends in precious metal in global markets, according to HDFC Securities. The precious metal had ended at Rs 55,225 per 10 grams in the previous trade. Silver climbed marginally by Rs 15 to Rs 69,273 per kilogram from Rs 69,258 per kilogram in the previous trade.

movement in price, the same is subsequently reflected in the prices of gold at home.

Union Bank of India celebrated Cyber Awareness Day



KULBIR SINGH KALSI
Chandigarh

To create awareness among internet users about cyber frauds and online crimes and to protect them from such incidents, a program

was organized under the aegis of Union Bank of India's Zonal Office at Hotel Shivalik View on the occasion of Cyber Awareness Day. Superintendent of Police (Cyber Crime) Ketan Bansal was present as the chief guest.

Ketan Bansal gave detailed information about the steps taken by the Police Department in this direction. He said that many cyber gangs have been exposed and action has been taken against them. He talked about taking necessary precautions, so that cyber criminals do not succeed in cheating and the hard-earned money of the general public remains safe.

The program was presided over by Arun Kumar, Area General Manager, Union Bank of India. He said that several measures have been taken by the bank to prevent such cyber crimes.

Apart from the employees of Union Bank of India, many professionals and police officers also participated in the programme. Deputy Zonal Head of Union Bank of India Navneet Gupta, Chandigarh Region Head H K Das, Zonal Audit Chief Sanjeev Verma were also present in the programme.

Culinary Brands partners exclusively with Lavazza in India

SECOND SUCH EXCLUSIVE PARTNERSHIP BY CULINARY BRANDS FOR INDIA IN THE F&B SPACE, AFTER TAKING EXCLUSIVE MASTER FRANCHISE RIGHTS FOR SUBWAY



MUMBAI: Culinary Brands (CB), part of Everstone Group, signed an exclusive license for the premium Lavazza brand in India. CB also acquired from Lavazza Group a significant majority stake in Fresh and Honest Café Limited (F&H), the owners of the manufacturing facility in Sri City, Andhra Pradesh (with a capacity of 9,000 tons per annum) and of the affordable 'Fresh and Honest' coffee brand.

CB is the exclusive Master Franchisee of Subway in India, Bangladesh, and Sri Lanka. This partnership was a significant step in Subway's transformation journey and expansion plans globally. Under this exclusive agreement, CB will triple Subway stores in India over 10 years.

Dev Amritesh, CEO of Culinary Brands commented, "After acquiring the exclusive master franchisee rights for Subway, we are very proud and excited to acquire F&H. F&H owns the affordable Fresh and Honest coffee brand and has the exclusive rights for the premium Lavazza brand. Leveraging these strong brands, F&H's manufacturing capability, and our strong leadership team with experience of building large F&B businesses in India, we look forward to making Lavazza and Fresh and Honest the beverage of choice for Indians through distribution, product leadership, partnerships and enhanced presence across channels and consumption opportunities."

Dev Amritesh joined Culinary Brands earlier this year, from Compass Group in India, part

of Compass PLC, where he was the Managing Director - India. Prior to this, Dev worked with leading consumer companies including Whirlpool, Cadbury, and Jubilant FoodWorks Ltd. (JFL). In his last role at JFL, Dev was the President and Chief Business officer of Domino's Pizza India and Sri Lanka.

"Lavazza Group has been operating in India for the last 15 years. We believe that such credible and solid local partner will ensure the achievement of the full potential and that Lavazza brand will have an even stronger growth and positioning in the future as India grows its consumption of coffee," said Antonio Baravalle, CEO of Lavazza Group. In the transaction, Lavazza was assisted by BDA Partners, Desai & Diwanji and Deloitte India.

Culinary Brands, part of the Everstone Group, is a F&B platform to transform and scale mass and mass-premium global brands in India and the sub-continent. It owns the exclusive master franchisee rights for Subway (the largest QSR brand globally) in India, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, and other countries. Culinary Brands also owns exclusive rights to Lavazza brand in India and owns the Fresh & Honest coffee brand. Lavazza, founded in Turin in 1895, has been owned by the Lavazza family for four generations. Today the Group is one of the leading players on the global coffee scene, with turnover of over € 2.3 billion and a portfolio of top brands that lead their respective markets, such as Lavazza, Carte Noire, Merrild and Kicking Horse.

Six Indians charged in multimillion-dollar tech scam in US, Canada

NEW DELHI: Five Indian men and a woman have been charged in connection with a transnational technical support scam that targeted more than 20,000 victims, many of them elderly, in the US and Canada.

Gagan Lamba, 41, and Harshad Madaan, 34, from New Delhi; Jayant Bhatia, 33, from Ontario, Canada, and Vikash Gupta, 33, from Faridabad, were charged with conspiracy to commit wire fraud, computer fraud, and substantive violations of wire fraud and computer fraud, US Attorney Philip R Sellerger said.

Lamba, Madaan, Bhatia, and a fifth defendant, Kulwinder Singh, 34, of Richmond Hill, New York, are also charged with conspiracy to commit money laundering, money laundering, and engaging in monetary transactions in property derived from specified unlawful activity.

Bhatia has been charged with offences related to his participation in a high-tech fraud scheme.

The sixth defendant, Meghna Kumar, 50, of Edison, New Jer-

sey, pleaded guilty last week to information charging her with engaging in monetary transactions in property derived from specified unlawful activity, based on her role in the scheme.

"As alleged in the indictment, the defendants are charged with using access to personal computers to run a high-tech extortion scheme on a global scale," the US Attorney said in a Department of Justice statement.

Sellerger said that the scammers frequently targeted senior citizens and scared them into paying for unnecessary and useless computer repair services.

According to documents filed in this case and statements made in the court, the defendants and others were members of a criminal fraud ring that operated a technical support fraud scheme in the US, India, and Canada from 2012 through November 2022.

The scheme targeted victims across the US and Canada, including New Jersey, many of whom were elderly, the press statement read.

The primary objective was to trick victims into believing that their personal computers were infected with a virus or malware and then convince the victims to pay hundreds or thousands of dollars to the fraud ring for phony computer repair services.

Over the course of the conspiracy, the fraud ring generated more than \$10 million in proceeds from at least 20,000 victims.

The fraud ring caused fraudulent pop-up windows to appear on victims' personal computers. The pop-ups were designed, at times, to "freeze" the victims' computers, which prevented the victims from using or accessing files on their computers.

The pop-ups also claimed, falsely, that the victims' computers were infected with a virus, or otherwise compromised, and

directed the victims to call a telephone number to receive technical support. Sometimes the pop-ups warned victims to not shut down their computers.

In reality, the pop-ups were a hoax, designed to trick the victims into believing that their computers were infected with viruses that did not actually exist.

Victims who called the technical support phone numbers appearing on the pop-ups were connected to one or more call centres in India associated with the fraud ring.

Fraud ring members at the call centres falsely repeated that the victims' computers were infected with viruses and offered to fix the purported issue for a fee.

The fraud ring members would then request permission



India becomes a key player in Central Asia riding on infra projects

NEW DELHI: The Dushanbe-Chortut Highway Project being undertaken by India in Tajikistan is nearing completion, the government informed Parliament on Thursday.

India's Border Roads Organisation (BRO) is constructing the 4.44 km eight-lane (two-way) highway, which will decongest the country's capital, under the USD 20 million grant announced during the state visit of the President of India to Tajikistan in October 2018.

"The project has achieved 90.57 per cent physical progress as on 12th December 2022," Minister of State for External Affairs V Muraleedharan told Rajya Sabha in reply to a question on India's development cooperation with Central Asian countries.

In March 2021, immediately



after the touchdown in the Tajikistan capital, External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar visited the Dushanbe-Chortut Highway Project site to take stock of the construction progress. A few months later, Defence Minister Rajnath Singh

also visited the BRO project site while on a three-day visit to Tajikistan. In Parliament on Thursday, Muraleedharan spotlighted that the Narendra Modi government is supporting infrastructure development projects in various Central

Asian countries.

"The nature of our development partnership and economic cooperation are not comparable with any country in the region. India's investments and development projects are based on the development priorities of a recipient country and these stand firmly on their own merits," he stated.

In Uzbekistan, for instance, the Indian government-supported Line of Credit of USD 448 million for social infrastructure and other development projects, is helping in equipping secondary schools in Syrdarya region with computers and in the creation and getting equipment for a new reference laboratory at the Republican Scientific Specialized Allergological Centre.

India is also committed to a strong development part-

nership with strategic partner Uzbekistan, having assigned a Line of Credit of US\$ 40 million for the procurement of defence equipment from India.

Last year, during his visit to Bishkek, EAM Jaishankar announced a USD 200 million Line of Credit to the government of Kyrgyzstan taking the historical and civilisational bond shared by the two countries to a new height.

India is providing similar LoCs to other Central Asian countries, including Kazakhstan and Turkmenistan. New Delhi is also battling extensively for improving the landlocked region's connectivity with the outside world through the Chabahar port in Iran and integrating it within the framework of the International North-South Transport Corridor (INSTC).

Covid-19 cases in the US surpass 100 million: Johns Hopkins University

WASHINGTON: The number of Covid-19 cases registered in the US since the start of the pandemic in early 2020 exceeded a staggering 100 million, Johns Hopkins University has said, amid a sharp spike in caseloads globally and the WHO making a strong pitch for vaccination. Japan, the US, the Republic of Korea, Brazil and China have witnessed a sudden spike in coronavirus cases over the last week. US-based Johns Hopkins University in its latest update said that 100,003,837 coronavirus cases were reported in the country so far. The virus has also claimed the lives of 1,088,236 people in the US, it added. Meanwhile, close to 8,000 and 10,000 people die of COVID-19 every week,



said Maria Van Kerkhove, an infectious disease epidemiologist who serves as the technical lead for the COVID-19 response team at the World Health Organisation (WHO). She told 'Science in 5' that the WHO target of vaccinating 70 per cent of the population in every country has not been achieved so

far. Vaccination against COVID-19 was "fundamental," she said. According to health officials in China, Chinese cities are currently hit by the highly transmissible Omicron strains, mainly BA.5.2 and BF.7.

The novel coronavirus first emerged in the Chinese city of Wuhan in December 2019.

Chinese aggression another reason to strengthen India-US ties: US lawmakers



WASHINGTON: The latest Chinese aggression against India is yet another reminder of strong India-US ties, top American lawmakers have said.

"China's most recent aggression in Arunachal Pradesh is yet another reminder of why a strong security partnership with India is crucial to the national security of the United States and our allies," India Caucus Co-Chairs said in a statement.

"This event marks yet another threat of the People's Republic of China (PRC) to the Indian territory, including China's premeditated aggression on the Line of Actual Control in 2020 which saw the death of approximately 20 Indian troops," the co-chairs said.

Nepal PM Deuba elected leader of Nepali Congress parliamentary party



KATHMANDU: Nepal Prime Minister and the Nepali Congress President Sher Bahadur Deuba was elected the parliamentary party (PP) leader on Wednesday, overpowering his nearest challenger, party General Secretary Gagan Kumar Thapa by 39 votes, officials said. Deuba, 76, secured 64 votes, while Thapa, 45, could muster only 25 votes, they said. All 89 lawmakers of the party participated in the voting. The win means that Deuba will possibly lead the next government after the Nepali Congress emerged as the single-largest party in the general elections held on November 20.

US condemns Taliban restrictions on women's education



WASHINGTON: The United States has condemned the recent decision of the Taliban with regard to imposing restrictions on education of women in Afghanistan. "The United States condemns the Taliban's indefensible decision to prevent Afghan women from receiving a university-level education," White House NSC spokesperson Adrienne Watson said on Tuesday. "This deplorable decision is the latest effort by Taliban leadership to impose additional restrictions on women and girls in Afghanistan and prevent them from exercising their human rights and fundamental freedoms," she said.

Now Sikhism to be part of school curriculum in two US states

NEW YORK: More than 24 million students in the US can now learn about Sikhs with two more states voting in favour of new social studies standards that will include Sikhi, or Sikh faith, in their school curriculum for the first time ever.

Utah and Mississippi became the 15th and 16th states in the US recently to include information about Sikhism, Sikh practices, and traditions in their social studies syllabi.

These new standards will give 606,000 students in Utah and approximately 457,000 students in Mississippi the opportunity to learn about the Sikh community.

"Thanks to these new educational standards, students



across our state can learn about Sikhism -- which means safer schools for my children in Utah, and better cultural education for all," said Manjit Singh, a resident of Salt Lake City.

Sikhism is the fifth largest religion in the world and the

state educational standards and their associated materials, a Sikh Coalition statement noted.

"These new standards provide our growing Sikh community in Mississippi with an opportunity to educate our neighbours about the Sikh faith and better protect and recognise Sikh students in the state," said Sikh community member Amrik Singh of Jackson. According to Sikh students who continue to face bullying because of their religion and articles of faith, the move is one of the best ways to educate their teachers and classmates about the religion in an accurate and constitutional way.

The move came after Sikh Coalition made the initial request for Sikhi to be included in

the new standards at the State Board of Education Meeting in January this year.

"Inclusive and accurate standards are an important first step to combat bigotry and to reduce bullying, and they benefit all students by increasing baseline cultural competency and decreasing ignorance," Harman Singh, Sikh Coalition Senior Education Manager, said in a statement. Local adoption and implementation of the more inclusive standards will begin in the months and years to follow, a Sikh Coalition press note said.

The Sikh Coalition stated that it will continue to work closely with the Utah and Mississippi Department of Education during the process.

UN calls for restoration of university rights for Afghan women

UN Women Executive Director Sima Bahous has called for the restoration of Afghan women's right to higher education after the Taliban-run administration banned female students from university.

"It is as short-sighted as it is appalling," she said.

Bahous called on the Taliban-run administration to immediately restore the full rights of women and girls, which include the right to education, as well as to work and to participate in public life, reports Xinhua news agency.

Women have always played a key role in shaping Afghanistan's development, and in supporting its peace, security and resilience, said Bahous, adding that to end women's higher education is to ignore their historical contributions and sever them from their future potential and the potential of their country.

As UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres stated, the denial of education violates the equal rights of women and girls and will have a devastating impact on Afghanistan's future. It condemns the country to further economic hardship, suffering and international isolation, said Bahous.



Without education, a generation of Afghan women and girls will not have the skills they need to fully contribute to the development of their country. Without education, their pathways to participation and leadership are further constrained, leaving them vulnerable to discrimination and gender-based violence, she added.

On Tuesday, the Taliban regime's Education Ministry said the decision, which will further restrict women's access to formal education, was taken at a cabinet meeting and the indefinite ban would go into effect immediately.

After the country fell to the Taliban in August 2021, universities had introduced gender segregated classrooms and entrances.

Female students could only be taught by women professors or old men.

Finland cuts GDP growth forecasts for 2023, signalling recession

Finland's Ministry of Finance has marked down its economic prognosis for 2023. It now predicts a 0.2 per cent GDP decline. Back in September, it projected growth of 0.5 per cent.

"It is difficult to see a path on which growth does not slow in Finland. The risk of a recession is clear, but an even greater risk is remaining locked in old structures and the resulting underutilisation of resources," Mikko Spolander, Director of the Ministry's Stability Unit, said on Tuesday.

Finland's GDP is expected to grow by 1.9 per cent in 2022, decrease by 0.2 per cent in 2023 and increase again by 1.2 and 1.4 per cent in 2024 and 2025, respectively, Xinhua news agency reported.

The country's GDP began a slight decline in autumn, and weak economic performance is expected to continue over the winter, the Ministry said in a statement on Tuesday.

A broad rise in prices has cut households' purchasing power as incomes have not kept pace with prices. However, inflation will slow in 2023 and income growth will accelerate. The economy will recover in 2024 but will not return to the growth



track that was previously forecast due to the conflict between Russia and Ukraine, it added.

According to the Ministry, the economic situation in the eurozone is very similar to that in Finland. However, most eurozone countries are suffering from the energy crisis more than Finland because natural gas plays a much greater role in their energy production.

Despite the slowdown in economic growth, the growth in world trade has been brisk and will accelerate after 2023. Finland's exports will also benefit from this growth. However, the loss of Russian markets will leave a permanent gap in exports.

The employment rate is at a record high at the end of 2022. The number of job vacancies

is also quite high. In 2023, the number of employed people will decrease by about 12,000, and the unemployment rate will rise to 7 per cent. Despite the slump, the employment rate will remain strong and begin to grow again in 2024, it said.

The forecast assumes that economic sanctions and the effects of the Russia-Ukraine conflict will remain similar, the Ministry said. New developments in Ukraine may cause significant and rapidly spreading effects on the economy. Should this occur, economic employment growth would be weaker than estimated. On the other hand, the end of the conflict and the start of reconstruction would have significant positive effects on the economy.

MIDAO awarded Facilitation of DAO Registry Process by government of Marshall Islands

PACIFIC ISLAND NATION PASSES INTO LAW THE DECENTRALIZED AUTONOMOUS ORGANIZATION ACT OF 2022, LEGALLY RECOGNIZING DAOs AS DOMESTIC LIMITED LIABILITY COMPANIES UNDER THE COUNTRY'S EXISTING LAWS, UNDERSCORING INVESTMENT AND EXPLORATION INTO DECENTRALIZED LEDGER TECHNOLOGIES

MAJURO, MARSHALL ISLANDS: In a world-first, the Republic of the Marshall Islands (RMI) announced today that the government has passed into law the Decentralized Autonomous Organizations Act of 2022, which legally recognizes DAOs and enables legal entities registered in the country to formally adopt DAO structures and governance tools. This development marks the furthest any country has gone in legalizing and encouraging the growth of decentralized entities and their associated elements, representing a unique opportunity for MIDAO's facilitation of DAO Registry Process in the Marshall Islands.

The historic announcement comes amid growing calls for

governments to introduce more regulatory oversight and scrutiny of blockchain and cryptocurrency. Following the collapse of the FTX centralized crypto exchange, many governments have announced plans for new legislation and beefed up enforcement from financial watchdog institutions. The government of the Republic of the Marshall Islands recognizes that a 'one-size-fits-all' approach will not work in this sector, and recognizes the benefits that decentralization can bring to its economy.

"The Republic of the Marshall Islands is proud to be at the forefront of tech jurisprudence and compliance globally. With this adoption of the DAO Act of 2022, The Marshall Islands commits its courts and

its resources to the burgeoning world of decentralization, and recognizes the unique place that decentralized autonomous organizations can hold not just in the blockchain space, but in the broader economy as well. We believe that our island nation is well-suited based on our history of shipping registration and compliance to take this step forward and offer DAOs a place to domicile easily, efficiently, and in a cost-effective manner," said RMI Finance Minister Bransen Wase.

"We are in the midst of the blockchain revolution, and people all over the world are exploring new ways to organize and make decisions in a more efficient and egalitarian manner. Decentralized autonomous organizations present

an enormous opportunity for people to organize in a more efficient and less hierarchical manner. We in the Marshall Islands recognize this unique moment to lead in this critical space," said Bobby Muller, former RMI Chief Secretary, and President and Co-Founder of MIDAO.

The Decentralized Autonomous Organization Act of 2022 in the RMI legally accomplishes:

- ◆ Allows DAOs to incorporate under the internationally recognized LLC structure, so long as they identify as a DAO LLC;
- ◆ Allows for-profit DAOs and not-for-profit DAOs to register;
- ◆ Recognizes DAO governance, voting processes,

and framework, including tokenization;

- ◆ Creates an investment fund for the government of RMI to continue education and training around DAOs and how to integrate them further into the economy;
- ◆ Provides definitions and regulations for DAO formation, agreements, and use of smart contracts.
- ◆ In an effort to attract DAOs and Web3 pioneers, this newly passed legislation establishes a DAO registry process, to be facilitated by MIDAO, a local company with the expertise to attract and explain why the RMI legal system is more beneficial to DAO structures than other jurisdictions in the world.

Taliban regime's decision to ban women from university education in Afghanistan will come with 'consequences': Blinken



WASHINGTON: United States has strongly condemned the Taliban's "indefensible decision" to ban women from universities and keep secondary schools closed to girls, with Secretary of State Antony Blinken warning that this decision will come with "consequences" for the hardline Islamist regime in Afghanistan. The Taliban rulers on Tuesday banned university education for women nationwide, as they took decisive steps to crush their right to education and freedom. It was a far cry from their promise of a softer rule when they seized power last year, with the Taliban regime strongly implementing their strict interpretation of the Islamic law, or Sharia. "You all are informed to immediately implement the mentioned order of suspending education of females until further notice," according to a letter issued to all government and private universities, signed by Minister for Higher Education Neda Mohammad Nadeem. "The US condemns in the strongest terms the Taliban's indefensible decision to ban women from universities, keep secondary schools closed to girls, and continue to impose other restrictions on the ability of women and girls in Afghanistan to exercise their human rights and fundamental freedoms," Blinken said on Tuesday. The ban comes barely three months after scores of female students took university entrance exams across the country. "Education is a human

right. It is also essential to Afghanistan's economic growth and stability. The Taliban cannot expect to be a legitimate member of the international community until they respect the rights of all in Afghanistan. This decision will come with consequences for the Taliban," Blinken warned. The move is almost certain to hurt efforts by the Taliban to win recognition from potential international donors at a time when the country is mired in a worsening humanitarian crisis.

"No other country in the world bars women and girls from receiving an education," Blinken noted. Afghanistan is already losing more than USD 1 billion per year in contributions that women could be making to the economy. No country can thrive when half of its population is held back, he explained. "The Taliban's latest announcement means that women and girls will continue to face enormous difficulties seeking employment to feed their families," he said. The ban notwithstanding, Blinken added that Washington will continue to provide robust support to the Afghans, including women and girls, seek to meet their humanitarian needs, and organise with allies to collectively advocate for their rights. The Taliban were ousted in 2001 by a US-led coalition for harbouring Al-Qaeda leader Osama bin Laden. They, however, returned to power following America's chaotic departure from the country in August 2021.

Record 4.8 mn immigration applications processed by Canada in 2022

TORONTO: Canada has processed a record 4.8 million immigration applications till the end of November, the Immigration Department said, nearly twice the 2.5 million processed during the same period last year.

"Immigration is critical to Canada's economy and our communities. Newcomers helped build our country, were on the front lines as we battled the pandemic, and remain key to our success," the Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada (IRCC) said in a press release on Monday.

"Our government has reduced its pandemic backlogs by nearly half a million, while also processing a record-breaking number of immigration applications this year," Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship, Sean Fraser, was quoted as saying.



Being a true-blue Punjabi, AYUSHMANN loves rajma-chawal & sarson ka saag!

MUMBAI: Bollywood star Ayushmann Khurrana, who was recently seen in 'An Action Hero' is a true blue Punjabi munda as he loves to indulge in food at all times. The talented actor-singer enjoys homemade food and Indian sweets made by his mother of which rajma-chawal, sarson ka saag, makki ki roti and gaajar ka halwa are his absolute favourites.

Given his shooting schedule, the actor has to constantly follow a regimented diet plan. However, the talented actor makes it a point to go back to his hometown Chandigarh every Diwali and year-end holiday,



and during this time, he indulges in everything his mother makes for him.

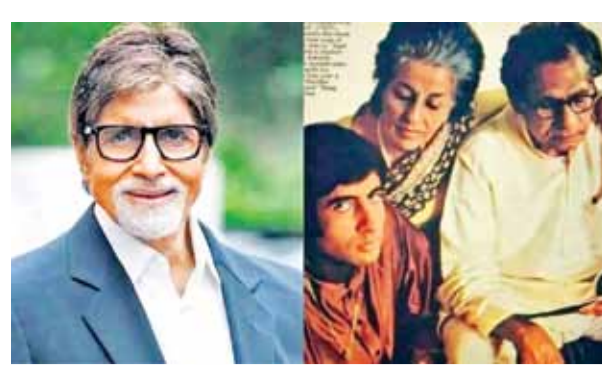
Talking about the same, Ayushmann shared: "My mom and my mother-in-law spoil me with my favourite dishes and I thoroughly enjoy it. It is tough for me to decide what I want to eat each day. Right from rajma-chawal, sarson ka saag, makki ki roti, pinni to gaajar ka halwa - I

like to eat all the delicacies that they make because they are simply divine. This holiday season I'm looking to get pampered in Chandigarh."

He further spoke about the importance of spending quality time with family as he said: "I feel it is important to spend quality time with your family. One must always remember where one's roots are and for me it's Chandigarh. My parents and this beautiful city have shaped me into the person that I have become today. Despite being in Mumbai, I always feel a massive gravitational pull for my home."

"I usually have erratic schedules because of shoots, promotions, brand deliverables etc and so, I make it a point to go back to my family in Chandigarh whenever possible, especially during the holidays. It is nostalgic and rejuvenating," he added.

Ayushmann will be leaving for Chandigarh after finishing his brand and film commitments this year and will ring in the new year with his family.



Big B remembers 'the most beautiful mother' on her death anniversary

MUMBAI: Cine icon Amitabh Bachchan has remembered his mother Teji Bachchan on her 15th death anniversary.

Amitabh took to his blog and recalled her last day, saying that she passed away "elegantly and quietly" at the age of 93 on December 21, 2007, following a prolonged illness.

"She slipped away as elegantly and quietly as was her tempera-

ment this morning as I watched the doctors struggle to revive her delicate heart, time and again .. pumping here delicate frame in vigorous pushes to get her to live again .. and again .. and again .."

"We stood .. holding hands all of us near and dear .. the nieces and the children in tears .. until." He added: "I spoke up ..leave it doc .. leave her ..she wishes to go .. stop .. do not make any more

efforts .. each effort was painful for her system and painful for us to stand there and witness .. each time that 'straight line' would appear .. and then shift to the graphic responses of the physical pumping .. stop it I said .."

And they did .. the singular tone of the straight line on the monitor .. indicating to us all and the World .. that she had left .. slipped out .. as someone recently mentioned about the passing of a near one .. and gone to a 'better place' - words that we often hear being used in consolation of the departure."

"A gentle hand on her forehead .. a million memories flashing by in the silence of the room in the hospital .. and then leaving to being her home .. the hall in Prateeksha was cleaned and washed .. her portrait, her beautiful face, by the side of a few white flowers .. a silence about .. and she lay there for the last time .."

POTPOURRI

Tabu's part in 'KUTTEY' was originally written for male actor



Actress Tabu, who is gearing up for her upcoming black comedy film 'Kuttey', revealed that her role in the film was written for a male character but director Aasmaan Bhardwaj and his composer-filmmaker father Vishal changed it for her.

"Kuttey" is the directorial debut of Aasmaan. Talking to the media at the trailer launch event of the film in Mumbai on Tuesday, the actress, who has worked with Vishal in films such as 'Maqbool' and 'Haider', said, "This character was written for a male, but Aasmaan and Vishal ji changed it for me. Aasmaan has grown up in front of me."

Brendan Fraser to receive Spotlight Award at Palm Springs Int'l Film Awards

LOS ANGELES: Hollywood star Brendan Fraser



will be feted with the Spotlight Award at the 2023 Palm Springs International Film Awards. The actor will be recognised for his performance in filmmaker Darren Aronofsky's "The Whale", the festival organisers said in a statement posted on the official website. "Brendan Fraser demonstrates his impressive talent in Darren Aronofsky's powerful adaptation of 'The Whale'. Fraser gives an extraordinary and haunting performance that paints a vivid portrait of our inability to escape our own sadness," festival chairman Harold Matzner said.

'Ram Setu' to make streaming debut on Prime Video on Dec 23



MUMBAI: Akshay Kumar-starrer 'Ram Setu' will start streaming on Prime Video from December 23, the streamer announced Wednesday.

Directed by Abhishek Sharma of "Parmanu" and "Tere Bin Laden" fame, the action-adventure movie was released

in theatres countrywide in October this year.

The movie, which also featured Jacqueline Fernandez and Nushratt Bharuccha, is presented by Prime Video in association with Kumar's Cape of Good Films, Lyca Productions and Abundantia Entertainment.

India win "3rd T20 World Cup Cricket for the Blind" title for Third Consecutive time

ARUN KUMAR RAO
Bengaluru

Brilliant tons by Sunil Ramesh and captain Ajay Kumar Reddy guided India to beat Bangladesh by 120 runs and win their third consecutive title in the 3rd T20 World Cup cricket for the Blind played here at the M. Chinnaswamy Stadium. India remained unbeaten to the course of winning the title. Governor of Karnataka Thawar Chand Gehlot presented the winners and runners up trophies.

Indian captain Ajay Kumar Reddy won the toss and elected to bat. In-form batter Sunil Ramesh was joined by vice-captain D. Venkateswara Rao to open the innings. Bangladesh could not have asked for a better start to the finals as Salman removed Venkareswara in the 4th over after the score read just 28. India faced a double blow in the same over as Salman castled Lalit Mee-



na's stumps to put India at 29/2. Unfortunately that was the only joy Bangladesh could find in the innings as it was Sunil Ramesh and captain Ajay Kumar Reddy's show from there on.

Both Indian batsmen challenged the Bangla bowling at attack with conviction and played their shots all over the ground. The bowlers did not have any answer to the onslaught by the inform Indian batters. Ajay

Kumar Reddy got a reprieve while batting at 40 when he was dropped in the deep. The batters did not give any chances to the bowling side as they continued to mint runs. Sunil Ramesh reached his hundred which is his third of the tournament with a boundary. Ajay reached his milestone in the final over of the innings. The batters put on a 248 run unbeaten partnership for the third wicket to take the

run rate and added pressure to the Bangladesh batters especially after the power play overs which yielded very less output for Bangladesh. They lost their first wicket in the 9th over after Lalit Meena dismissed the Bangladesh captain for 21 after an opening wicket partnership of 56 runs. Salman on the other side was trying his best to accelerate the scoring but the Indian side were disciplined and restricted the batters. Salman put on a 42 run partnership with Abid for the second wicket and 48 runs for the third wicket with Arif Ullah on the way to scoring his half century. Abid scored 18 and Arif Ullah scored 22. Salman remained unbeaten on 77 from 65 balls. He also finished the tournament as the top run getter with 425 runs from 7 innings. Bangladesh could only manage 157/3 at the end of 20 overs but will return after showing some fighting spirit.

Foodie Kartik Aaryan poses with massive Gujarati thalis



Bollywood actor Kartik Aaryan, who is known to be a foodie, has shared a picture posing with two massive Gujarati thalis.

Kartik took to Instagram, where he shared the picture. In the image, he is seen dressed in a grey T-shirt paired with black pants and a baseball cap. The two thalis are kept in front of him on the table as he gets clicked.

"No touching only Seeing #TableForTwo #Spkk."

The actor is currently in Gujarat, where he is shooting for his musical romantic film 'Satyaprem Ki Katha'. It also stars Kiara Advani. The film marks their second collaboration after 'Bhool Bhulaiyaa 2'. Kartik will also be seen in 'Shehzada', which also stars Kriti Sanon. He has 'Captain India' and Kabir Khan's yet-untitled next.

For the caption he wrote:

Bollywood actor Jacqueline Fernandez withdraws her plea to travel abroad

NEWDELHI: Bollywood actor Jacqueline Fernandez on Thursday withdrew her plea seeking to travel abroad, at a court in the national capital.

The counsel for Enforcement Directorate (ED) opposed her plea to travel abroad.

The agency said that "she's an actress, and a foreign national, and the matter in which she is being tried is at a crucial stage". To this, Fernandez's lawyer contended that the agency has not even completed its investigation in the case. The judge then questioned her counsel whether he wants to withdraw the application, or wants a judicial order. The counsel chose to withdraw the plea.

Fernandez is accused in a Rs 200 crore money extortion



case involving multimillionaire conman Suresh Chandrashekar.

On December 20, Special Judge Shailendra Malik had issued notice to the ED and sought its reply to Fernandez's application seeking permission to travel to Bahrain from December 23.

Hockey India announces squad for 'FIH Odisha Hockey Men's World Cup 2023' Bhubaneswar-Rourkela

ARUN KUMAR RAO
New Delhi

Hockey India on Friday announced the 18-member team who will represent India at the prestigious FIH Odisha Hockey Men's World Cup 2023 in Bhubaneswar-Rourkela. The Indian team grouped in pool D along with England, Spain and Wales will begin their campaign on 13th January 2023 in the newly built Birsamunda Hockey Stadium in Rourkela.

Ace dragflicker Harmanpreet Singh has been named the Captain of the squad with Amit Rohidas as the Vice Captain. The team, strategically selected after two-day trials in SAI Centre, Bengaluru where 33 players were put to test, features a good mix of experienced and young players who will vie to end India's wait to stand on the podium in the prestigious event.

Krishan B Pathak and PR



Sreejesh, who will be playing his fourth World Cup - his third on home soil, have been chosen as goalkeepers while the Indian team's defence will be spearheaded by the Captain Harmanpreet Singh along with Vice Captain Amit Rohidas, Suresh Kumar, Varun Kumar, Jarnanpreet Singh and Nilam Sanjeev Xess.

The midfield will see the return of young prodigy Vivek Sagar Prasad, who missed the recent tour of Australia as well

as the FIH Hockey Pro League due to an ankle injury. He will be joined by Manpreet Singh, Hardik Singh, Nilakanta Sharma, Shamsheer Singh and the experienced Akashdeep Singh.

The forwardline will feature Mandeep Singh, Lalit Kumar Upadhyay and youngsters Abhishek and Sukhjeet Singh who continue to impress after making their debut earlier this year. The two alternate players chosen are Rajkumar Pal and Jugraj Singh.

Speaking on Team selection, Chief Coach Graham Reid said, "The World Cup is the most important "Hockey Only" tournament there is. A home World Cup puts extra importance and extra pressure on this event like no other. Every country chooses the best team they believe is available to them at the time and tries to provide their team with the best preparation they can. We have also tried to do both with the selection of our Indian World Cup team, choosing a mixture of experienced and younger exciting players who can provide something special."

"We have also had a great preparation over the last two months including a home Pro League series and a very tough tour to Australia against the World's No.1. We are looking forward to getting to Odisha and put the finishing touches to our preparations for what will be an exciting and challenging tournament ahead," Reid added.

Biryani : KING OF FOOD LIST



MAHIE JK

What India ate the most in 2022? This is one among those questions which is mostly discussed, when we are talking of some other memories of this year. Well among all the vegetarian and non vegetarian dishes, Chicken Biryani topped the food list this year. According to many online food apps the most ordered dish of 2022 is Chicken Biryani . This is the seventh time in a row that the dish has topped the chart. From the data of the Online food apps it is found that around 137 orders of Biryani were ordered every minute this year. Almost in all the top food apps, Biryani was found at the Top.

JIYA a student of Amity University, Noida who is residing as a paying guest says " It is very difficult for me to prepare food when I come back from college,

so I mostly ordered biryani from online food apps ". its so easy and fast, she added.

"A mention of biryani is enough to make ones mouth water and feel hungry and especially when it is in front of you steaming, the tendency is to launch a vicious attack and devour it" says Ajay another student of Delhi University. Almost all the corporates and non-corporates offices in Delhi NCR are ordering Biryani from us, says warsi a cook who privately runs a Biryani shop in South Delhi.

"Its one dish that never fails to brighten our dinner table," feels Sunita a housewife, who loves Biryani but can't prepare it perfectly. Her family is very fond of Biryani so they order twice or thrice every week. A plate of juicy meat combined with rice and spices is irresistible. Even some of our celebrities are found posting pictures

of their favourite Biryani on social media.

No other Indian food has as many stories as Biryani has. Its story varies across the country as its taste and flavours. The handi of meat rice and spices is a complete meal in itself. Be it a formal or informal meeting , a handful of biryani is a must .

It is not a only a food item but many quotes are made on this popular dish. For some "Biryani is not food but Emotions" some say "it is not only a dish it is actually Love". " Burger and pizza are overrated, my love for Biryani will always stay" etc. BIRYANI is mostly liked dish of people across the country. Food Delivery has become a very important part of our daily life now, whenever we are hungry and we crave for our favourite food, we order that with the help of our smart phones. It is so easy and convenient to relish our tasty dishes with the help of these online food apps. They have made our life so easier and comfortable. We can get our orders in minutes. It is very easy to throw a party at home, even when you come back from the office, said Anamika, a school teacher , who recently hosted a Biryani party at home with the help of these online food apps. So gather your friends and enjoy your favourite meal with New year.

been involved in illegal activity in the village jurisdiction. "Whereas it is noticed by this Panchayat that you are doing alleged illegal construction and excavation, in property bearing survey no. 211/2 B at Ashvewada, Mandrem, village without obtaining prior permission from the competent authorities and this Panchayat," the notice reads.

Goa panchayat issues notice to actor Nagarjuna over alleged illegal construction work



PANAJI: A panchayat in Goa on Wednesday issued a "stop work" notice to Telugu actor Nagarjuna over the alleged illegal construction and excavation work at Mandrem village in North Goa.

Mandrem Panchayat sarpanch Amit Sawant has issued the notice under the Goa Panchayat Raj Act 1994. As per the notice, the respondent has

A complete **KNOWLEDGE CAPSULE**

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