

REGION

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BJP-LED GOVERNMENT IN HARYANA A CHAMPION IN RISING UNEMPLOYMENT, SAYS RAHUL GANDHI



Sandhwan appreciated the determination shown by Maan against corruption



CHANDIGARH: Appreciating the decision taken by Punjab Chief Minister Bhagwant Mann to end the scourge of corruption, Punjab Vidhan Sabha Speaker Kuldeep Singh Sandhwan has said that his party had promised to give a clean and corruption-free administration to the people while coming to power

and the Punjab government is fully committed and firm in this regard. Regarding the decision taken by the Chief Minister about the strike by the government officers, S. Sandhwan said that eliminating corruption from the state is the responsibility of the state government and all the officials

Punjab govt pulls out from mega textile park bid due to land unavailability



CHANDIGARH: Owing to unavailability of land the Punjab government has withdrawn its application for the centre's mega textile park scheme, informed Union Minister for Commerce and Industry, Piyush Goyal. He clarified that the centre has launched production-linked incentive (PLI) schemes across sectors and does not discriminate between states. The Minister said that the Centre is building seven mega textile parks for which applications were invited under the PM Mitra scheme.

Helmets for Sikh soldiers violate of Sikh Tenets and marayada

CHANDIGARH: Shiromani Akali Dal (Badal) President appealed to the Prime Minister Narendra Modi to personally intervene against the implementation of the reported move of the Government of India to make helmets mandatory for Sikhs in the country's armed forces. Describing the move as "provocative and insensitive in the extreme" Badal said that it was not just unprecedented in history but also defied all logic as Sikh soldiers had always remained in the forefront of the country's defense without ever feeling the need for such helmets in the past. "If details emerging from various sources including newspaper reports are indeed true, then we are surprised that the Government has shown such callous disregard for the time



honoured and established Sikh tenets, norms and practices on a matter of such critical emotional and religious sensitivity. It concerns Sikh Marayada which no one has a right to tinker or trifle with," said Badal in a letter to the PM, Narendra Modi. He, however, hoped that the PM would look into the matter and order that necessary action be taken to stop any proposal in this regard. "Not even the British had forced such a decision on the Sikh soldiers. Sikhs are fiercely patriotic people and

Setting up more fast track courts for NRIs to be on fast lane in Punjab

CHANDIGARH: With the commitment of Chief Minister Bhagwant Mann to resolve all the genuine grievances of Punjabi Diaspora living across the globe, Punjab NRIs Affairs Department has set the ball rolling to establish more Fast Track Courts especially for cases related to NRIs. NRIs Affairs Minister Kuldeep Singh Dhaliwal will meet Chief Justice of Punjab and Haryana High Court soon to work out the legal and other modalities in this regard.



The Cabinet Minister also instructed to depute Legal Advisors to provide requisite legal aid to NRIs. He also ordered concerned Deputy Commissioners to resolve around 50 per cent grievances brought during these 'Milni Programs' through their Nodal Officers appointed specially for the cases of NRIs. Reiterating the commitment of Punjab Government to take every step for the well being of NRIs, Kuldeep Singh Dhaliwal also asked the officials of the department to issue Demi-Official (DO) letter to concerned Deputy Commissioner, Nodal Officer,

Punjab administration has collapsed, time for Governor to interfere, AAP CM should resign immediately: Chugh

JAGMOHAN SINGH
Amritsar

BJP national general secretary Tarun Chugh said that due to the lopsided and myopic vision of the AAP government in Punjab there is unprecedented collapse of administration while AAP leadership has completely failed. Reacting to the decision of the PCS officers' going on week-long strike, Chugh said it reflected seriously how the AAP government has crumbled in the border state, which is an alarming situation. Chugh requested the Punjab Governor to intervene in this crisis moment of the state and take a report from the AAP government about the abysmal failure of governance. Chugh also expressed his serious concern at the Punjab IAS officers' delegation expressing resentment over the Punjab Vigilance Bureau's action against IAS officer Neelima who was recently booked by VB. A delegation of around 50 IAS officers met Chief Secretary VK Janjua and flagged their resentment before them. The officers said that the procedure has not been followed while registering the case against Neelima. Chugh in a statement issued today said the AAP leaders have proved themselves to be thoroughly incompetent to run the state in spite of the big mandate given by the people.

CORPORATES & INDUSTRY

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7TH EDITION OF MP GLOBAL INVESTORS SUMMIT BEGINS IN INDORE



Crypto Currencies equivalent to gambling: RBI Governor



NEW DELHI: Reserve Bank of India (RBI) Governor Shaktikanta Das on Friday reiterated that crypto currencies are equivalent to gambling, as their perceived value is only make believe. Addressing a media event

here, Das called for a ban on cryptos, saying there is no underlying value in it. Those supporting it call it an asset or a financial product, but there is no underlying value in it, he added. To counter the growth of

cryptocurrencies, the central bank recently launched in pilot mode, its own e-rupee or central bank digital currency (CBDC). "Every asset, every financial product has to have some underlying (value) but in the case of crypto, there is no underlying value. So anything without any underlying, whose value is dependent entirely on make-believe, is nothing but 100 per cent speculation or to put it very bluntly, it is gambling," he said. "Since we don't allow gambling in our country, and if you want to allow gambling, treat it as gambling and lay down the rules for gambling. But crypto is not a financial product," Das added. He said that CBDCs are the future of money and its adoption can help save on logistic and printing costs.

POTPOURRI

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DILJIT DOSANJH IS SET TO PERFORM AT THE COACHELLA MUSIC AND ARTS FESTIVAL 2023



Congress MP from Punjab dies of heart attack, Bharat Jodo Yatra suspended



JALANDHAR: Congress MP Chaudhary Santokh Singh on Saturday died of a heart attack during party leader Rahul Gandhi's Bharat Jodo Yatra in Punjab. He was 76 years old. Chaudhary fell during the rush of the yatra in Phillaur town and was taken to a hospital in Phagwara in an ambulance where he died.

Leader of Opposition in the Punjab Assembly Partap Singh Bajwa said Chaudhary was walking along with a fellow MP from Kerala and suddenly collapsed. In 2019, Chaudhary became the second-time MP from Jalandhar with a margin of 19, 491 votes. His cremation will take place on Sunday at 10.30 a.m. at his native Gakhlan Dhaliwal village in Jalandhar. After a day's break, Rahul Gandhi had resumed his Bharat Jodo Yatra from Ladhawal Toll Plaza in Ludhiana on Saturday morning.

State Congress chief Amarinder Singh Raja Warring said the yatra will remain suspended till until the last rites are performed. "He was a down-to-earth hardworking leader, a pious person and a strong pillar of the Congress family, who dedicated his life to public service from Youth Congress to Member of Parliament," Rahul Gandhi wrote on Twitter, expressing condolences.

Chaudhary came out with Rahul from Kusht Ashram in Phillaur when he collapsed. Priyanka Gandhi Vadra expressed condolences and praised him for being a dedicated leader and true public servant for the Congress ideology. "Shri Santokh Singh ji was a dedicated leader and true public servant for the Congress ideology. His death has caused an irreparable loss to the Indian National Congress," she wrote on Twitter. "Santokh Singh Chaudhary, aged 76, Congress MP from Jalandhar, passed away from a sudden cardiac arrest during the Bharat Jodo Yatra this morning. We extend our deepest condolences to his family," Jairam Ramesh, Congress general secretary in charge of communications said in a tweet. "There will be some changes in schedule of the yatra which will be shared shortly." Punjab Chief Minister Bhagwant Mann tweeted: "I am deeply saddened by the untimely death of Congress Member of Parliament from Jalandhar, Santokh Singh Chaudhary. May God rest his soul in peace."

Lok Sabha Speaker Om Birla expressed condolences on the demise of Chaudhary and said that the parliamentarian was always vocal on issues of public interest.

Withdraw new helmet policy for Sikh soldiers in Indian Army: Harjinder Singh Dhami

AMRITSAR: Shiromani Gurdwara Parbandhak Committee (SGPC) President Harjinder Singh Dhami has raised a strong objection to the new helmet policy of the Ministry of Defence, Government of India, for the Sikh soldiers serving in the Indian Army. He has written a letter to Union Defence Minister Shri Rajnath Singh, asking him to withdraw this decision. He said that the decision to implement a special helmet for Sikhs serving in the Indian Army will destroy the unique Sikh identity and Sikh Marayada (code of conduct). He said the turban is not merely a cloth, but it is also a symbol of Sikh heritage besides having spiritual and temporal significance. The commitment of Sikhs to the turban also reflects Sikh pride and adherence to the Guru's command. He said ordering a Sikh soldier to take off his turban and wear a helmet just because it offers better protection to his head, is ignorance to the Sikh's psyche, and his attachment to turban.



Harjinder Singh Dhami said the decision of forcing Sikh soldiers to wear helmets is hurtful for the religious sentiments of the community. He wrote to the Defence Minister that the important examples of Sikh soldiers fighting wars wearing their turbans without exception include the battles with Mughals at the time of Sikh Gurus, the Battle of Saragarhi, the World Wars, and the wars fought by the Indian Army in the past. Even in the Indian Army, the Sikh soldiers serving in The Sikh Regiment, Sikh Light Infantry, and Punjab Regiment, are performing their duties diligently to protect the country, he wrote. SGPC President said India is a multi-religious country and the people of different communities have the right to serve for the nation while practicing their religion. People of different faiths working in Armed and paramilitary forces reflect the diversity and colors of our nation, he said.

Gear Up For Assembly Polls: BJP leader to J&K unit

FW DESK

In an indication that Assembly elections in Jammu and Kashmir could be around the corner, BJP national general secretary B L Santhosh on Wednesday asked the party's J&K to be ready for assembly polls.



The meeting was also attended by Union minister Jitendra Singh, BJP national general secretary and J&K in-charge Tarun Chugh and J&K BJP President Ravinder Raina. Santhosh made the statement days after senior party

leader and Union Home Minister Amit Shah held deliberations with party functionaries from Jammu and Kashmir in Delhi. This has raised the hopes

that the assembly elections in the union territory might be held this year. Government has, however, stayed short of making an official announcement yet.

Rahul Gandhi meets representatives of farmer organizations, listens to their problems

SATISH HANDA
Kurukshetra / Ambala

The Bharat Jodo Yatra, which continues under the leadership of Rahul Gandhi, reached Ambala from Dharma Nagri Kurukshetra. Thousands of women participated in Bharat Jodo Yatra despite heavy smog and biting cold on Monday on the occasion of Women's day. Rahul Gandhi's yatra was warmly welcomed by 50 women on reaching Tyoda village in Shahabad. Rahul Gandhi also met the families of farmers and women farmers who were martyred in the farmer's movement. Farmer leaders of Haryana told Rahul Gandhi that Leader of Opposition Bhupinder Singh Hooda had given financial assistance of Rs 2 lakh each to the families of martyred families.

Farmer leaders said that during the agitation, MP Deepender Hooda helped in providing water, electricity, medical facilities and sanitation facilities at various dharmas. On this occasion, representatives of various farmer organizations of the country, including Haryana, discussed in detail the problems of the farmers, including the MSP guarantee. Farmer leaders also said the current government did not live up to the written agreement made by the government during the farmer's movement last year. In the meeting held in the presence of former Haryana Chief Minister Bhupinder Singh Hooda, State Congress in-charge Shakti Singh Gohil, State Congress President Udaybhan, Deepender Hooda, Rahul Gandhi listened to the farmers



carefully. During this mainly representatives of farmer organizations including Rakesh Tikait, Yudhveer Singh, Yogendra Yadav, Virendra Narwal, Prahlad Barukheda, Mandeep Nathwan, Joginder Nain, Rajbala, Deepak Lamba, Tejveer, Jagdeep Aulakh, Jogendra Tiger were present.

On this occasion, former Chief Minister of Haryana Bhupinder Singh Hooda said BJP government had failed on its promises of doubling farmers income by the year 2022. "The anti-farmer face of the government has been completely exposed. The farmer is feeling cheated. Today the sugarcane

farmers are on the streets but the government remains indifferent to the agitation. In 2015-16, the rate of sugarcane was Rs 317, if the income of the farmers had to be doubled, the rate should have been Rs 634," he said, pointing out the rate is only Rs 362 per quintal. "The income of the farmers has not doubled, on the contrary, the debt and expenditure on the farmers have definitely doubled. The loan on farmers has increased from 9 lakh to 18 lakh crore. The prices of diesel-petrol, fertilizers are increasing rapidly. By imposing tax on agricultural equipment, the government has only reduced the income of the farmers," he added. He said the Congress government in Haryana had increased the rate of sugarcane by a record breaking Rs 193, taking the rate from

Rs 117 to Rs 310. "Along with this, timely payment was also ensured, at the time of leaving the government in 2014, the sugarcane mills did not owe a single penny to the farmers," he pointed out. Former Chief Minister Bhupinder Singh Hooda said brotherhood is increasing in the whole country and the atmosphere of hatred is ending due to Rahul Gandhi's Bharat Jodo Yatra. "Immense public support is being received from wherever the Yatra is reaching in Haryana. There is tremendous enthusiasm not only among the public regarding the Yatra, but also given new energy to the Congress workers," he said. On the initiative of Member of Parliament Deepender Hooda, today the girl students of Government Girls High School

of village Khairampur, Hisar along with their parents met Rahul Gandhi and raised the issue of closure of government schools in the state and shortage of teachers in government schools. These mainly included 10th class student Pooja Rani, daughter of Kiran, Chanchal, daughter of Rajbala and Jyoti. Apart from this, Deepender Hooda also got Rahul Gandhi to meet Haryana writers and artists. In which included SP Singh, Subhash Chandra and others. Bharat Jodo Yatra started today from Khanpur Koliya village of Kurukshetra and reached Shabbad crossing Ladwa road. After this, again starting from Saha crossing, Mohra Maulana reached Ambala where the yatra would halt for the night at the new grain market of Ambala Cantt.

Punjab CM says stadium, road to be named after braveheart constable



MANN HOPED THE YOUTH OF THE REGION WILL JUDICIOUSLY USE THIS STADIUM FOR TRAINING THEMSELVES TO JOIN THE PUNJAB POLICE AND ARMED FORCES

SHAHPUR: Punjab Chief Minister Bhagwant Mann on Wednesday announced to construct a stadium and name a road after Punjab Police constable Kuldeep Singh Bajwa, who sacrificed his life while combating the anti-social elements.

The Chief Minister, who visited the house of the martyr at his native village in Gurdaspur district, handed over a cheque for Rs 2 crore,

including Rs 1 crore ex gratia by state government and Rs 1 crore of life insurance by HDFC Bank, to the distressed family as a mark of respect for his supreme sacrifice for the country.

Noting that Bajwa had attained martyrdom while performing his duty at Phagwara, Mann said that this "humble initiative of the state government is in recognition of the immense contribution of this son of soil towards maintaining law and order in the state".

Reiterating the firm commitment of the state government to help the families of the soldiers who sacrifice their life at the altar of the motherland, he said it is the duty of the government. He announced the construction of a stadium in the village in

the name of martyr Kuldeep Singh Bajwa with an ultra modern athletic track.

Mann hoped the youth of the region will judiciously use this stadium for training themselves to join the Punjab Police and armed forces.

The Chief Minister also announced to name the road leading to the village of martyr, in the name of Bajwa. He said this initiative is in recognition of the contribution of the braveheart who has sacrificed his life for the sake of the country.

He said the financial assistance to family of the martyr is in consonance with the commitment of the government to ensure the well being of the soldiers and their families.

Mann govt will spend Rs. 6.81 cr on development works for the beautification of Amritsar city : Dr. Nijjar

SATISH HANDA

Haryana Chief Minister Manohar Lal Khattar while addressing media strongly condemned Congress for making wrong propaganda regarding unemployment rate in Haryana state as 34%, which is incorrect since there is only 6.1% unemployment in the state. He surprisingly said why Congress leaders are projecting such incorrect figures during their Bharat Jodo Yatra. Khattar slammed the Congress for quoting fictional figures projected by Centre for Monitoring Indian Economy (CMIE) for which we shall take action against CMIE for quoting unrealistic figures.

Khattar said, Congress leaders are in the habit of making false statements and befool people by spreading false rumours that 34% youths in Haryana state are unemployed as against actual 6.1% as identified in 'Parivar Pehchan Patra Programme' (family id) launched in the state in 2022 in which around 98% families were registered. Khattar said that there is 2.75 crore population of people between age 18 to 60 of them nearly 6.5 lakh people were found unemployed in the state whereas only about 6% people of age between 18 to 45 were identified only between 2 to 2.5% as such Rahul Gandhi needs to provide correct figures before making a public statement.



Khattar disclosed that during eight years BJP government in Haryana state nearly 33,60,000 persons have been provided employment opportunities and nearly 50,000 Micro, Small, Medium Enterprises (MSME) industrial units have been set up in the state in this period provided employment to more than 12 lakh persons. He said that nearly 9 lakh unemployed youth have been able

to get jobs under Start up and Stand up schemes in the state. Chief Minister said, although it is not possible for a government to provide government jobs to everyone, but ruling government in the state provided government jobs to nearly a lakh youths and there is a proposal to provide 40,000 government jobs in class III category and 20,000 jobs in class IV category during this year.

Chief Minister expressing regret said that doing this kind of petty politics over such fictional figures is undesirable from a leader of any sensible political party. Khattar said, if needed action would be taken against CMIE for releasing unrealistic figures which during month November, 2022 in its report had showed unemployment rate in Haryana as 29.3 percent which itself was far from the reality as now they are claiming unemployment rate in Haryana as 34% which itself is contradictory seems to be associated with political parties in opposition perhaps working on their tips.

Hooda demands ruling government to issue white paper on rising debt and unemployment in Haryana



BJP-led government in Haryana a champion in rising unemployment: Rahul

SATISH HANDA Panipat

Congress leader Rahul Gandhi strongly condemned the ruling BJP in alliance with JJP government in Haryana state on the rising inflation and unemployment among youths during the 'Bharat Jodo Yatra' at Panipat in Haryana on Friday late afternoon.

While addressing a huge gathering he raised high question over rising unemployment in Haryana state. He said people also in small and medium weaving industries of Panipat,



earlier a flourishing sector today facing decline and youths working in this industry are jobless. He said unemployment in Haryana state at present has been identified as 38%, highest in the country. He said, ruling government in the state has

been unsuccessful to control rising prices of all essential commodities.

Rahul Gandhi raised a siren at the historic Panipat field for Congress victory in 2024 polls in the country assuring beneficial schemes for the welfare

people living below poverty line, farmers and laborers to help them financially putting amount worth Rs 72000 in their bank accounts every year. Rahul Gandhi also interacted with people directly during rally. He was accompanied by senior Congress leaders Mallikarjun Kharge Congress National President, Udaibhan State Congress President and the former Haryana Chief Minister Bhupinder Singh Hooda.

Among others present on the stage were Kumari Shelja, Randeep Surjewala and Kiran Choudhary.

Detective teams to improve health services in Haryana: Anil Vij

SATISH HANDA

Talking to media persons Home and Health Minister Anil Vij said that health department detective teams in the state will function similar to CM Flying

have free hand to check a government hospital in the state to improve health services in the hospitals as in case of CM Flying Squad have provided efficient services to arrest criminal activities not only in government

Haryana DGP PK Aggarwal reviews crime, law and order situation



SATISH HANDA

Addressing media persons at Panchkula, Director General of Police in Haryana P.K. Aggarwal said that in order to wipe out crime as well as fast rising drugs and liquor smuggling in the state, decision has been taken for stern action against anti-social elements mushrooming in the state involved in criminal activities within the state as well as in adjoining states in 2023 also. He disclosed that CID in the state has already prepared a list of hard core criminals involved in criminal activities including murders, attempt to murders, ransom demands, kidnappings, rapes, dacoities, drugs smuggling and few of them having links with gangster groups also having number of illegal properties built with black money in the state.

DGP told that Special Task Forces in Haryana state had identified as many as 72 illegal properties in the state owned by such hard core criminals, many of them involved in drugs smuggling which were demolished by bulldozers during year 2022. He added that CID has prepared a list of several hardcore criminals having illegal properties in Haryana state yet to be demolished this year. Aggarwal said that state police arrested 11463 anti-social elements involved in criminal activities during the year 2022 which included 334 hardcore criminals, most wanted by the police on which award up to Rs one lakh was declared by the state government for their arrest, which included maximum number of 43 criminals from Faridabad, 40 from Mohindergarh, 28 from Palwal, 26 from Sonapat, 24 from Rohtak 21 each from Gurugram and Kurukshetra districts.

DGP said that among 72 properties in Haryana owned by hardcore criminals as identified by CID Haryana were demolished during year 2022 which included maximum number of 35 properties in Faridabad, 9 in Sirsa, 6 each in Kurukshetra and Rohtak, 4 each in Kaithal and Yamunanagar, 2 each in Ambala and Hisar and one in Rewari district. He said, there is a list of large number of illegal properties yet to be demolished in the state shortly.

Aggarwal told media persons that on an average 956 criminals and bale jumpers were arrested by Haryana police every month. He said according to police record total number 6552 persons involved in criminal activities and 4911 bale jumpers were rounded by the police during past year, of them 951 criminals and 912 bale jumpers were arrested by the crime branch and 5601 criminals and 3999 bale jumpers were rounded by police field units in the state. DGP Haryana told that large numbers of criminals including some of them most wanted by the state police spreading terror in the state have been identified by the police yet to be arrested in order to make Haryana crime free during 2023.

Mann govt will spend Rs. 6.81 cr on development works for the beautification of Amritsar city : Dr. Nijjar



JAGMOHAN SINGH Amritsar

Local Government Minister, Dr. Inderbir Singh Nijjar said that the government led by Chief Minister Punjab Bhag-

want Mann is fully committed to provide basic facilities to the people of the state and the Punjab government has decided to spend 6.81 crore rupees on development works for the beautification of Amritsar.

In a statement issued here today, Dr. Nijjar today after inaugurating the installation of interlocking tiles at a cost of Rs.40 lakh in Pothohar Bazaar, Kot Mit Singh and Khalsa Nagar under Ward No. 38. He said that it is a matter of great sadness that no one has taken care of this area for the last 35 years and this area is completely backward. Dr. Nijjar said that now all the facilities will be provided to the people in this area and first of all the work of the streets and drains will be completed.

He said that our dream is to make the life of the people of the state easy and provide a clean and tidy environment. He said that there is no shortage of funds for development.

Two arrested with 3.5 kg of opium at Ambala



SATISH HANDA Ambala

The CIA Staff of Ambala police arrested two persons hailing from Bihar and recovered 3.5 kg opium from them. Arrested persons were identified Sahni and his accomplice Randhir both residents of Harsher village of Muzaffarpur in Bihar. Jashandeep Singh Randhawa SP Ambala said that both Nandan and Randhir were nabbed by a police team at a special check post that had been set up on a flyover in Ambala Cantonment. The price of the opium seized by police is estimated over Rs 5 lakh.

Randhawa said that the police had received a tip-off that some peddlers from Bihar would be delivering opium to a smuggler in Ambala. Accordingly, a checkpost was set up on a flyover in the cantonment area and the both drug suppliers were arrested.

Warm Welcome to Rahul Gandhi's Bharat Jodo Yatra in Ambala

SATISH HANDA Ambala

Warm welcome was given to Rahul Gandhi's Bharat Jodo Yatra on Monday when entered Ambala Cantt after covering 255 km distance of seven districts of the state in eight days. Large number of residents of the town including children, youths, old age persons, women, farmers and entrepreneurs of Ambala scientific industry welcomed Yatra at the National Highway No. 1.

Senior congress leaders present in Bharat Jodo Yatra including AICC media in-charge Jai Ram Ramesh, leader of opposition in Haryana Vidhan Sabha Bhupinder Singh Hooda former Haryana Chief Minister, Congress Convener Shakti Singh, HPCC president Uday Bhan, and Rao Daan Singh were present while addressing a press conference.

The main issues discussed in the press conference included MSP of their crops.



extremely poor condition of roads observed during Bharat Jodo Yatra which have become worst in past eight years BJP government rule. Former Chief Minister Bhupinder Singh Hooda while addressing said that unemployment, rising prices of all essential commodities, increasing crimes, drug smuggling in Haryana state, drug addiction among youths, corruption in government offices and poor administration by the government

are some of the vital issues the ruling government has failed to control.

Hooda said that the farmers in the state demand guaranteed minimum support price of their crops as well as change in land acquisition rules by the government which are unfavorable for them. Hooda said, ruling Chief Minister had assured farmers to double their income but failed to fulfil their promise and the condition of farmers becoming bad to worst.

Ambala police arrested two persons carrying 7 pistols, cartridges

SATISH HANDA Ambala

CIA Staff of Ambala police on secret information arrested two persons carrying illegal arms in 24 hours. Addressing media persons SP Ambala, Jashandeep Singh Randhawa said that police patrolling party got information that both are carrying illegal weapons. He told that Aman Sonkar alias Bond master mind of a criminal gang was arrested while travelling on foot near Subhash Park Ambala Cantt while plan-



ning a criminal activity. Subhash Parka in Ambala Cantt attracts large number of visitors especially

women and children throughout the day. Police team during search recovered from him five country

made pistols and four cartridges. Randhawa told that in another case police on a clue arrested a youth Bandhan Sharma a resident of Harl Hari near behind BD Flour Mill while moving near Namastey Chowk Ambala Cantt and during search police team recovered from his possession two country made pistols. SP Randhawa told that Aman alias Bond was having seven cases registered against him in three different police stations at Ambala including two cases of attempt to murder.

Protest : All Colleges in Punjab to Remain Shut on Jan 18

JAC AND UN-AIDED COLLEGES SET TO PROTEST AGAINST STATE GOVT. OVER CENTRALIZED ADMISSIONS

JAGMOHAN SINGH Amritsar

With no favourable response coming up from state government, the Joint Action Committee (JAC) of Non-Govt Aided Colleges Management Federation (NGACMF), Principals' Associations, Punjab Chandigarh Colleges Teachers Union (PCCTU) and Un-aided Private Colleges' body called for all Colleges shut on January 18.

In a statement issued here today, the colleges in Punjab are fighting against the government 'arbitrarily and discriminatory decision to implement centralized admission portal and tinkering with service rules of teachers including lowering retirement age at 58 years..

In a joint meeting of the JAC and Unaided Colleges at Guru Nanak Khalsa College for Women at Ludhiana, the issue was discussed threadbare and as the government of Bhagwant Singh Mann is not hearing the genuine demands for the Colleges, all colleges will remain closed on January 18.

"We are in dire strait and are taking this extreme step as the government is unresponsive to our demands", said Federation President Rajinder Mohan Singh Chhina who chaired the meeting.

He said and Chief Minister and Minister of Higher Education has not even given the times for meeting to discuss issues confronting higher education in Punjab. Even now we appeal the government to address the issues confronting the colleges in Punjab.

He said the government's decision will baldly impact the autonomy of the colleges and is highly discriminatory in nature as state Universities, their constituent colleges and private universities have been kept out of the purview of this so-called admission portal. The higher education institutions are facing acute financial troubles already in wake of the drop in

admissions as the youth is flying western countries and thus there is no demand of such a portal. "The indifferent attitude of Bhagwant Singh Mann's government to the issues confronting the Colleges is forcing us to adopt the path of agitation and protest. On Jan 18 all colleges will remain shut and memorandums would be submitted to Deputy Commissioners in all district headquarters as neither the Higher Education Minister nor CM is giving us time meet them to raise our issues", said Federation Secretary SM Sharma. He said the implementation of centralized portal has been unanimously taken by the government and their concerns raised during the meeting with Secretary, Higher Education at Chandigarh had been ignored and Speaking orders passed and it is being implemented through the affiliating Universities in Punjab.

Cheaper fuel, jobs and harmony: Rahul Gandhi's promises in letter

NEW DELHI: Congress leader Rahul Gandhi has written a letter to the people of the country in a massive outreach programme of the party, promising cheaper petrol and diesel, gas cylinder at Rs 500, jobs and harmony.

The party on Friday announced that it will deliver Rahul Gandhi's letter to each house along with a charge sheet against the Central government from January 26. The letter is signed off as "aapka apna Rahul (your own Rahul)".

The letter is written in all regional languages and the exercise is an attempt by the Congress to reap the political benefits from the Bharat Jodo Yatra.

Gandhi in his letter has tried to touch all the subjects. He mentions that this is written after completing the historic, 3,500 km long Bharat Jodo Yatra where millions of Indians walked with him from Kanyakumari to Kashmir.

"It was the most enriching



journey of my life, and I am overwhelmed by the love and affection that every single Indian has showered on us. I heard intently, to all your stories along the way."

He said there is a palpable economic crisis brewing - joblessness among the youth, unbearable price rise, severe farm distress, and a complete corporate capture of the country's wealth... People are worried about losing their jobs, their incomes are falling further, and their dreams of a better future are shattering.

"There is a deep sense of hopelessness across the country. Today, even our plurality is under threat. Divisive forces are attempting to turn our diversity against us - different religions, communities, regions are being pitted against each other. These forces, which are only a handful in number, know that only when people feel insecure and scared can they sow the seeds of hatred for the 'other'. But after this Yatra, I am convinced that this vicious agenda has its limits, and it cannot go on any longer."

He wrote that he will fight to eradicate these evils - from the streets to Parliament, every single day and determined to create economic prosperity for everyone - right price for farmers' produce, jobs for our youth, fair distribution of the country's wealth, an enabling environment for MSMEs and entrepreneurs, cheaper diesel, a stronger rupee, and a gas cylinder for Rs 500.

"The people of our country realise that we cannot reach our full potential unless we embrace our diversity and work shoulder to shoulder. I strongly believe that India will reject hatred. We will rise above caste, religion, language, gender, and all other differences that cause rifts in a society. Our greatness lies in our Unity in Diversity. My message to each one of you - Daro Mat! Remove fear from your hearts, and hatred will vanish from within you."

"The Yatra has renewed my vigour to fight for each one of you. It has been a 'Tapasya'.

"I understand that my personal and political journey is one - to give voice to the voiceless, to be the weapon of the weak, to take India from darkness to light, from hate to love, from suffering to prosperity. I will carry forward the vision and values of those who gave us our extraordinary Constitution."

"The Congress family has been working tirelessly for 137 years, first to free, then to unite and then further to build this country and have always brought the country together during the difficult times. Today, again, our country finds itself in a state of crisis.

"The 'Hath se Hath Jodo' Abhiyan is our initiative to spread the message of unity and brotherhood. Through this historic Abhiyan, the Congress party is extending its hand to you - lend a hand, come together to put the country back on the path of building a 'Swarnim Bharat' - where every single Indian has an equal chance to fulfill their dreams."

Several corrupts involved in frauds worth crores in FCI trapped in 'operation Kanak' by CBI

SATISH HANDA

The CBI launched 'Operation Kanak' in high level corruption alleged in the Food Corporation of India (FCI) conducted raids at 39 places in Punjab, Haryana and Delhi and recovered amount worth Rs 1.03 crore from senior officers involved in embezzlements in various godowns. According to a CBI spokesman, an network of employees from junior to senior level were found involved in corrupt practices. Some time ago embezzlements in dispatch of rice and wheat stocks of value worth crores of rupees for supply to below poverty line (BPL) families under government schemes sent to Gujarat and other states in the country were detected when a three members committee was sent to Gujarat which found that stocks were taken out from the bags before dispatches and corrupt employees even didn't spare poor families.

The CBI booked a total of 74 accused and registered FIRs against them including a DGM ranks officer from Chandigarh was arrested. Among others booked by CBI teams included FCI Executive Director Sudeep Singh and other suspects in the syndicate of officials, rice mill owners and middlemen involved in embezzlements. Among others allegedly indulged in corrupt practices by CBI sharing money were Deputy General Manager of FCI Ravji Kumar Mishra who was arrested for receiving a bribe of Rs 50,000 from one Ravinder Singh Khera, the CBI said that few other senior officers of Punjab Government are also on CBI radar. Information reveals that among the 74 alleged accused, 34 are serving



officials, three are retired, 17 private persons and 20 entities. Information also reveals that the agency recovered Rs 80 lakh cash during investigation including Rs 10 lakh from a female officer found currency notes hidden in the washing machine in her bath room during search.

According to information, CBI teams conducted raids in FCI godowns in six states which included in Rupnagar, Sangrur, Morinda, Bassi Pathana, Fatehgarh Sahib, Mohali, Sunam, Bhatinda in Punjab, Dukheri (Ambala), Gurugram in Haryana, Kolar, Chikbalpur in Karnataka, Chennai in Tamilnadu, Chandigarh and New Delhi and also recovered Fixed Deposit documents of value worth Rs three crore in raids found a chain of officers, lower staff working in godowns, rice mill owners, grain merchants, brokers engaged in procurements, all involved in nexus of corruption.

According to CBI information, it was alleged that alleged accuse used to accept bribe from rice millers, commission agents getting sub-standard grains, at times showing more procurement on papers that actual supplies while accepting bribe. Investigation also revealed that amount worth Rs 4000 was being collected from every truck carrying stocks in godowns allegedly being shared by the General Manager, Deputy General Manager, AGM, Research officer in lab, Storekeeper, Headquarter expenses and towards other miscellaneous expenses.

Preparations underway for Modi's visit to K'taka's Kalaburagi on Jan 19



Kalaburagi (Karnataka): Preparations are underway for Prime Minister Narendra Modi's upcoming visit to Karnataka's Kalaburagi district on January 19, his second trip this month to the poll-bound state.

During the visit, Modi will distribute property documents to the residents of 'tandas' (makeshift houses for SC/STs in villages) at a mega event at Malkhed.

It is for the first time in the history of Karnataka that these documents are being distributed to 51,900 tandra residents.

The beneficiaries are chosen from the Hyderabad-Karnataka region districts of Raichur, Bidar, Yadgir and Vijayapura, according to Revenue Department officials.

The state Minister for Revenue R. Ashoka has been holding a series of meetings with officials in Kalaburagi to make it an impactful event.

A huge helipad, is being constructed for the event, while 600 cooks will be deputed to cook food and 200 counters will be opened on the day of the event.

The beneficiaries will be brought in 2,582 buses, according to the Minister.

Kalaburagi is the home turf of AICC President Mallikarjuna Kharge and after his defeat in the last parliamentary elections, he wants to prove his might in the upcoming state Assembly polls.

Karnataka's ruling BJP wants to defeat his plans not only in Kalaburagi but in the entire northern region of the state.

Drug smuggled from Pakistan at Indo-Pak border seized



JAGMOHAN SINGH Amritsar

Border Security Force (BSF) on Jan 9 seized 500 grams Heroin at Indo-Pak border which was smuggled to India from the neighboring country Pakistan.

In a statement issued by BSF official said that on 09th Jan 2022 during afternoon hours, amidst dense foggy condition, BSF troops deployed on border heard sound of something thrown over the border fence towards own side of fencing in the area falling near Village - Mehandipur, District - Tarn Taran.

However, the smugglers managed to escape taking advantage of dense fog. Further, during the initial search of the area, troops recovered one packet of narcotics (Heroin) (Gross wt - 500 Gms) wrapped in yellow colour polythene.

Delhi Akali chief objects to helmet plan for Sikh soldiers in Indian Army



NEW DELHI: When the Sikhs elsewhere in the world have successfully secured the right to work with their proud turbans in jobs requiring helmets, the BJP government back home has initiated a plan to bring in so-called special helmets for Sikh soldiers in the Indian Army, which is completely unacceptable, Delhi Akali chief Paramjit Singh Sarna said.

The Indian Army has reportedly issued a request for proposal for the emergency purchase of nearly 13,000 helmets for Sikh troops through a fast-track procedure.

"What is this happening? From the World Wars to the war with China in 1962, with Pakistan in 1965 and 1971 to the Kargil conflict, the Sikh soldiers fought at the frontline bravely wearing their turbans. What's the motive behind getting them to wear helmets now?" Sarna asked. He reminded the BJP government that even the British tried to introduce helmets for Sikh soldiers in World War II but couldn't because the move was rejected by Sikh troops. He asked the government to drop its helmet plan for the Sikh soldiers of the Indian Army with immediate effect.

Dhankhar's remarks against Constitution dangerous sign for future: Yechury

NEW DELHI: CPI-M General Secretary Sitaram Yechury on Friday termed Vice President Jagdeep Dhankhar's recent remarks against the basic structure of the Constitution as a "dangerous sign" for the future.

Dhankhar, while addressing the inaugural session of the All India Presiding Officers' Conference in Jaipur, had said that the Supreme Court had set a wrong precedent by its verdict in the Kesavananda Bharti case of 1973.

Yechury strongly objected to Dhankhar's comment, saying that it was an unprecedented attack on the judiciary.

He said that the Indian Constitution established the Parliament, and the Executive, Legislature



and Judiciary derive their authority and power from the Constitution itself.

He added that the Constitution is supreme and no government exercising its autocracy of majority can undermine the basic

structure of "our republic".

The CPI-M leader added that the Vice President is questioning the supremacy of the same Constitution under which he assumed office.

Yechury explained that the

centrality of the Constitution lay in upholding the sovereignty of India, which has been made apparent in its Preamble.

Yechury said that people's sovereignty cannot be substituted at any point in the thread of the constitutional scheme.

He said that the vision of an 'intolerant', fascist' Hindutva nation is an attempt to destroy the secular and democratic character of the Republic of India, which should be rejected and resisted.

Earlier, senior Congress leader and former Union minister P. Chidambaram, while reacting on the same, had said that all those who loved the Constitution should be cautious of the "dangers ahead".

Shradha Walkar case: Bones cut with saw, says post-mortem report

NEW DELHI: A saw was used to cut up the bones of Shradha Walkar, killed by her live-in partner in May -2022, the autopsy report has revealed.

The Delhi Police have got the forensic analysis report of her 23 bones which were recovered during the course of investigation.

According to sources, it is called Osteological study or biophysical study of the bone pieces which help the police in such cases.

It has been learnt in the report that her bones were cut with the help of a saw and similar sharp edged weapon.

The post-mortem analysis was conducted in AIIMS on Tuesday.

"The post-mortem analysis has suggested that her bones were cut with the help of a saw. Now we will submit this



report before Saket Court," the source said.

Walkar and Aftab Amin Poonawalla had met through the dating app 'Bumble' in 2018. They had come to Delhi on May 8, and shifted to Chatrapur area on May 15. On May 18, Poonawalla allegedly killed her and then chopped her body into 35 pieces and threw her body parts across various places over a period of 18 days.

He was reportedly inspired by the American crime show 'Dexter', which tells the story of a man with homicidal tendencies who lives a double life.

World witnessing transforming India: Yogi Adityanath

Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath on Friday said that in the past eight years, the world has seen a transforming India and that Kashi (Varanasi) has embarked on a new journey with the launch of the longest river cruise.

Speaking at the flagging off of the world's longest river cruise-MV Ganga Vilas and inauguration of the Tent City by Prime Minister Narendra Modi via video conferencing, Adityanath said that new doors of possibilities have also opened along with the launch of the river cruise.

"Today is an important day. In the past eight years, the world has seen a transforming India. Kashi (Varanasi) has embarked on a new journey. The oldest city of the world (Kashi), which is famous as the spiritual and cultural capital of India, in the past eight years has emerged on the global stage in new 'kaya' (physique) and new 'kalevar' (form)," Adityanath said.

He added that along with Kashi, Uttar Pradesh, Bihar and Jharkhand are also "entering into a new era". Highlighting the landlocked geographical feature of Uttar Pradesh, the Chief Minister said, "Being a landlocked state, UP used to yearn, as exporting MSME products to the international market used to be expensive.

Illegal mining will lead to many Joshimaths in Rajasthan, warn veterans

JAIPUR: What Joshimath is seeing today will be seen in Rajasthan somewhere after 25 years if the present menace of illegal mining remains unchecked in the desert state, veteran environmentalists say while warning of a "disaster which is out of expectation".

"There are many hills which have gone missing in the state. In fact, on the other hand, hills have been created on plains by the locals by dumping garbage," Congress MLA Bharat Singh quipped while mentioning the insensitivity of people engaged in illegal mining in the state.

Bharat Singh has been vocal on the issue of illegal sand mining and has been attacking his own government. He recently wrote a letter to Chief Minister Ashok Gehlot and demanded the dismissal of state Mining Minister Pramod Jain Bhaya, terming him "land mafia".

Speaking to media, Singh said, "Joshimath story will be repeated in Rajasthan too. It is sad that governments realise the gravity of the issue when the situation goes

out of control. In our state too, Joshimath story is being repeated... The illegal mining in the state has thrown many challenges out, however, everyone seems to be sitting with folded hands. They will wake up from slumber when disaster happens."

The Congress MLA further said, "The entire ecology has changed in the region. The sad part of the story is that such facts are being reviewed under its economic ambit, keeping monetary prospects in mind and hence everyone has joined hands in this illegal act... Unitedly, they are engulfing hills."

Singh said that he will protest in Mining Minister's constituency on January 23, the day when the Assembly session starts in Jaipur.

Meanwhile, environmental activist Mahendra Kachhwa, said, "Illegal mining and Rajasthan have become synonymous. In fact, these mafias have not even spared forests and have entered the core areas of forests, threatening the tiger breed. There has been



massive destruction in Ranthambore in core tiger conservation areas... many illegal mines are running in areas spread over 1,100 hectares of land."

"The sad part is that the miners have dug 30 feet deep pits in jungles, even in areas inside Ramgarh Sanctuary where tigers go to deliver. There is rapid encroachment

and mining inside jungles and hunting also goes rampant. If forest area gets disturbed, the surrounding areas will also be affected," he added.

"Jawai Sanctuary, Ranthambore national park and Sambhar lake are all dominated by these illegal mining mafias. Salt mafias dominate in the Sambhar region. The results

of it are out in open. The lake which once used to dry during May-June has now dried in November and December... The reason is simple, there is no trained dedicated staff to check it (illegal mining) and there is no protection for the staff who raise voice (against it). Eventually open murders are being reported in the state,

"Kachhwa asserted.

Like Singh, he also believes that Rajasthan will see Joshimath-like situation in the future. "What we are facing in Joshimath, after 25 years you will see the same situation here as encroachment and mining are increasing and the area is turning into concrete jungle".

Babulal Jaju, another environmentalist said, "Illegal mining has brought the state in a pathetic situation. It (illegal mining) is going on in almost all districts like Bharatpur, Alwar, Rajsamand and many more. Rivers have dried up because of this malpractice. Sand has been dug out from rivers openly under the nose of officials which has affected the aquatic life."

He warned: "Joshimath story will surely be repeated in Rajasthan if there is no full stop to illegal mining. The reason behind Joshimath story is greed and lust for unwanted development. They want to turn nature into business. Same story is being repeated here. There is greed for uncontrolled development, which

will become 'cancer' and will leave people crying."

In 2018, the Supreme Court also referred to a central empowered committee report that 31 hills or hillocks have vanished in the state's Aravalli area. The disappearance of hills in Rajasthan could be one of the reasons for the rise in pollution levels in Delhi, the apex court had said.

Earlier, the Comptroller and Auditor General (CAG) report also said Rajasthan's mines department granted, renewed and extended mining leases violating Supreme Court's orders against mining in the Aravalli mountain range.

Illegal mining in Rajasthan which has a rich reserve of copper, lead, zinc, rock phosphate, soapstone, silica sand, limestone, marble and gypsum in the Aravalli mountain range has razed several hills over the years, said sources.

Recently, a saint self-immolated in the state protesting against the illegal mining in holy Braj area alleging that holy hills are disappearing courtesy illegal mining.

Rehabilitation norms crucial for eviction

The Supreme Court's timely intervention has halted the forcible eviction of some 50,000 people from Haldwani in Uttarakhand, where the occupants are accused of squatting on railway property for decades. The Uttarakhand High Court had taken a tough stand against the residents, and passed a slew of directions that would have entailed their eviction within a week, backed by force, including the deployment of paramilitary forces. It is significant that the Bench underscored the human angle to the issue and spoke about the need for rehabilitation before eviction while staying the order. The court has ruled that it was not a government order but only a communication on how to manage the land, and it does not amount to declaring it as 'nazul land', that is, land that has fallen into the hands of the state by escheat. As one of the nazul rules is that there cannot be sale or lease, the court rejected all claims made by occupants based on purported documents for lease, sale, and, in some cases, purchase through auction. Conflicts between occupants of public land and the state that wants to reclaim the land are a never-ending saga in the country. A shortage of housing, as well as inadequate recognition of the right to shelter, means that large masses of people encroach on vacant land, be it on the bed of water bodies or government property. This often leads to attempts to evict the occupants and spawns litigation. The Haldwani eviction effort has unfortunately taken communal overtones, and there appears to be a clamour for the early eviction of the Muslim residents. India does not have a good record on rehabilitation of those evicted from public spaces, and this case presents an opportunity to the Supreme Court to lay down the law on meaningful rehabilitation as well as effective prevention of encroachments.

LETTERBOX

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

"When everything seems to be going against you, remember that the airplane takes off against the wind, not with it."

- Henry Ford

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DR. HARVINDER KAUR

Go for farmer-friendly insurance

About 46% population directly or indirectly depends on the agriculture sector. Crop insurance is a crucial and key issue for the survival of agriculture. The unpredictability of agricultural yields and products often results in windfall losses making the lives of farmers debt-ridden and pathetic. The economic decisions involved in agriculture are massive and need to be recognized as such. Crop insurance is directly linked with the security of farmers in India. For instance, students of economics are familiar with the COBWEB theorem. A farmer has to take the decision to produce a particular crop minimum of six months before marketing so assurance of minimum support price is a must in agriculture. Every industry can increase or decrease its production according to the demand in the market but a farmer can not as he has sown the crop six months before, it reaches to market and the standard law of demand and supply of Dr Marshall does not work in food production. A farmer never knows what will be market and weather conditions in the coming next 5 to six months. The Cobweb theorem describes this dilemma of a farmer. How the market forces and nature play a major role in deciding the price of agricultural products as two third of total land has no irrigation facilities in our country. A farmer can be ruined because of a lack of demand and low prices. Even plenty of production can also ruin him when the price falls because of more production when supply surpasses demand and the equilibrium price falls. This is called poverty in prosperity in economics. Even the developed capitalist economies, where free markets supposedly rule, highly subsidize their farming communities. As agriculture depends on nature and undoubtedly is a risky occupation and this discourage farmer to invest and he rarely thinks of making agriculture a profession. has done a cost-benefit analysis of Pradhan Mantri Fasal Bima Yojana (newly launched crop insurance scheme by the Central Govern-



ment) implemented in every state of India, in collaboration with the respective state. The agricultural sector performs a vital role in developing the Indian economy and it can be considered the backbone of the industry and service sector. The agricultural sector still depends upon the weather and climate conditions, which is always uncertain and unpredictable. Crop insurance is one of the ways through which farmers may be protected from the financial loss of their crops against natural disasters.

In Haryana, the first crop insurance scheme was introduced in 2004 during the Kharif season [4] through the Agriculture Insurance Company (AIC). The government of Haryana adopted this National Agriculture Insurance Scheme (NAIS) with the collaboration of Govt. of India. A new scheme was introduced in 2009 in Haryana on a pilot basis known as the Weather Based Crop Insurance Scheme (WBCIS). In 2011, a new scheme named

Modified National Agriculture Insurance Scheme (MNAIS) was started. Finally, the Government of Haryana implemented the central-sponsored scheme Pradhan Minister Fasal Bima Yojna (PMFBY) in 2016. It replaces all the previous schemes. we conclude that only a few schemes are implemented in Haryana state from India's various schemes from time to time. Here, the need arises to assess the performance of various crop insurance schemes in Haryana.

The studies should be done to evaluate the performance of the crop insurance schemes implemented in Haryana. only a few schemes are implemented in Haryana in comparison to other states of India. The Pradhan Mantri Fasal Bima Yojana performs better continuously and proves beneficial for the farmers of Haryana. As a policy implication, policymakers should frame a provision of no claim bonus for the farmers.

In 2016 Prime Minister launched a new crop insurance scheme that replaces all of India's

prevailing yield crop insurance schemes by giving the slogan of 'One Nation One Scheme'. In Haryana, PMFBY was implemented in Kharif 2016 for cotton, paddy, bajra, and maize and in Rabi 2016-17 for wheat, barley, mustard, and gram. This scheme was based on the area approach. This scheme was compulsory for loanee farmers and voluntary for non-loanee farmers. Under this scheme, premium rates are 1.5 per cent for Kharif, 2 per cent for rabi, and 5 per cent for horticultural crops. The major difference between the PMFBY and the previous crop insurance scheme is that the premium rate under the PMFBY scheme is reduced and expands coverage of crops. This scheme was a more farmers-friendly provision that used advanced technology to estimate the losses accurately and make the payment on time to the farmers.

Dr. Harvinder Kaur, Associate Professor in Economics, Ambala, views are personal



NARVIJAY YADAV

INDIA'S POSITION IN THE FIELD OF EMPLOYMENT IS VITAL. IN TERMS OF THE WORKING POPULATION, INDIA IS POISED TO BECOME THE WORLD'S LARGEST LABOUR FORCE BY 2027. INDIAN COMPANIES ARE IN A BETTER POSITION AND IMBIBE HOPE IN TERMS OF EMPLOYMENT.

Opportune time for India in terms of job

While millions of jobs are being lost around the globe and big IT corporate houses are laying off their regular employees, Indian companies are in a better position and offer hope in terms of jobs. In the past, giant companies like Facebook (Meta), Amazon, and Twitter laid off employees in bulk. Amazon has announced the removal of 18,000 i.e. 6 percent out of its 2.5 lakh employees. US-based software company Salesforce has also prepared to lay off 10 percent of its staff. At present, there are 80,000 employees in this company. Actually, the work of these companies had shot up during the Covid era, which is now decreasing fast. But in India, the situation is the opposite, and 2023 looks very promising. India's position in the field of employment is vital. In terms of the working population, India is poised to become the world's largest labour force by 2027.

Recording Jobs India's survey states that 45 percent of the leading companies are preparing for 20 percent of new recruitments. In the second half of the year, India will move forward in the manufacturing sector and domestic demand will increase



here. Some big foreign brands like Apple and Volvo are setting up their innovation centers in India. Last year, 50,000 new jobs were created in this sector and this trend is expected to continue further. Companies will recruit new heads for clean energy technology in the auto sector. The highest demand will be for posts like program manager, electronic engineer, system engineer, etc. There is a lot of hope in the field of the Internet and IT. Apart

from delivery professionals, there will also be a demand for analytics experts. A lot of employment will be generated due to performance marketing. Tech companies will focus their attention on quality. A lot of recruitment has already taken place in this sector. According to CII's IndiaSkills Report, India's employability score is above 50 percent, which means half of the candidates who apply for jobs are employable.

This is the time to learn new skills and upgrade yourself. Prime Minister Modi said at the Youth Festival held in Hubli recently that the youth need to learn new skills so that they can prepare themselves for the jobs of the future. This is a very important time when the whole world is looking toward India and its youth. This is the first time that both hope and opportunity are on India's side. He told the youth that if they have new ideas then they should not care about being ridiculed. New ideas are initially ridiculed. Regardless of this, you need to work on your idea. India is currently one of the five largest economies in the world and soon it will be counted among the top three economies of the world. As many as 48 percent of the 3,000 Indian companies surveyed in the latest Employment Outlook survey by Manpower Group say they will add more jobs in the days to come. Of these, 34 percent of companies do not want to make any changes in their existing workforce. The hiring outlook in India has been found to be good compared to other countries.

Narvijay Yadav is a senior Journalist & Columnist. Views are personal



BOOKS: REVIEW

Book discusses cases that shaped financial landscape

Examining 15 judgments that have shaped the financial landscape of India, an upcoming book by senior advocate and author Saurabh Kirpal will offer insight into judicial thinking in matters concerning the economy since independence.

"Fifteen Judgments: Cases that shaped India's financial landscape" will hit the stands on November 21. It is published by Penguin Random House India (PRHI).

The book examines major judgments delivered on a variety of subjects, ranging from the environment and sex discrimination to disinvestment and insolvency, to show how far reaching the role of the court has been in influencing the economic development of India.

"The book is not a legal text

aimed solely at lawyers but is an attempt to demystify the process of judicial adjudication. The law as well as the historic and socio-economic context of the issues at stake are discussed in a language accessible to the lay reader," writes the author in his introduction of the book.

The judgments, including RC Cooper v. Union of India (the 1970 case for bank nationalisation) and Vishaka v. State of Rajasthan (the 1997 case on how to deal with the menace of sexual harassment against women at workplaces), have been examined to give the reader a flavour of the jurisprudential philosophies at different times in the country since Independence.

According to the publishers, the 15 judgments also trace the long path of the economic history of the country.

'The texture of these rivalries has undergone paradigm changes during the past 100 years but the suspicion of the big powers against each other continues to haunt the world'

"From the almost laissez-faire conception of the economy in the fifties to the socialism of the seventies and eighties; from the recognition of the effects of liberalization in the 90s to the attempt to reign in the perceived excesses of liberalization, the judgments reflect the sentiment of the era that they were delivered in," it added.

Kirpal, who has been practising at the Supreme Court for over two decades, is also the editor of



the 2020 released book "Sex and the Supreme Court", an anthology about issues relating to law, gender and sexuality.

Kirpal, after studying physics at St Stephen's College in Delhi, read law at the University of Oxford and did his masters in law at the University of Cambridge.

He did a brief stint with the United Nations in Geneva before returning to Delhi where he has been practising at the Supreme Court for well over two decades. He has appeared in a range of matters covering diverse subjects from commercial to constitutional law.

This is reflected in the variety

of clients he has appeared for—from Anil Ambani in his legal battle with his brother to being counsel for Navtej Johar, Ritu Dalmia and others in the case that led to the reading down of Section 377 of the Indian Penal Code.

A self-described 'accidental activist', he is also a trustee of the Naz Foundation Trust, the NGO that first fought for decriminalization of homosexuality in India. He is the editor of the recently released book Sex and the Supreme Court, an anthology about issues relating to law, gender and sexuality.

The new book examines fifteen judgments that have influenced the financial destiny of India. With significant macroeconomic dimensions, these judgments, when explored, show a long-term impact on the economy.

In doing so, judgments from different times of history have been examined to give the reader a flavour of the jurisprudential philosophies at different times in the country since Independence.

Experts predict India's emergence as 'third pole', despite GDP growth worries

If any major middle-income country is truly outperforming in the coming decades, it's the world's soon-to-be third largest economy (and its largest democracy), India, Eurasia Group said in a report.

"In my view, 2023 will be remembered for India's emergence as the third pole of the world," wrote Shigesaburo Okumura, Editor-in-Chief of Nikkei Asia, in a recent article.

Another important factor not to be neglected is India. This year will likely be remembered for marking its emergence as the world's most populous nation, Okumura wrote.

According to the UN, China's population last year was 1.426 billion while India's was 1.417 billion. In July, the UN forecast that China's population would fall in 2023 while India's would surpass it.

By 2050, the UN expects India will have 1.6 billion residents and China 1.3 billion.

A growing working-age population is an important

source of economic growth, so India's emergence will give it new power in international politics, Okumura said.

Moreover, decoupling between the US and China and the rebuilding of technology supply chains to exclude China benefits India. Apple is building iPhone 14s in India.

Natarajan Chandrasekaran, chairman of Tata Sons, has talked of plans to produce semiconductors in the subcontinent.

In March, India will host the plenary session of the Trilateral Commission for the first time. This year, it is also chairing the Group of 20, a role that will involve a leaders' summit and many ministerial meetings. The Modi government will be eager to show leadership ahead of India's own elections in 2024, Okumura wrote.

"The new year thus could mark the beginning of a tripartite world, involving the US, China and India. New Delhi is undeniably on the rise," Okumura concluded.



Challenges, however, are mounting for India's economy with the GDP forecast at a half-century low.

Motilal Oswal Financial Services forecast in a note that after growing strongly for two consecutive years, India's real GDP growth would decelerate to 5.2 per cent YoY in FY24, while nominal GDP growth would weaken even sharply to 7-7.5 per cent, led by easing inflation.

A combination of factors

such as slower global economy, fading pent-up demand and normalising base effects would contribute to slower real growth.

With an expected retail inflation print at just 4.3 per cent and a mere 1 per cent growth in the wholesale price index (WPI) in FY24, the GDP deflator could be around 2 per cent, dragging down India's nominal GDP growth to the lowest level compared to any year between the early 1970s and FY19 (that

is, half-a-century pre-Covid period), the report said.

Such slow growth rate would have some serious implications for the macro economy and financial markets.

"Overall, we believe that unlike the past 12-15 months, the narrative will reverse in FY24. Inflation concerns will take a back seat and growth worries will resurface. This may be true not only for India, but also for the entire global economy. At the same time, restrictive monetary policy will fail to boost financial markets. Accordingly, CY23 could be very painful," the report said.

Revenue of listed companies is highly correlated with nominal GDP growth (and WPI-inflation). In case of single-digit nominal GDP growth, corporate sales growth is also expected to weaken from an average of >30 per cent YoY in the past seven quarters to single digits in FY24.

With an expectation of weaker nominal GDP growth in FY24, we estimate India's

Rs 13,573 cr invested via MF SIPs in Dec '22



NEW DELHI: The systematic investment plans (SIP) of Indian mutual funds gathered Rs 13,573.08 crore from investors, up from Rs 13,306.49 crore invested in November 2022, the Association of Mutual Funds in India (AMFI) said on Tuesday.

Last month's SIP contribution was much higher than Rs 11,305.34 crore that was invested in December 2021.

"Investors will continue to invest in the India growth story through the mutual fund route over the near future. Investors are looking forward to a growth-oriented budget which should have a positive impact on the markets.

"The importance of investing in equity markets for the longer term goals is not lost on investors and the same is reflected in the ever-increasing awareness and adoption of SIP as a goal-linked route to create wealth over the long term. This month almost 24 lakh new SIPs were registered, which shows increasing investor belief in the instrument. SIPs are the simplest route to build a disciplined habit of regular investing," AMFI's Chief executive N.S. Venkatesh said.

According to the AMFI, the industry's net assets under management (AUM) at the end of December 2022 stood at Rs 39,88,735.37 crore (Rs 37,72,696.31 in December 2021) and the average AUM at Rs 40,76,170.53 crore.

The retail AUMs (Equity+Hybrid+Solution-Oriented Schemes) in December 2022 stood at Rs 20,55,212 crore and the average AUM stood at Rs 20,88,946 crore.

According to the industry body, the number of SIP ac-

World Bank projects slowdown in economic growth of India at 6.6 per cent next fiscal



NEW DELHI: Predicting a slight decline in India's economic growth, the World Bank said that India will grow at 6.6 per cent in next financial year from an expected 6.9 per cent in 2022-23. However it said that India is likely to remain the fastest growing economy of the seven largest emerging-market and developing economies (EMDEs). For 2024-25, the growth rate is projected at 6.1 per cent. "The slowdown in the global economy and rising uncertainty will weigh on export and investment growth," it said. "Before falling back toward its potential rate of just above 6 per cent, India's growth is anticipated to slow, to 6.6 per cent in FY24," it said.

Paytm logs Rs 3.46 lakh cr in GMV for Q3 FY23, a robust 38% growth

Leading payments and financial services company Paytm on Monday announced its business operating performance for the third quarter in FY23, saying its robust growth continues with Gross Merchandise Value (GMV) for Q3FY23 at Rs 3.46 lakh crore.



The company said it continues to reign the market in offline payments with 5.8 million merchants now paying subscriptions for payment devices, while user engagement also continues to grow. In its stock exchange filing, Paytm said that the aSuper App continues to see growing consumer engagement for its wide array of payment and financial services.

The company's average monthly transacting users (MTU) for the quarter ended December 2022 stood at 85 million, registering a robust growth of 32 per cent (year-on-year).

"Our payments and lending business continues to scale with strong adoption by consumers and merchants. We continue to remain focussed on execution and are confident on our profitability plans, a the monetization beyond MDR, its focus on subscription services continues to expand.

"With our subscription as a service model, the strong adoption of devices drives higher payment volumes and subscription revenues, while increasing the funnel for our merchant loan distribution," said Paytm.

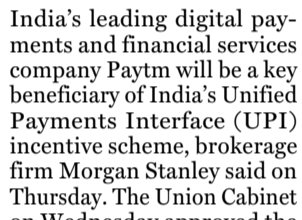
The company's loan distribution business, in partnership with top lenders, continues to witness an accelerated growth

Paytm approved the incentive scheme of Rs 26 billion for promotion: Morgan Stanley

India's leading digital payments and financial services company Paytm will be a key beneficiary of India's Unified Payments Interface (UPI) incentive scheme, brokerage firm Morgan Stanley said on Thursday. The Union Cabinet on Wednesday approved the incentive scheme of Rs 26 billion for promotion of RuPay Debit Cards and low-value BHIM-UPI transactions (P2M) for FY23, compared with Rs 15 billion in FY22.

"Apart from banks, Paytm should be a key beneficiary of the above. On our estimates, Paytm would have received 5-7 per cent of the FY22 incentive, and assuming a similar share for FY23, this would represent 3-5 per cent of our contribution profit estimate (1 per cent higher than what we previously assumed for FY23)," the brokerage firm mentioned.

TN government extends 100 per cent road tax exemption for EVs till 2025



CHENNAI: With the aim to promote electric vehicles in the state, the Tamil Nadu government has extended 100 per cent exemption of road tax for EVs till December 31, 2025.

It has extended the relaxation for both transport and non-transport e-vehicles registered in the state, said a G.O. issued by K Phanindra Reddy, Additional Chief Secretary, Home Transport department on Friday.

Earlier, the state government had granted 100 per cent relaxation between November 3, 2020 and December 31, 2022. As the state government had not extended the relaxation further, registration of electric vehicles disrupted across the State. Following the request from the vehicle manufacturers and dealers, the transport department has now extended the sops for two more years.

599.9 grams Gold valued at Rs 33,71,438 seized at SGRDJI Airport



JAGMOHAN SINGH Amritsar

The Customs Department in Amritsar has seized smuggled Gold having value Rs 33,71,438.

Commissioner of Customs, Mr. Rahul Nangare in a statement issued here today stated that on January 12, one passenger arriving from Australia via Singapore by Scoot Airlines was intercepted on the basis of profiling and suspicious movements by Customs officers at Shri Guru Ramdas ji International (SGRDJI) Airport, Amritsar.

On carrying out his personal search, raw gold weighing 599.9 grams of 24 Carat in the shape of five Kadas (bangles) valued at Rs. 33,71,438/- was recovered. The same has been seized under the relevant sections of the Customs Act. Further investigation is in progress, he informed.

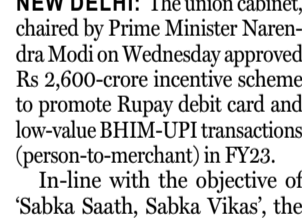
Centre approves promotional incentives for Rupay debit card, low value BHIM-UPI transactions



NEW DELHI: The union cabinet, chaired by Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Wednesday approved Rs 2,600-crore incentive scheme to promote Rupay debit card and low-value BHIM-UPI transactions (person-to-merchant) in FY23.

In-line with the objective of 'Sabka Saath, Sabka Vikas', the scheme will also promote UPI Lite and UPI 123PAY as economical and user-friendly digital payments solutions and enable further deepening of digital payments in the country, across all sectors and segments of the population. The Union Cabinet has also approved the setting up of three national-level multi-state cooperative societies under Multi-State Cooperative Societies (MSCS) Act, 2002. Earlier in 2021, the Cabinet, chaired by PM Modi, had approved an incentive scheme to promote RuPay Debit cards and low-value (upto Rs 2,000) BHIM-UPI transactions (Person-to-Merchant (P2M)) in the country.

Delhi HC asks Ashneer to maintain decorum in a plea filed by BharatPe



NEW DELHI: The Delhi High Court on Monday asked BharatPe's former Managing Director Ashneer Grover's counsel to advise his client (Grover) to maintain decorum following his termination from the fintech company while hearing a plea filed by the company seeking orders to restrain Grover and his kin from making defamatory statements against the company, and other reliefs.

Justice Navin Chawla said: "This social media has brought us down to this level. Ask him to maintain decorum." The court made its remark after seeing some tweets and allegations made against BharatPe and its staff by Grover. The court was informed that some of those utterances contain language that prevents their repetition in open court.

The court then ordered: "Issue notice on defendants' application to the plaintiff. Notice accepted. Three more weeks time granted to the defendants to file their responses to the interim applicants. Written statements to be filed in response to the main suit as well."

Global economy staring at two recessions in same decade which would mark a first in over 80 years



NEW DELHI: Global growth is slowing sharply in the face of elevated inflation, higher interest rates, reduced investment, and disruptions caused by Russia's invasion of Ukraine, according to the World Bank's latest Global Economic Prospects report.

Given the fragile economic conditions, any new adverse development -- such as higher-than-expected inflation, abrupt rise in interest rates to contain it, a resurgence of the Covid-19 pandemic, or escalating geopolitical tensions -- could push the global economy into recession.

This would mark the first time in more than 80 years when two global recessions have occurred within the same decade, the World Bank said.

The global economy is projected to grow by 1.7 per cent in 2023 and 2.7 per cent in 2024. The sharp downturn in growth is expected to be widespread, with forecasts in 2023 revised down for 95 per cent of advanced economies and nearly 70 per cent of emerging markets and developing

economies.

"The crisis facing development is intensifying as the global growth outlook deteriorates," said World Bank Group President David Malpass.

"Emerging and developing countries are facing a multi-year period of slow growth driven by heavy debt burdens and weak investment as global capital is absorbed by advanced economies faced with extremely high government debt levels and rising interest rates. Weakness in growth and business investment will compound the already-devastating reversals in education, health, poverty, and infrastructure and the increasing demands from climate change."

In the US, growth is forecast to fall to 0.5 per cent in 2023 -- 1.9 percentage points

below previous forecasts and the weakest performance outside of official recessions since 1970.

In 2023, euro-area growth is expected at zero per cent -- a downward revision of 1.9 percentage points. In China, growth is projected at 4.3 per cent in 2023, 0.9 percentage point below previous forecasts.

Excluding China, growth in the emerging markets and developing economies is expected to decelerate from 3.8 per cent in 2022 to 2.7 per cent in 2023, reflecting significantly weaker

external demand compounded by high inflation, currency depreciation, tighter financing conditions, and other domestic headwinds.

The report offers the first comprehensive assessment of the medium-term outlook for investment growth in emerging markets and developing economies. Over the 2022-2024 period, gross investment in these economies is likely to grow by about 3.5 per cent on average -- less than half the rate that prevailed in the previous two decades.

INTERNATIONAL

War plunges Ukraine's GDP to record 30.4 per cent in 2022



In the wake of Russia's ongoing war against Ukraine, the country's GDP declined by a record 30.4 per cent last year, the Economy Ministry said citing preliminary estimates.

"In 2022, the Ukrainian economy suffered its largest losses and damage in the entire history of independence," Xinhua news agency quoted Economy Minister Yulia Svyrydenko as saying.

In December 2022, Ukraine's GDP declined 34

per cent due to a certain stabilisation of the situation with energy supply, after a fall of 37 per cent in November, the Ministry said. In the fourth quarter of last year, Ukraine's economy experienced a decline of 35.5 per cent compared with the same period in 2021, it said. The Ukrainian economy saw a 3.4-per cent growth in 2021. The country's GDP is expected to rise 3.2 per cent this year, according to the government's projection.

Piyush Goyal mocks 'mini' trade deal with US, concedes no FTA on offer

Union Commerce and Industry Minister Piyush Goyal said that India was not interested any longer in the "mini" trade deal that was once under discussion with former US President Donald Trump and a Free Trade Agreement (FTA) is not on the table because President Joe Biden's administration is not currently interested in negotiating one with any country.

India and the US have decided to focus instead on greater market access, ease of doing business between the two countries and a larger footprint regarding trading, investment and business, the Minister said on Wednesday. Two specific targets for this elevated engagement were semiconductors and defence production.

Goyal made the remarks while speaking with reporters after discussions with US Trade Representative Katherine Tai at the 13th meeting here in Washington D.C. of the Trade Policy Forum, which is the highest platform for trade talks between the two countries. Recent trade relations between India and the



US have been marked by lack of significant progress, specially after President Biden took office, in stark contrast to the frenetic pace set by the two sides just a year before in the run-up to Trump's visit to India in February 2020, in anticipation of a deal. Talks collapsed and Goyal had blamed the Trump administration for it, saying the former administration kept shifting the goal-post.

"In terms of the mini trade deal, I think it was too mini to really merit any great effort on both sides," Goyal said of the negotiations. "And we have even forgotten most of those issues. We are looking at much much bigger ambitions in our trade

with the US."

Goyal had himself led the talks on the Indian side then, as now, and he had at one stage exuberantly declared that the deal was "just a phone call away". The Minister was also dismissive of the withdrawal of preferential zero-duty benefits the US had provided to imports from India under the Generalized System of Preferences (GSP) programme.

Trump had ordered the withdrawal of the benefits in 2019, just a few days after Prime Minister Narendra Modi started his second term, to compel India to concede more market access to US products as part of a trade deal Washington was trying to inflict on New Delhi.

UNSC confirms re-authorization of cross-border aid deliveries to Syria



The UN Security Council (UNSC) has adopted a resolution to confirm the re-authorization of cross-border aid deliveries into Syria for another six months till July 10.

Resolution 2672 confirms Resolution 2642 of July 2022, which decides to extend the authorization for aid deliveries through the crossing at Bab al-Hawa on the border with Turkey for six months till January 10, 2023, and decides that a further extension of an additional six months will require a separate Security Council resolution, reports Xinhua news agency.

Resolution 2672, which won the unanimous support of the 15-member Council, requests the UN Secretary-General to provide a special report on the humanitarian needs in Syria no later than June 10.

Joe Biden's legal team finds fresh batch of classified documents

US President Joe Biden's legal team has found a fresh batch of classified documents at a second location following the initial discovery of confidential material dating back from the time when he was Vice President at his former think tank office in Washington, media reports said.

Since the original batch of about 10 documents was discovered in November 2022 at the Penn Biden Center think tank near the White House, but only came to light this Monday, Biden's aides have been searching for any additional classified materials that might be in other locations he used, an informed source told CBS News on Wednesday.

The classification level, number and precise location of the fresh batch of documents was not immediately clear. It was also not known when the additional documents were discovered and if the search for any other classified materials Biden may have from the former Barack Obama admin-



istration is complete. The White House has not yet commented on the newly discovered batch.

Earlier on Wednesday, White House Press Secretary Karine Jean-Pierre declined to answer questions about the first cache of files during her daily press briefing, the BBC reported. "This is under review by the Department of Justice" she said. "I'm not going to go beyond what the president shared yesterday." On Tuesday, Biden said he was "surprised to learn there were any government records that were taken there to that office" which he periodically used from mid-2017 until the start of his 2020 presidential campaign.

Canada finalises agreement to buy 88 F-35 fighter jets



The Canadian government announced that it has finalised an agreement with the US and Lockheed Martin with Pratt & Whitney to buy a fleet of 88 F-35 fighter jets.

The first deliveries of the aircraft are anticipated to begin in 2026 and a fully operational fleet is expected between 2032 and 2034, Xinhua news agency quoted a statement issued by the Public Services and Procurement Canada.

Estimated at C\$19 billion (\$15 billion), this is the largest investment for the Royal Canadian Air Force in the past 30 years.



The agreement includes associated equipment, sustainment set-up and services, as well as the construction of fighter squadron facilities, the statement said. The acquisition will occur as a staggered process and acquisition plans for a number of aircraft are already confirmed with this process continuing until the full fleet of 88 jets is acquired, it added.

Australian Cardinal convicted of child abuse dies



Cardinal George Pell, whose conviction on child abuse charges shocked the Catholic Church before being quashed, has died of heart complications after hip surgery, officials said on Wednesday. He was 81. The former Vatican treasurer is Australia's highest ranking Catholic cleric, and the most senior Church figure ever jailed for such offences, reports the BBC. Cardinal Pell served as Archbishop of both Melbourne and Sydney before becoming one of the Pope's top aides.

Indian-origin driver charged for killing 4 Sikh men in Aus crash

A 41 year-old Indian-origin man, has been charged with four counts of dangerous driving causing the death of four men from Punjab in Australia's central Victoria province.

Harinder Singh Randhawa, who is recuperating in the hospital under police custody, was driving a Peugeot with four passengers inside when it collided with a Toyota Hilux ute at an intersection at Pine Lodge, near Shepparton earlier this month, the SBS Punjabi channel reported. Randhawa will be appearing in Melbourne Magistrates' Court on June 8. The four men died on the spot, the police said, adding that they are investigating whether they were wearing seatbelts.

The deceased men have been identified as Harpal Singh from the Mukstar, Bhupinder Singh from Jalandhar, Baljinder Singh



and Kishan Singh from Tarn Taran. "They belonged to the state of Punjab and were on visitor visas in Australia to see their extended families," Melbourne-based social worker Phulvinderjit Singh Grewal told SBS Punjabi. Grewal told the channel that the families of the four men "were inconsolable".

Victoria Police Acting Assistant Commissioner Justin Goldsmith told media that early signs pointed to a "T-bone type collision", that is, when the front of one vehicle strikes the side of another, forming a 'T' shape.

Aussie police seize \$1mn cash, cocaine, methylamphetamine



Police in the Australian state of New South Wales (NSW) has charged four men after seizing more than 5 kg of cocaine and methylamphetamine, and cash worth \$1.03 million in Sydney.

In a statement released on Monday, the NSW Police said that the officers stopped a sedan at Strathfield, a suburb in the

hatchback parked nearby located a further 550 g of cocaine and 140 g of MDMA.

Following that, investigators executed two search warrants at related properties, where they located and seized a further A\$1.5 million cash, 2 kg of methylamphetamine, 2 liters of methylamphetamine oil, almost 700 g of cocaine as well as cannabis and steroids.

Three vehicles, two hydraulic press machines, two ballistic vests, a firearm and ammunition, multiple driver's licenses and other items consistent with the manufacture of illicit drugs were also found on site.

Two more men, aged 18 and 35, were arrested at one of the properties and taken to the police station.

A subsequent search of a

Afghanistan—what next?

BRIGADIER (RETD.)
RAJ BHUTANI

Archaeologists confirm human habitation in Afghanistan from as far back as 50,000 BC. The indigenous people were small farmers and herdsmen, as they are today. They were grouped into tribes with small local kingdoms, rising and falling through the ages. It is believed that the region had early trade contacts with Mesopotamia. Before the arrival of Islam in the 7th century, there were a number of religions practiced in ancient Afghanistan, including-Zoroastrianism, Surya worship, Hinduism and Buddhism.

Afghanistan is a landlocked mountainous country at the cross roads of central and South Asia. It has borders with Pakistan, Iran, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan. In the middle ages and upto the 18th century, the region was known as Khorasan. The present day cities of Balkh, Herat, Ghazni and Kabul comprise the Khorasan area. Afghanistan is a notoriously difficult country to govern. Empire after empire, nation after nation have failed to pacify what is today the territory of Afghanistan. It is therefore, called the 'Graveyard of Empires'.

Genghis Khan, in his bid to expand the Mongol Empire towards central Asia and the middle east, invaded Afghanistan in 1219—21 but could not hold it for long, as he was defeated by the forces of Jalal-ad-Din at Parwan. Britain, in order to protect its Indian Colony from any invasion by the Russian Czars, played the 'Big Game' in the area in order to check Russian influence in central Asia and the middle east. There were three Anglo-Afghan wars in the area but in the first Anglo-Afghan war which was fought in 1839-42, all 4500 British troops and 12,000 civilians were slaughtered by the Afghan tribal warlords.

In 1979, the Soviet Union decided to prop-up a communist regime in this strate-



gically located central Asian country. Soviet troops fought for over nine years to have a grip on the country but, had to abandon their adventure, after having lost 15000 of their soldiers and killing two million Afghan people.

But this victory cannot be wholly attributed to the superiority of Afghan mujahideen as NATO (North Atlantic Treaty Organisation) forces under the United States, were providing complete war material, finance and intelligence through covert operations and for this, CIA (Central Intelligence Agency) of US and ISI (Inter-Services Intelligence) of Pakistan, were hand in glove with each other. At the end of withdrawal of soviet forces, no doubt, the visible victory went to Afghanistan but, in actual fact it was the covert victory of America over the Soviet Union which was its cold war enemy after WW II.

Now Afghanistan was free to be taken over by the Taliban which was waiting in the wings in Pakistan. The withdrawal of soviet forces also saw, a huge availability of military hardware left by the US and the Soviets which became the legitimate property of Taliban when it took over the country in 1996. Taliban, with its medieval ways of governance, created terror in the minds of common people

with public lashings and public hangings. Their barbaric rule ended when they allowed Al Qaeda leader, OSAMA BIN LADEN to use the Afghan soil to launch the 9/11 attacks on the Twin Towers in New York and the US response thereto. In Oct, 2001 the US war in Afghanistan started and continued for 20 years. In these 20 years, US forces faced continuous guerrilla attacks from the mujahideens. At the end, the American public got fed up with this war and receiving body bags for such a long period of time. It made them sick which resulted in a hasty and ignominious withdrawal of US troops from Afghan soil on 30th Aug, 2021. Their achievements are there to seefor the whole world!

The Taliban were virtually handed over the complete Afghan territory on a platter and the whole world condemned this action. The Taliban had occupied Afghanistan on the 15th of Aug, 2021. But before the departure of US forces from Afghan soil, the US signed an agreement with Taliban at Doha in Qatar that, once the US troops leave Afghan soil, the Taliban would rule the country by forming an inclusive government in which the representation of all ethnic groups would be ensured

and democracy would prevail. Women too would be given due representation in governance. Women education would not be stopped and justice would be delivered by keeping in mind the human rights principles. And in case, the future government fails to abide by the Agreement, it would not be recognized and therefore, no financial help would be forthcoming from the international financial institutions for the reconstruction and economic development of the country. It was also mentioned that the Afghan Central Bank funds to the tune of nine billion dollars would be blocked by the US and not made available for the development of Afghanistan.

The population of Afghanistan is around 40 million. The nation is composed of a multi-ethnic and multilingual society. Ethnic groups in the country include Pashtuns, Tajiks, Hazaras, Uzbeks and others. Afghanistan has two official languages, Pashto and Dari. Pashto is spoken in most regions of Afghanistan. The country is an Islamic Republic and 90% of the population follows Sunni Islam, the rest are Shia Muslims.

Pashtun aspirations to rule this country with Sharia laws, have not allowed the country to progress in tune with the new

world order. Its leaders, or to put it more appropriately, its warlords, never allowed scientific education to its people which kept the whole country devoid of holistic progress. This was one of the major reasons that outside powers came to Afghanistan and used its people for their ulterior motives and ultimately leaving the country in lurch. A large number of countries in the Arab world impose Sharia laws but they do not hinder the scientific outlook and progress of their people. The problem with the autocratic leaders of this country is that, they listen to the Islamic clerics blindly and impose ultra-austere interpretation of Islam thus creating a near theocratic state in which, barbaric punishments are handed down like public lashings and public hangings.

The imposition of ultra-austere interpretation of Islam has not helped the country and its people. A country that debars half of its population to stay away and not be part of the progress and development, can only expect to remain in the lower rung of countries on a global scale. What a shame to see that in the 21st century, a government issues a diktat that the role of women is only to bear and deliver children as also to look after affairs within the four walls of the house.

The women in the country are forbidden to seek education especially higher education; cannot run a business unless always accompanied by a close male relative such as the father, husband or brother. They cannot work in an office, be it government or private. Whenever, they step out of their home/premises, even for a small routine errand, they must be accompanied by a male member of the family. All females except small children, must cover themselves with black hijab. Is there a difference in the life of a prisoner and an Afghan woman? This dumb world won't be able to respond to this question effectively!

It is noteworthy that nowhere in the holy book of Quran Sharif, hijab is strictly defined, though it is firmly rooted in Islamic tradition. It is often a personal and cultural concept.

Many muslim majority countries like Kosovo, Azerbaijan, Tunisia and Turkey have made it illegal to wear hijab in public, schools, universities or government buildings while Egypt and Syria have banned the use of face veils in universities. A similar approach by the present Afghan government is likely to help.

What Next?

It is very clear that the West wants the Taliban to run the

country in a transparent manner and not be an impediment to the progress made in the last two decades in terms of education including the women education, societal harmony and fair legal system.

Russia is on the same page as India that Afghanistan being an Asian country, the finding of solution to its problems should be left to the Asian countries bordering it or situated in its vicinity. India is a very important country in its vicinity and it can't afford to ignore Taliban in order to safeguard against potential terrorist attacks by anti-India forces from the Afghan soil. India also can't ignore very ancient historic and cultural ties with this country. Although India does not recognize the Taliban Government yet it has been providing medical assistance to the Indra Gandhi Children's Hospital, Kabul, Afghanistan. India has been sending humanitarian aid in terms of wheat and medical supplies. This contact must continue and at a later stage both the countries would find ways and means to establish a sound economic relationship.

In my opinion the world powers have a collective responsibility towards the situation in Afghanistan; its resolution will be time consuming and challenging. Foreign powers should not rush to fill the vacuum with ulterior motives, due to the geostrategic importance of Afghanistan.

The world body and more importantly the US has to catch the bull by its horns and make sincere efforts to bring the governance of Afghanistan in tune with the present world order. The US is morally responsible to discipline the Taliban, not with the barrel of a gun but by showing compassion for the 40 million Afghans, most of whom were not responsible for the attack on twin towers.

One way forward is by asking the Taliban to allow establishment of a large number of NGOs who could be working for

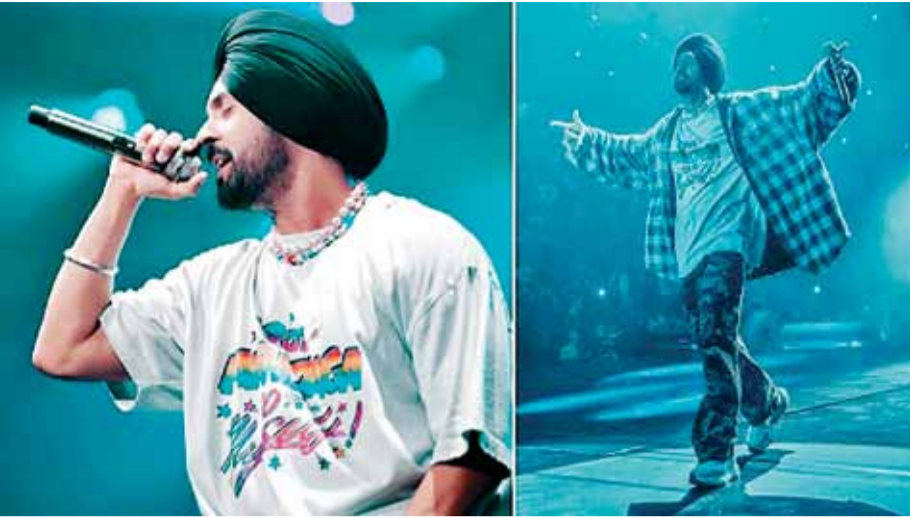
relief of poverty, medical assistance, assistance for the handicapped, assistance and medical advice to the pregnant women, running de-addiction centres, adult education and encouraging others to acquire education, helping people living in far flung areas to maintain personal documentation and land records, providing legal assistance to poor people, vocational training in industry, educating people to enhance the agricultural productivity and finally to wean away people from growing poppy crops.

These NGOs should be funded for a period of 20 years from the nine billion dollars blocked by the US and everyone knows that these funds legitimately belong to the people of Afghanistan. Every year, 500 million dollars should be allocated directly to these NGOs and since in the last one and a half year, Taliban has not kept its promise on most points mentioned in the Doha Agreement, the funds cannot and must not be routed through the government agencies. In this way Taliban government can be lured into accepting the establishment of these NGOs. With this, their constant harping about the release of the blocked funds would also stop.

In the end, I would like to advise the law makers of America to start thinking out of the box—if they are sincere to bring reforms in Afghanistan. The President of the United States of America needs to sit back and deliberate; did a super power of 280 million people (in the year 2001) require a 20 years of bombing campaign to avenge the twin towers attack on an already beleaguered country of 20 million people and send them back to the medieval ages?

Brigadier (retd.)
Raj Bhutani : (The author is a freelance writer, a war veteran of 1971 war and retired Brigadier with 32 years of service in the Indian Army)

DILJIT DOSANJH is set to perform at the Coachella music and arts festival 2023



Indian singer-actor Diljit Dosanjh is set to perform at the Coachella music and arts festival 2023 in April. The Instagram handle of the festival recently shared the lineup on their feed. The festival will be headlined by South Korean girl band - Blackpink, Bad Bunny,

Bjork. As the news of Diljit performing at the fest travelled, fans expressed their excitement over their idol gracing the stage. One fan exclaimed, "DILJIT DOSANJH AT COACHELLA?!?! This was the QUICKEST impulse purchase of my life and I have no regrets". Diljit retweeted the fan and put up praying hands emoji in his tweet. In addition, the festival will also feature Pakistani singer Ali Sethi, whose song from 'Coke Studio' - 'Pasoori' has become a viral sensation. Last year's edition featured Harry Styles, Billie Eilish, and The Weeknd, among many others, following the cancellation of the event in 2020 and 2021 due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

'Bigg Boss 16': Salman Khan dances with Bharti-Haarsh's son 'Gola'



MUMBAI: In the upcoming episode of 'Bigg Boss 16', Salman Khan will be seen turning babysitter for Bharti Singh and Haarsh Limbachiyaa as they left their son Laksh, lovingly called Gola, with the 'Dabangg' song. A promo shared by the

channel Colors, showed Bharti walking onstage calling out her son's name "Gola." She then gives him in Salman's arms saying: "Sir, ek minute pakado, main thak gayi." Salman replies, "Obviously, thakogi haan" as Haarsh laughs on. Moments later, Bharti and Haarsh, leave Gola and Salman on stage. As they go, Bharti shares: "Do din bachha sambhalna hain" and Haarsh adds, "Chachu ko pareshaan maat karna." Salman asks if Gola would like to dance and they shake a leg to the actor's song 'Baby Ko Bass Pasand Hai' from the 2016 film 'Sultan'.

James Cameron says Leonardo DiCaprio thought 'TITANIC' was 'boring'

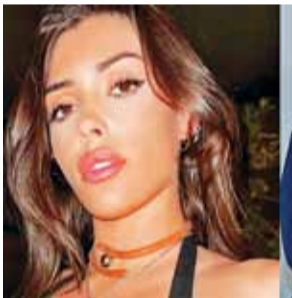


"Titanic" remains the biggest hit of Hollywood star Leonardo DiCaprio's career, but it sounds like getting the actor to star in the film was tough work for director James Cameron. The filmmaker recently told People magazine that DiCaprio thought the "Titanic" screenplay was "boring" and didn't want to star in the epic disaster romance film. Cameron had to "twist" DiCaprio's arm, reports 'Variety'.

"He didn't want to do a leading man," Cameron said. "I had to really twist his arm to be in the movie. He didn't want to do it. He thought it was boring. (He) accepted the part only when I convinced him that it was actually a difficult challenge." As revealed to GQ magazine earlier this year, Cameron and DiCaprio hit another speed bump on the road to "Titanic" when DiCaprio refused to screen test for the movie. Kate Winslet had already landed the role of Rose, and Cameron wanted DiCaprio to screen test with her before officially giving him the role of Jack. "I had the camera set up to record the video," Cameron said. "Leo didn't know he was going to test. He thought it was another meeting to meet Kate. So I said, 'Okay, we'll just go in the next room, and we'll run some lines and I'll video it.' And he said, 'You mean, I'm reading?' I said, 'Yeah.' He said, 'Oh, I don't read.' I shook his hand and said, 'Thanks for coming by.'"

Kim 'hates' Kanye West's new wife, shares cryptic quotes

LOS ANGELES: Reality TV star Kim Kardashian reportedly doesn't approve of her former husband and rapper Kanye West's alleged new wife Bianca Censori. According to a new report, it has been an open secret that Kim has long hated Bianca for no obvious reason, reports aceshowbiz.com.



"Kim hates her," an insider told Page Six of the 'Donda' artist's architectural designer wife. "She's pretty. And Kim hates pretty girls." It was also said that it was well known around the Yeezy HQ that the SKIMS founder didn't like Bianca, who reportedly worked at Yeezy as an architectural designer for several years. Kim allegedly suspected that Bianca had a secret agenda by approaching Kanye. Kim also appeared to react to the wedding news with cryptic quotes. Amid reports that her ex-husband has remarried, the 42-year-old star, who shares four kids with the rapper, shared a message on Instagram.

"I'm in my quiet girl era. I don't have much to say." The now-deleted post continued: "Just much to do." In another post, she added: "Just remember, the black sheep usually turns into the goat. Keep doing you."

A third post, meanwhile, read: "People who want to see you win, will help you win. Remember that." In other news related to Kanye, it was said that he and his new wife Bianca went on honeymoon in Utah following their private wedding ceremony. Daily Mail reported that the embattled star and the Yeezy architectural designer spent time at Amangiri resort last week. News of their shocking marriage broke on Friday. While the pair reportedly tied the knot in private nuptials, it is believed that the union is not legally binding as they haven't filed a marriage certificate.

Sudarsan Pattnaik builds world's largest hockey stick



MANPREET SINGH Bhubaneswar (Odisha) Ahead of the FIH Odisha Hockey Men's World Cup inaugural ceremony, eminent sand artist Padma Sri Sudarsan Pattnaik sculptured World's largest hockey stick on the banks of Mahanadi River at Cuttack, where the 'celebration' event is scheduled for on 11 January to mark the opening of the mega hockey event starting 13th January at Bhubaneswar-Rourkela. Sudarsan Pattnaik created a 105-feet long hockey stick, using 5000 hockey balls. The sand artist used over five tonnes of sand for the sculpture which also showcases

the newly built Birs Munda Hockey Stadium in Rourkela. Having taken two days to complete this incredible art installation, Sudarsan Pattnaik has once again showcased the passion Odisha has for the national sport. He said, "There is a festive atmosphere in every village you travel to in Odisha because of the World Cup. It is a very special event for the people of Odisha and there are celebrations everywhere. To welcome everyone to this beautiful state, we wanted to create something unique this time, that's why we thought of using hockey balls and create this installation." It took Sudarsan and his

team of 15 students two full days to complete the installation and it will be up for display all of 11th January when thousands will throng the Barabati Stadium to catch a glimpse of Bollywood stars who will perform during the opening ceremony. "During the previous World Cup, we had installed sand art at the Kalinga Hockey Stadium and the art work depicted the major monuments of Odisha like Konark. This time we have used the installation to welcome all the 16 participating teams to Odisha and we have created 16 national flags in the installation," added an elated Pattnaik about this unique creation.

'It was a beautiful torture': Ram Charan looks back at 'Naatu Naatu'



When Marc Malkin of 'Variety' asked Ram Charan if he would like to be a Marvel superhero, the 'RRR' hero responded at once: "Absolutely. Why not?" And when he was asked about his favourite Marvel superhero, he said without thinking much: "Tony Stark." He was referring to the character Robert Downey Jr plays in the Iron Man franchise. "Or maybe Captain America, why not?" Ram Charan added as an afterthought. "We have some amazing superheroes in India too," he pointed out. "How about you invite one of our heroes over here?" Talking specifically about 'Naatu Naatu', he said: "My knees still wobble talking about it today. It was a beautiful torture and look where it has got us." Was the 'RRR' director S.S. Rajamouli hard on them during the terrific action sequences? Rajamouli said: "I took care of them like babies. No one ever got hurt." To this, Ram Charan added: "He spanked the babies too."

On the positive response 'RRR' has been getting in the run-up to the awards, Rajamouli said: "It humbles me that I get love from so many people." In the same spirit, NTR Jr had told 'Variety' in another red carpet interview: "We thought we had a winner, but it turned out to be more than a winner... you don't expect this to happen." Earlier, the actor had tweeted: "Congratulations Sirji on your well-deserved #GoldenGlobe award! I've danced to many songs throughout my career but #NaatuNaatu will forever stay close to my heart...@mmkeeravaani" Cheering the win, 'Los Angeles Times' tweeted (and promoted the profile it carried of Rajamouli): "Last night, the audience at #RRRMovie's sold-out Chinese Theater screening swarmed the stage to dance during the 'Naatu Naatu' number. Today, composer M.M. Keeravani won the Golden Globe for best original song."

POTPOURRI



Congress Leader Rahul Gandhi offers prayer at the Harmandir Sahib (Golden Temple), Sikh's holiest shrine during Congress's 'Bharat Jodo Yatra', in Amritsar on Tuesday. PHOTOS: PRABHJOT GILL



Navina Wadekar joins 'Taarak Mehta Ka Ooltah Chashmah'

Actress Navina Wadekar has been roped in to play the role of Bawri in 'Taarak Mehta Ka Ooltah Chashmah'. After Monika Bhadoriya, who was playing the character quit the show, there was a search for a new face and maker Asit Kumarr Modi has found Navina a perfect replacement. As he mentioned: "I wanted a fresh and innocent face for the character of Bawri and we luckily found what we were looking for. She has also promised commitment to the show."



Bawri is a girl from Kanpur and she is shown as the love interest of Bagha, played by Tanmay Vekaria. Earlier, the

character Bawri was not seen in every episode and her presence was not that noticeable. However, now the character will be given more prominence. Now in the show, viewers can see that Bawri is back from her town and promises to meet Bagha in the garden but instead of meeting him, she just sends a message of breaking up. Bagha is surprised and wants to know the reason. While talking more about the actress, the creator of the show adds that after looking at a number of talents, he finally found her suitable for the role.

Only female to produce the highest number of Punjabi Movies : Ravneet Kaur Grewal



It is said that with hard work and effort, you can achieve anything. And all this came true for Ravneet Kaur Grewal as well. Ravneet Kaur Grewal is a famous Punjabi producer who has rendered numerous hit Punjabi movies under the banner of her production Houses - Humble Music and humble motion pictures. Being one of the directors of the said production house, she has delivered her perfection and persistent effort into the house in a prime manner. As a result, Humble Motion Pictures & Humble Music are one of the biggest production houses in Punjabi Entertainment Industry. Apart from a producer, if her personal life is concerned, she is happily married to producer, actor and singer Gippy Grewal (Rupinder Singh Grewal) and is mother to three boys - Gurbaaz Grewal, Ekam Grewal and Shinda Grewal. Ravneet's journey from zero to zenith was quite long as there was time when she used to juggle in Canada for work with her husband Gippy Grewal. With her constant support and their joint efforts, the couple managed to make their own identity in the Punjabi Entertainment Industry and now own the biggest projects of the same.

'Shehzada' shoot wraps up, Manisha Koirala shares update

Kartik Aaryan and Kriti Sanon-starrer film 'Shehzada' wrapped up its shooting on Tuesday. The film also stars Ronit Roy and Manisha Koirala, both of whom took to social media to share the update with their followers. Manisha took to the story section of her Instagram and uploaded pictures and a video from the film's wrap up party. In the video, Kartik and Kriti can be seen along with the film's director, Rohit Dhawan.



Ronit also shared one of the pictures posted by Manisha in his story and expressed his gratitude as he wrote on the picture: "(It) was so lovely co-starring in this movie with you @m_koirala. Hope to do it again soon. Thanks much for

A unique 'Winter Specials' menu crafted keeping the winter season in mind

KULBIR SINGH KALSII Chandigarh

Spend the day in your favourite sunshiny courtyard at Olive Café & Bar in Sec 26 and warm up with chef Anubhav Moza's new winter specials! All day, every day 12:00 pm onwards. The new winter menu offers dishes made with seasonal ingredients which are perfect for winters and has been curated with ingredients that help beat the winter chill.



Head Chef Anubhav Moza and his team have creatively used ingredients that are known to be favourites during winters; spices like paprika and saffron, and ingredients like figs form part of the culi-

nary delights unveiled as part of the 'Winter Specials' menu. Healthy options like flaxseed and sesame have been infused in some offerings. There has been some excellent experimentation done with seasonal vegetables and fruits. Seasonal roots like beetroot, black carrot and fresh herbs have been used quite innovatively in some dishes. A variety of cheese over and above the regular cheese have also been used quite well in the dishes.

A complete KNOWLEDGE CAPSULE



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