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REGION

CENTRE THREATENING FOURTH PILLAR OF DEMOCRACY BY RAIDING BBC: AAM AADMI PARTY





UNION BUDGET IS ENSURING A MULTIPLIER EFFECT FOR **GROWTH MOMENTUM IN ALL SECTORS: FM**



DEEPIKA AND SHAH RUKH DEMONSTRATE THE CHP PROCESS USING PRODUCTS FROM 82°E

SC stayed criminal proceedings against Delhi CM in a 2014 inflammatory speech case

Court on Friday stayed criminal proceedings against Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Keiriwal in a 2014 inflammatory

A bench, headed by Justice K.M. Joseph and comprising Justice B.V. Nagarathna, said the stay will remain until the next date of hearing before the court and directed the listing of the matter after 5 weeks.

It also said that it is a settled position of law that there can be no appeal for votes on the basis of religion.

As Kejriwal's counsel argued that his client had only used the word 'khuda' (God), the bench queried: "Are you saying God cannot be related to a particular religion?'

Senior advocate Abhishek



Manu Singhvi, representing Kejriwal, contended that "khuda" cannot be attributed to God of Muslims alone as the allegation made in the present case. He emphasised that it was not an appeal to Muslims and for an statement and it is intriguing. code of conduct.

offence, the use of such a word must be followed by some vilification to show intent.

The bench further queried. why would somebody holding the office of CM make such a

"God will not forgive you if you vote for BJP' ... saying this in a secular country.", it said. After hearing arguments, the top court stayed proceedings against Kejriwal pending before an Uttar Pradesh trial

The top court was hearing an appeal filed by Kejriwal challenging the Allahabad High Court passed in January, declining to entertain his plea for discharge in the case. The high court had upheld an order of the Sultanpur sessions court.

A Flying Squad Magistrate, citing Section 125 (promoting enmity between classes in connection with election) of the Representation of the People Act, alleged that Kejriwal had flouted the model

Delhi HC asks DDA, DUSIB to file affidavits in Mehrauli demolition drive case



DELHI: The Delhi High Court on Friday directed the Delhi Development Authority (DDA) and Delhi Urban Shelter Improvement Board (DUSIB) to file affidavits by February 21 in a plea filed by the Goshiya Colony Sewa Samiti and others residing in Mehrauli. Justice Manmeet Pritam Singh Arora dealing with a plea filed through advocate Anupradha Singh also directed the petitioner to file its rejoinder within three days after DDA and DUSIB file their affidavits. The court listed the matter for next hearing on February 28. The plea challenges the December 12, 2022 demolition notice, wherein DDA purports to carry out a demolition drive in the entire Goshiya Colony, which is in existence for more than five decades and consists of over 600 houses, with approximately 4, 000 population.

Credit remains key challenge for MSMEs despite govt efforts: Survey

MSME

Credit

NEW DELHI: A new survey by Consortium of Indian Associations has revealed that credit challenge still exists in spite of government taking proactive measures to bring ease in credit flow to MSMEs.

The study noted that majority of the respondents felt the performance of their business has either remained stagnant or declined and access to credit remained a key challenge.

Further it highlighted that 72 per cent of the respondents said their performance is either stagnant or decreasing or stopped or wound up during the last five years.

Raising warning flags, the study reported that only 28 per cent of the respondents have confirmed that they are

Another 76 per cent said that they are not making a profit while 45 per cent were of the opinion that there was no "ease of doing" feeling that exists in starting or running or

the central government has

during the Covid-19 pandemic closing or in their living style. while 87 per cent of the re-Only 21 per cent of the respondents believed that

MSME Loans

spondents felt the Union Budget was disappointing or a big

HSBC economists signal stretch in inflation due to rural recovery

MUMBAI: Owing to the revival of rural demand, India's economy is likely to witness another bout of inflation, said economists at HSBC Securities and Capital Markets (India).

It will also be driven by the informal sector as it recovers from the pandemic-lows, the experts reported.

For most of the January consumer price inflation remained above the central bank's upper tolerance band of 6 per cent before falling below it in the last two months of the year, only to resurge to 6.5 per cent in January.

Goods inflation in India is outpacing services in contrast to the global experience, while core prices remain elevated said Pranjul Bhandari economists.

Both the economists opined that it has much to do with the recovery in rural and informal sector demand

While rural demand was weak in the early part of last year, wage growth, adjusted for inflation, has now surpassed pre-pandemic levels, HSBC's research showed.

Further, strong sowing patterns in the winter season will also help incomes. The informal sector, closely linked to the rural economy, is seeing a revival in step.

"Already, there is pressure on food inflation, particularly across cereal and milk," the economists said pointing out towards the implications of ris-

ing rural incomes for inflation. "As we await the winter crop, due in March/April, food prices will likely remain elevated,"

they added. Producers will use the strong demand conditions to restore margins, raising the risk of inflation staying higher, the economists said.

UP CM Yogi has asked officials to impose National Security Act (NSA) against those involved in unfair practices According to the govern-**LUCKNOW**: Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath has asked officials to im- minister has ordered the offipose National Security Act (NSA) against those involved

in unfair practices in the upcoming UP Board 2023 exams for Class 10 and 12, beginning from February 16. Moreover, FIRs will also be

lodged against room invigilators and centre administrators found involved in the activities

ment spokesman, the chief cers that static and sector magistrates should be appointed at each examination centre by the district magistrates Last year, the board had

suffered a major embarrassment after the English language question paper of Class 12 got leaked in 24 districts.

The spokesman said, "They will be required to report to



the district inspector of schools along with the district magis-

trate after the examination is over so that daily activities can be monitored. On the other and static magistrates, centre hand, for the first time, a separate room will be made apart from the principal's room for monitoring of the exam."

In addition, the copies will be kept in a double lock cupboard and a CCTV camera will be placed for its monitoring round the clock.

After the appointment of room inspectors in all districts,

before the exam. The sector administrators and external centre administrators will also be trained in the district. Yogi Adityanath has directed

they will be given strict training

that a separate strong room should be made for the safety of question papers having 24hour deployment of two armed policemen with their CCTV monitoring. He has also called for installing voice-equipped CCTV, digital voice recorders, router device and high-speed broadband connections at examination centres.

"Strict action should be taken against anyone who is absent during this period. In such a situation, the permission of the district magistrate or the additional district magistrate will be necessary while opening the question paper, "the guidelines said. This year, a total of 58, 85, 745 students, including 31, 16,

487 for Class 10 and 27, 69, 258 for Class 12, have registered for high school and intermediate examinations. UP Board secretary Di-

vyakant Shukla said that of the total students, 32, 46, 780 are male and the number of female candidates is 26, 38, 965. These candidates will take the exam at 8,753 exam centres, including 540 government, 3, 523 private and 4, 690 unaided colleges, spread across the state, he said.

India's press freedom index has fallen to 150: Congress



NEW DELHI: The Congress on Wednesday criticised the Centre for the Income Tax department raids on BBC offices, and alleged that due to its high-handedness the press freedom index has fallen to 150.

Addressing a press conference here, Pawan Khera, ing of becoming the Prime party's media department chairman said, "Infact, India has a dubious position of 150th in the Press Freedom Index. 135 journalists in India were arrested, interrogated, or detained from 2014 to 2020. (As per Free Speech Collective) 37 Journalists have been killed in India since 2014 as UNESCO observatory of killed jour-

He said that the Indian media has been "repeatedly strangulated, muzzled and bulldozed by the Modi government just because some of them (and a very small minority of them) have refused to toe the line of the BJP".

"When Modi ji was dream-Minister of this country, then he was a dedicated follower of the same BBC.

"When the Prime Minister gets an award then you boast about it using your PR machinery to the whole wide world! And if the same media outlets, if the same international media sets your "record" straight, then you unleash your arrogance

Petroleum products can be brought under **GST if consensus reached: FM Sitharaman**

NEW DELHI: Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman on Wednesday said that if states arrive at a consensus, then petroleum products can be brought under the GST regime Addressing a post-budget interactive session organised by industry body PHDCCL she said that if the states agree, then petroleum products can be brought under the



scheduled to meet on February 18.

during the interactive session with industry captains, said that the government, over the years, has striven to increase public expenditure, which she said would fuel

Sitharaman further said that the government has raised capital expenditure by 33 per cent to Rs

JPC required in Adani issue as corporatepolitical nexus exists: Congress

NEW DELHI: The Congress on Thursday said that a joint parliamentary committee is required in the Adani-Hindenburg report as there is political-corporate nexus in the whole issue and only the JPC can probe the scam.

Jairam Ramesh, Congress General Secretary, said, "It is an exercise initiated by the two principal actors...the government and the Adani group... to cover up, avoid, evade and bury all genuine scrutiny."

He said that the proposed committee is a part of a carefully orchestrated exercise by these vested interests to prevent any real investigation into the Adani group's relationship



with the ruling regime. "This is supported by the fact that the Solicitor General suggested, as per news reports, that the government will give the names for the committee in a sealed cover, for the consideration of the Supreme Court,

He said that the nature of these allegations, the link between Adani and the ruling regime is examined in the full light of day by elected officials

accountable to the public. He said on February 13, the

bench of the Supreme Court while hearing petitions on the Adani-Hindenburg matter, discussed the creation of a committee of experts to examine the regulatory regime post the Adani-Hindenburg expose.

"An evaluation of the regulatory and statutory regime by experts is in no manner equivalent to an investigation by a Joint Parliamentary Committee (JPC). Such a committee, however competently staffed, cannot be a substitute for a thorough investigation into the political-corporate nexus that has come to light in the last two weeks.

Jammu and Kashmir statehood will be discussed after elections: Amit Shah

mu and

Kashmir.

The reinstatement of Jammu and Kashmir's statehood will be discussed after the assembly polls, Union Home Minister Amit Shah on Tuesday said in an exclusive interview to ANI. the re-

"I had clearly said that state

hood will be restored in Jammu and Kashmir after elections,' Shah said. "Process of preparation of voters' list is nearing completion in the UT. Now, the Election Commission has to take a call on elections.

The Supreme Court on Monday rejected a plea challenging the government's decision to form a delimitation commission in Jammu and Kashmir.

The home minister also highlighted the gains made in Jammu and Kashmir following the revocation of Article 370 saying there has been a decrease in terrorism-related incidents

and that developefforts in contributing to the improving

situation. "See all the figures, there is a lot of change in Jammu and Kashmir," he said. Shah also criticized the rule

of previous governments. "As far as elections are concerned. do they not remember the local body polls, these were held under our rule, these did not take place for 70 years. Three families were holding sway in Jammu and Kashmir and they are making noise. Farooq Abdullah had gone to England In whose tenure, terrorism grew, who allowed it to grow, there should be an answer," he said.

institution to save democracy

and the issues involved in

'How can it go to CBI, Centre controls it': Telangana govt in SC on MLAs poaching case



The Telangana government on Friday, in the Supreme Court, questioned the Telangana High Court decision to transfer to the CBI the investigation into an alleged attempt to poach four Bharat Rashtra Samithi (BRS) legislators. Senior advocate Dushyant Dave, representing the state government, submitted before a bench headed by Justice B. R. Gavai: "How can I go to the CBI? The allegations are against the BJP in the FIR.'

He stressed that the Central government controls the CBI, therefore what is the point of sending it to the CBI? He said the state has evidence against the BJP, while emphasising that it is a very serious issue. Dave vehemently contended that the judiciary is the only

the matter would affect the foundation of democracy.He pointed out that the investigation by the state-appointed SIT was not allowed to move ahead. After hearing submissions, the top court has scheduled the matter for further hearing on February 27.Earlier this month, the apex court agreed to take up a plea filed by Telangana Police challenging the high court order, upholding the CBI probe into the alleged criminal conspiracy behind an attempt to poach BRS MLAs by the BJP. A division bench of the High Court on February 6 upheld the earlier order of a single judge on December 26, 2022 transferring the case to CBI. The plea argued that the high court did not appreciate that the CBI directly works under the Centre and is under the control of the office of the Prime Minister and the Home Ministry. The state government al-

leged the involvement of some top BJP leaders to poach its four MLAs, was an attempt to topple the government.

IT'survey' at BBC ends after nearly 60 hrs; company says will continue to cooperate with authorities

NEW DELHI: The Income Tax department's marathon "surveys" at BBC's offices ended on Thursday, after clocking nearly 60 hours, as officials took with them an inventory of financial data from select staffers and cloned electronic data.

The operation that began at the British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC) offices in Delhi and Mumbai around 11:30 am on Tuesday, ended just after



10 PM Thursday, sources said. Tax authorities have made and taken an inventory of the available stock, recorded the statement of some staffers and have impounded some documents as part of the survey action that continued for three days clocking

about 57-58 hours, officials told to media. Tax officials were seen carrying some bags as they exited the BBC office at KG Marg in central Delhi in multiple four-

at BBC office in Delhi, Mumbai **NEW DELHI:** The Press Club of India (PCI) has strongly condemned the income tax "surveys" at the office of the

BBC in Delhi and Mumbai on Tuesday. In a statement, PCI said, "The 'surveys' are part of a

series of attacks on the media by government agencies in recent times, especially against those sections of the media that the government perceives is hostile to it and critical of the ruling establishment.

"It is deeply unfortunate as this latest instance appears



Press Club of India condemns I-T 'surveys'

to be a clear cut case of vendetta, coming within weeks of a documentary aired by

the BBC on the Gujarat riots."

The PCI said that the documentary, which appears to be read.

the immediate provocation for the raids, has already been banned on YouTube and other social media platforms. "We are deeply concerned and distressed that such an

action on an international broadcasting network will damage the reputation and image of India as the largest democracy in the world. We appeal to the government to restrain its agencies from misusing their powers in order to intimidate the media and put curbs on the freedom of the press, "the statement

Centre threatening fourth pillar of democracy by raiding BBC: AAP

NEW DELHI: The Aam Aadmi Party on Tuesday accused the Bharatiya Janata Party-led Central government of threatening the fourth pillar of democracy by raiding the BBC.

Lashing out at the government over its actions, AAP leader Atishi said: "The BJP wants to suppress every word spoken or shown against the government. The Income Tax Raid on the BBC is an attack on the democracy of India. Media is the most important pillar of democracy, today the BJP Central government is trying to break the fourth pillar of democracy."

Addressing the media, she said that this is a message to the entire media fraternity that if they show anything against the BJP and the PM, they will meet the same fate. Raising questions about the Centre's intentions behind the action, she said: "BJP banned the documentary made



by BBC to prevent the country from seeing these allegations unfold. India is at number 150 out of 180 countries in the Global Index of Press Freedom, today the whole world is questioning India's democratic status."

Why has the BBC been raided? Because today, not only India but the entire world is discussing the BBC documentary. First of all, the Bharatiya Janata Partyruled Central government got that documentary banned and removed from websites and

social media so that no one in India is able to watch it. This was the first act of censorship by the BJP-ruled central government after the BBC's documentary on Narendra Modi.

And with today's income tax raid, she alleged, that the BJP-led central government "is threatening all of us and asserting that no one, not even a globally famous organisation like the BBC can say, write, or show anything that is critical of their administration". Atishi asked the BJP to explain what image of India does it want to present to the whole world.

"History is witness that you

can suppress the voice of the

people for some time but you

cannot suppress the voice of

every person forever, "she said,

appealing to the BJP to not inthe Lt. Governor's post. timidate the media like this, and stop tarnishing India's image in He said that when it comes front of the world.

Delhi BJP slams AAP's Sanjay Singh for statement on L-G

NEW DELHI: Delhi BJP working president Virendra Sachdeva has said that the Aam Aadmi Party is an anti-Constitution and extra-constitutional authority party.

Sachdeva said that Wednesday' statement of AAP MP Sanjay Singh that the post of Lt. Governor should be abolished, on the one hand shows his anarchic nature while on the other hand it is also an attack on the constitutional arrangements.

Sachdeva said that the Aam Aadmi Party is in government in two states and it is ironical that on Tuesday Punjab Chief Minister Bhagwant Mann refused to give a clarification to the Punjab Governor on the issue of foreign training of teachers, while in Delhi MP Sanjay Singh went two steps further and demanded the abolition of

to their rights, Delhi Chief



When it comes to their rights, Delhi CM and his party leaders start invoking the Constitution, but when the time comes to answer for their actions, they disrespect the constitutional posts"

Minister Arvind Kejriwal and his party leaders start invoking the Constitution, but when the time comes to answer for their actions, they disrespect the constitutional posts.

Lawrence Bishnoi to Jaipur from Chandigarh in connection with the recent G-Club firing incident

sionerate Police has brought gangster Lawrence Bishnoi to the city from Chandigarh in connection with the recent G-Club firing incident here.

Jaipur police arrested Lawrence on the basis of a production warrant from Chandigarh, Punjab and brought him to Jaipur under tight police security on Wednesday night.

He will now be questioned at the Jawahar Circle police station. More than 100 jawans have been deployed in and around the police station premises.

Gangster Bishnoi will be taken on remand after being presented in the court through VC on Thursday. Along with the case of Lawrence demanding extortion from the G-club owner and firing 17 rounds for not paying, inquiries will also

BJP in Haryana prepares road-

map to form govtt third time



be made against him in other cases of demanding extortion

from the businessmen. The Jaipur Commissionerate Police had reached Punjab on Wednesday morning to

arrest the gangster in the case. Lawrence was arrested from Punjab Jail with a production warrant after which he was made to sit in an armored vehicle from Chandigarh along with seven commandos. Four vehicles of police personnel from Punjab also accompanied the armoured vehicle.

The Jaipur Commissionerate Police returned to Jaipur with him around 7.30 p.m on Wednesday night. Gangster Lawrence Bishnoi will be questioned at Jawahar Circle police station.

In day light dacoity Rs. 22 lac looted from the **Puniab National Bank**



In a day light dacoity Rs. 22 lakh looted from the Maclod Road Branch of Punjab National Bank here today. The branch of the Bank is just one hundred meters away from the office of Deputy Commissioner of Police.

Talking to media Deputy Commissioner Detective Mukhwinder Singh Bhullar said that two unidentified looters arrived outside the bank on a scooter and one of them wearing a mask on face entered the bank with a pistol. On getting entry in the bank, the accused asked everybody to hands up and asked the cashier to fill all the cash in the carry bag. After looting cash from the cashier, the accused escaped away.

DCP said that at the time of the crime there was no security Vidnan Sabha constituency in the event of a foot march by party's opposition Bhupinder Singh guard with the bank. Even the state Balraj Kundu started from the incident.

DCP said that when the accused entered the bank with a pistol, all were scared and the cashier became nervous who within no time handed over the cash to the accused.

Tejashwi Yadav meet Delhi Chief Miniser Kejriwal to discuss opposition unity

PATNA: Bihar Deputy Chief Minister Tejashwi Yadav met Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal in the national capital on Tuesday to discuss various matters, including opposition unity for the 2024 Lok

An RJD spokesperson said that Tejashwi Yadav and Kejriwal discussed current social and political issues as well as state of the economy at the meeting at the latter's official

"The two leaders also raised concerns over the BJP government which is putting the national assets in the hands of private players. Tejashwi Yadav appeared to all the

After 'Bharat Jodo Yatra' by Ra-

hul Gandhi of Congress, various

other political parties are now

holding their 'Yatras' in Hary-

ana state to attract vote bank in

2024 polls in the state as well as

pers. 'Jan Jagriti Yatra' started by

independent MLA from Meham

Nangal Chaudhary in Mahender-

an ambitious to uproot ruling

BJP-JJP government in the state

arrived here on 22nd day was

welcomed. Whereas on the other

hand, Indian National Lok Dal

(INLD) also planning a similar

attract headlines in the newspa-



Chief General Secretary Abhay Hooda are also holding two-

former Deputy Prime Minister. meetings said the 'yatra' aims to

month

people to work together to save the country, "the spokeperson said. The AAP has governments in

two states - Delhi and Punjab - as well as some MLAs in Gujarat and Goa. Recently, Kejriwal was those of the Left parties.

'Yatra' politics in Haryana to uproot ruling BJP-JJP govt

Singh Chautala announced

which will conclude on Septem-

ber 25, the birth anniversary of

INLD ideologue Ch. Devi Lal,

Haryana Congress State Presi-

garh district on Januray 26 with start on February 20 from Nuh

seen in Telangana with opposition leaders including state Chief Minister and BRS chief K. Chandrashekhar Rao, Samajwadi Party



SATISH HANDA

Chief Minister Haryana Manohar Lal Khattr as well as all BJP ministers as well as leaders in Haryana state has started preparations for coming 2024 Vidhan Sabha and Lok Sabha polls to form BJP government in the state as well as in centre third time. In two days meeting held at Bhiwani in which all prominent party leaders were present a roadmap for victory in both 90 Vidhan Sabha and 10 Lok Sabha seats was also prepared. After Rahul Gandhi's Bharat Jodo Yatra, a new trend of politicians getting out on the roads and holding rallies have started in the state so that to tember 25, the birth anniversary come in power in 2024 polls. er 'Bharat Jodo concluded in Srinagar, HPCC president Udai Bhan and the former Haryana CM Bhupinder Singh Hooda also leader of opposition in Haryana Vidhan Sabha announced to conduct a two-months-long 'Haath-se-

Haath Jodo Abhiyan' in order to be nearer to the voters in the state and preparing for the 2024 Lok Sabha as well as Vidhan Sabha polls. Hooda said, as a

follow up 'Bharat Jodo Yatra'

the state unit of Congress will

conduct 'Haath Se Haath Jodi Yatra' for a mass connect ahead of the state assembly polls. Meanwhile, Indian National Lok Dal (INLD) leader and former leader of opposition Abhay Singh Chautala too has announced a state-wide sevenmonth long 'Yatra' dubbed as 'Parivartan Rally' to cover all the 90 Vidhan Sabha constituencies likely to start on February 20 from Nuh and conclude on Sepof INLD founder Choudhary According to informa tion, INLD has formed a ninemember committee to work out all the modalities and prepare a ruling BJP government has route map hoping to bring party in power in the state once again.

According to a party's senior

as 'World Day for Social Justice' that is why this day has been chosen for 'padyatra' so that people of the state can be saved from BJP-JJP alliance government presently in the state and INLD comes back to power to serve the people of Haryana,

BJP state head Om Prakash Dhankar has given a target of inducting 4 lakh 'Panna Pramukhs' across the state. The party president has asked the district presidents and other office bearers in the state to ensure that all the 'Panna Pramukhs' be assigned their specific duties and tasks and should have close contacts with new voters and tell people about all welfare schemes and coming developmental programs announced by the party. The BJP state president has also asked all the MPs, MLAs, district presidents to achieve their specific targets of inducting the 'Panna Pramukhs' in their respective constituencies so that the party can move forward with its strategy for the 2024 polls. He said, BJP workers should promote all activities by ruling government including wiping out corruption in government offices in the state and arrested large number of employees including senior officers involved in corrupt practices. Dhankar said that not only corruption, brought transparency in working in government offices which is not visible to political leaders leader, February 20 is celebrated in opposition.

Had Cong given development and employment in Kashmir, then youths would not taken up arms: Anil Vij



SATISH HANDA Ambala

Taking a dig at the Congress, Haryana Home and Health Minister Anil Vij said that had the Congress done development in Kashmir or given employment to the youths, then youths would not taken up arms. He was talking to media persons at his camp office Ambala, while pointing at Congress leader Rahul Gandhi said that Rahul Gandhi does not know what is required in Kashmir and said that Kashmir needs development and the BJP government is doing development in Kashmir, whenever there is development somewhere there are small discontinuity. Home Minister Vii hit back at the Congress and said that if the Congress had done development in the beginning itself, had given employment to Kashmir, e vouth there have not taker up arms. Giving advice to Rahul Gandhi, Vij said that now present government is doing all this, it is better that instead of making useless statements, Rahul Gandhi should see the works being done there.

Delhi: Father-son duo held for robbing Rs 11L by impersonating as CBI officers

as CBI officers and robbing a bag containing Rs 11 lakh in the national capital, an official said

The accused have been identified as Mohd Intzar (46) and his 19-year-old son Mohd

Yusuf, both residents of Sha-According to the police, a po-

NEW DELHI: Delhi Police lice team was patrolling near have arrested a man and his the Sarai Kale Khan flyover son for allegedly impersonating on Tuesday when they heard a person shouting "chor-chor". "Sensing that something had

gone wrong, the patrolling team rushed to the spot where they saw two persons running in a scampering manner. After a short

chase, both of them were apprehended, "said Rajesh Deo, Deputy Commissioner of Police



-long 'Haath s

Jodo Abhiyan' all over in the state

hoping to have victory in 2024

polls. Kundu, while addressing

media persons as well as public

uproot the incumbent BJP-JJP

Hindu pilgrims raise slogans before leaving for the Katas Raj Temple in Pakistan to celebrate the upcoming Maha Shivratri festival at the Durgiana Temple in Amritsar on Thursday. PHOTO: PRABHIOT GILL

Home Minister introduces 'Rashtrapati Colour Badges' to 'Dhakad' Police Officers in Haryana

SATISH HANDA Ambala

During recent visit of Union Home Minister Amit Shah at Karnal, he honored Haryana police at Madhuban with President Badge for its excellent services identifying Haryana police as 'Dhakad'. Now Haryana Home Minister Anil Vij too has introduced 'Rashtrapati Colour Badge' for police men in Haryana state having excellent service record and honored Inspector Naresh Kumar of Ambala Cantt police station with this badge identifying him a 'Dhakad' police officer.

While interacting media persons at PWD Rest House Ambala Cantt after honoring Inspector Naresh Kumar Anil Vij proudly said that Haryana is 10th state in the country honored with 'Rashtrapati Flag' for providing excellent services in past 25 years and in future such 'Rashtrapati Badges' will be offered to all police personnel from the rank of a policeman to Director General Police offering excellent services by the state

Anil Vij said that Congress should come prepared to attend coming Vidhan Sabha budget session since ruling government in the state if fully prepared to answer their quarries since their leaders are in the habit of raising but and why questions



during Vidhan Sabha session taken by the state government which not only waste time but also indicate that they are not mentally prepared as well as also harmful for democratic decisions in the session.

Vij said that people are very happy over frequent 'Janta Durbar' being organized to listen and solve public grievances immediately and now for public convenience decision has been taken to listen to the grievances of people arriving from all over Haryana and those belonging to Ambala Vidhan Sabha constituency on separate days on second Saturday and fourth Saturday respectively.

While having a talk with media persons Home Minister Anil Vij told that decision has been that now old range police personnel like Ambala, Hisar and Karnal will get promotion at par with the police personnel of Gurugram and Faridabad. He disclosed that about 4560 new posts have been created to remove the disparity in promotion among police personnel. He said that police personnel from the old ranges like Ambala, Hisar and Karnal were left far behind in promotion, while the personnel posted in Gurugram and Faridabad became Inspectors from Havaldars. Vij said that it was a very old demand of these police personnel that they should also be brought at par with the promoted police personnel, besides approval for

4560 new posts.

60 cows poisoned to death mystery solves with 4 arrests 2 yet absconding

SATISH HANDA Karnal

CIA Staff of Karnal police solved the mystery of death of 60 cows in a 'gaushala' at village Phoosgarh in Karnal district in which 46 cows were found lying dead and many more were found unconscious struggling for life during night January 26-27 this year when a team of doctors was called to find out the reason of death of such a large number of cows. Finding foam coming out from the mouth of deceased animals the doctors' team suspected that cows died perhaps due to poison, assuming that during spray of some poisonous pesticide on the green cattle feed crop in the agriculture



farm might be the reason for in Ghas Mandi Karnal from the death of cows. However, news of the incident spread across the state when Haryana Chief Minister Manohar Lal Khattar ordered immediate investigation in this case in his home district. Karnal police took into custody the dealer

whom green cattle feed was procured as usual on January 6 after noon.

The residents of village took into custody a group of nearly half dozen persons when they were burying nearly a dozen cows died in the same

near the 'gaushala' with JCB during mid night recently and informed police which arrested four persons taken into possession by villagers, whereas two persons had managed to flee in dark. The arrested persons handed over to the police were identified as Vishal resident of Deha Basti Shahabad, Rajan resident of Mangal Colony Karnal, Suraj resident of Jhuggi Colony Jammu, and Sonu a resident of Deha Colony Ambala Cantt, whereas remaining two persons of the gang managed to abscond were identified as Amar a resident of Deha Colony Shahabad and Amit Pradhan a contractor usually lifting dead animals.

commercial projects **KULBIR SINGH KALSI** 'gaushala' at a lonely place Chandigarh Chandigarh based North

India's leading real estate developer Sushma Group has announced on Tuesday that IndusInd bank has funded 140 Crores for its commercial projects. The funds will be divided between two projects, Sushma Capital and Sushma Pristine. IndusInd Bank has committed 50 Cr to Sushma Capital, of which 25 Cr is in fresh funding, and 25 Cr has been earmarked for the takeoff of an existing funding from DMI Finance. Additionally, IndusInd Bank has committed 90 Cr in fresh funding for Sushma Pristine.

IndusInd Bank invests

140cr in Sushma group's

Mamata calls BJP's elected representatives 'seasonal birds'

Chief Minister Mamata Ba-nerjee on Friday described the elected public representatives of the BJP in West Bengal as 'seasonal birds' who 'vanish' after getting elected.

Speaking at the administrative review meeting in Bankura district, the Chief Minister said, "Both the Lok Sabha seats in Bankura and eight of the 12 Assembly seats in the district are held by the BJP. But none of the elected representatives of the party has taken any initiative for the development of the district. There has been no development in Bankura. They are like seasonal birds who come at the time of elections and vanish after getting

Banerjee also said that the MPs and MLAs of BJP had promised Ujala gas before

"However, no one received



them after the polls got over. Instead, the Union government hiked prices of essential commodities after the elections were over, "the Chief Minister said

Commenting on the ongoing agitation by state government employees over dearness allowance arrears, Banerjee said that despite limited financial resources, her government has announced an additional 3 per

"I am not a magician. I have to arrange funds. We are also facing constant reluctance of the Union government in releasing our legitimate dues,

the Chief Minister said.

Reacting to Banerjee's remarks, BJP MLA from Bankura Assembly constituency, Niladri Sekhar Jana, alleged that the district administration is not allowing the MPs and MLAs of his party to operate or undertake development

I am not a magician. I have to arrange funds. We are also facing constant reluctance of the Union government in releasing our legitimate dues"

activities in the district.

"The District Magistrate is holding over all the development projects proposed by our elected representatives. I feel he is following the Chief Minister's instruction. But I am happy that the Chief Minister has admitted that her party lacks support in the

Congress established only 74 airports in 70 years,

Modi govt did it in 9, says Jyotiraditya Scindia

India's deepwater exploration has vast investment potential, says research report

NEW DELHI: Petroleum Minister Hardeep Puri, quoting a report by the global research and consultancy group Wood Mackenzie, on Friday said that India could be the licensing wildcard of 2023, adding that it reaffirms the fact that there is alignment and agreement from Prime Minister's Office (PMO) down to Director General Hydrocarbons (DGH) that more offshore exploration is required.

Wood Mackenzie, also known as WoodMac, is a global research and consultancy group supplying data, written analysis and consultancy advice to the energy, chemicals, renewables, metals and mining industries.

Citing the firm's latest report titled "Why are the Majors interested in deepwater India", Puri said in a series of tweets that the "World looks atA#PMModiJi's leadership with confidence & hope. As this latest report by@Wood-



MackenzieAstates".

He also tweeted that "Could India be the licensing wildcard of 2023" and added that "this also means there's alignment & agreement from PM's office down to DGH that more offshore exploration is needed".

We now believe the risk or reward balance in deepwater exploration is sufficiently tempting to bring in the industry's big players, "the minister tweeted, quoting a portion from the report.

Citing the concluding remarks of the report, Puri tweeted: "We would argue that India's projection of 'alignment' on wanting more exploration, from the PM down, is

The minister, on his part, said that: "New area access & geological prospectivity has

opened up over 9.1 lakh sq kms of no-go areas, particularly frontier blocks with limited well and data coverage and untested deepwater for exploration. India's data sharing, fiscal terms & policies have also evoked global confidence". "Reforms including royalty

discounts, zero-revenue sharing for Category II & III basins, windfall revenue sharing, capped govt revenue share, and increased gas marketing & pricing freedom have resonated well with majors. Other regulatory improvements include PARIVESH, an online portal to speed up environmental approvals, & a move to accept more documents from contractors on a self-certification basis, DGH, is also pushing easier data access, virtual data rooms & a new data repository in Houston, "

Shah will visit poll-bound Nagaland on February 20 where ie will participate in a mega

Amit Shah to take

part in roadshow in

Nagaland on Feb 20

As per a BJP source, "Shah will visit Nagaland on February 20 to participate in a mega road show. Preparations for the roadshow are underway. The party workers are eager to meet the Home minister."

The 60-member Nagaland Assembly will go to the polls on February 27, while the counting of votes will be taken up on March 2.

"Shah will meet the party workers to boost their morale just like he did in Gujarat. We are confident that the people of Nagaland have confidence in Prime Minister Narendra Modi, "added the source.

On Wednesday, the BJP released a short film -- 'Nagaland needs BJP' -- as part of its election campaign in the northeastern state.

Rahul Gandhi arrivs in Srinagar



crucial for a healthy and happy life, "he said during a fireside chat with Vikrant Shrotriva our to support various efforts and John Dawber. Dev uses patches for monitoring and

on a personal visit centre in Coimbatore. The SPG



Gulmarg", sources said.

Earthquake of magnitude 3.6 hits Jammu and Kashmir's Katra

An earthquake of magnitude 3.6 hit Jammu and Kashmir's Katra on early Friday morning, according to India's National Center for Seismology.

"Earthquake of Magnitude:3.6, Occurred on 17-02-2023, 05:01:49 IST, Lat: 33.10 & Long: 75.97, Depth: 10 Km ,Location: 97km E of Katra, Jammu and Kashmir," tweeted National Center for

There was, however, no casualty or damage to property reported from anywhere.

Earlier on February 13, in Syria which have earthquake tremors were 44000 lives so far.

EARTHQUAKE

felt in the early morning in the state of Sikkim. According to the National Center for Seismology, earthquake tremors occurred at Yuksom in Sikkim at 4.15 am. Its intensity was recorded at 4.3 magnitude on the Richter

The Katra earthquake comes in the wake of the earthquakes in Syria which have claimed

PM Narendra Modi to visit Meghalaya ahead of Assembly polls



NEW DELHI: Ahead of the Assembly election at the end of this month, Prime Minister Narendra Modi will visit poll-bound Meghalaya on February 24.

According to sources, PM Modi will address a rally in Tura on February 24. The same day, he is scheduled to hold a roadshow as a part of an election campaign in Shillong, where the BJP hopes to secure large vote shares.

"The PM will also address a public rally to give a boost to the election campaign. Meeting with state BJP lead-

the sources added. This will be his first visit to Meghalava

themes in speeches of Union minister and ex-Assam CM recently. He also hinted at the Sangma families' "nepotism".

Bengaluru

this year The BJP's election plank has been development and employment in the state with number of their employees little of either. These, along with corruption, have been the Sarbananda Sonowal, who campaigned in Meghalaya both of which have a number of members in the fray

in early 2020 and became Civil **BHOPAL**: Union Minister Jyotiraditya Scindia along with Aviation Minister in Prime Min-Madhya Pradesh Chief Minisister Narendra Modi's cabinet, said till 2016 India had around ter Shivraj Singh Chouhan on Wednesday laid the foundation 74 airports, and the BJP governstone of an airport in Rewa disment has established the same

"Today is a historic day for Rewa and the Vindhya region when we are laying the foundation stone for this airport, and it happened only because of Prime Minister Narendra Modi. You can see that 74 airports were established during the 70 years ing on this occasion, Scindia of Congress rule, while the same number of airports have been established within just nine years connectivity in their cities, but of Prime Minister Narendra Mo-

number of airports in just nine

di's leadership, "Scindia added. Scindia also attacked Madhya Pradesh Congress president and

Nath saying the latter was lamenting the shortage of money during his 15-month government. "Jansevak ki kursi rone ke liye nahi hoti, janta ki seva karne ke live hoti hai. (Jansevak's post is not for lamenting but to serve the people). Had the same excuse been given by Shivraj Singh Chouhan, this project would not have been possible today. This is the difference between the BJP and the Congress, "Scindia said.

his ex-cabinet colleague Kamal

Chief Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan asserted that the people of Rewa deserve this gift (airport) because they had given all eight assembly seats to the BJP in 2018. Chouhan also announced to develop a Vindhya Expressway which will connect the region directly from the state capital Bhopal.

Chouhan also attacked the Congress saying that despite a strong presence in the state cabinet, Vindhya region did not see any development till 2003. "You might remember what kind of roads there used to be during the Digvijaya Singh led Congress government, and now you can see the roads of Rewa and entire Madhya Pradesh, " Chouhan added.

Heavy security deployment in Madurai, **Coimbatore for President visit**



police will provide security during the visit of President Droupadi Murmu in Tamil Nadu's Madurai on Friday and Coimbatore on February 19. The Special Protection

Group (SPG) of the President has already conducted one round of inspection at the Meenakshi Sundareswarar Temple in Madurai and at the Isha Yoga centre in Coimbatore. President Murmu will arrive at the Madurai airport on February 18 and will visit the temple on the same day. She will offer her prayers at the temple.

The President will leave for Coimbatore on the same day from Madurai airport and will istry regarding the visit of the attend the Maha Shivaratri President.

has conducted a thorough inspection at the Coimbatore airport and at the Isha Yoga centre ahead of the visit of President Murmu. During the President's tem-

ole visit, police will cordon off the premises, and devotees will not be allowed to enter. Madurai City police com-

missioner Narendranath Nair will be in-charge of the security of the President at Madurai, while in Coimbatore city police commissioner V. Balakrishnan will take charge

The central intelligence agencies have also given inputs to the Union home min-

hul Gandhi will leave for Gulmarg ski resort immediately after his arrival in Srinagar. "He is scheduled to spend a few days in Gulmarg during his personal visit. Former Chief Minister, Omar Abdullah is likely to join Rahul during his vacation in

Brand Ambassador Former Cricketer Kapil Dev with Novo Nordisk "100th Global Anniversary celebration" Bengaluru to raise awareness and drive ing and drinking. Discipline is

trict. This will be the sixth in

the state after Bhopal, Indore,

Gwalior, Jabalpur and Khajura-

ho. The project, which is in its

initial stage with land acquisition

underway, will be established on

300 acres of land in the Chorahta

area of Rewa city. It is estimated

While addressing the gather-

said that until a few years back,

people were demanding railway

things have changed now, and

people are demanding airports. Scindia, who switched to the BJP

to be completed by 2025.

Novo Nordisk in India marked the company's "100th Global anniversary" in a grand event with large present on occasion and reaffirmed company's commitment to providing care for people with Diabetes, haemophilia, and other chronic diseases through its 'Driving Change for Generations' Campaign. On this occasion company also launched a digital employee

community outreach portal aimed at encouraging employees to volunteer for community service and gie back to society. The event graced by diginitaries including its Brand Ambassador former Indian cricketer Kapil Dev, Ambassador Royal Danish Embassy in New Delhi, H E Freddy Svane, Corporate Vice President and MD, Nordisk Global Business Services John Dwber and Corporate VP and MD Novo Nordisk India, Vikrant Shotriaya.

Brand Ambassador Kapil Dev said, wishing Novo Nor-



disk on their 100th anniversary milestone, He said my fight against diabetes is well-known and I am glad to have partnered with Novo Nordisk – an organisation that truly works

change in the lives of people living with diabetes and other chronic diseases. It is an hontaken up by the company that is shedding light on the need to educate people with chronic diseases their caregivers, and doctors about eh importance of taking active responsibility for living healthy lies'. He added.

After being diagnosed with diabetes, Kapil Dev cultivated self-discipline . "If I weren't a diabetic, I would perhaps have been a wild person. I'd have ruined my body overeat-

stabilising his blood sugar, Thanks to advances in medicine. I am able to live a normal life" he said. The patches deliver insulin automatically as the sugar level goes up in the body and can be used instead of insulin jabs. "Knowledge is power. Now I know more about my body and how it

works ", he added. H.E.Freddy Svane, Ambas-

Embassy in new Delhi Congratulating company on 100th anniversary during event said. The Danish Government has always been proud of our relationship with India, and we are glad that Danish headquartered organization, located in India, is committed to helping the country with its fight agaist chronic diseases that has very heavy economic burden. We are happy to collaborate and extend our support in every way possible in Novo Nordisk india's present and future efforts ", He added.

Maharashtra highlighting Mahotsav, Banjara Community developments

DOMINICK RODRIGUES Mumbai

Maharashtra Chief Minister EknathShindehas announced the State Government's setting up of the VasantraoNaik Research and Training Institute (VANA-RTI) and also establishinga Nagara board with Rs 50 crores for the development of the Banjara community.

He made this announcement while unveiling the Panchadhathu (five metals) statue of Saint SevalalMaharaj-- the idol of the Banjara community. He also unfurled the SevaDhwaj (Service flag) and laid down the foundation stone for Rs 593 crores development works.

Declaring that there would be no shortage of funds for the VasantraNaik Corporation, he said that under the TandaSudhar scheme, all the tanda>s (remote areas)

and other basic amenities, besides schools, hospitals and angawadis, and also establishing a Banjara Community Bhavan in New Mumbai. Deputy Chief Minister

Mr DevendraFadnavis said that the opinion of Advocate General will be taken in regard to scrapping the condition of 'non-creamy' layer, while an Academy will be formed for the conservation of the "Gor" dialect.

The Chief Minister EknathShinde earlier unveiled a 21-feet high equestrian statue of Sant-SewalalMaharaj with 135feet high white service flag made of panchdhatu (five metals) at the NangaraVastu Museum premises in SrikshetraPoĥradevi, a major pilgrimage centre visited by millions of people belonging to the Banjara community

in India. The government has al-

will be provided water, roads located a development plan of Rs 593 crore for developing this 'B' status pilgrimage site, and the Chief Minister and the Deputy Chief Minister had visited Pohradevi for foundation stone-laying and inauguration of various development works under

the same development plan. The fund allocation includes Rs. 67 crores for the development of NangaraVastu Museum and premises, Rs. 326 crores for the development of Umari and Pohradevi pilgrimage sites and Rs. 200 crores for SantRamraoBapuUdyan (garden).

Meanwhile, the RashtriyaSanskritiMahotsav2023 was inaugurated by Governor of Maharashtra, Bhagat Singh Koshyari, at Azad Maidanin Mumbai from 11th to 19th February 2023. The Mahotsav is being organised by the Ministry of Culture, Govt. of India to promote National Unity and



integrity through cultural exchange.

The colourful inauguration ceremony was presided over by Union Minister of Culture & Tourism, Govt. of India G. Kishan Reddy. Minister of Cultural affairs. Forest and Fisheries SudhirMungantiwar and Minister of Tourism, Skill Development, Employment, Entrepreneurship, Women & Child Development MangalPrabhatLodha were the

guests of honour present for the inaugural function.

Noting that the Government of India is heralding a 'Renaissance' of Indian culture, he cited the institution of the" International Day of Yoga" as an example of the world taking note of India's rich culture and tradition. Meanwhile, Union Minis-

ter of Culture & Tourism G. Kishan Reddy said that from April 14, the birth anniversary of Dr. BabasahebAmbedkar,

a special "BabasahebAmbedkar" touristcircuit train will be inaugurated, while this Mahotsav will witness the performance of around 1000 Describing Mumbai as

a "City with a confluence of ancient tradition and modernity,"rich tapestry of culturally rich tourist designations, institutions, festivals and art forms including dance and cinema, he said that with the inspiration from "Ek Bharat Shreshtha Bharat,' the Mahotsav is being held to promote national integration through celebration of India>s diversity through art and

culture. Maharashtra Minister of Cultural affairs, Forest and Fisheries, SudhirMungantiwarassured that Maharashtra will continue to contribute actively toward the +Ek Bharat Shreshtha Bharat+ initiative of the Central Government.

The Joint Secretary, Ministry of Culture, Government of India, Ms. Amita Sarabhai said the Mahotsav aims to connect the cultures of different states with each other and the common citizen through the "3 C's of craft, culture and cuisine.

All seven zonal Cultural Centres and academies under Ministry of Culture, Govt. of India, are participating in the Mahotsay that is being held in co-operation with Ministry of Culture, Govt. of Maharashtra.

The Maharashtra Chief Minister, during a visit to Kolhapur recently, highlighted various problems globally caused by climate change and the need for environment conservation.

Shinde said that the illeffects of global warming and changing weather is being felt through water pollution, air pollution and air pollution, for which creating awareness about conservation of "PanchMahaBhootas" was essential.

He was speaking at a function about the "SumangalPanchmahabhootLokotsav" of environment conservation to be held from February 20 and 26, 2023 by theKshetraSiddhagiriMahasansthan.

Underlining the need for organic farming, he highlighted the State Government's thrust in this direction by providing self-help groups going in for organic farming with a district level market for their produce which had thus resulted in increasing the crop yield.

The Chief Minister later visited the six pavilions based on PanchMahaBhootas(including earth, water, light, wind and skies) as well as Ayurved where the origin of these basic principles and their misuse by humans as well as measures to make positive use of these basic principles would be depicted in these pavilions.



New foreign trade dynamics call for sharp responses

ndia's goods exports, a key driver of its growth impulses and a major job creator, got off to a disappointing start in 2023. Merchandise ship-■ ments fell 6.6 percent year-on-year to \$32.91 billion in January. While this is the second month of contracting exports, the dip is more than double the 3 percent drop in December 2022 and marks a sharp 13.6 percent sequential decline. Along with an anticipated post-Christmas cooling off in demand, order books probably took a hit as much from actual slowing of economic activity as buyers' wary assessments about consumer confidence levels, with the new year kicking off amid a pall of gloom and doom on the global economic outlook. Engineering exports fell 10 percent; pharma products lost momentum as did 14 other products out of India's top 30 export items, including jewellery and textiles. The silver lining is that imports dipped too, bringing the goods trade deficit to a 12-month low of just \$17.75 billion, a far cry from the \$25-odd billion averaged in each of the previous six months and the record \$29.23 billion gap of September 2022. If this trend holds, India's current account deficit for 2022-23 may end up lower than the uncomfortable 3 percent-plus levels of GDP projected by most agencies. Yet, the drop in imports during January suggests domestic demand growth is fading. Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman has rightly flagged concerns about Indian exporters' prospects this year amid global slowdown fears. Her prescription that exporters keep closer tabs on developments in different markets to avoid being "demotivated" is also spot on. Amid the overall headwinds, trends are diverging in key markets. Industry bodies and the government must work in tandem to tap shrinking opportunities better and help exporters move across this river of uncertainty by feeling the pebbles along the way.

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EDITOR* ABDUL WASEY



India has become more dependent on China now

't is a matter of immense pride that India has become the fifth largest economy in the world and it seems with some degree of certainty that leaving Germany and Japan behind is not going to be a herculean task. At present, the Indian economy is slightly less than 4 billion US dollars and the economy of Germany and Japan is just over 4 billion US dollars. That's why it seems possible that in the next few years, India will definitely make its mark as the third largest economy of the world. But the path ahead of US and China would be very difficult for India because even today China is 6 times bigger than the Indian economy, whereas America is 8 times. Since China comes from the continent of Asia and according to the size of the population, it has the same challenges like us, so many times it appears that the competition with China is little bit easier, but in reality it is a biased thinking.

The fact is China has dominated India a lot in global trade because India's imports are increasing continuously with China. According to data from a reliable source, India's imports with China have more than doubled in the last 10 years. In 2012, India imported about 39.3 billion US dollars from China, while in the first 9 months of 2022, the import figure was around 90 billion US dollars. It is clear from the above account that India's dependence on China is continuously increasing. In this context, one thing also emerges that since the size of the Indian economy is increasing continuously, it is justified to increase the imports continuously and this is a positive trend for the development of the economy. But statistics also show that India's imports have increased by 46 percent in the last 10 years, while India's imports with China have increased by 127 percent. Certainly this fig-



ure is shocking and also raises the question whether the ever-increasing dependence on China is appropriate for India according to international diplomacy?

For the past many years, India's international trade with China has been continuously running into losses as exports have remained the same. During the year 2021, India's trade deficit with China was equal to 70 billion US dollars, in which imports were more than 97 billion US dollars, while exports were only 25 billion US dollars. The reason for concern is that in the current financial year till now, imports have increased by 44 percent and exports have decreased by 30 percent. For this reason, the trade deficit with China is likely to be around 100 billion US dollars in the current financial year, which can also be seen as 25 billion US dollars per quarter. In this context, it is also necessary to mention that India's military and defence budget was 73 billion US dollars in the year 2021 and 76 billion US in the year 2022. This automatically explains that India is paying more to China in the form of deficit in international trade than what it is spending on its army and defence. This situation is also a major challenge in moving towards self-reliant India. In the midst of all this, when some mobile applications of China were banned by India, it seemed that the youth of India would achieve a new position by adopting entrepreneurship in this field, but the situ-

ation still remains contradictory. India mainly gives priority to capital goods while importing from China which are increasingly used by Indian industries in the construction sector, energy sector and in the nuclear sector. For the last many years, the import of capital goods from China is witnessing an increase of 4 percent every year. On the other hand, this figure is also very surprising that in the last financial year, there has been an increase of 37 percent in the import of various electronic and electricals products and it is clear that under the consumption of smartphones in the Indian

market, China imported raw materials and spare parts are the only contributor. This fact is also definitely a big hindrance towards the self-reliance that India gets through "Make in India", "Digital India' and "Startup India". Heavy machinery, chemicals are major contributors to other major imports from China. In the midst of all this, the question also arises whether India>s imports from China are comparatively cheaper than other countries?

Now it is absolutely crystal clear that India>s dependence on China is very high and it is also increasing continuously. The relative economic performance of the two economies proves that China is at a much better position in the international division of labor than India. And obviously, China is in a very good position in the manufacturing sector. The contribution of the Indian manufacturing sector to the economy is not increasing beyond 15-16 per cent, while the National Manufacturing Competitiveness Council (NMCC) was set up by the government in the year 2006 with the sole objective of increasing the contribution of the manufacturing sector to around 25 percent in the Indian economy. Similarly, in 2014, when «Make in India» was launched with much excitement, the objective was to increase the contribution of the manufacturing sector to the economy. In this regard, it can only be regretted that economic policies have not made desired changes at the ground level to encourage India>s manufacturing ector, as a result of which today, on one hand, this sector is facing the ever-increasing unemployment problem in India and ,on the other hand, the demand related to this sector in the country has to be imported because domestic production is available in very limited quantity

Dr. P.S. Vohra, Academician, Financial Thinker & Newspaper Columnist, Views



Union Budget and its response to Agriculture

DR. SRIDHAR KUNDU

griculture has remained the backbone of India's economy. The share of agriculture and allied sector in **±**otal Gross Value Added (GVA) has witnessed a declining trend. In 1950, the share was 65 percent and came down to 17 percent of GVA (at 2011-12 constant prices) in 2022.

Even with this lower share, the agriculture, and allied sectors, today provide the largest share of employment in the country. According to the PLFS report 2020-21, about 50 percent of rural households earn their livelihood from agriculture. These rural householdsconstitute 39 percent as selfemployed and the rest, 11 percent as casually employed in agriculture. The agriculture sector has its own importance because of its connection with people's lives. It has the during an economic slowdown, though the sector employed this labour force at a smaller wage rate.

Agriculture is dominated by the private sector as land, the primary input in the production processis mostly owned by private individuals. However, it is one of the poorest private sectors in the country. A larger sectioni.e., above 70 percent of rural agriculture households possess a land size of less than 1 hectare. Many cultivators are also landless. Above 50 percent of poor households live on agriculture as their primary source of income. This adds to the necessity of government interventions to provide basic inputs such as power, irrigation, seed, fertilizer, machinery, bank credit, etc.

Agriculture is a state subject. Because of its connection with society and the economy,



the union government intervenes to support the state in the development of the sector. In 2016-17, total union government spending was Rs.44,230 crores and it increased to Rs. 1.32 lakh crores in 2023-24(BE). The annual average growth of union government spending on the sector between 2016-17 and 2023-24 is 19.5 percent.

A major push of union public spending allocation became almost doubled from its previous year. Total union spending on agriculture here includes only spending under the Ministry of Agriculture and Farmers' Welfare (MoAFW) and, the Ministry of Fisheries, Animal Husbandry and Dairy (MoFAD). The union government also spends on irrigation and fertilizer subsidies which fall under the other ministries contributing to the agriculture sector's development.

The priority of the sector in the union budget has not significantly changed in the last decade. As a share of the total union budget, in 2016-17, the spending on agriculture was 2.2 percent and it increased to 3.9 percent in 2019-20. Since 2019-20, the share follows a declining trend, and it came down to 2.9 percent in 2023-24(BE). In 2021-22 and 2022-23(RE), the share was 3.3 percent and 3 percent respectively. The total budgetary provision under the

MoAFW and the MoFAD in 2023-24(BE) was Rs. 1.16 lakh crores and Rs. 9,500 crores respectively. Compared to the previous year i.e. 2022-23(RE), the union spending under these two ministries has gone up by 4.8 percent and 9.8 percent respectively. The total budget allocation for the MoAFW

is further divided into two departments namely, the Department of Agriculture and Farmers' Welfare (DoAFW) and the Department of Agriculture Research (DARE). A larger share of total funds allocation goes towards the DoAFW. In 2023-24(BE), this share is 92 percent. The rest 8 percent i.e. about Rs. 9,500 crores, goes to the DARE. In 2016-17, this share was 13.4 percent and over the years, it has followed a diminishing trend.

The DoAFW spends the allocated budget on various development schemes related to direct cash transfer scheme for the farmers, has a budgetary allocation of Rs. 60,000 crores, which is about 52 percent of the total budget of the DoAFW in 2023-24(BE). However, there is a reduction in budgetary allocation of about Rs.8,000 crores under this head compared to 2022-23(BE) but, the provision in 2023-24(BE) equalizes with the same in 2022-23(RE). Besides PMKisan, the Pradhan Mantri FasalBima Yojana (PMFBY) and Interest subsidy to farmers are two other major expenditure heads that constitute about 32 percent of the total budget allocation under the DoAFW. Rashtriya Krishi Vikas Yojana and RashtriyaKrishionnati Yojana are two centrally sponsored schemes that constitute about 12.3 percent of the total allocation for DoAFW in 2023-24(BE).

There is a 39 percent rise in budgetary alocation under the MoFAD in 2023-24(BE) from 2022-23(RE). Within this Ministry, the Department of Fisheries got a budgetary allocation of Rs. 2249 crores in 2023-24(BE) compared to Rs. 1624 crores in 2022-23(BE) which is a rise of over 38 percent. About 90 percent of the total allocation under the Department of Fisheries goes towards the Pradhan Mantri MatsyaSampad Yojana i.e. Rs. 2000 crores in 2023-24 (BE).

The Department of Animal Husbandry and Dairying (DoAHD) which fall underthe MoFAD received a budgetary allocation of Rs. 4328 crores in 2023-24(BE). In 2022-23(BE), the allocation was Rs. 3105 crores. The rise of allocation in 2023-24 is about 40 percent. A major share of the total budget allocation under DoAHDi.e. about Rs. 2350 crores in 2023-24(BE) goes towards the central sector scheme Livestock Health sponsored schemes, Rashtriya Gokul Mission and National Livestock Mission received an allocation of Rs. 600 crores and Rs. 410 crores respectively.

The union budget 2023-24 has covered a wide range of aspectsrelated to the agriculture and allied sector and has tried to give a harder push to the fishery and animal husbandry. However, the spread of the sector and its connection with life and livelihood expects higher priority in the union budget. The research and innovation for the agriculture and allied sector need more emphasis to accelerate the pace of growth and, enable its diversity, and productivity.

Dr. Sridhar Kundu, Bharti Institute of Public Policy ,Indian School of Business, Mohali, Punjab



BOOKS: REVIEW

Celebrated author Dr Sabarna Roy comes out with new book

Dr Sabarna Roy's **Thirty Summer** Poems and Conversations about a Murder, is due for a March 2023 release. This book is intense, morbid, stark, realistic, thought-provoking, and unputdownable.

The poems wind around the psychology and thought process that most human beings experience, at some point in life as they trudge along its path.

A book for a matured reader, it makes for a serious read and may not be enjoyed by someone who is looking for some light-hearted fun read to relax with! However, it does not cater to any specific

The prose is precise, exciting and has all the elements a detective story should have, despite its short

Dr Sabarna Roy, the author of 9 critically acclaimed fictional works - covering novellas, short-stories, plays, conversations, opinion pieces journal entries, ballads, and poesies - and 3 technical works, was also working as the Senior Vice President [Business Development] at Electrosteel Castings Limited, Kolkata.

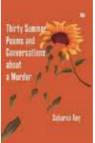
At the age of 55, Dr Roy has made a major career shift in his life. He has now joined The Sandur Manganese & Iron Ores Limited at their Bengaluru Corporate Office in the capacity of DI Business Head - Sales & Marketing.

A technocrat by profession, Dr Roy's keen observations and detailed sketches of the human mind shine through his literature, proving him to be a literary scientist of sorts who follows no conventions

'I am now concentrating on a thick contemporary political novel, which is likely to be published in the winter of 2024-25. Although a section of my readers is glued to my poetry, I love writing prose more than poems'

when it comes to soulful writing.

Meanwhile, Dr Roy's latest epistolary novel, Tara and Sandy: Slow Dance of Infinite Stars, written along with Sita Bhaskar has taken the market by storm.



Thirty Summer Poems and Conversation about a Murder By Dr Sabarna Roy

It is a book of letters exchanged between two school friends who briefly meet at the airport and exchange their mail addresses and years later they start writing to each other. It is a beautifully crafted book where letters go back and forth. Tara and Sandy exchange and share their life stories interspersed with philosophy, bad marriage and relationships. In an age where letter writing has gone out of style, this book brings in fresh breath of air.

Dr Roy says, "I am now concentrating on a thick contemporary political novel, which is likely to be published in the winter of 2024-25. Although a section of my

readers is glued to my poetry, I love writing prose more than poems.

Roy has been awarded Honorary Doctor of Arts by Azteca University, Chalco, Mexico for his contribution to Post-modern Literature in Indian English writing, on July 28, 2022 in the Convocation Ceremony of the University.

In July beginning, Sabarna Roy was awarded the Most Iconic Author of the Year, 2022 under the Pillars of Indian Economy [Punjab Chapter] by Government of Punjab.

Sabarna Roy's ninth literary work was published in the winter of 2022. It is an epistolary novel written jointly with his editor and friend, Sita Bhaskar. The Foreword of this book was written by Maithili Rao, who is a film critic and the author of Smita Patil: A Brief Incandescence. Her new book Millennial Women in Bollywood: A New Brand is due for publication in

Tata-owned Air India to acquire 250 Airbus aircraft

□ A350 AIRCRAFT OF CHOICE FOR AIR INDIA'S RENAISSANCE IN LONG HAUL TRAVEL

☐ A320 FAMILY TO BE THE CORNERSTONE OF AIR INDIA'S DOMESTIC AND REGIONAL FLEET

FW DESK New Delhi

The Tata Group-owned Air India has announced its commitment to order 250 Airbus aircraft to boost its domestic and international operations. The commitment includes 140 A320neo and 70 A321neo single-aisle aircraft as well as 34 A350-1000 and six A350-900 wide-body jets that will mark a new era for the country as the all-new, long-range aircraft celebrates its debut in the Indian

The order aims to both modernise and expand the airline's fleet with the objective of creating a larger and premium fullservice carrier that will cater to the growing travel demand in the region. Deliveries are set to commence with the first A350-900 arriving by late-2023.

"Airbus has been a longstanding partner of Air India, and these new aircraft will play an important part in delivering Vihaan.AI, Air India's comprehensive transformation and growth

strategy," said Campbell Wilson, CEO and MD, Air India. "A core element of this transformation is the significant expansion of our network, both domestically and internationally, coupled with the elevation of our on-ground and onboard product to world-class standards. This order marks the start of a new chapter for both Airbus and Air India.'

"This is a historic moment for Airbus and for Air India. India is on the verge of an international air travel revolution and we are honoured that our partnership with the Tatas and our aircraft solutions will write that new chapter for the country's air-connectivity," says Christian Scherer, Airbus Chief Commercial Officer and Head of International. "The A350's unique capability will unlock the pent-up potential of India's long-haul market, its technology, long reach and second to none comfort will enable new routes and passenger experience with better economics and enhanced sustainability. Alongside the A350s, the A320 Family fleets



will be the efficient, versatile asset to continue democratising and decarbonising air travel in the country – from domestic, regional, up to international

Christian Scherer adds: We salute Air India for its visionary strategy, picking the two reference aircraft types in each of their categories. We are thrilled and humbled to see these aircraft become the cornerstones of Air India's renaissance. This fleet will propel the airline globally where it deserves to be - with the best.

Over the next decade, India will grow to have the largest population in the world, its economy will expand the fastest among the G20 nations, and a burgeoning middle class will spend more on air travel. As a result, passenger traffic in India will grow fast, including on the

long-range markets in the U.S. Europe and Asia-Pacific that the A350 is well positioned to serve.

The A350 is the world's most modern and efficient wide-body aircraft in the 300-410 seater category. The A350's clean sheet design includes state-of-the-art technologies and aerodynamics delivering unmatched standards of efficiency and comfort. Its new generation engines and use of lightweight materials bring

burn, operating costs and carbon dioxide (CO2) emissions, compared to previous generation competitor aircraft. The aircraft offers a 3-class

a 25 per cent advantage in fuel

configuration cabin that is the quietest of any twin-aisle and offers passengers and crew the most modern in-flight products for the most comfortable longrange flying experience. The A321neo is the longest

fuselage member of Airbus' best-selling, single-aisle A320 Family, comfortably seating 180 to 220 passengers in a typical two-class layout, and as many as 244 in a higher-density arrangement. The A320neo has already set the standards as the world's most comfortable short-to-medium-haul aircraft that typically accommodates from 140 to 170 passengers, with a maximum capacity of up to 180 travellers. Its environmental performance allows for at least 20 per cent less fuel burn and CO2 emissions as well as 50 per cent noise reduction, compared to previous generation aircraft.

Indian tourists figures 6th largest for S-Africa Tourism

DOMINICK RODRIGUES

Mumbai

South Africa, whose music in the golden voice of +Mama Africa+ (The late singer Mariam Makeba) enthralled and still echoes in the world, continues todraw global tourists also in its diverse attractions with Indians becoming in 2022 the 6th largest international source market for driving tourism there.

Even as global economies are recovering from CO-VID-19, Indians are choosing South Africa as their next +adventure destination+ and around 50,000 Indian tourists provided the "Rainbow Nation" of South Africa a significant 200% surge in numbers that exceeded its goal of seeing 33,900 visitors in 2022.

While over 100,000 Indians visited South Africa pre-COV-ID-19, South Africa Tourism's strategic roadmap for 2023 is now eyeing a 72% increase over 2022's Indian tourists' figures, while also aiming at an overall increase of 35% in 'MICE" travellers from India.

In an exclusive interview here recently with The Financial World Correspondent, NeliswaNkani, Hub Head, MEISEA, South African Tourism, said a roadshow to further boost South Africa's tourism was being held in key Indian cities like Mumbai, Kolkata, Chennai and Hyderabad along with its trade delegation showcasing their offerings to Indians.

The trade delegation represented South Africa's key regions like Western Cape, KwaZulu-Natal, Gauteng,

"India remains one of our key markets globally with traditional markets like Delhi and Mumbai flourishing as we continue the second leg of our +More and More+ campaign," she said while highlighting South Africa's new tourist

destinations like Limpopo, panoramic Mpumalanga (containing partly Kruger National Park, the iconic Blyde River Canyon), Eastern Cape (Nelson Mandela's home and hiking trails), Free State, West Coast of Cape Town, Northern Cape (Waterfalls and Nature Park bordering Botswana and Zambia).

Noting that wildlife tourism in South Africa's nine states is growing due to abundant wildlife including Pretoria's game reserve ("Big Five" wildlife) near Johannesburg, she said no hunting is allowed."Animals were there before us and we have to preserve them" she said.

Mining still continues to be a support to South Africa's economy through its tourism value. Our diamond mining continues including the Cullinan Mine (which gave the famed Cullinan diamond) where visitors are given a certificate and opportunity to buy the mine's diamonds,

Syngenta, loTech join hands to deploy drones in agriculture



Chandigarh

In a significant move, driven by the vision of India's Prime Minister Narendra Modi of large-scale use of drones in agriculture, Syngenta India Pvt Ltd (SIPL) has partnered with IoTechWorld Avigation for facilitating introduction of drone spraying across India. Under this agreement, the two companies will work on creating employment opportunities for rural youth by training and preparing them for using drone technology. Both parties agree to work together to harness their strengths to promote spray of Syngenta approved chemicals using drone technology of IoTechWorld, in different territories of India. "In the first phase, 200 rural youth will be trained and employed for spraying. Large-scale trials over 400 acres were conducted and data submitted to regulators for 20 crops", informed Susheel Kumar, MD & Country Head Syngenta India. Io-Tech's drone Agribot is being used across all of Syngenta's spray services and products. Syngenta was the first private company to get approval from Central Insecticides Board, Government of India to use drones for spraying of its product Amistar on paddy to protect the crops against fungal infections, Blast & Sheath Blight. "Encouraged by this along with the policy push by Government of India and various state government, Syngenta organised a unique, first-of-its-kind Drone Yatra, under which a drone awareness van moved across 17,000 km in 13 states reaching out to 15,000 farmers and giving them demos on drone spraying," informed Sachin Kamra, Head, Farmer Centric Ecosystem, Syngenta India Pvt Ltd.

Nutraceutical industry can boost preventive healthcare says G. Kamala Vardhana Rao

FW DESK New Delhi

The nutraceutical industry encompasses three main segments which include functional foods, dietary supplements, and herbal/natural products highlights chief guest, G. Kamala Vardhana Rao, IAS, Chief Executive Officer, FSSAI, Ministry of Health & Family Welfare, Government of India at the 8th Nutraceuticals Symposium & Awards "Quality, Standardization, Regularization" organized by ASSOCHAM.

For the first time ever, our Hon'ble Finance Minister discussed nutritional security in the union budget, he noted. India as a nation is naturally abundant with food grains.

Over 2.75 lakh new MSME units set up in Haryana in past 5 years

SATISH HANDA

Information reveals that in-spite of epidemic outbreak adversely affected trade and industry in Haryana state for nearly about two years still 2,81, 024 new Micro, Small, Medium Enterprises (MSME) manufacturing units were registered in Haryana state in past five years during year between 2018 to 2023 which provided employment to nearly 15,26,962 persons in the state in this period the state ranking at the top in all northern states in the country. Whereas, new MSME units in neighboring states Punjab had provided employment to 10,52,059 persons, Himachal Pradesh provided employment to 2,56,424 persons and Chandigarh provided employment opportunities to 51,999 persons in past five years. According to information collected from Ministry of MSME in past five years nearly 500 MSME units were also closed down for one reason or the other in this period and got cancelled their registration in Haryana



According to recently declared central budget, government of India has announced everal benefits including financial assistance to MSME sector in all states across the country providing employment opportunities to maximum number of ouths in the country. A study by the industry department in Haryana state according to 'Udham Portal' reveals that during year 2018-19 employment was provided to 2,23,787 persons in 39,088 newly set up MSME units in the state. Similarly,

during year 2019-20 employment was provided to 2,22,209 persons in 39,088 newly set up MSME units in Haryana. During year 2020-21 new 65,006 MSME units were set up in the state provided employment to 4.08.645 persons. During year 2021-22 employment was offered to 4,03,386 persons in 76,603 newly set up MSME units in the state in-spite of epidemic outbreak and frequent lock downs announced by the government all over in the

Sanjay Nayar Takes Over as **Vice President, ASSOCHAM** FW DESK

New Delhi

Sanjay Nayar, well-known expert in the global financial markets, has taken over as the Vice President of the apex industry chamber AS-

Nayar is a senior finance professional in the Indian Private Equity and Banking landscape with nearly four decades of experience in the Global and Indian financial markets. Presently, he is the Founder and Chairman of Sorin Investment Fund, an early-stage technology fund, ASSOCHAM said in a release today. "ASSOCHAM has always played a transformational role empowering Indian enterprises by focusing on critical issues. I look forward to adding value to India's apex chamber which has been playing a front-line role in newer and technology driven areas, especially to help the SME and MSME companies in the country- a backbone for India's growth", Nayar said.

In addition, Nayar also serves as a Non-Executive Director at the newage E-commerce company NYKAA founded by him and his wife Falguni Nayar. As a Non-Executive Direc-



capacity in mergers and acquisitions activity as well as overseeing its expansion in the UAE, UK, and the USA. Recently appointed as a non-official member for the Board of Trade, Government of India, representing the private sector; (A key advisory body to the commerce and industry ministry). Advisor to the Board of US-India Strategic Partnership Forum (USISPF), Governing Board of Indian School of Business (ISB), member of Advisory Board of Habitat for Humanity, Chairman of Grameen Impact Investments India (GIII); and Founder - Board Member of Centre for Social and Economic Progress (CSEP). Previously served as: Member of NISM (SEBI's National Institute of Securities Markets), Member of the first AIF committee led by Naravan Murthy under the SEBI. President of the IVCA, served on Board of EMPEA - Washington DC from

Shell and Microsoft collaborate on digital skilling for non-IT students in vocational education institutes

NEW DELHI: In line with their joint commitment to empower the workforce of tomorrow with future-ready skills, Shell and Microsoft announced a collaboration to impart digital skills to students in vocational education institutes. The project aims to enable 5,000 underserved youth across 24 government institutes with digital productivity and employability skills and prepare them for digital careers in manufacturing

Emerging technologies are changing the nature of jobs and redefining the scope of productivity in every sector. Job roles across sectors that typically did not require digital skills earlier demand foundational digital skills to adapt with new requirements. The addition of digital curriculum to the training offered in Industrial Training Institutes (ITIs) and polytechnics will enable the students in non-IT trades to enhance skills for jobs.

With a goal to enable livelihood opportunities for stud in ITI and polytechnic trades such as electrician, electrical engineering, fashion designing, and more, the first phase of the program will focus on creating awareness about digital employment opportunities across Gujarat, Haryana, Delhi, Maharashtra, Karnataka, and Tamil Nadu. Further, the initiative will support the enhancement of digital learning labs at these institutes and build the capacity of faculty members to sustain the outcomes of the program. SRF Foundation will deploy the program in each of the states and provide 240 hours of training, which includes modules on data analytics and sustainability at the workplace.

Latika Taneja, Head of Corporate Relations, Shell India, said, "Shell India is committed to support reskilling and upskilling programs to take employment opportunities within evolving energy and manufacturing markets, closer to the community. This collaboration between Shell and Microsoft will help create a future ready workforce and open new avenues of learning and job opportunities for students in ITI and polytechnic colleges.

Gunjan Patel, Director, Microsoft Philanthropies India, said, 'In today's digital-driven economy, it is critical to equip the youth in vocational education, especially in non-IT trades with digital skills to meet the demands of the rapidly transforming sectors. We are excited to join forces with Shell on this crucial initiative empowering skills for jobs and look forward to makng a positive impact on the youth of India.' Microsoft (Nasdaq "MSFT" @microsoft) enables digital

transformation for the era of an intelligent cloud and an intelligent edge. Its mission is to empower every person and every organization on the planet to achieve more. Microsoft set up its India operations in 1990.

ASSOCHAM inks MOU with PSDM for Skill Development Project



KULBIR SINGH KALSI Chandigarh

The Associated Chambers of Commerce and Industry of Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with the Punjab Skill Development Mission (PSDM), Govt. of Punjab for Skill Development Project at the PSDM's Office, Chandi-

The MoU was signed and exchanged between Deepti Uppal, Director, Employment Generation, Skill Development Arora, Assistant Secretary General, ASSOCHAM in the august presence of Kumar Rahul, IAS, Secretary, Employment Generation, Skill Development & Training, Punjab, and other senior officials of PSDM, Ravinder Singh Chandla, Regional Director- North-

ern Region, ASSOCHAM were also present during the event. The objective of the MoU is to set up a dedicated Skill based in the area.

lence in Hoshiarpur for the Automotive industry, which will help in improving the employment and entrepre-India (ASSOCHAM) signed a neurial opportunities for local unemployed youth, school dropouts & bridge the gap of skilled manpower for the local industry cluster. ASSOCHAM has identi-

fied 3 courses with prescribed NSQF from the National Operating Standards of Levels 2-4. Beneficiaries would be mobilized, counselled, and recruited in the most scientific and Training, Punjab & Neeraj and structured manner. The training program is projected to start on April 01, 2023, at Village Rampur Khalyan (Distt. Kapurthala).

This Skill development training program will be in tune with the national SKILL $\ensuremath{\mathsf{INDIA}}$ initiative. This step will not only benefit the economically weaker section of society but will also help in improving the efficiency of the industries

25 AAI airports have been earmarked for leasing till 2025 Under the National Monetisa-

tion Pipeline (NMP), 25 AAI (Airport Authority of India) airports have been earmarked for leasing till 2025 with the help of private sector investment and participation. The leasing of the airports

began in 2022. These airports include Trichy, Coimbatore, Madurai & Chennai in Tamil Nadu; Bhubaneswar in Odisha; Varanasi in Uttar Pradesh; Amritsar in Punjab; Indore & Bhopal in Madhya Pradesh; Raipur in Chhattisgarh; Calicut in Kerala; Nagpur in Maharashtra; Patna in Bihar; Surat & Vadodara in Gujarat; Ranchi in Jharkhand; Jodhpur & Udaipur in Rajasthan; Vijayawada, Tirupati & Rajahmundry in Andhra Pradesh; Hubli in Karnataka; Imphal in Manipur; Agartala in Tripura and Dehradun in Uttarakhand.

The Ministry of Civil Aviation in a written reply in the Rajya sabha on Monday said that as per the Foreign Direct Invest-



ment (FDI) Policy 2017, 100 per cent FDI in Civil Aviation sector is permissible subject to certain conditions as mentioned

The Ministry informed that upgradation and modernisation of airports' infrastructure is a continuous process and is undertaken by Airports Authority of India (AAI) and other Airport of land, commercial viability,

socio-economic considerations. traffic demand or willingness of airlines to operate to/from such airports.

AAI and other Airport Developers have targeted capital outlay of approximately Rs 98, 000 crore in the airport sector in the next five years for expansion and modification of existing terminals, new terminals Developers from time to time and strengthening of runways, depending on the availability among other activities, said the

Lenovo logs \$400 mn quarterly revenue across portfolios in India gines of non-PC business now

Global technology company Lenovo Group on Friday reported revenue of \$15.3 billion and net income of \$437 million in the third quarter (Q3) of FY22-23, signalling strong momentum for its services and solutions business.

With total revenue of over \$400 million across all Lenovo portfolios in India in Q3, the company continues to see good growth in the country.

"We are committed to investing in capability building to deliver for our customers beyond end-point devices and achieve our service-led transformation objectives with a broad suite of pocket-to-cloud offerings, "said Shailendra Katyal, Managing Director, Lenovo India.

"With the help of new IT solu-



tions, we are on our journey to becoming an end-to-end technology partner that enables intelligent transformation for grew revenue to record highs of our customers, "Katyal added. \$1.8 billion and \$2.9 billion,

The global revenue from nonrespectively, up 23 per cent and PC businesses reached a high of 48 per cent year-on-year. "Our diversified growth en-41 per cent while its diversified

pressures, Lenovo sees longterm opportunities ahead as the global trends of digitalisation and intelligent transformation continue to accelerate and IT growth engines of Solutions and spending is expected to recover to a moderate growth rate in the Services Group (SSG) and Infrastructure Solutions Group (ISG) mid-to-long term.

The company expects yearon-year growth to resume in the second half of the calendar year with end-user demand to be higher than pre-Covid levels.

our group revenue and are driv-

More than 1 million people signed up on the waitlist to try out the new Bing Search account for over 40 per cent of with ChatGPT

ing solid profitability. Despite More than 1 million people signed up on the waitlist to try out the the complex macro environment, we retained our market leadership in PCs, "said Yuanqnew Bing Search with ChatGPT functionality in just 48 hours, Miing Yang, Chairman and CEO. crosoft has announced. OpenAI's While the industry faces ChatGPT had itself attracted one significant macroeconomic million users in one week. "We're humbled and energized by the number of people who want to test-drive the new AI-powered Bing! In 48 hours, more than 1 million people have joined the waitlist for our preview, "tweeted Yusuf Mehdi, corporate vice president and consumer chief marketing officer at Microsoft. Mehdi and Microsoft Chairman and CEO Satya Nadella announced the new Bing last week which is still in limited preview to some users.

Union Budget is ensuring a multiplier effect for growth momentum in all sectors: FM PhonePe announced it has raised another \$100 million in primary capital from Ribbit Capital

New Delhi

The central government is ensuring that the public expenditure continues to grow to have a desired multiplier effect on all the sectors as per the directions set by the Honourable Prime Minister of India, Narendra Modi, stated the Union Finance Minister, Nirmala Sitharaman at the Post Budget Session of PHD Chamber of Commerce and Industry (PHDCCI).

"For the last 3-4 years, there has been a consistent emphasis on public capital expenditure, such as in last year's budget, and this year's budget has seen a 30 percent increase in capital expenditure. This is the first time in many years that the capital expenditure has reached a double-digit amount, making it the clear focus of this budget," the Union Finance Minister explained.

The Union Finance Minister also stated that Capital expenditure has the potential to benefit a range of core in-



way to ensure that money is directed to the right places and generate multiplier effects. "However, we must also ensure that we take care of those who need it most. As such, we will continue with the free food programme throughout this year, ensuring that no family is left without food. In addition to inclusion, our major focus should be on Micro, Small and Medium Enter-

the backbone of the Indian economy and important job creators. Unlike large units that are often located in specific places to leverage scale, MSMEs are spread throughout the country, creating local employment wherever they

She also informed that the central government is collaborating with the states, as well as the Tier III administra- To ensure that these groups

or ward-level administrations. to ensure that MSME priorities remain at the top of the

She also informed about the importance of women's empowerment, as a significant portion of the self-help groups (SHGs) in the villages are actually women's groups. In fact, there are more than 81 lakh women's SHGs in the country.

have greater access to resources, professional assistance, and market linkages, we are adding branding and market finding activities to their portfolio. With these initiatives, we hope to enable true women's empowerment, allowing them to scale up their activities and run a professional, profitable, and government-supported

Speaking at the session Saket Dalmia, President PHD Chamber lauded the Government's focus on short-term needs of the economy as well as the long-term vision to make India a Developed Nation by 2047. He said that the rise in farm incomes, the wellestablished linkage of agriculture sector with Industry and innovative solutions for this sector will be a stepping stone towards achieving our goal of inclusive development.

Hemant Jain, Vice President, PHD Chamber gave the concluding remarks. He appreciated the government for increased tax collections and containment of fiscal deficit.

PhonePe on Tuesday announced it has raised another \$100 million in primary capital from Ribbit Capital, Tiger Global, and TVS Capital Funds, at a pre-money valuation of \$12

The new investment follows the recent \$350 million primary fundraise from General Atlantic. a leading global growth equity firm, that PhonePe closed in

'We are privileged to have a great set of leading global investors, both existing and new, who believe in our mission of building massive technology platforms to bring at-scale financial and digital inclusion in India, "Sameer Nigam, CEO and Founder of PhonePe.

PhonePe started its latest fundraise with a target of raising up to \$1 billion in capital, post its domicile shift to India.

With this second tranche, the company has already raised \$450 million within six weeks from leading investors.

It expects further investments from leading global, as well as



prominent high net worth Indian investors in due course.

"PhonePe lives by the same values as we do at Ribbit. We both believe that better money makes life better. PhonePe's relentless pursuit of this principle in serving consumers and businesses all across India is a mission to live for, "said Micky Malka, Founder of Ribbit Capi-

Founded in December 2015, PhonePe has 44 crore registered users and one in four Indians are now on PhonePe.

The company has success-

fully digitised 3.5 crore offline merchants spread across the country, covering 99 per cent pin codes in the country.

PhonePe is also the leader in Bharat Bill Pay System (BBPS), processing over 45 per cent of the transactions on the BBPS

"We are excited to continue our partnership with PhonePe as they lead the digital payments sector in India, a market we believe is still in the early stages with significant growth potential ahead, "said Scott Shleifer, Partner, Tiger Global.

Budget's focus on capex to crowd-in pvt investment, push growth to 7 pc: RBI

MUMBAI: The Union Budget's focus on capital expenditure is expected to crowd-in private investment and push the GDP growth rate close to 7 per cent in the next financial year beginning April 1, said a Reserve Bank article on 'State of the Economy'. In 2023-24, capital expenditure is budgeted at Rs 10 lakh crore which will constitute 3.3 per cent of GDP.

India's forex reserves drop by USD 8.32 bn to USD 566.95 bn

MUMBAI: India's forex reserves dropped by USD 8.319 billion to USD 566.948 billion for the week ended February 10. the RBI said on Friday. This is the second consecutive week of drop in the reserves after the USD 1.49-billion decrease in the previous reporting week. It can be noted that in October 2021, the country's forex kitty had reached an alltime high of USD 645 billion. The reserves have been declining as the central bank deploys he kitty to defend amid pressures caused majorly by global developments.

Feature enabled by the NPCI for multiple small-value UPI transactions:PAYTM

Bank Limited (PPBL) on Wednesday said it has gone live with UPI LITE, a feature enabled by the National Payments Corporation of India (NPCI) for multiple smallvalue UPI transactions. It will enable faster real-

time transactions with a single click through Paytm. With UPI LITE, the Bank aims to drive the adoption of digital payments across the country. Once loaded, a UPI LITE

wallet allows a user to do instant transactions of up to Rs 200 in a seamless way. A maximum of Rs 2, 000

can be added twice in a day to UPI LITE, making the cumulative daily usage up to Rs Additionally, with UPI

LITE, users can carry out a large number of small value UPI payments without worrying about a cap on the number of bank transactions, said the

'As per official data from try are less than Rs 200 and



faster and safer real-time small value payments. We are focussed on driving digital inclusion and the launch of UPI LITE is a big step ahead in that direction, " said Surinder Chawla, MD and CEO, Paytm Payments Bank.

UPI LITE was launched by the Reserve Bank of India in September 2022. It also de-NPCI, half of the everyday clutters the bank passbook UPI transactions in the coun- of small value transactions, with UPI LITE, users get only show in the Paytm bal- across platforms using the banks for UPI transactions, acsuperior experience with ance and history section, and Paytm app.

not in the bank passbook. "This will further improve

the success rate of transactions, enhancing the user experience, and taking us one more step closer to processing a billion transactions a day on the UPI platform, "said Praveena Rai, COO, NPCI.

Paytm Payments Bank recently announced that users can receive and send money instantly to any mobile num-

As per official data from NPCI, half of the everyday UPI transactions in the country are less than Rs 200 and with UPI LITE, users get superior experience with faster and safer real-time small value payments"

PPBL remained the largest UPI beneficiary bank for 19 months in a row with over 1. 726.94 million transactions in December 2022, ahead of all major banks in the country.

With 386.5 million registered transactions, the Bank one of the top 10 remitter

Crypto exchange Binance likely to pay penalties to settle US probes

SAN FRANCISCO: World's largest crypto exchange Binance is likely to pay "monetary penalties" to settle investigations into its business in the US, the media reported.

Binance chief strategy officer Patrick Hillmann told the Wall Street Journal that the exchanges' executives were "unfamiliar with laws and rules written surrounding bribery, corruption and money laundering".

"Binance is working with regulators to figure out what are the remediations we have to go through now to make amends for that, " he was quoted as saying in the report. The outcome could range from "like a fine" to "could be more", Hillmann said. Binance is reportedly facing

a probe by the US Attorney's Office for the Western District of Washington. The US Department of Justice (DOJ) has also reportedly sent at least two trading firms subpoenas in recent months, requesting Changpeng Zhao, the massive with Binance US.

Hillman did not estimate



might be settled, according to the report. He said he was highly confident and feeling really good about where those discussions are going". The regulatory scrutiny on Binance has increased after the collapse of FTX last November. Since the bankruptcy of

FTX, Binance has been seeking to prove it has all of its customers' reserves. In December, customers withdrew \$1.14 billion in just 12 hours from Binance.

According to its CEO with ease" and "things seem

NPST sees 3.3x Jump In 9M FY23 Net Profit

DOMINICK RODRIGUES Mumbai

Network People Services Technologies Limited (NSE

EMERGE-NPST) has reported a robust 3.3 times increase in its nine-month FY23 Net Profit, while Total Income for Q3 FY23 highlighted a 127.59% YoY growth. EBITDA for Q3 FY23 stood

at Rs3.43 crore with a 345.45% YoY growth, while Net Profit for Q3FY23 at Rs1.81 crore with a 1,031.25% YoY growth. Deepak

Thakur, CMD, NPST - while announcing the company's **Un-Audited** Financial Results for the Q3

& 9M FY23 said, "The digital payment ecosystem is gaining rapid momentum and it is just the beginning of the

digital revolution in the Indian economy." "We have received a robust response to our digital payment services and that is clearly visible in our financial performance," he said, adding "We are confident with our quality services & track record of growing along and increase our market share in the coming years." He said that since 2013, NPST is engaged in providing software and digital payment solutions to the banking and finance sector -- with primary focus on mobile banking applications, Paymentswitch solution (such as IMPS & UPI), Merchant acquiring platform and digital wallet. Describing NPST as an authorized Merchant Payment Service Provider, approved by NPCI, acquiring merchants, and providing payment applications to users across various segments, he said the Company also provides digital ERP over cloud to manage and operate the financial value chain of a business. "We recorded 8 million+ average transactions per month with 85,000+ sub-merchant base,' he said, adding that in 2022, the

Patel Engineering 9M FY23 Consolidated Net Profit Up 109.89 pc

DOMINICK RODRIGUES Mumbai

Patel Engineering Limitedannounced its limited reviewed Financial Results for Q3 & 9M FY23.with the nine-month FY23 Consolidated Net Profit up by 109.89% While the Total Order Book

stood at Rs1,68,094 million as on 31st December 2022. Revenue for Q3 FY23 was Rs 10,369.77 million (18.11% YoY growth) and Operating EBITDA for Q3 FY23 was 1,637.48 million(11.86% YoY growth). PEL's Q3 FY23 Debt Equity Ratio stood at 0.79. Its sector-wise Revenue contribution for Standalone Q3 FY23 stood at: Hydro 52%, Tunnel 21%, Irrigation 13%, Road 6%, and Others 8%

Noting that the company's performance has improved significantly in the quarter due to growth in its operations, Rupen Patel, Chairman & Managing Director of Patel EngineeringLimited, said that its profitability for 9 months had more than doubled -- as compared to corresponding previous year-surpassing all targets.

"Infrastructure is the prime focus of the government with increased allocations in budget and we expect to continue growing our order book," he said while adding "Hydro power remains one of the oldest sources of renewable energy and, to achieve net zero goals, it is going to be one of the focus area for energy consumption.



Our expertise in the segment will be a key growth driver going forward apart from other infrastructure segments.'

Describing PEL as One of the most integrated infrastructure and construction services conglomerates in India since 1949 with strong presence in tunnels and underground works for hydroelectric and dam projects, Patel highlighted its consistent track record in execution of projects in domestic and international arena. The Company has completed over 85 dams, 40 hydroelectric projects and more than 300 km of tunneling for clients which are mostly central PSUs or state government organiza-

tions, he added. Ms. KavitaShirvaikar, Director & CFO, emphasized the company's continued focus on improving its leverage situation along with improving operational efficiency.

"To do this, we continue to focus on monetizing non-core assets and are also in the process of raising funds through the Rights Issue. This will help us in reaching our target of debt reduction and also help in fund working capital requirements of the company,

Insurtech company InsuranceDekho has raised \$150 million in its Series A funding

NEW DELHI: Insurtech company InsuranceDekho on Tuesday said it has raised \$150 million in its Series A funding, led by Goldman Sachs Asset Management and TVS Capital Funds.

Touted as the largest-ever series A round by an Indian insurtech company, the fresh funding, a mix of equity and debt, also saw participation from Investcorp, Avataar Ventures and LeapFrog Investments. "The fundraising will enable us to deploy scalable Insurtech solutions in the ar-



intelligence, last mile servicing keeping customer experience

eas of data analytics, artificial and claims management while

at the core of everything, "said Ish Babbar, Co-founder and CTO, InsuranceDekho.

The company said that it will use the funds to scale up its product and technology functions, expand to new markets, and launch new products in the health and life categories.

InsuranceDekho was launched by automobile aggregator CarDekho in 2016. During FY22, Insurance-

Dekho's revenue surged 61 per cent to Rs 47.91 crore from Rs 29.71 crore in FY21. The covering 98 per cent of pin company aims to achieve an

annualised premium run rate of Rs 3, 500 crore by March 2023. "InsuranceDekho has demonstrated a proven ability to bring new-to-insurance channel partners to their platform while empowering them through technologybased solutions and working closely with insurers, " said

InsuranceDekho is present in more than 1, 300 towns

Management.

Rajat Sood, managing director at Goldman Sachs Asset Company built "Super App" for one of the largest PSU bank powered with 256 services creating API hub and processing engine.

Nearly 88 percent of the investments made by Alternative Investment Funds

Nearly 88 percent of the investments made by Alternative Investment Funds (AIFs) under the Startups FFS (Fund for Funds) Scheme have gone to five states. Karnataka has topped the list of states with an investment of Rs 4, 687 crore out of the total investment of Rs 14, 077 crore spread across

The Fund of Funds for Startups (FFS) Scheme was approved and established in 2016 with a corpus of Rs 10, 000 crore, with contribution spread over the 14th and 15th Finance Commission cycle based on progress of implementation, to provide a much-needed boost to the Indian startup ecosystem and enable access to domestic capital.

As on December 31, 2022,

under FFS, Rs 7, 980 crore has

been committed to 99 AIFs and

Rs 3, 400 crore has been disbursed to 72 AIFs which have in turn made investments of Rs 14, 077 crore in 791 startups.

The government data said that while Karnataka got an investment of Rs 4687 crore for 240 startups under the scheme, Maharashtra's 176 startups received an investment of Rs 3, 426 crore and Delhi's 138 startups got Rs 2, 254 crore. Similarly, in Haryana 60

startups received an investment of Rs 1, 148 crore and in Tamil Nadu, 29 startups got an investment of Rs 826 crore. Under FFS, the Scheme does

not directly invest in startups. instead it provides capital to SEBI-registered Alternative Investment Funds (AIFs), known as daughter funds, who in turn invest money in growing Indian startups through equity and



equity-linked instruments. The Small Industries Devel-

opment Bank of India (SIDBI) has been given the mandate of operating this Fund through selection of suitable daughter funds and overseeing the disbursal of committed capital. AIFs supported under FFS are

required to invest at least two times of the amount committed under FFS in startups.

The Government with an intent to build a strong ecosystem for nurturing innovation, startups and encouraging private investments in the startup ecosystem of the country launched Startup India initiative on January 16, 2016.

The flagship Schemes including Fund of Funds for Startups (FFS), Startup India Seed Fund Scheme (SISFS) and Credit Guarantee Scheme for Startups (CGSS) support startups at various stages of their business cycle to enable startups to graduate to a level where they are able to raise investments from angel investors or venture capitalists or seek loans from commercial

banks or financial institutions. Officials said that over 50 regulatory reforms have been undertaken by the Government since 2016 to enhance ease of doing business, ease of raising capital and reduce compliance burden for the startup ecosys-

Besides, to enable ease of procurement, Central Ministries

and Departments have been directed to relax conditions of prior turnover and prior experience in public procurement for all DPIIT recognised startups subject to meeting quality and technical specifications. Further, Government e-Marketplace (GeM) Startup Runway has been developed which is a dedicated corner for startups to sell products and services directly to the Government. The Government also imple-

ments flagship annual exercises and programs including States' Startup Ranking, National Startup Awards and Innovation Week which play an important role in holistic development of the startup ecosystem. The Government also facilitates participation and engagement of the Indian startup ecosystem at international platforms.

India has paid its 2023 annual contribution of \$30.54 million to the UN budget PM Modi held a telephonic conversation with Joe Biden

ALTHOUGH THAT WORKS **OUT TO \$33.592 MILLION,** IT IS GIVEN A CREDIT OF \$3.052 MILLION THAT THE UN COLLECTS FROM ITS INDIAN EMPLOYEES IN LIEU OF THE INCOME **TAXES THEY WOULD HAVE HAD TO PAY**

India has paid its 2023 annual contribution of \$30.54 million to the UN budget, according to a UN spokesperson.

India was among the 43 countries on its "honour roll" so far for having paid their assessments to the budget, Stephane Dujarric, the Spokesperson for Secretary-General



Antonio Guterres, said on get of \$3.217 billion. Monday. India's contribution was received on Friday

according to the UN. India's share is assessed at 1.044 per cent of the total bud-

Although that works out to

\$33.592 million, it is given a credit of \$3.052 million that the UN collects from its Indian employees in lieu of the had to pay.

The rate of budget assessments for each of the 193 member countries is worked out by a complex formula that is based on gross national income (which is the gross domestic product plus income from abroad), debt burden and an adjustment for per capita income using the principle of the "capacity to pay".

Although India boasts of being the world's fifth-largest economy, its assessment is brought down by the low per capita income diminishing its "capacity to pay".

This puts its assessment lower than some fellow developing countries like Brazil

per cent or Mexico at 1.221 per cent.

The assessment for the US is 22 per cent, which is the highest that can be set for a country, working out to \$707.897 million.

China comes next with an assessment of 15.254 per cent or 490.83 million.

Britain, the size of whose economy was overtaken by India, pays \$140.775 million or 4.375 per cent to be the fifthlargest contributor with Japan being the third and Germany

In addition to the main UN budget, countries also have to make contributions based on similar formulas to the budgets for capital, peace-keeping and international tribunals.

A report showed Sunday that

China's reopening from Covid

restrictions and its economic recovery are expected to help

boost South Korea's economic

growth and exports, which are

highly related to the neighbor-

NEWDELHI: Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Tuesday held a telephonic conversation with US President Joe Biden, during the course of which both the leaders ex-

pressed satisfaction at the

deepening of the India-US

Comprehensive Global Stra-

tegic Partnership.

The two leaders welcomed the first meeting of the initiative on Critical and Emerging Technologies (iCET) held recently in Washington DC and express a keen desire to strengthen bilateral cooperation in space, semicon-

ductors, defence and other

They also agreed to bolster the vibrant and mutually beneficial people-to-people ties between the two countries.



comed the landmark agreement between Air India and Boeing as a shining example of mutually beneficial

cooperation.A Modi invited Boeing and other US companies to make use of the opportunities arising due to the expanding civil

The leaders agreed to remain in contact during India's ongoing G20 Presidency to ensure its success.

Air India and Boeing on Tuesday entered into a pact under which the former will purchase 250 aircraft from the American company.

Israel's inflation rate hits 5.4%, the highest in over 14 years



Israel's year-on-year inflation rose to 5.4 per cent in January, the highest since October 2008, according to figures released by the country's Central Bureau of

The 12-month inflation figure continued to move away from the government target ranging from 1 to 3 per cent. The last time the figure was within the range was in December 2021, Xinhua news agency reported.

Israel's inflation rise has not been curbed even though the central bank increased the base interest rate from 0.1 per cent in April last year to the current 3.75 per cent. According to analysts, the interest rate may be raised again for the eighth consecutive time on February 20. Asher Blass, the former chief economist at the Bank of Israel, told the news agency that the main factor for the continuous inflation rise in Israel is the global high prices of raw materials like fuel, gas, coal, and steel. He explained that there were problems in the supply chain amid high demands, and it took a while to get everything running again, causing raw materials to become more expensive. However, the inflation rate in Israel is still lower than that in many other countries, such as the 8.5 per cent average in the eurozone countries. Omer Moay, a professor of economics at the University of Warwick in the UK and Reichman University in Israel, told the news agency that Israel's relatively low inflation is related to the country's export surplus, which has been strengthening the Israeli shekel. "When the shekel became stronger, the prices of imports were reduced, he said, adding he is confident that the country's inflation will

American Petroleum Institute has reported an increase of 10.507 million barrels of crude oil in U.S.

unforeseeable happens".

fall within the government's

target range "unless something



The American Petroleum Institute has reported an increase of 10.507 million barrels of crude oil in U.S. inventories for the week ending Friday. Analysts expected a hike of 0.321 million barrels for this week. The API reported a drop of 2.184 million barrels in the previous week. Oil prices fell on Tuesday after the United States said it would release more crude from its Strategic Petroleum Reserve, Xinhua reported. The West Texas Intermediate for March delivery dropped 1.08 U.S. dollars, or 1.35 per cent, to settle at 79.06 dollars a barrel on the New York Mercantile Exchange. Brent crude for April delivery lost 1.03 dollars, or 1.19 per cent, to close at 85.58 dollars a barrel on the London ICE Futures Exchange.

Biden says he will not apologise for downing Chinese spy balloon and its economic recovery: survey 2023

US President Joe Biden has said that the last three of the four aerial objects shot out of the skies were probably balloons tied to private companies, recreation or research institutions; but the fourth was a Chinese spy and "I make no apologies", he added, for bringing it down. Biden said that he ordered

the shooting of the remaining three "due to hazards to civilian commercial air traffic and because we could not rule out the surveillance risk of sensitive facilities". The American President acknowledged that the US knows nothing about these three, which were shot down on consecutive days last week - one over Alaska, the second over Canada in a joint operation with Canada, and the third over the American midwest.

Biden said further that he has asked for a new protocol for dealing with these kinds

spree, was shot down by a US F-22 on February 4 off the coast of the American state of South Carolina on the western coast. It had been floating above the US mainland for

The Chinese owned up and expressed regret, saying the airship was studying weather and had gone off course. The US declared the aerial

more than a week, hovering

over sensitive installations.

intrusion as a violation of its of unidentified aerial objects. national sovereignty and Sec-The Chinese spy plane, retary of State Antony Blinken which started this shooting postponed his visit to Beijing Relations worsened as an

lowed, especially after Biden seemingly taunted the Chinese President Xi Jinping in his state of the union speech, saying, no world leader would like to trade places with the Chinese leader because of the spy balloon incident.

Biden sounded reconciliatory on Thursday, reiterating that the US doesn't seek a conflict with China and it also doesn't want a new cold war.

to express US displeasure more

exchange of sharp words fol-

According to the report published by the Korea International Trade Association

ing country.

(KITA), global institutions have predicted that the Chinese economy will expand 5.1 per cent in 2023 from a year earlier, up from a 3 per cent growth in the previous year, Yonhap News Agency reported.

Thanks to the reopening from its years long zero-Covid policy and Beijing's stimulus packages, the world's secondlargest economy will likely post a 6.9 per cent on-year growth in the second quarter and 2.6 per cent for the first

Should that prediction materialise, the robust growth in the Chinese economy will likely



growth by an additional 0.16 percentage point and its exports by 0.55 percentage point this year, the report said.

The South Korean government expected Asia's fourthlargest economy to expand around 1.6 percent in 2023, down from a 2.6 per cent gain in 2022. Its 2023 exports are expected to decrease 4.5 percent on-year, compared with a growth of 6.1 per cent last year.

"South Korea needs to make

the most of China's reopening and tackle the Chinese domestic market in a way to get over sluggish exports, " the report said. South Korea's economy is

largely affected by the fluctuation of the Chinese economy as the neighbouring country is its biggest trade partner.

Shipments to China reached US\$155.8 billion in 2022, accounting for 22.8 per cent of Korea's total exports of \$683.8

Canada's employment increased by 150,000: **Statistics Cánada**



Canada's employment increased by 150, 000 in January and the unemployment rate held steady at 5 per cent, Statistics Canada

Employment gains were driven primarily by people aged between 25 to 54 years, split evenly between women and men in this group, the national statistical agency said on Friday, adding that employment also increased among people aged 55 years and above, while it was little changed among youth aged between 15 to 24 years.

There were gains across sev eral industries, led by wholesale and retail trade, health care and social assistance and educational services. At the same time, employment declined in transportation and warehousing, the agency said.

Magnitude 5.4 earthquake jolts NW Syria



A magnitude 5.4 earthquake jolted the province of Idlib in northwestern Syria on Thursday night, the Syrian National Earthquake Center reported.

The earthquake, which struck at 10:47 p.m. local time, has a depth of 18.8 km. Its epicenter was 61 km from the city of Idlib, the capital of the namesake province. The earthquake could be felt in the Syrian capital Damascus and the northern province of Aleppo, Xinhua news agency reported.

Another magnitude 3.4 earthquake hit the northwestern coastal province of Latakia at 11:17 p.m. local time. With a depth of 46 km, the second quake's epicenter is 50 km from Latakia, the capital of the namesake province. Local people in ment control.

the coastal province saw dust falling from walls in their buildings and ran out to the streets in panic, witnesses told the news agency by phone. People in many Syrian areas took to the streets after the tremors, the Syrian Observatory for Human

Rights reported. Northern Syria

was hit hard by the magnitude

7.7 and 7.6 earthquakes cen-

tered in southeastern Turkey on February 6. The Syrian Health Ministry announced on Tuesday that the final death toll from the earthquake that hit Syria stands at 1, 414, while the number of injured people reached 2, 357. The ministry's count of quake casualties only includes the quake-hit areas under govern-

European LNG demand to drive competition for new supply and dominate trade in the long term Europe's increased

need for liquefied natural gas (LNG) looks set to intensify competition with Asia for limited new supply available over the next two years and may dominate LNG trade over the longer term, according to Shell's LNG Outlook 2023.

NEW DELHI: European countries, including the UK, imported 121 million tonnes of LNG in 2022, an increase of 60% compared to 2021, which enabled them to withstand a slump in Russian pipeline gas imports following its invasion of Ukraine. A 15 million tonne fall in Chinese imports combined with reduced imports by South Asian buyers helped European countries to secure enough gas and avoid shortages. Europe's rapidly rising appetite for LNG pushed prices to record highs and generated volatility in energy markets

With reduced Russian pipeincreasingly important pillar of European energy security, supported by the rapid development of new regasification terminals in north-west Europe. In contrast, China is evolving from being a rapidly growing import market to playing a more flexible role with an increased ability to balance the

global LNG market. "The war in Ukraine has had far-reaching impacts on energy security around the world and caused structural shifts in the market that are likely to impact the global LNG industry over the long term," Steve Hill, Shell's Executive Vice President for Energy

Marketing, said. "It has also underscored the need for a more strategic approach - through longer-term contracts – to secure reliable supply to avoid exposure to

The drop in Russian pipeline gas flows prompted unprecedented policy and regulatory intervention as governments energy security and shield their economies from high costs, including prioritizing LNG imports and quickly develop-

ing new import terminals. In 2022, Europe's LNG demand forced other buyers to reduce their imports and switch to other fuels, generating more emissions. High global LNG prices led to a drop in LNG imports in South Asia, with Pakistan and Bangladesh importing more fuel oil to minimize power supply shortages

and India using more coal. Total global trade in LNG reached 397 million tonnes in 2022. Industry forecasts expect LNG demand to reach 650 to over 700 million tonnes a year by 2040. More investment in liquefaction projects is required to avoid a supply-demand gap that is expected to emerge by the late 2020s.

Turkey, Syria in the aftermath of the quake



The death toll from the earthquakes in Turkey has climbed to 29,605, the country's disaster agency was quoted by the Anadolu Agency as saying, bringing the total fatalities with neighbouring Syria to over 33,000, with tens of thousands injured.

Rescue efforts

The first batch of emergency aid, including tents and blankets, delivered by the Chinese government for earthquake relief has arrived in Turkey on Saturday. More emergency supplies, including tents, electrocardiographs, ultrasonic diagnostic equipment and medical transfer vehicles will warm socks and shoes, female also be shipped in batches hygiene products in addition from China.

Syria is also receiving supplies from the Red Cross Society of China and the local Chinese community. The aid from the local Chinese community included infant formulas, winter clothes, and medical supplies, while the first batch of emergency medical supplies from the Red Cross Society of China arrived on Thursday.

On Sunday, Algeria and Libya also sent planes full of relief items to the quake-hit areas. Pakistan on Sunday sent another special relief consignment as part of relief assistance for the earthquake-hit areas

Qatar has sent the first part of the 10,000 container houses for earthquake victims reported.

Meanwhile, foreign heads of state and ministers started to pay visits to Turkey and Syria to show solidarity. Greek Foreign Minister

Nikos Dendias visited Turkey on Sunday to show support. The Qatari emir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad Al Thani, the first foreign head of state visiting quake-hit Turkey, met with Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan in Istanbul on Sunday.

Also on Sunday, Foreign Minister of the United Arab Emirates Sheikh Abdullah bin Zayed Al Nahyan visited Syria, pledging continued support for the country to overcome the repercussions of the earthquakes, Syrian state news agency SANA reported.

Problems and response

The lack of hygienic facilities has started to endanger the survivors in the quake-hit Turkey.

"The issue of hygiene is becoming more and more urgent, wrote Ihsan Cakir, deputy general secretary of Hatay Municipality on Friday. The Hatay province was one of the worst it areas by the earthquakes.

"Underwater sources might have been polluted, with the sewage system in ruins, "said Celalettin Kocaturk, a doctor in Istanbul, adding that now the tap water is not safe for drinking or ablutions. He also warned of an increased risk of

Turkey Earthquake: UNITED SIKHS collaborating with Govt agencies for relief operations like baby food, water, tents,

KULBIR SINGH KALSI

Ludhiana

Hatay, Turkey: Responding to one of the worst disasters to hit Turkey, UNITED SIKHS is collaborating with various governments and local organizations for relief operations and expanding assistance to the most affected regions. This includes digging the rubble looking for survivors and distributing relief supplies.

In addition to the relief aid in Diyarbakir, the UNITED SIKHS team is going to set up a base in Hatay, one of the worst affected regions in southern Turkey.

Our volunteers from Denmark and Germany have the wide scale of devastation joined the relief operations. They are also collaborating with local volunteers to quickly expand humanitarian assistance to the most affected Hatay. As part of the initia-



saster and the collaboration

with governments, Gurpreet

Singh, CEO, UNITED SIKHS

said, "We are in pain seeing

and suffering. To maximize

the relief work across re-

gions, we are collaborating

with government agencies in

tive, our supporters would also help ship relief consignments of required items to Turkey. We need your gen-

erous support in providing urgent humanitarian relief to the thousands impacted." Gurvinder Singh, UNIT-**ED SIKHS International Humanitarian Aid Director**

has reached," he said.

UNITED SIKHS on-ground also appealed that the scale of the disaster calls for a global

response. "People are still trapped under the rubble. And those who survive have lost everything. They are in immediate need of humanitarian assistance. Please support us in providing critical aid to regions where no one

teams report that supplies including non-perishable items

supplies are urgently needed. UNITED SIKHS continues to provide humanitarian relief to victims of man-made or natural calamities including the ongoing war in Ukraine. Our teams have provided humanitarian aid to earthquake victims in Pakistan in 2006,

heaters, mattresses, pillows,

to portable toilets and medical

in Pakistan-Afghanistan in 2015, as well. Kavita Kumar, UNITED SIKHS volunteer from Denmark who joined the mission in Turkey said that it is hard to describe colossal damage and suffering. Temperatures are dropping below zero, making

it worse for those displaced

and homeless.

in Haiti in 2010, in Chile in

2010, in Japan in 2011, and

of Turkey.

in Turkey, the Anadolu Agency

an epidemic.

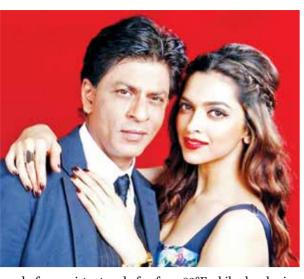
Deepika and Shah Rukh

demonstrate the CHP process using products from 82°E

global Indian icon Deepika Padukone, 82°E (eighty-two east), has debuted a ground-

Following the success of their movie Pathaan, Deepika and Shah Rukh have teamed up for an exhilarating video in which they demonstrate the Cleanse-Hydrate-Protect (CHP) skincare routine with 82°E products. As Deepika walks Shah Rukh through the steps of her own beauty routine, the video shows the amicable chemistry the actors have with one another.

The brand's newest skincare product, Gotu Kola Dew, a toner serum containing gotu kola and niacinamide, is also introduced. The purpose of this entertaining yet instructive movie featuring the two Indian



ficient CHP skincare practise. Shah Rukh demonstrate the superstars is to emphasise the CHP process using products with Lotus Splash, then tone

need of a consistent and ef- from 82°E while also sharing some of their favourite skin-In the video, Deepika and care hacks and suggestions. They begin by cleansing

with Gotu Kola Dew, moisturise with Ashwagandha Bounce, and hydrate with Ashwagandha Bounce. Shah Rukh was reminded of the value of everyday sun protection as they wrapped off the process with Patchouli Glow sunscreen drops with SPF 40 PA+++ to Protect.

"It is no secret that I started my career with Shah Rukh and that we have now done four movies together. But getting ready and going through our skin care routine together was a whole other level of fun! Through this video we hope to inspire our fans to adopt 82°E's (C)Cleanse, (H)Hydrate and (P)Protect Skincare Routine and prioritise taking as much care of their skin as we do, said Deepika Padukone.

82°E products are formulated by in-house R&D experts, combining time-tested Indian ingredients and powerful scientific compound(s) to offer high-quality, high-performance products. The brand will launch more products under the skincare category and has ambitions to expand into other categories that support a modern, holistic approach

Saudi Tourism

authority announces partnership with Indian Premier League

DOMINICK RODRIGUES

The Saudi Tourism Authority (STA) inaugurated its official partnership with the TATA Indian Premier League (IPL) -- the world's preeminent Twenty 20 cricket league – here recently.

The inauguration was attended by Jay Shah, Secretary of Board of Control for Cricket in India (BCCI), Rajeev Shukla (Vice-President, BCCI) and Ashish Shelar (Honorary Treasurer, BCCI) along with Saudi Tourism Authority officials including Alhasan Aldabbagh, President of APAC. The cricketing partnership comes off Saudi Arabia's tourism strategy, that is viewing India's immense potential as Saudi's largest tourism source market by 2030.

Describing the Indian subcontinent region as a key market for the STA in its global marketing strategy, Alhasan Aldabbagh, APAC President at Saudi Tourism Authority, said, "We know

how important cricket is to our visitors from South Asia and, through our partnership with IPL, we aim to increase Saudi's presence and appeal in the Indian and South Asian markets."

He said India's diverse and rich culture is similar to Saudi Arabia's where hospitality is +deeply rooted in our DNA.+ "IPL is a celebration of cricket and we have a bold vision for 2030 featuring this sport while also making Saudi Arabia one of the top five destinations in the world," he said while describing the IPL as the right platform for connecting Saudi Arabia globally.

"We are excited to show propective South Asian visitors why they should consider Saudi not only as their next holiday destination, but also as a viable sports destination as we play host to prominent sports and entertainment events such as Formula One, WWE, and the Spanish Super Cup.'

Reiterating Saudi Arabia's

National Award-winning ac-

tor Manoj Bajpayee, who is

gearing up for his upcoming

release 'Gulmohar' and plays

actress Sharmila Tagore's son

Arun Batra in the film, shared

a fan moment which he had

with the veteran actress. The

actor is so fond of songs from

the actress's films that he kept

singing them on the sets of

'Gulmohar'.

POTPOURRI



commitment to supporting excellence in the world of sport, Fahd Hamidaddin, CEO and Member of the Board at Saudi Tourism Authority, said, "Sports, like tourism, brings people together in harmony and fellowship, bridging cultures and sharing perspectives on the world around us. These values are central to Saudi culture and are championed by young people

from all around the world." Highlighting the IPL's rise as a global dominant force that generated strong appeal in the sporting ecosystem, Jay Shah, Secretary of Board of Control for Cricket in India said, "For us, it's an exciting prospect that

Manoj Bajpayee

gearing up for his upcoming

Saudi Tourism Authority has immense faith in the power of IPL to bring countries together. This partnership will create newer opportunities for cricket in Saudi and strengthen the sport in the region." Welcoming the Saudi Tour-

ism Authority on board as an official sponsor for the 2023 edition of the IPL, Rajeev Shukla (Vice-President, BCCI), said, "The IPL partnership is a powerful channel to engage with its vast audience and support Saudi Tourism Authority's objective of creating brand awareness in India and among fans from the entire cricketing world.

Watch a music-drenched love story in Colors' new fiction drama 'Jaanooniyat'

CHANDIGARH: Music is the saviour, anchor, and destination for three aspirants, who must choose between love and their ambition in COLORS' upcoming fiction offering, 'Junoonivatt'. The show traces the soulstirring journey of emotions and passion of three distinct individuals, Elahi (played by Neha Rana), Jahaan (played by Ankit Gupta) and Jordan (played by Gautam Vig). While Elahi and Jahaan are immersed in the magic of love and musical notes, Jordan is consumed by the intent to dominate the world of music. Produced by Sargun Mehta and Ravie Dubey's Dreamiyata Entertainment, the show premiered on the 13th February and air every Monday to Friday at 8:30 pm only on COLORS.

Manisha Sharma, Chief



Entertainment, Viacom18 says, "Junooniyatt is a spellbinding tale of three ambitious singers Elahi, Jordan, and Jahaan, who beckons. With our long-standpresented some popular shows

Content Officer, Hindi Mass that have captured the hearts and minds of our viewers. Hoping to continue this streak of success, we are delighted to present a tussle between love follow their dreams while love and music Junooniyatt. We are looking forward to evoking ing partnership with Dreaminostalgia and giving viewers a yata Entertainment, we have music-filled story that they can celebrate.

Cutting-edge technology gives new ray of hope for cervical & breast cancer patients at Fortis Mohali

KULBIR SINGH KALSI

TheOncology DepartmentatFortis Hospital Mohali has revolutionised the treatment of cancer through cutting-edge technology wherein patients were completely cured when detected in the early stages of the disease.

Dr Shweta Tahlan, Consultant, Gynae Onco-Surgery, Fortis Hospital Mohali, recently treated a 45-year-old woman who had been experiencing vaginal discharge and post-coital bleeding (bleeding after sexual intercourse). Medical investigations, including cervical biopsy, revealed that the Patient was suffering from invasive squamous cell carcinoma (Stage 1). As the cancer had been diagnosed at an early stage, Dr Tahlan performed Radi-



the surrounding tissue and pelvic lymph nodes). She did not require any adjuvant treatment. The Patient was discharged on the fifth day of the surgery and has recovered completely.

Emphasizing on theearly detection of cervical cancer, Dr Tahlan, said, "Early stage of cervical cancer may not produce any symptoms. However, symptoms may include postcoital or intermenstrual vaginal bleeding, irregular periods, post-menopausal bleeding, persistent or foul-smelling vaginal discharge and pelvic pain.



Recollecting his first meeting with the senior actress, Manoj said, "When I met Sharmila ji the songs like 'Jab bhi ji chahe the fact she responds to my for the first time, I was thrilled nayi duniya basa lete hai log' messages after the film is over, and excited and told her that I from the film 'Daag,' and ev- I get the warm feeling that her had watched many of her old ery time it happened I realised affection for me is like that of films while growing up to which she was either crossing me or a real family.' Sharmila ji told me, "Manoj just standing behind me while I was singing the songs."

Manoj said, "Somehow the times it happened, Sharmila ji Sharma, Kaveri Seth and Utsongs from her films would told me in mock anger, Manoj, savi Jha, is set to release on stay in my head, and often I I will beat you. I cherish these March 3, 2023, only on Diswould hear myself humming memories from the set. And ney+ Hotstar.

Sharing another nugget, He added, "After a couple of Amol Palekar, Simran, Suraj

'Gulmohar', directed by Rahul Chittella, and also starring

Valentine's Day highlighted VietJet awards, gifts and tear-jerker proposals

While Valentine's Day was celebrated on February 14 globally, the megapolis of Mumbai highlighted a low key yet visible mode in where some stores hung out colourful posters and messages highlighting their related wares for the occasion.

While some couples shared cards or gifts, others chose to make trips to tourist hotspots and cosy places for parties of their own. Yet others could be seen on the beaches and rockspots including the popular haunt being the city's +Marine Drive.+

A prominent city event in this regard featured VietJet of Vietnam organising a +Gala Night+ of their iconic "Love onnection" Award Ceremony in a well-known Juhubeachside hotel, where it felicitated 77 couples with a dream honeymoon in famous coastal cities of Vietnam. VietJet had organised a four-

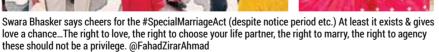
month competition that drew responses from over 150,000 couples in India highlighting their unique love stories and

rewarding them with air tickets and romantic honeymoons in Hanoi, Da Nang, Ho Chi Minh city, PhuQuoc and various famous cultural, economic and tourist centres in Vietnam with departures scheduled between February 13 and June 30, 2023.

Congratulating the winning couples while also describing "Love Connection" as a special program designed by the airline in gratitude for such Indian couples flying with them, VietJet Vice-PresidentDo Xuan Quang said "I hope that VietJet will be able to serve more Indian tourists including couples on vacation to explore Vietnam's beauty alongside significantly contributing to bilateral cooperation between India and Vietnam in various fields.'







Bollywood star Deepika Padukone was seen flying in the economy section in a flight Ditching the luxury of business

class, Bollywood star Deepika Padukone was seen flying in the economy section in a flight.

their social media account, where Deepika, who was followed by her body guard, is seen walking towards the front, as directed by one of the crew members. In the video, she is seen keeping a low profile and walked without talking to any of the co-passengers.

In the video posted by a fan club of Deepika on Twitter, she is seen wearing a fiery orange and blue jacket paired with a cap along with sunglasses.



On the work front, Deepika was recently seen in 'Pathaan' starring Shah Rukh Khan and John Abraham. The film 'Pathaan' has become the fifth highest grossing Indian film after beating Salman Khan's 'Bajrangi Bhaijaan' (2015) and Aamir Khan's 'Secret Superstar' (2017).

Kartik Aaryan showcases promotional teaser of 'Shehzada' on Burj Khalifa



MUMBAI: After taking over the nation with a myriad of promotional events in Mumbai, Jalandhar and Kutch besides many other locales in India, actor Kartik Aaryan took over the world's tallest building Burj Khalifa to promote his upcoming film 'Shehzada' Recently, Kartik took over the iconic Burj Khalifa and showcased the promotional teaser of the film. While he kick-started the Dubai tour by meeting his fans but it's culmination was in the grandest possible way with the projection of this much awaited family entertainer on the Burj Khalifa. 'Shehzada' is directed by Rohit Dhawan, starring Kartik Aaryan, Kriti Sanon, Manisha Koirala, Paresh Rawal, Ronit Roy, and Sachin Khedekar, and music by Pritam, produced by Bhushan Kumar, Allu Arvind, Aman Gill, and Kartik Aaryan. It is set to release on February 17.

The Pitch Battle: Border Gavaskar trophy

SUNIL THAPLIYAL

India defeated Australia by an innings on the third day of the first test match in Nagpur to take a 1-0 lead in the four-test series of the Border-Gavaskar series. Since the beginning of the series, the greats of Australia and India have engaged in a verbal duel. Former Australian cricketer Ian Healy triggered a controversy when he asked India to prepare a fair pitch for the test series. He raises the ques-tion about Indian pitches. His insistence on fair pitches during the next series has reignited a discussion about what it really means to be fair and unfair in order to win a game.

Healy has predicted that Australia would win the first Test match if a «fair» pitch were created. Ravi Shastri, a former head coach of Team India, has, on the other hand, provided a wonderful rejoinder to Healy by stating that he would like to see a turn from the first day of the competition.

Sunil Gavaskar, the renowned



cricketer, has responded angrily, claiming that Australia has no right to complain about the condition of Indian pitches because their own wickets have been scrutinised. He emphasised that the Brisbane ground at Gabba, where the Test match between Australia and South Africa in December of last year ended in two days, was much more hazardous than any Indian pitch could ever be. The Australians are always this way; they were thrashed twice at home by India

on bouncy wickets. Australians

are now looking for green turf in

India as well. The pitch is deter-

mined by a number of elements. including the soil. Its difficult to make bouncey wickets on the Indian subcontinent.

Every home team has the right to arrange the pitch whatever they choose, rendering the whole debate over pitch doctorexpect bouncy fast pitches.

ing pointless. When teams from the subcontinent go on tour in Australia, they don>t anticipate low bounce, dusty tracks; they Australia used to be far ahead of the competition when it came

to mind tricks. They>re now get-

ting a taste of their own medi-

cine. This is one of Australia>s

most humiliating overseas Test defeats. Australia appeared to have already lost the match by putting too much emphasis on the field. India batted expertly, as required by Test cricket, and scored 400 runs, but Australia was visualising a different wicket. Even though there has been a large disparity between the teams, the field can>t be that bad if one team scores 400 runs.

The Australian media has been constantly criticising the Indian team management and the Indian cricket board, refusing to discuss their own failings that contributed to an embarrassing loss.

The third Test has been moved from Dharamshala to Indore by the BCCI. Officials from the board concluded after a careful investigation that the outfield «lacks suitable grass density» and is not prepared to conduct a match of this magnitude on an international scale. The BCCI provided an explanation of the situation that compelled them to relocate the game to Indore via a press statement.

