

**REGION**

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**PUNJAB REGISTERS RECORD INCREASE IN GST AND EXCISE REVENUE, SAYS HARPAL CHEEMA**



## CM Mann and Delhi CM Kejriwal dedicated 500 Aam Aadmi Clinic to the People of Punjab

JAGMOHAN SINGH  
Amritsar

Punjab Chief Minister Bhagwant Mann on Friday said that the state government is making concerted efforts for carving out a 'healthy and rangla' (vibrant) Punjab by ensuring comprehensive development in every sector.

Addressing the gathering after dedicating the 500th Aam Aadmi Clinic during a function here on Friday, the Chief Minister, accompanied by Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal, said that the state government has already set the wheels in motion for this noble cause.

He said that massive work is being done in the field of health, education and employment sector which will bear fruits soon. Mann said that in order to provide quality and timely health services to the people 100 Aam Aadmi clinics were already dedicated to the people on 75th



Independence Day.

He said that these clinics are offering 41 health packages with nearly 100 clinical tests free of cost to the people. He said that till now 10.26 lakh people had got free treatment from these Aam Aadmi clinics operational since the month of August. Likewise, Bhagwant Mann said that 1.24 lakh patients have undergone free clinical tests in these clinics.

He said that these clinics are

acting as a cornerstone in the revamp of the healthcare system in Punjab. He said that it is a matter of great pride and satisfaction that the Government of India (GoI) has also lauded this path breaking initiative of the state government to deliver health services to people. Mann said that now with the opening of more than 400 Aam Aadmi Clinics Punjab will script a new success story in the Healthcare sector by functioning of 500

such clinics.

Mann envisioned that the residents of the state will no longer have to shelve huge money in hospitals for getting treatment and diagnostic facilities adding that patients can avail the medical services by stepping into the clinics or can avail facility of online appointment.

Welcoming Arvind Kejriwal, Mann said that taking inspiration from his visionary leadership and guidance, Punjab had taken this citizen centric decision. He said that the Delhi government had pioneered this pro-people initiative, which had immensely benefited the people in the national capital. Mann said that other states are now replicating this model to bring much needed reforms in education and health sectors.

The Chief Minister said that the online data of every patient visiting these clinics will be maintained across the state. He

said that this will help in data compilation for formulation of strategy to combat deadly diseases in the state. He said that it will ensure research based diagnose and treatment of the residents of the state in an efficient and foolproof manner.

Mann said that the state government is spending every single penny of taxpayers money for their well-being. Mann said that this is a paradoxical situation where the Aam Aadmi Party is talking about development whereas the other parties are pursuing divisive agenda.

Mann said that successive governments in the state have plundered the wealth of Punjab. He said that his government is duty bound to put the perpetrators of this heinous crime behind the bars. He said that no stone will be left unturned to punish these culprits of the state who have looted the money from state exchequer.

**CORPORATES & INDUSTRY**

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**\$420 PRICE FOR A TESLA SHARE NOT A WEED JOKE TO PLEASE GIRLFRIEND, SAYS ALON MUSK**



**POTPOURRI**

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**TEASER OF SALMAN KHAN'S UPCOMING FILM 'KISI KA BHAII KISI KI JAAN': LEAKED**



## FISME advises MSMEs to challenge foreclosure penalty before Banking Ombudsman

**NEW DELHI:** Upping the ante against the Banks' practice of imposing foreclosure or prepayment penalties, the Federation of Indian Micro and Small & Medium Enterprises (FISME), has advised MSEs to challenge the penalty before the institution of Banking Ombudsman.

According to the Code of Bank's Commitment for Micro and Small Enterprises' which was adopted by all commercial banks in 2012, Banks had committed that they would 'permit prepayment of fixed rate loans up to Rs. 50 lakh without levying any pre-payment penalty and also' permit prepayment of floating rate loans without levying any pre-payment penalty.

"Banks, primarily private sector Banks continue to flout their own commitment given in Code and slap foreclosure penalties on hapless micro and small enterprises



ranging from 2-4 per cent on sanctioned loan", says Neeraj Kedia, Chairman of Banking & Finance Committee of FISME.

These penalties are evoked if a small enterprise decides to move on to another bank for better financial terms. Banks also withhold papers of securities of such customers.

"It is disappointing that these Banks have tried to discredit the Code itself, stating that the Board which led to the formulation of the Code was under dissolution and hence the Code was infructuous. However, continued lobbying by FISME has finally led RBI to clear the air by amending the Master Circular which now

upholds the Code", adds Kedia.

The Para 5.3 of amended RBI Master Circular RBI/FIDD/2017-18/56 29th July 2022 states that 'while BC-SBI has initiated the process of its dissolution, banks may continue to follow their commitments as hitherto under the Code of Bank's Commitment for Micro and Small Enterprises'.

Following RBI's 27th Meeting of the Standing Advisory Committee to review the flow of credit to MSMEs, held in Kolkata on 15th Dec 2022, in which FISME had sought clarity on sanctity of the Code and powers of Banking Ombudsman, the central bank has noted in the Minutes of the Meeting that Banks have been advised to continue to follow their commitment to Micro and Small Enterprises. Failure to adhere to the Code can be a ground for approaching Banking Ombudsman'.

**Rahul Gandhi pays floral tribute to martyrs of Pulwama terror attack**



Congress leader Rahul Gandhi on Saturday paid floral tribute to the martyrs of 2019 Pulwama terror attack at Lethpora. He stopped the Yatra for a while at Lethpora in Pulwama and laid a flower bouquet at the spot where 40 CRPF jawans were killed in the terrorist attack. Official sources said that Rahul Gandhi resumed Yatra from Chersoo village in Anantnag district. The Bharat Jodo Yatra, which started from Kanyakumari on September 7, will conclude in Srinagar on January 30 where Rahul Gandhi will hoist the national flag and address a public rally.

**Bhupinder Hooda seeks compensation for mustard farmers in Haryana**



Former Haryana Chief Minister Bhupinder Singh Hooda on Saturday demanded compensation for mustard farmers as 70-90 per cent of the crop has been damaged due to frost. He said the BJP-JJP government neither carried out the 'girdawari' nor announced compensation. He demanded the government should come forward to help the farmers without delay.

Hooda said the farmers are protesting at many places demanding compensation for the Kharif crop of 2020. "For the last several seasons, farmers have either been given a nominal amount of compensation or they do not get any compensation at all. In this way, the government and insurance companies have duped the farmers of hundreds of crores." "Even after paying premium to the insurance companies every season, the hands of the farmers remain empty. While insurance companies have earned huge profits of more than Rs 40, 000 crore from Haryana. Under the protection of the government, insurance companies are minting money while farmers wait for support," the Leader of Opposition said.

## Aam Aadmi clinics; old wine in new bottles, says Raja Warring

**CHANDIGARH:** Punjab Congress president Amarinder Singh Raja Warring today described as merely publicity stunt the opening of the Aam Aadmi clinics in Punjab saying, it was a classic case of old wine in new bottles as the government was only renaming the existing health facilities. Besides, the PCC president remarked, these clinics looked more like Aam Aadmi Party offices and extension counters

than health centres. Reacting to the opening of the clinics in Punjab, he pointed out, that the state government was only renaming the already existing facilities in the and naming these as "Aam Aadmi clinics" as its purpose was more to gain political mileage than provide healthcare to the people.

Warring said, in the mad race of getting the numbers of so called clinics jacked up,



the AAP government had replaced the historic and reli-

gious names of various centres including the one in Amritsar which was named after one of the Panj Pyaras.

He asked as why these clinics were not named as "government clinics" and why as Aam Aadmi clinics with Chief Minister's photograph.

Who is paying for it, the government or the AAP? he asked, while asserting that the names of these clinics must be changed. He also hinted

at initiating legal course for the same.

"First of all there was no need to open such clinics as Punjab already has a robust healthcare system which was proved by the fact that the government was only renaming the existing healthcare facilities and superimposing party name on them which is illegal", he said, while adding, "it was only trying to propagate and publicise its party name".

**LAKHIMPUR KHERI CASE**

## An Accused Ashish Mishra released from jail

**LAKHIMPUR KHERI :** Ashish Mishra, son of Union Minister Ajay Mishra Teni and an accused in the Tikunia murder case, was released from jail on Friday evening after the Supreme Court granted him an interim bail of eight weeks.

Mishra was taken out of the jail from the rear gate to avoid the media which had gathered at the main gate and taken to his residence.

Family members refused to disclose where he would relocate to after one week as per Supreme Court directives.

The Supreme Court has directed Mishra to leave Uttar Pradesh within one week after his release from jail.

"Petitioner to give his passport to the trial court, and will not enter the state of Uttar Pradesh, apart from his appearance for trial proceedings," the court had ordered.

The court also said that the petitioner has to mark



his attendance at the police station of jurisdiction where he relocates to.

The court also warned Mishra and his family members against influencing witnesses, violation of which would lead to the cancellation of his bail. "If it is found that Mishra is trying to delay the trial, it will be a valid ground to cancel his bail," the court said in its order.

The case will now be taken up on March 14 again for further directions on the matter.

## SGPC to give Rs 20,000 per month honorarium to 9 Bandi Singhs serving long sentences: Dhami

**AMRITSAR:** The Shiromani Gurdwara Parbandhak Committee (SGPC) has decided to give Rs 20,000 per month as honorarium to 9 Bandi Singhs (Sikh prisoners) serving long sentences in different jails of the country. A decision has also been made to take up the issue of non-release of Sikh prisoners despite completion of their jail terms to the United Nations Organization (UNO) and the International Court of Justice (ICJ).

Speaking to the media after the meeting of the SGPC Executive Committee (EC) at SGPC office on Friday in Amritsar, SGPC President Harjinder Singh Dhami said that the government's injustice towards the Sikhs who have served jail terms for three decades is a major violation of human rights, and this voice will now be raised on the international platforms. He said that the EC has decided to give monthly honorarium of Rs 20,000 to



9 Sikh prisoners who have served long sentences and legal assistance as required. The 9 Sikh prisoners include Bhai Gurdeep Singh Khara, Prof Devinderpal Singh Bhullar, Bhai Balwant Singh Rajoana, Bhai Jagtar Singh Hawara, Bhai Jagtar Singh Tara, Bhai Lakhwinder Singh Lakha, Bhai Gurmeet Singh, Bhai Shamsher Singh and Bhai Paramjit Singh Bheora. He said among them, Bhai Rajoana is already being given this honorarium.

Dhmi said that since 1984, the SGPC has firmly stood with the struggling Sikhs and is committed to continue in future too. He informed

- HIGHLIGHTS**
- SGPC to give Rs 20,000 per month honorarium to 9 Bandi Singhs serving long sentences - Issue of Sikh prisoners to be taken up to UNO & International Court of Justice
  - SGPC decides to file writ petition against government's patronage of Ram Rahim

that the signature campaign started by the SGPC for the release of Sikh prisoners will be intensified and Sikh jathebandis, educational institutions, Singh Sabhas and people working for human rights will be taken along and this campaign will be taken from door to door.

## BJP is becoming the first choice of the people in Punjab: Ashwani Sharma

JAGMOHABN SINGH  
Amritsar

The two-day state executive of Bharatiya Janata Party Punjab began here today under the chairmanship of State BJP President Ashwani Sharma.

On the first day, the state executive was inaugurated by BJP National Vice President Soudan Singh, BJP Punjab in-charge Vijay Rupani, Co-in-charge Dr. Narendra Singh Raina and Organization General Secretary Srimanthari Srinivasulu by lighting the lamp and singing Vande Mataram.

Ashwani Sharma first presented the introductory message in the executive committee meeting. Vijay Rupani guided the present office bearers how to win the 13 Lok Sabha seats in Punjab. Thereafter, Dr. Subhash Sharma gave detailed infor-



mation about the Lok Sabha migration plan and the journey against drugs and corruption. In the second session of the executive, Organization General Secretary Srimanthari Sreenivasulu asked the present office bearers to complete the organization structure up to the booth level in their respective districts as soon as possible.

Addressing the executive meeting, Ashwani Sharma said that People of Punjab were eyeing on the Bharatiya Janata Party, because the people of Punjab now want their own development and that of the

state. He said that the Bharatiya Janata Party will contest all the upcoming civic elections in Punjab on its own and BJP workers have already entered the fray for this. He asked the BJP workers to raise the issues and problems being faced by the public more loudly and to take the people along with them to protest if the government or the administration didn't listen.

Sharma said that the Bharatiya Janata Party was going to begin a drive on war footing against drug and corruption throughout the Punjab to awaken the youth and public against drugs and to make Punjab drug-free. It will start from the month of March, which will continue till August. He said that the BJP was getting positive support in the cities as well as in the rural areas.

## Congress to launch 'Haath Se Haath Jodo Abhiyan' campaign in Haryana

SATISH HANDA

After Rahul Gandhi's 'Bharat Jodo Yatra' to be concluded at Srinagar in Jammu-Kashmir on January 31, 2023, Congress in Haryana is going to launch another campaign 'Haath Se Haath Jodo Abhiyan' in every village, block and district in the state led by senior party leaders in their area for a period of sixty days, probably in order to strengthen Congress network in Haryana state and prepare for coming 2024 polls, it was declared by HPCPC president Choudhary Uday bhan when Congress will also release a charge sheet against ruling BJP-JJP government in the country.

Information reveals, among those senior Congress leaders in Haryana state attending closing ceremony of 'Bharat Jodo Yatra' at Srinagar on January 31, 2023 include the names of former Chief Minister also leader of opposition in



Haryana Vidhan Sabha Bhupinder Singh Hooda, Congress General Secretary Randeep Singh Surjewala, Deependar Hooda MP, HPCPC President Choudhary Udaibhan and former HPCPC president Kumari Shelja. However, few MLAs in Haryana from Shelja's lobby are also joining closing ceremony of 'Bharat Jodo Yatra' at Srinagar. In order to give final shape to proposed 'Haath Se Haath Jodo Abhiyan' in Haryana state, earlier scheduled to commence from January 26, 2023 was delayed since most of the senior Congress leaders in the state are attending closing ceremony of 'Bharat Jodo Yatra' on January 31, 2023 at Srinagar as such proposed 'Haath Se Haath

Jodo Abhiyan' campaign will now commence in the state with effect from February 1, 2023. It cannot be denied that rift between the groups of senior Congress leaders in Haryana state is going on since past couple of years, rather increasing, although during a conference held at Ambala when 'Bharat Jodo Yatra' arrived all party leaders had assured Rahul Gandhi to join hands and strengthen party network in the state assuring congress victory in coming 2024 polls but it doesn't look so.

Information reveals, the senior Congress leaders as well as executive party presidents in Haryana state Ramkishan Gurjar, Shruti Choudhary, Suresh Matloda and Jitender Bhardwaj feel themselves neglected and not consulted while taking a decision as regard the party in the state since all decisions are taken only by Bhupinder Singh Hooda.

## Govts adopting different policy for minorities in country: Harjinder Singh Dhami

JAGMOHAN SINGH  
Amritsar

Shiromani Gurdwara Parbandhak Committee (SGPC) President Harjinder Singh Dhami here today objected to 40 day parole granted to Dera Sira head Gurmeet Ram Rahim, who is serving in jail under heinous charges of murder and rape. He said in a statement issued here today that if murderers and rapists can be left free in the society like this, then what is the difficulty in releasing the Bandi Singhs (Sikh prisoners) who struggled for Qaumi (community's) rights and interests. SGPC president said that the dual policy of the governments towards minorities is creating an environment of mistrust among Sikhs. He said that if Gurmeet Ram Rahim, accused of murder and rape, can come out for four times within a year, then why is the government not listening to the voice raised by the Sikh community for the release of Bandi Singhs.



# Punjab registers record increase in GST and excise revenue: Harpal Cheema

HOISTS THE TRICOLOUR ON 74TH REPUBLIC DAY, MANN GOVERNMENT TO FULFILL ALL PROMISES MADE TO PEOPLE

**AMRITSAR:** Remembering the freedom fighters and soldiers who laid down their lives for the freedom of the country on the occasion of 74th Republic Day, the Punjab Finance, Planning, Excise and Taxation Minister Advocate Harpal Singh Cheema said that the India has become biggest democracy of the world and we Indian are enjoying freedom only because of these freedom fighters and our soldiers who are guarding the borders of the nation. He said that on 26th January 1950, the Republic of India was established with the implementation of the Indian Constitution and we got the honour of becoming biggest democracy in the world. Addressing the residents of the district after the flag hoisting in the Tricolour here at Guru Nanak Stadium, Advocate Harpal Singh Cheema said that Chief Minister Bhagwant Mann led Punjab Government has taken many pro-people initiatives during its 10-month ten-



ure. He said that these initiatives included restoration of old pension for government employees, opening of Aam Aadmi clinics, recruitment in government jobs, war against corruption, Schools of Eminence, new initiatives for Punjabi language, conducting Khedan Wattan Punjab Dian, waiver of electricity bills upto 300 units per month, removal

of illegal encroachments from Panchayat lands, resumption of government bus services to Delhi Airport and establishment of new medical colleges. Referring to the efforts made to increase the revenue to ensure the welfare of the people of the state, Cheema said that the Punjab government has registered record increase of

24.5 percent in revenue from GST and 34 percent increase in Excise revenue. He said that the government has also waged war against corruption, which would continue until these menaces would not be completely eradicated. Interacting with media on this occasion, Cheema said that the introduction of Aam Aadmi clinics in the state has brought a revolution in the health sector. He said that more than 10 lakh people have availed free treatment in 100 such clinics opened so far. He said that Chief Minister Bhagwant Mann along with Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal would dedicate 400 more Aam Aadmi Clinics to the people of the state on January 27 from Amritsar. He said that every promise made by the Aam Aadmi Party to the people will be fulfilled.

He also announced a holiday in the schools across the district on January 27. Meanwhile, during the cultur-

al show on this occasion, Gidha and Bhangra were performed by the students of various schools. Tableaus showing government programs were presented by various departments. Parade Commander Virinder Singh Khosa led the march past. On this occasion, the district administration also honored the performing officers and employees of various departments. Deputy Commissioner Harpreet Singh Sudan honoured the chief guest with memento.

Prominent amongst others, Harpreet Kaur Randhawa, District and Sessions Judge, Jeevanjit Kaur, Dr. Ajay Gupta, Jaswinder Singh Ramdas, Jasbir Singh Sandhu, (All MLAs) Amardeep Singh Roy, ADGP, Dr. Jaskaran Singh, Police Commissioner, Jaspreet Singh, Chairman District Planning Board, Laxmikanta Chawla, Former Cabinet Minister, Dr. Gurpreet Kaur, Chairperson Red Cross were also present on this occasion.

## Previous BJP govt left debt of Rs 75,000 crore, says Himachal CM on statehood day

Extending greetings on the 53rd statehood day celebrations, Himachal Pradesh Chief Minister Sukhvinder Singh Sukhu on Wednesday said the previous BJP government left a debt of Rs 75,000 crore.

Besides, there is an arrear of Rs 4,430 crore of the employees, Rs 5,226 crore of pensioners and Rs 1,000 crore dearness allowance of both.

The Chief Minister said 900 institutions were opened by the BJP in the fag end of its tenure without any budgetary provision. This led to an additional burden of Rs 5,000 crore.

Also, approximately Rs 8,000 crore of National Pension System (NPS) is held up with the Central government. Despite all these challenges, the state government has fulfilled its commitment to restore the old pension scheme, benefiting 1.36 lakh employees, said the Chief Minister.

Speaking on the occasion of statehood day celebration here, the Chief Minister unfurled the National Flag and took the salute from contingents of police, home guards, NCC cadets and Scouts and Guides



in a parade led by DSP Ankit Sharma.

The Chief Minister said the people have contributed immensely in the development journey of the state. He also mentioned the contribution of the first Chief Minister, late Y.S. Parmar, in the progress of the state.

"It was on December 11, 2022, when the new government took over the reins of this hill state and from the very first day started to work for revamping the derailed system," said the Chief Minister.

As per the government's pledge for zero tolerance against corruption, stringent measures were being adopted to eliminate this social evil.

The suspension of Himachal Pradesh Staff Selection Commission, which was the hub of corruption and was selling jobs, was the first in this direction against corruption.

## Sukhbir Badal condemns parole given to convicted Gurmeet Ram Raheem



JAGMOHAN SINGH Amritsar

Shiromani Akali Dal (SAD) president Sukhbir Singh Badal today condemned the parole given to convicted Gurmeet Ram Raheem, saying repeated paroles were being given to Ram Raheem but justice was not being done with Bandi Singhs who were languishing in jails even after completion of their sentences.

In a statement issued here, the SAD President said "the need of the hour is to apply a healing touch to anguished Sikh hearts. Instead of doing this the governments are bending over backwards to please a rape and murder convict". He said this had only exposed the anti-Sikh intent of governments of the day.

The SAD president inducted BJP state Scheduled Caste wing vice president Rakesh Kumar Rinku along with hundreds of his supporters into the SAD on the occasion. He said Rinku's induction into the SAD had boosted the party in the Majha region and assured the leader due responsibility in the party.

Answering a query, he said instead of making meaningless statements chief minister Bhagwant Mann should first try to run the Meritorious Schools established by former chief minister Parkash Singh Badal which even AAP Governor Arvind Kejriwal had praised efficiently. "One cannot hope that the AAP government will open any Meritorious Schools. It is interested in cheap publicity only. See how it befooled Punjabis by turning Sewa Kendras established by the erstwhile SAD government into Mohalla Clinics. The move has not helped people as the Clinics are sans doctors and medicines".

## Congress never gave credit for freedom to others except itself: Vij

**AMBALA:** Haryana Home and Health Minister Anil Vij said that the Congress never gave credit for freedom to others except itself, till date they say 'Le di humein azadi bina khadg bina dhal, sabarmati ke sant tune kar diya kamal. Vij said that Sabarmati saint has done wonders and he salutes him, but by saying 'Bina Khadg Bina Dhal' we are insulting those who gave their sacrifices. While celebrating the birth anniversary of Netaji Subhash Chandra Bose at Netaji Subhash Chandra Bose Park in Ambala Cantonment today, Home Minister Anil Vij saluted Netaji by offering flowers on his 12 feet tall statue along with hundreds of workers. After this, during interacting with media persons, Home Anil Vij said that 26,000 soldiers of 'Azad Hind Fauj' were martyred during the occupation of Andaman and Nicobar. He said, when we say 'Bina Khadga Bina Dhal' then we are also insulting the sacrifices of Bhagat Singh, Rajguru, and Sukhdev.

## A man from Ludhiana tells CM would commit suicide if don't get justice

JAGMOHAN SINGH Amritsar

A man from Ludhiana created embarrassing situation when he shouted while sitting in the Public gathering about the corrupt officers in the presence of top AAP leadership including Punjab Chief Minister Bhagwant Mann, Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal, Rajya Sabha Member Ragav Chadha and senior state machinery who were here in the State level function was held to dedicate 500th Aam Aadmi Clinics in Punjab. The moment a turbaned man started shouting, police rushed to him and attempted to overpower. Bhagwant Mann who was watching all that intervened and asked security people to let this person come forward.

## 13 sugar mills in Haryana closed down due to farmers protest

SATISH HANDA

Thousands of labourers involved in crushing sugarcane in sugar mills have become idle in as many as 13 sugar mills in Haryana state, except sugar mill at Palwal since an indefinite strike called by the farmers demanding a hike in the sugar cane price by the government. According to the farmers they will not allow the crushing operations at sugar mills until the Haryana government increases the SAP to Rs 450 per quintal from the existing price Rs362. According to information, as a result of farmers strike crushing worth three lakh quintal sugarcane every day in sugar mills in the state has stopped, besides there is possibility of sugarcane get dried in the absence of crushing.

There are 14 sugar mills in the state which include three private owned mills, 10 cooperative mills controlled by the government and one sugar mill run by HAFED of



these 13 sugar mills are lying closed due to farmers strike since after January 19, 2023 causing heavy financial loss to these mills. According to the Haryana Sugarfed, per day crushing capacity of cooperative sugar mills is 2.54 lakh quintals, besides the crushing capacity of private mills around 1.70 lakh quintals as such large number of migrant labourers from U.P and Bihar working in these sugar mills, loading-unloading sugarcane and working in agriculture fields are now sitting jobless and many of them has started shifting to their native towns in search of work. According to information more

than 40000 labourers have become jobless due to farmers strike.

According to a spokesperson of agriculture department, farmers are getting Rs 362 per quintal sugarcane and demand increase in the prices but it is difficult to increase the price of sugarcane since most of the sugar mills in the state are running on loss and to run these mills government is paying subsidy amounting up to Rs 500 crore every year to such sugar mills. However, there is a proposal to install plants in the sugar mills to manufacture Ethanol and other sugar products in these sugar mills to compensate losses in sugar production.

## 48 corrupt, non-performer employees expelled from jobs by Haryana govt

SATISH HANDA

As many as 48 officers, employees working in government offices in Haryana state have been either expelled from jobs by Manohar government in the state in past eight years. Such officers, employees were either found involved in corrupt practices or failed to perform desired services. Talking to media persons Haryana Chief Minister Manohar Lal Khattar said that ruling government in the state will take similar action against corrupt and non-performers in future also and asked to take pre-retirement from the services in case between age 50-55 or already served for a period of minimum for 20 years. He said, there are nearly 2000 corrupt or non-performer employees in



the state including officers in the hit list of state government either to be expelled from the services or asked to take pre-mature retirement since there is no place for them in the state government's zero tolerance policy against corruption and transparency in working.

According to information, Haryana State Government, too, following the footsteps of the Central Government terminated officers or employees of the age group between 50 to 55 years in last eight years and has decided

to adopt similar policy in the state and taking action against officers as well as junior employees involved in corruption, negligent in duty and in incorrect practices in their working, may either be expelled from the job or asked to take pre-mature retirement. Among those 48 employees expelled from jobs were working in the offices of Haryana Government's various departments, boards, and corporations. Chief Minister said, the government keeps evaluating the performance of officers and employees from time to time after reviewing their service records and the state government will be more vigilant in this regard in future to evaluate the performance of each employee including officers.

## Chandigarh administrator opens north India's largest floating solar project

**CHANDIGARH:** Chandigarh Administrator and Punjab Governor Banwarilal Purohit on Monday inaugurated north India's largest floating solar project of 2000kWp here.

The 2000kWp floating solar power plant at Water Works in Sector 39 has been commissioned at a cost of Rs 11.70 crore. He also opened the 500kWp floating solar power plant installed over the Dhanas lake here. It was constructed at a cost of Rs 3.34 crore.

Both the projects have been designed and executed by CREST (Chandigarh Renewable Energy and Science and Technology Promotion Society) and will generate a minimum of 35 lakh units (kWh) per year with 20 per cent module efficiency, an official statement said.

The administrator appreciated the efforts of CREST and the Forest and Wildlife Department for developing and beautifying the Dhanas Lake with fountains, making it another tourist destination. He also urged the residents



to install rooftop solar power on their buildings so as to tap the solar energy.

Chandigarh MP Kirron Kher expressed happiness with the commissioning of the solar plant along with the fountains that have not only beautified the lake but also help creating awareness on need to tap the solar energy.

Dharam Pal, Advisor to the Administrator, appreciated the efforts of CREST on the inauguration of the unique floating projects, one of its kind in north India, and hoped that with this pace Chandigarh can achieve the target of the government of India to become 100 per cent renewable energy in the future.

## SGPC to reach door to door for release of Sikh prisoners : Grewal

**SIGNATURE CAMPAIGN TO BE INTENSIFIED BY PRACHARAK GROUPS IN VILLAGES & EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTIONS**

JAGMOHAN SINGH Amritsar

The signature campaign of Shiromani Gurdwara Parbandhak Committee (SGPC) will intensify its drive for the release of Bandi Singhs (Sikh prisoners) as the pracharak (preacher) groups will take this campaign to village level. This signature campaign was started on December 1, 2022, under which, lakhs of proformas have been filled by the people.

Presently, the SGPC is getting the proformas demanding release of Sikh prisoners filled at about 90 centres in the historical Gurdwara Sahibs.

To intensify this campaign, the pracharak groups will take this campaign to the village level besides educational institutions,



stated in a release issued here today. SGPC general secretary Gurcharan Singh Grewal said that although the SGPC had been raising its voice for release of Bandi Singhs through various means, it is now being taken forward with a motive to develop the issue as a mass movement under the signature campaign. He said although the legal procedure is also being adopted, taking forward the people's sentiment to the governments is extremely important.

He said accordingly, a signature campaign was started,

under which more than 10 lakh proformas have been filled so far. He said that now this campaign will be intensified in its final phase and students would be made a part of it in educational institutions. Apart from this, the process has been started to fill the proforma at the village level. He said that the devotees are enthusiastically participating in the signature campaign centers at Gurdwara Sahibs, but many people who could not come to the Gurdwaras and fill the proforma, efforts are being made to make them a part of it.

## SGPC blames Punjab Government for ignoring Punjabi language

**SGPC BLAMES PUNJAB GOVERNMENT FOR IGNORING PUNJABI LANGUAGE**

**AMRITSAR:** Shiromani Gurdwara Parbandhak Committee (SGPC) President Harjinder Singh Dhama has blamed Punjab Government for allegedly ignoring Punjabi language from the syllabus of the examination to be conducted for the recruitment process of clerk post through the Subordinate Service Selection Board (SSSB), Punjab.

In a statement issued here today, he said that the Aam Aadmi Party (AAP)-led government of Punjab is on the path of destroying the state's mother tongue, heritage and culture. "This is an action affecting the youth of Punjab, which has also opened the way for the recruitment of non-Punjabis, thus snatching the rights of Punjabis", said Dhama.

SGPC President said that Punjab Chief Minister Bhagwant Singh Mann is only tricking the public by talking about implementing Punjabi at all levels, while the reality is that by ignoring the Punjabi language, the present Punjab government led by him is doing every official work in English.

"The example of this practice is several orders issued by Bhagwant Singh Mann in the past. Whenever they issue any announcement, official order or circular, it is issued in English language. Punjabi language is being deliberately neglected by the Punjab government under the influence of Delhi people", said Harjinder Singh Dhama.

He said that the SSSB, Punjab's action to exclude Punjabi from the syllabus of the main paper for the recruitment of clerk post is an expression of AAP government's real intention towards Punjab, from which Bhagwant Singh Mann cannot run away.

## 2-day state executive of BJP concludes

JAGMOHAN SINGH Amritsar

The two-day state executive of BJP Punjab, organized here under the chairmanship of Bharatiya Janata Party Punjab State President Ashwani Sharma, concluded here today.

Punjab BJP chief Ashwani Sharma in his address to the office bearers said that none of the opposition parties including the current Aam Aadmi Party government of Punjab have done nothing for the development of the State except mere hollow announcements and fake promises which were never turned into reality.

He blamed the Aam Aadmi Party government for exploiting the people of Punjab and crushing democracy. The Bhagwant Mann government has created an atmosphere of



anarchy in Punjab. This was a very insensitive government, which has nothing to do with the people of the state and their sentiments.

He said that the Mann government has recently announced to accept the demands of farmers' organizations and other organizations but unfortunately no notification has been issued in this regard, resulting farmers' organizations and other organizations still continuing their protest on roads against the Mann government. He alleged that the people of Punjab were fed up with the misrule of the Mann government.

## Two highly sensitive cases of sex exploitation alleged in a week in Haryana

SATISH HANDA

Two sex exploitation allegations by the females including by a athlete and another by students of Kalpana Chawla Government Medical College Kamal have been reported to media in Haryana state within a week, in which the victims have demanded immediate action against alleged accused at the time when large number of wrestlers were protesting against sexual harassment by heads of sports federations at Jantar Mantar New Delhi demanding justice.

Recently in a press conference at Chandigarh, a former international level player in weight lifting Kavita Dalal told media persons that she had left the career in weight lifting in year 2008 when faced severe mental harassment by then president of



weight lifting federation, since she refused to dance at his tune and she was compelled to jump into the 'Akhada' to start fresh career in world wrestling entertainment. When asked why she remained silent for such career in sports and her dreams would have remained unfulfilled.

Expressing surprise over the attitude of organizers of sports federations a long period of 14 years, she told that in case she would had raised voice against such black sheep her parents would have not allowed her to adopt. Kavita said that when they do not spare national, international level athletes what

to speak of exploitation by these people towards fresh players willing to join career in sports. Kavita expressed surprise over the appointment of political people in sports federations who are unaware of even ABC of sports. They are often seen exploiting young sports persons and start harassing female players refuse dance at their tunes. Kavita said, there are incidents when young players were drugged, trapped in Dope Test and thrown out of sports field when they opened their mouth against such elements.

In another recent case reported at Kalpana Chawla Government Medical College at Karnal where a protest is going on by the female students of B.Sc Operation Theatre Technician 2022-23 batch at present blaming sexually exploited by OT Master also allegedly in-

olved in passing vulgar remarks on female students, mentally exploiting them, blackmailing and luring students to get them job at PGI Chandigarh in case they respond him and in-spite of complaints to college management no action was against him as such parents of large number of students has stopped sending their wards to attend college.

When matter was taken up with Seema Trikha chairperson of 9-members committee investigating the case, she listened to the grievances by complainant students in a close room and assured them justice. Sources reveal, the role of senior officers of college management also seems to be doubtful who did not bothered to resolve this highly sensitive issue. Surprisingly, media persons were allowed to see students or have comments of college management in this regard.

## Congress leaders should wear two different uniforms to save people being confused: Vij

SATISH HANDA Ambala

While addressing media persons here at his camp office Haryana Home and Health Minister Anil Vij on the subject of making different statements by Congress leaders said that Congress party leaders should wear two different color uniforms so that people should know that it is his personal statement or an official statement leaving no confusion in their mind. During an interacting with media persons, Home Minister said that the Congress party should fix a two-color uniform for its workers and leaders when they are making a personal statement should wear uniform of one color and when they are making an official statement of the party should wear uniform of another color so that there is no confusion and Jairam Ramesh as well as Rahul Gandhi did not have to give an explanation after Digvijay Singh made an anti-national statement. Significantly, Congress leader Digvijay had raised questions on the Pulwama attack and surgical strike by giving anti-national statements, later Congress leader Rahul Gandhi and Congress General Secretary Jairam Ramesh distanced themselves from these statements terming them as personal statements of their leaders.





# Despite plenty of ammo against govt, divided Oppn may fritter away Budget session

The first test of opposition unity will be on Monday when the Bharat Jodo Yatra will conclude in Srinagar, where the Congress has invited at least 24 political parties to join the hoisting of the national flag. So far many of them have either skipped the yatra altogether, or distanced themselves from it.

The second test will be in the budget session of Parliament. Will the Congress be able to lead the charge of the Opposition, which has so much ammunition to fire at the government, or will they collectively flounder as a result of the disunity within them. The Congress has made a long list of issues to corner the government with -- from the Chinese presence on the LAC to inflation, rising national debt and unemployment, and the damaging Hidenburg report --

but on many of these issues, the other political parties are silent.

The JD(U) has sent a letter to the Congress's Mallikarjun Kharge that they are unable to attend as there is no clarity on the SP, BSP as SP leader Akhilesh Yadav chose to skip the BJJ and join the BRS rally of the Telangana Chief Minister recently.

However leaders of the Kashmir based parties have walked with Rahul Gandhi and some have shown solidarity. The Congress wants to demonstrate the strength of the opposition in Srinagar and subsequently in the Parliament as without a united opposition the Congress can't corner the BJP in both the Houses due to the lesser numbers. Also, the government has played it smart by giving the late SP leader and Akhilesh's father Mulayam Singh Yadav



the Padma Vibhushan.

However the Congress is undeterred and is attacking the government with renewed energy after the successful Bharat Jodo Yatra which has put its leader Rahul Gandhi first among the opposition. On the Hidenburg report, the Congress

will press it in Parliament as the party alleged that there is public money involved in it. Party General Secretary Jairam Ramesh said, "The allegations require serious investigation by those who are responsible for the stability and security of the Indian financial system, viz.

the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) and the Securities and Exchange Board of India (SEBI)."

The Congress picked up the issue of losing 26 patrol points at the LAC, and demanded a discussion on it in Parliament during the budget session.

Citing the three-day annual DGPs-IGPs conference in which a detailed security research paper was submitted for discussion, the Congress alleged that it revealed shocking facts about the rank apathy of the Modi government to China's illegal occupation of India's territory in the region. Media cell chairman Pawan Khera had said, "India lost access to 26 out of 65 Patroling Points (PP), which was not the case before May 2020, and the subsequent Galwan clash where 20 Bravehearts sacrificed their lives."

## BJP only national party in India, says JP Nadda



BJP President J.P. Nadda on Monday said that his party is the only national party left in India as all others, including the Congress and several regional outfits, have become "family parties".

Addressing the BJP Rajasthan State Working Committee meeting here, he attacked the Congress over its Bharat Jodo Yatra, alleging that those who raised slogans against India are walking in it. Nadda also said that in 2023, the BJP will form a government in Rajasthan with a three-fourth majority under the leadership of Prime Minister Narendra Modi.

Congratulating the state leadership and their entire team for the successful organisation of Jan Aakrosh Yatra and Jan Aakrosh meetings, he said: "We have to maintain this mission and continuity of such campaigns."

Nadda claimed that the condition of Rajasthan is the worst under the Ashok Gehlot-led Congress government under which the graph of crime against women, and Dalits and cyber crime is rising rapidly, while the continuous increase in the prices of electricity, petrol and diesel left the common man of the state troubled.

He said that the BJP was "not just a political organisation but also a party working for social concerns with human

aspect and the whole of India and the whole world saw the social face of the party during the Corona period as it served food, ration, water etc. to the needy across the country".

"Along with politics, the social side of the BJP also came in front of the whole world through service. Our party is a party with ideas, we work with politics with mission, politics with ideology, service to the country, party and ideology are paramount for us.

"There is democracy in our party and we work for the strength of the cadre in a democratic way, BJP is the only national party, all other parties have become family parties, Congress is completely finished, and regional parties have also become family parties," he claimed. Attacking the Congress over its Bharat Jodo Yatra, Nadda alleged: "Congress doesn't know whom they are uniting, or breaking, in the entire journey of Rahul Gandhi. The same people who shouted slogans against India and made conspiracies against India are walking besides him."

He said that the Narendra Modi government gave 22 medical colleges to Rajasthan, while the Delhi-Mumbai Expressway will spur development of all its districts, and through the Har Ghar Nal and Har Ghar Jal Abhiyan, it has ensured that pure drinking water is delivered to crores of households in the country, including Rajasthan.

BJP national General Secretary and state incharge Arun Singh, state chief Satish Poonia, national Vice President Vasundhara Raje, national Secretary and state co-in charge Vijaya Rahatkar, state General Secretary, Organisation, Chandrashekhar, and other senior leaders were present.

## Pandals in GIS-2023 to be named after sages



Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath has decided to name various pandals being put up at the Global Investors Summit-2023 (GIS-2023) after prominent sages of India.

The GIS-2023 is scheduled to be organised at the Vrindavan Yojana in Lucknow from February 10 to 12. Prime Minister Narendra Modi will inaugurate the programme on the first day, which will be followed by discussions to be held by different departments at four pandals(enclosures). According to the official spokesman, all the exhibition halls have been already named after major rivers.

Yogi Adityanath has named the main pandal of GIS-23 as Maharishi Valmiki. The second, third, fourth and fifth pandals have been named after Maharishi Vyas, Dadhichi, Bhardwaj and Maharishi Vashishtha. A discussion on how Uttar Pradesh is spreading wings in the world in the field of designing and manufacturing would be organised at Maharishi Vyas pandal on February 10. A discussion on 'Power House of White Goods Manufacturing' will take place at Maharishi Dadhichi pandal. The issue of progress in the tourism sector will be discussed at Maharishi Bhardwaj pandal. A talk on renewable energy will be held at Maharishi Vashishth Hall. There will be sessions on food processing, ODP (one district one product), Defence Corridor and the NRI Award and cultural programmes.

## PM in Rajasthan, will offer prayers at Malaseri Dungri



Prime Minister Narendra Modi will be visiting Malaseri Dungri in Rajasthan's Bhilwara on Saturday. He will come to Udaipur, from where he will take a helicopter to Malaseri Dungri and will have a darshan of Lord Devnarayan in temple premises. "Here he will give purnahuti in havan and will plant a neem sapling which will be followed by a public meeting," said Union minister Arjun Ram Meghwal. Meghwal said that before PM Modi, no Prime Minister ever visited Malaseri Dungri. Meghwal said that this visit of PM Modi is absolutely religious. The PM has a visionary approach to preserve the religious heritage of major places of the country. Modi, as per the schedule, will reach Dabok airport at 10.30 a.m., and at 10.35 a.m., he will depart for Malaseri via helicopter. At 11.25 a.m. he will reach Malaseri and he will be here from 11.30 a.m. to 12.55 p.m. He will offer prayers and will address a huge gathering during this phase before leave for Delhi.

## Tripura: CPI-M MLA, Trinamool leader join BJP



In a development that could provide a major boost to the ruling BJP in Tripura ahead of the February 16 Assembly polls, Communist Party of India-Marxist (CPI-M) MLA Moboshar Ali and Trinamool Congress leader Subal Bhowmik on Friday joined the saffron party in the national capital. Ali and Bhowmik joined the BJP at the party headquarters in Delhi in presence of Tripura Chief Minister Manik Saha, state party president Rajib Bhattacharjee, and the party's spokesperson and northeastern states' in-charge Sambit Patra. BJP sources also said that senior Congress leader Billal Mia and some other leaders are also likely to join the saffron party. Mia, however, denied the possibility of joining the BJP. Ali was elected to the Tripura Assembly from Kailasahar constituency in northern Tripura in 2018, while Mia won the Boxanagar seat in western Tripura twice, in 1988 and 1998. Both Ali and Mia are senior leaders of their respective parties. The Trinamool Congress removed Subal Bhowmik from the post of Tripura unit state president on August 24 last year, but he was in the party. Bhowmik, a former Congress MLA, joined the Trinamool Congress in July 2021. He had jumped ship from the BJP to the Congress in 2019. "The party is in talks with a few other CPI-M and Congress leaders to join the party," a Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) leader said.

## Punjab Police in joint operation with BSF shoot-down hi-tech drone loaded with 5kg heroin in Amritsar

IT IS SIXTH SUCH DRONE RECOVERED IN LESS THAN TWO MONTHS, SAYS DGP GAURAV YADAV

JAGMOHAN SINGH Amritsar



covered in less than two months.

He said that this hybrid 6-winged drone, worth Rs 10 lakhs, is assembled with parts manufactured in USA and China, and was equipped with hi-tech features includ-

ing long-lasting battery backup and infrared-based night vision camera and GPS system.

DGP said that after noticing the drone movement in Indo-Pak border on the intervening night of Saturday and Sunday, Po-

lice teams from Amritsar Rural district immediately shared the pin-pointed inputs with the BSF and jointly conducted an intensive search operation in the area of Village Kakkar, which is just 2kms away from the Indo-Pak border. He said that the Police teams had fired at least 12 burst-fires from AK-47 to shoot-down the drone. Sharing more details, Senior Superintendent of Police (SSP) Amritsar Rural Swapn Sharma said that the Police have rounded-up two persons from the spot when they were trying to escape. Investigations are on to ascertain the identity of the Pak smugglers, who sent the consignment via drone, and also their Indian associates, who were to receive this air-dropped consignment of heroin, he added.

## TRIPURA ASSEMBLY ELECTIONS

## BJP CEC meets to finalise candidates, PM present



NEW DELHI: The BJP's Central Election Committee is meeting at the party's headquarters here to finalise candidates for the February 16 Tripura Assembly elections.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi also reached the party office for the meeting, which will be chaired by party President J.P. Nadda.

Home Minister Amit Shah, Defence Minister Rajnath Singh, Tripura Chief Minister Manik Saha, Deputy Chief Minister Jishnu Dev Verma, Union Minister and state MP Pratima Bhowmik, CEC member Om Mathur, former Tripura Chief Minister Biplab Deb, Union Ministers Bhupendra Yadav, Satyanarayan Jatiya, and Sarbananda Sonowal, Iqbal Singh Lalpura, and Tripura election incharge Dr. Mahesh Sharma are also participating.

According to sources, most of the 60 candidates' names will be finalised and announced after the meeting. "Strategy will be made to win the election with a majority, and there will be brainstorming on Meghalaya and Nagaland Assembly elections too," a source said.

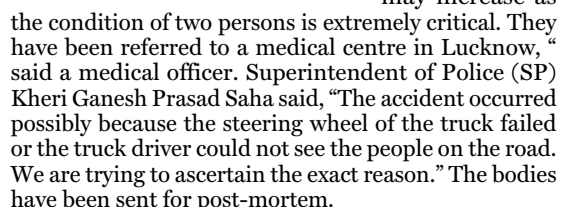
While elections in Tripura will be held on February 16, Meghalaya and Nagaland will go to polls on February 27. The results of all three will be declared on March 2.

## Five killed as truck ploughs into crowd in UP's Lakhimpur Kheri

Five persons were killed while several were reportedly injured after a speeding truck lost its balance and rammed into a group of people who had gathered on road here to rescue a biker, who was hit by a speeding car.

The incident took place late on Saturday night near Pangi Khurd village under the jurisdiction of Lakhimpur Sadar Kotwali police circle. Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath has expressed condolences at the loss of

lives and instructed District Magistrate Mahendra Bahadur Singh to ensure best possible treatment of the survivors. "The death toll may increase as the condition of two persons is extremely critical. They have been referred to a medical centre in Lucknow," said a medical officer. Superintendent of Police (SP) Kheri Ganesh Prasad Saha said, "The accident occurred possibly because the steering wheel of the truck failed or the truck driver could not see the people on the road. We are trying to ascertain the exact reason." The bodies have been sent for post-mortem.



## Have come to seek blessings of Lord Devnarayan, his devotees: PM

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Saturday attended the birth anniversary celebrations of Lord Devnarayan, the folk deity of Gujjars, at Malaseri Dungri in Bhilwara.

Addressing a gathering after darshan on 1111th birth anniversary of Lord Devnarayan, Modi said that he does not leave any chance when Lord Devnarayan calls him, that is why he was present. "No Prime Minister has come here, I have come with full devotion as a traveller like you to seek blessings," he stated.

"I also had the good fortune to make ahuti in the Yajnasala. It is also a matter of good luck for me that a common man like me has got the virtue of coming among you today

and receiving the blessings of Lord Devnarayan and his devotees," Modi said.

The Prime Minister said, "We Indians are proud of our thousands of years old history, culture and civilization. Many civilizations of the world ended in time as they could not adapt itself with the changes. Many attempts were made to break India geographically, socially and culturally, but no force could destroy India."

Participating in the programme on 1111th birth anniversary of Lord Devnarayan, Modi can also announce the Devnarayan Corridor.

The people of Gujjar community settled in nine states of the country have reached here since Friday night. Around



3 lakh people hailing from Rajasthan, Gujarat, Punjab, Haryana, Delhi, Himachal, Jammu-Kashmir and Madhya Pradesh are attending the programme.

In view of Modi's pro-

gramme, security agencies and police have converted the Asind area into a fortress. For the security here, the Central Reserve Police Force of all the surrounding districts including Bhilwara has

been deployed in Asind. More than 7,000 policemen are at standby. Malaseri Dungri, situated in Bhilwara district, has a famous temple of Lord Devnarayan. About 12 kms away from Asind town in Bhilwara district, Malaseri Dungri - being the birth place of Lord Devnarayan - holds great religious importance for the Gujjar community. Modi is the chief guest at the ceremony commemorating 'Avataram Mahotsav' of Lord Devnarayan in Bhilwara. Devnarayan, born in Malaseri in the 10th century, is believed to be an incarnation of Lord Vishnu. It is believed that in Malaseri Dungri of Asind area of Bhilwara district, Lord Devnarayan incarnated on a lotus flower.

## Cyber criminals syndicate operating from China and Dubai unearthed, had cheated 11,000

NEW DELHI: Delhi Police has unearthed an international gang of cyber crooks based in China, and Dubai, and a mastermind in Georgia, who have defrauded 11,000 people on the pretext of providing online work from home jobs in Amazon, an official said on Friday.

The gang duped people of crores of rupees on the pretext of providing online jobs. Police have so far arrested three people in separate raids conducted at Delhi, Gurugram and Fatehabad (Haryana) in this connection.

The accused have been identified as Satish Yadav, 36, Abhishek Garg, 40, and Sandeep Mahla.

Deputy Commissioner of Police, Outer North, Devesh Kumar Mahla, said the investigation done so far indicated that Chinese cyber criminals have developed a module to cheat people looking for online work from home jobs or part time jobs as Chinese loan fraud are now declining due to action by agencies and awareness among people.

"A complaint was received by Delhi Police in which a woman stated that she was cheated of Rs 1.18 lakh by some unknown scammers in the garb of providing online part-time jobs in Amazon.



In the complaint, the woman stated that it is a well drafted big scam being run by some unknown criminals posing as Amazon company. After ascertaining the facts, the police registered a case of cheating," he said.

During investigation it was revealed that the telegram ID used by the scammers was being operated from Beijing, and the WhatsApp number used to defraud the victim by convincing her to invest into a fake Amazon site was also found being operated from outside India.

The police then wrote an email to the NPCI and Kotak Mahindra bank seeking beneficiary details of the suspected transactions and it was re-

vealed that a shell firm account had been used to accumulate money from victims.

"During the examination of details received from the bank, it was found that a total of Rs 5.17 crore was credited in a single day. In further money trail, it was revealed that the whole amount was siphoned further through 7 different firms. That siphoning of money has been done to foreign accounts through crypto currency," the DCP said.

The official said the technical investigation finally led them to Satish Yadav, who disclosed the name of another accused Garg. The third accused Mahla was arrested after his account was found involved in siphoning the money through

RazorPay to a fraudster sitting abroad.

The DCP said that fake websites are created in such a way that they appear like genuine Amazon websites and one can get deceived easily. Websites are generally developed from China.

As per police, promotions are being done on social media platforms like Instagram, Facebook, YouTube with posts of handsome earnings to lure aspirants/job seekers and they get millions of paid likes and ratings and reviews through digital marketing so that victims fell prey to this fraud.

Artificial intelligence is also used to pop them up before people on their screen finding online job or work from home.

The scammers reach victims through WhatsApp automatically or in some cases, victims approach themselves. Victims are convinced with fake screenshots of WhatsApp chat with employees earning good money and well-crafted creative chats.

To keep victims in darkness, the cyber-criminals have developed a "fool-proof" procedure like genuine companies use to run their organisation, eg providing a tutor to teach them how to work for which Rs 200 is charged. Any aspirant will pay such a petty amount to get a job with ease, police said.

Victims are asked to create a work ID on the website. Wallets are designed like Amazon where users can see various options like balance, tasks, order, withdrawal, selling/flagging products, they said.

Then users are assigned with the task of selling or purchasing products for the company. Users get carried away when they see that products have been sold out and money reflects as balance in their wallet but in actual, they are tricked by the criminals who have complete control over the website, and they can make any modifications in users accounts, police warned, adding that these websites are operated from China.



## Faltering global economies hit Indian exports

Last year was bad, but December 2022 had marked the steepest fall in two years for India's goods exports, with products worth \$34.5 billion shipped out — 12.2% lower than a year ago. This was the second time in three months that shipments dropped year-on-year and top Commerce Ministry officials sought to calm nerves by citing the global headwinds that were posing challenges for Indian merchandise. These include the clouds of recession blowing through Europe and the U.S., the COVID-19 situation in China and a reversion towards protectionism in some markets. To be clear, a high base effect also played a role in exaggerating the year-on-year export dip in December. Amid the ongoing tumultuous times, a month-on-month reading of export trends is perhaps a better way to gauge the situation. For now, December's export numbers, even if lifted by the last batches of pre-holiday festive shipments reaching their destined shores, hold up well on this front vis-à-vis October and November's initial trade estimates. The other silver lining is that imports also contracted 3.5% in December, the first such instance since November 2020, although they remained flat sequentially at around \$58.2 billion. For the first nine months of 2022-23, India's goods exports are still 9.1% higher than a year ago, slightly lower than the 11.1% rise recorded till November 2022. Some agencies expect the global recession to hit demand for Indian goods far harder in the current quarter so much so that the full year could still end up with a shrinkage in exports. With China reopening, competition is expected to intensify even as demand shrinks. Some recent government moves such as fixing glitches in a duty remission scheme for exports and lifting curbs on iron ore shipments have helped, but more macro- and swifter micro-policy actions are warranted to keep the export engine chugging.

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"Being motivated costs you nothing, but can get you everything."  
-Murray Newlands

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## THE FINANCIAL WORLD

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DR P S VOHRA

## Current Inflation figures are not rational

Current Inflation data is providing a breath of fresh air to the Indian economy as both the Consumer Price Index (CPI) and Wholesale Price Index (WPI), have dropped down to low level of 6 percent after a long time. The drop in CPI is seen for the first time since January 2022. Presently WPI is at the level of 5.85 percent as compared to 8.39 percent during the same time last year in 2021. After the release of these figures, it has become interesting to discuss if an Indian consumer has started getting some real relief from the ever-increasing inflation? Or is it just a game of numbers?

Certainly this question is very logical and its solution can be obtained only through analysis. On the face of it, it is fair to say that if there has been a decline in the figures, then surely there must have been some major financial factors behind it. Also, in this context, the changes being made in the monetary policies continuously by the Reserve Bank of India for a long time has also played a major role. It should be noted that during the current financial year, the repo rate has been increased 4 times so far to control the liquidity. However, its direct impact is to control the purchasing power of the consumer, which is in negative trend in terms of economic growth. On the other hand, it is also a fact that the economic benefit of the drop in these latest figures of the index of inflation is not directly seen in the life of the common man on a very large scale.

It is very important to clarify that in the economic life of a common man, the inflation rate data of Consumer Price Index (CPI) is more important than the WPI. Because the change in retail prices of different types of goods is measured at different levels and the National Statistics Office (NSO) publishes this. In this context, it is also very important to point out that



both Wholesale Price Index and Consumer Price Index will always complement each other, is not necessary.

In the present times, it is significant that the drop in both is recorded equally. At the global level these days, due to the change in interest policies by the American Fed, the comparatively stronger dollar has weakened the currencies of all the Countries and as a result, the fear of global economic recession is everywhere. Its effect is visible somewhere on the reduction in the inflation figures of WPI. Supporting to the facts of decline in CPI is due to the decrease in the prices of vegetables and fruits these days. The importance of food and beverages are relatively very high in the basket of 6 levels of CPI inflation. With the onset of winter season, the arrival of vegetables and fruits has suddenly very much increased. As a result there is a decrease in the prices and hence, the rate of CPI in the month of November was 5.88 percent. However, the increase in the prices of various pulses, spices and milk shows its own logic in this regard.

The Consumer Price Index definitely presents the impact of inflation in the

life of the common man in a very rational way, but it is a great irony that, in the present time for assessing the consumer's purchase pattern base year is the year 2011-12. Has there been no change in the mindset of the Indian consumer in the last 10 years? It should be noted that the National Statistics Office was to determine the criteria of various levels of the consumer's purchasing power in the year 2017-18, which has not happened yet, and for this reason even today, the rate of inflation is being calculated on the basis of 10 years old criteria which seems completely impractical and also raises a question on the thinking that how the reduction in the rate of CPI is providing relief to the common man from inflation?

Above all it is important to understand that the Consumer Price Index is a very elaborated criteria for calculating the rate of inflation. In this index, the mindset of a rural consumer and an urban consumer for the purchase of different items is seen. Apart from this, the difference in purchasing mindset of rural and urban consumers in different states of India can also be noticed and understood from this index.

At present, the inflation rate of rural areas in 16 states is higher than urban areas, which seems to be a surprising fact but it is a reality. Apart from this, the consumer price index at the national level has been recorded less than 6 percent but in some states like Telangana, Madhya Pradesh, Haryana and Andhra Pradesh it is currently quite high. Currently the CPI in Telangana is currently 7.89 percent, but it did not have much negative impact on the average consumer price index of all the states of the country because Telangana's weightage in the average of all states is only 3.5 percent. The highest significance or weightage in the rate of inflation of the Consumer Price Index is in the states of Maharashtra and Uttar Pradesh. It is clear from this that if there is an increase or decrease in the prices of food and beverages in urban or rural areas of Maharashtra or Uttar Pradesh, then its huge impact can be seen on the inflation rate of the country. Is it rational?

On the other hand, the Reserve Bank of India, is continuously changing the rates of interest so that the purchasing power of the consumer remains in control. At the initial level, it seems to be a necessary step, but on the basis of economic analysis, it is also essential to understand that the increase in the repo rate increases the "EMI" or monthly installment of the financial loan, whose economic burden comes on very common consumer. Therefore, it is probably not wrong for a common man to think that changes in inflation data do not affect him much. In reality it is a game of numbers.

But it certainly seems logical that both CPI and WPI dropping below 6 per cent indicates a boom in the third quarter GDP rate of Indian economy which can be seen in the time to come.

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

### TIKENDER SINGH PANWAR REMINDS ABOUT THE FLAWS IN THE COUNTRY'S URBANISATION POLICIES



## India's policy paradigm



A report by the World Bank, released in November last year, on financing India's urban infrastructure needs, focuses on private investments ameliorating urban problems. The push to attract private capital, since the 1990s, followed by the urban reforms under the United Progressive Alliance I regime, the Smart City mission, and now this report, continues to plague India's policy paradigm in the urban sector.

So, has the reform process really been able to attract private capital to urban infrastructure? After three decades of reforms, urban finance predominantly comes from the government. Of the finances needed to fund urban capital expenditures, 48%, 24% and 15% are derived from the central, State, and city governments, respectively. Public-private partnership projects contribute 3% and commercial debt 2%.

In the last few years, various reports have estimated a huge demand for funding urban infrastructure; for example, the Isher Judge Ahluwalia report says that by 2030, nearly 39.2 lakh crore would be required. Likewise, the 11th Plan puts forth estimates of 1,29,337 crore for four basic services, Rs 1,32,590 crore for urban transport and Rs 1,32,590 crore for housing. A McKinsey

report on urbanisation has a figure of \$1.2 trillion, or Rs 90 lakh crore.

### World Bank estimates

The World Bank estimates that nearly \$840 billion (Rs 70 lakh crore) would be needed for investment in urban India to meet the growing demands of the population, and \$55 billion would be required annually. The flagship programmes of the

government, the Smart City mission, the Atal Mission for Rejuvenation and Urban Transformation (AMRUT), the Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana (PMAY), etc., are not more than Rs 2 lakh crore (that too for a period of five years). So, how will such a gap between demand and supply be matched?

The core idea of the report and the solutions suggested include "improving the fiscal base and creditworthiness of the Indian

cities. Cities must institute a buoyant revenue base and be able to recover the cost of providing its services". In simpler terms, it means increasing property taxes, user fees and service charges to name a few.

This report already points out that nearly 85% of government revenue is from the cities. This means that urban citizens are contributing large revenues even as the World Bank report's emphasis is on the levying of more burdens in the form of user charges on utilities, etc. But the point is even by enhancing the tax base, will it be sufficient to meet the rising demands of urban infrastructure in the cities?

### The answer is that it will not.

The basic problem with this report and other reports drawn up in a similar fashion is that they are made using a top to bottom approach, with too much of a focus on technocentric solutions using very high capital-intensive technologies.

For the urban context, plans must be made from below by engaging with the people and identifying their needs.

Tikender Singh Panwar is a former Deputy Mayor, Shimla, and an urban specialist.  
Views are personal.

### BOOKS: REVIEW

## New book tracks the concept of democracy since its beginning

From the popular assemblies of Syria-Mesopotamia and the Indian subcontinent to present-day challenges around the world, John Keane, the co-author of much-acclaimed "To Kill a Democracy", tells the history of democracy in his latest book.

"The Shortest History of Democracy", published by Pan Macmillan India, traces byzantine history from the age of assembly democracy in Athens to European-inspired electoral democracy, and the birth of representative government to our age of 'monitory democracy'.

"The book tracks the long continuities, gradual changes, crises and sudden upheavals that have defined its history. It pays attention to past shocks and setbacks when democracy suffered a crushing blow, or committed democide.

"It puts its fingers on puzzles — why democracy has typically been portrayed as a woman, for example — and springs a few surprises. It also aims to unsettle

orthodoxies," writes the author in the introduction of the book.

"What does democracy really mean? 'Does it have roots in the Indian subcontinent? 'Is democracy past its expiration date?' or 'How can its radical potential be achieved?' are some of the questions that the book seeks to answer.

According to the publishers, Keane in his book gives new reasons why democracy is a precious global ideal, and shows that as the world has come to be shaped by democracy, it has grown more worldly.

"It shows why democracy is much more than periodic 'free and fair' elections, and why the birth of a new form called monitory democracy in the years after 1945 has been far more consequential, and remains so today," it added.

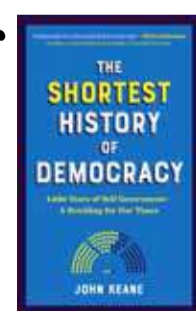
The full chronological sweep of democracy, from the assemblies of ancient Mesopotamia and Athens to present perils around the globe. The Shortest History books deliver thousands of years of history

**'It puts its fingers on puzzles — why democracy has typically been portrayed as a woman, for example — and springs a few surprises. It also aims to unsettle orthodoxies'**

in one riveting, fast-paced read.

This compact history unspools the tumultuous global story that began with democracy's radical core idea: We can collaborate, as equals, to determine our own futures. Acclaimed political thinker John Keane traces how this concept emerged and evolved, from the earliest "assembly democracies" in Syria-Mesopotamia to European-style "electoral democracy" and to our uncertain present.

Today, thanks to our always-on communication channels, governments answer not only to voters on Election Day but to intense



The Shortest History of Democracy: 4,000 Years of Self-Government A Retelling for Our Times  
By Debashish Roy Chowdhury & John Keane  
Pan Macmillan India  
224 pages; Rs.1,162

tions from South Africa to Mongolia, Spain to Indonesia, and his concept of 'monitory democracy' is indispensable for understanding democracy today. Provocative, passionate, fun, and even a bit hopeful. Don't miss it!" writes Michael Schudson, professor of journalism and sociology, Columbia University.

"A pragmatic, shining light to readers on radical democratic potential. This is the best, most readable book on the history of democracy published in the third millennium," says Takashi Inoguchi, professor emeritus, University of Tokyo; eminent scholar professor and J. F. Oberlin professor (Tokyo); former assistant secretary general of the UN

"This is a remarkable book. It covers a vast historical landscape while also delivering intellectual depth. It draws on research and scholarship while remaining accessible and engaging. But most of all, it offers a hopeful history without being naive. Modest in size, incredibly ambitious in content," opines Matthew Flinders, professor of politics, University of Sheffield; vice president of the Political Studies Association of the United Kingdom

scrutiny every day. This is "monitory democracy"—in Keane's view, the most complex and vibrant model yet—but it's not invulnerable. Monitory democracy comes with its own pathologies, and the new despotism wields powerful warning systems, from social media to election monitoring, against democracy itself.

At this urgent moment, when despots in countries such as China, Russia, Iran, and Saudi Arabia reject the promises of democratic power-sharing, Keane mounts a bold defense of a precious global ideal.

The book is currently available for sale across offline and online stores.

"Shortest—and best! John Keane knows more about the history of democracy globally than one can imagine. Full of fascinating examples of democratic innova-



# \$420 price for a Tesla share not a weed joke to please girlfriend: Musk

Elon Musk has told a US court that his taking Tesla private at \$420 a share was not a weed joke but only a coincidence.

In the ongoing securities fraud trial, Musk was asked if his "\$420-a-share price" was a weed joke to please his girlfriend, reports The Verge. "You rounded up to 420 because you thought that would be a joke that your girlfriend will enjoy, isn't that correct?" asked Nicholas Porritt, an attorney for a class of Tesla investors.

"No. I think karma is around 420. I should ques-



tion whether that is good or bad karma at this point," replied Musk. The Tesla, SpaceX and

Twitter CEO said that the figure of 420 was not chosen because of a joke.

"It was chosen because there was a 20 per cent premium over the stock price," said Musk.

420, 4:20 or 4/20 (pronounced four-twenty) is cannabis culture slang for marijuana and hashish consumption.

Musk last week admitted that he ignored his advisors and investors while tweeting about Tesla securing funding in 2018.

The controversial 2018 tweets by Musk on taking

Tesla private has come back to haunt him and he stands to lose billions.

The plaintiffs have argued that Musk's tweets about taking Tesla private, in which he said he had "funding secured", led them to lose millions of dollars.

Musk in August 2018 had tweeted: "Am considering taking Tesla private at \$420. Funding secured."

"Shareholders could either sell at 420 or hold shares & go private," he added. His notorious tweet had cost him his role as Chairman of Tesla.

# Manipal Hospitals Collaborates with FUJIFILM India to provide Digitized Solutions for Patient Diagnosis

ARUNK KUMAR RAO  
Bengaluru

Manipal Hospitals, one of India's foremost healthcare providers, has entered into an agreement with FUJIFILM India, a pioneer in healthcare technology, to leverage the latter's innovative digital technology for storing sensitive medical documents and images. Under the long-term agreement Manipal Hospitals would be provided with large-scale Picture Archiving and Communication System (PACS), POWERED BY Fujifilm India, films and reports, said Dilip Jose, MD & CEO, Manipal Hospitals and Koji Wada, MD, FUJIFILM India addressing the preconference in Bengaluru.

In addition, the next-generation system will enable the storage of medical documents and images in secure off-site servers while the PACS software will ensure that such sensitive medical data can be accessed via mobile devices and workstations from anywhere in the world. The deployment will cover 23 hospitals and 45 Teleradiology facilities under the umbrella of Manipal Health Enterprises across the country. With a modular design, expandable to all future centres of Manipal Hospitals, the state-of-art Radiology information



Systems (RIS) PACS, which has been developed as a part of the engagement, is now available for radiology and cardiology specialities. It is scalable to more clinical specialties and covers three million studies per year currently, they added.

Koji Wada, MD, FUJIFILM India, said, "As a trusted healthcare technology provider globally, we are delighted to partner with Manipal Hospitals to bring state-of-the-art digitized technology solutions to patients. Through this association, we aid to provide superior technological medical facilities that can help save lives and encourage patients to become more engaged in their personal care. We are determined to offer the high-

standards of innovative and high-quality healthcare solution in India, further solidifying our commitment to being a socially responsible brand" he added.

Dilip Jose, MD & CEO, Manipal Hospitals said, "We are glad to partner with FUJIFILM India, this partnership will further add value to our existing diagnostic portfolio and treatment outcomes. The interoperability that this solution offers will accelerate our progress toward digitization across our network of hospitals. This solution will further help promote the penetration of Manipal Hospital's clinical healthcare services across its network while making it convenient for both clinicians and patients." He added.

# Global smartphone shipments suffer biggest fall in holiday quarter



Global smartphone shipments declined 18.3 per cent (year-over-year) to 300.3 million units in the holiday quarter of 2022, the largest-ever decline in a single quarter.

According to an IDC report, the Q4 2022 drop contributed to a steep 11.3 per cent decline for the entire year. The year 2022 ended with shipments of 1.21 billion units, which represents the lowest annual shipment total since 2013 due to significantly dampened consumer demand, inflation, and economic uncertainties.

This tough close to the year puts the 2.8 per cent recovery expected for 2023 in serious jeopardy with heavy downward risk to the forecast, the report mentioned. "We have never seen shipments in the holiday quarter come in lower than the previous quarter. However, weakened demand and high inventory caused vendors to cut back drastically on shipments," said Nabila Popal, research director with IDC.

Chinese vendors suffered massive losses for the entire year. Heavy sales and promotions during the quarter helped deplete existing inventory rather than drive shipment growth. "Vendors are increasingly cautious in their shipments and planning while realigning their focus on profitability. Even Apple, which thus far was seemingly immune, suffered a setback in its supply chain with unforeseen lockdowns at its key factories in China," said Popal.

According to Anthony Scarsella, another research director with IDC, with 2022 declining more than 11 per cent for the year, "2023 is set up to be a year of caution as vendors will rethink their portfolio of devices while channels will think twice before taking on excess inventory."

"However, on a positive note, consumers may find even more generous trade-in offers and promotions continuing well into 2023 as the market will think of new methods to drive upgrades and sell more devices, specifically high-end models," he added.

# FourKites Launches Data Connector to Help Businesses Maximize the Power of Supply Chain Data

NEW INTEGRATION WITH BUSINESS INTELLIGENCE TOOLS PROVIDES CUSTOMERS WITH UNPRECEDENTED ACCESS TO TRUSTED, REAL-TIME SUPPLY CHAIN DATA TO ELIMINATE SILOS, MAXIMIZE AGILITY



NEW DELHI: Leading supply chain visibility company FourKites today announced the launch of Data Connector, an offering that allows customers to automatically access and leverage FourKites data directly within their existing business intelligence tool. By making supply chain data more accessible than ever before, Data Connector will help leaders across organizations access valuable insights to mitigate disruptions and expedite decision-making.

From customer satisfaction to carrier performance, real-time supply chain data is a critical input to understanding business health and

performance. Unlike other data integration methods that unlock only a fraction of a company's supply chain data and require time-consuming processes to integrate, Data Connector allows analysts to incorporate hundreds of data points from FourKites directly into their custom analytics platform of choice.

"Data Connector has enabled our company to integrate additional data points into internal reporting for better traceability," said Kaitlyn DeSpiegler, Logistics Manager - Strategic Projects, 3M. "This, in turn, has helped us gain insight into our export process as it relates to delays and handoffs. The data feeds into

a larger end-to-end view that our export and import teams use to track goods processing through 3PL warehouses and the exporting country. The team has seen great efficiencies in being able to integrate all tracking data into one report."

Designed for data analysts who want the ultimate flexibility for custom analytics, Data Connector allows customers to start building custom dashboards in minutes — no implementation or significant developer resources required. It also eliminates the need for manual data uploads or complex workflows to integrate FourKites data into customers' business intelligence stacks.

# Mahanadi Coalfields to set up 1,600 MW power plant in Odisha

Mahanadi Coalfields Limited (MCL), a subsidiary of Coal India Limited, is looking to diversify into power generation, and plans to set up a Rs 12,000 crore power plant in Odisha. It also aims to enter into aluminium business and may soon set up a greenfield aluminium project.

Sources informed that the 1,600 megawatt capacity coal-fired power project would come up in Odisha's Sundergarh district as a wholly owned subsidiary of MCL.

MCL also plans to enter into the aluminium business, they further said.

The mini ratna company is currently looking to secure a



bauxite mine for the purpose.

Coal India's board in October 2021 had approved a pre-feasibility report for setting up an integrated aluminium project in Odisha.

Earlier, the coal behemoth in December 2020 had got in-principle approval for venturing into aluminium and solar sectors and creation of special purpose vehicles.

# Measures likely to give some momentum to laggard deposits

With the Indian banking sector stable plank with the ghosts of non-performing assets (NPA) vanishing — at least for now — there may not be any major announcements by Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman as to capital infusion in public sector banks or even their disinvestment in the upcoming Union Budget, said experts.

With the credit offtake being good while deposit mobilisation lagging behind, the Centre may announce something to increase bank deposits, they added.

"The banking sector — government and private — is stable now. We don't expect any capital infusion announcement by the Finance Minister for the public sector banks," Sanjay Agarwal, Senior Director, CARE Ratings, told to media. He also said there may not be any announcement relating to disinvestment of the public sector banks.

"The privatisation of IDBI Bank is moving ahead. The government may wait and watch post IDBI Bank privatisation relating to disinvestment in pub-



lic sector banks. The process of privatisation of government

banks has to be streamlined," Agarwal added.

According to a report by Emkay Global Financial Services, the government may name the two banks that would be privatised.

The report also said the banking sector witnessed slight moderation in credit growth to 15 per cent year-on-year (YoY) for the fortnight ended December 30, 2022 (vs 17.4 per cent the previous fortnight), mainly due to the base effect (heavy lending to oil PSUs last year), while underlying growth in absolute terms remained robust.

"Deposit growth continued

to be a laggard, at 9.2 per cent YoY, which remains a concern amid the tight liquidity situation, resulting in most banks turning aggressive in raising deposit rates in the last quarter," Emkay Global said.

"The interest on deposits has to be hiked by the banks. The budget may have some announcements on credit support or tax support for bank depositors," Agarwal said.

According to Emkay Global, the banking industry would look for growth boosters in the bud-

get like:

1. Announcement of large infra/power and defence projects with private participation, to revive capex demand;
2. Increase in bad-debt-provision deduction, under Sec 36(1) (via) from the current 7.5 per cent of adjusted total income plus 10 per cent of average aggregate advances made by rural branches, can be expected;
3. Increase in the FPI/FTI limit for public sector banks, which though looks unlikely, given there is already enough headroom.

# Shutterstock launches its AI image generation platform



Stock photography company Shutterstock has announced the launch of its AI image generation platform, which will be available to use by all Shutterstock customers globally in every language the site offers.

"Shutterstock has developed strategic partnerships over the past two years with key industry players like OpenAI, Meta, and

LG AI Research to fuel their generative AI research efforts, and we are now able to uniquely bring responsibly-produced generative AI capabilities to our own customers," Paul Hennessy, CEO at Shutterstock, said in a statement.

The company said that — its AI image generator will allow anyone to create high-quality

visuals by simply describing what they're looking for — worry-free, one-of-a-kind, and ready in seconds. "Our easy-to-use generative platform will transform the way people tell their stories — you no longer have to be a design expert or have access to a creative team to create exceptional work," Hennessy added. In October last year, Shutterstock expanded its partnership with OpenAI, launching a fund to compensate artists for their contributions, and focusing its R&D machine on gathering and publishing insights related to AI-generated content.

The purpose of the collaboration was to introduce OpenAI's seamless image generation capabilities to Shutterstock audiences worldwide — allowing them to instantly create images based on the criteria they specify.

# Awareness Technologies Launches Veriato Workforce Behavior Analytics in India

SECTONICS PARTNERSHIP BRINGS EMPLOYEE INSIGHT AND VISIBILITY TO INDIAN BUSINESSES

MUMBAI: Awareness Technologies, the parent company of Veriato, announced the launch of Veriato's workforce behavior analytics software in India in partnership with Sectonics. India is an important and growing market, with thousands of organizations looking for solutions to better monitor and manage their workforce, especially as millions of employees have shifted to remote and hybrid work. Awareness is prioritizing the India market in 2023, investing in a presence in the region, support for the local market and additional product

development.

"Veriato's workforce behavior analytics solution is a perfect fit for so many businesses in India and we are thrilled to partner with them to represent them in the region. Leaders are looking for more than just employee monitoring, and Veriato delivers with behavior analytics and risk management so that businesses have a complete solution to improve productivity and get ahead of issues in a remote and hybrid work environment," said Vikas Chalke, Director at Sectonics.

"India is an important market for us, and we are devoting resources to expand our presence here. With our partnership with Sectonics, we will be able to help more businesses in India have access to Veriato's workforce behavior analytics to gain new



insights and tools in a forever-changed work environment," said Elizabeth Harz, CEO at Awareness Technologies.

Veriato offers modern workforce behavior analytics solutions with advanced technology and artificial intelligence (AI) to help employers track employee behavior and maintain company security with far more control than typical monitoring software. Veriato provides unmatched visibility into activity, communications, and access, making it the ideal solution for any organization looking to detect issues with employee

productivity, fraud or data theft. Veriato is the leading provider of workforce behavior analytics, helping businesses monitor and analyze on-site, remote or hybrid workforce activity to boost productivity and keep sensitive data secure. Veriato is the partner of choice to deliver unmatched insights to help companies thrive in today's complex work environment, especially in industries where sensitive data and IP is at stake. With powerful analytics that work across networks, in the cloud, and on-premise, companies gain complete visibility and understanding, ensuring maximum productivity and minimum risk.

Sectonics is the CyberSecurity focused VAD. Incorporated with the objective to assist enterprises of all sizes and

verticals to boost their security posture and efficiently deal with newer and ever evolving cyber attacks. Sectonics is a team of enthusiastic and experienced cybersecurity experts from India. Headquartered in the financial capital of India, Mumbai; Sectonics act as the Value Added Distributor across India, South East Asia and Middle East markets for our ISV partners. Our network of 100+ channel partners includes some of the leading GSIs, NSIs, regional SIs, MSSPs, and consulting partners. From endpoint security, data security to cloud security and even brand security, we cover almost all the key security aspects considered by any enterprise CXO. This makes us a preferred and go to distributor amongst the security channel partners.



# Union FM holds the key to a revival of capital markets

**NEW DELHI:** The Union Budget 2023-24 is less than a week away, actually four calendar days. There are just two trading sessions left and then the budget would be presented on February 1. Yet markets seem unaware of it as there is no reaction or expectation to the expected event which has a special significance.

This Budget would be the last one before the 2024 general elections. The government of the day would use it as an opportunity to meet expectations of as large a population as it could, and keep spirits of its vote bank flowing and flying. Alas! The situation is completely the opposite and contrary this time around. There seems to be no pre-budget rally and markets are actually sharply down. There are various theories being floated around but let us analyse the situation a bit critically.

Markets since they made their life time highs on the December 1, 2022, seem to be trading in a broad range with 61,343 on BSESENSEX and 18,265 points on NIFTY being the crucial high points and levels of 59,625-59,675 on BSESENSEX and at 17,760-17,795 on NIFTY acting as



strong support on the lower side.

Friday saw these levels being broken comfortably and decisively with markets closing below them. The street attributes the same to a report from Hindenburg on Adani Enterprises who are in the midst of their mega follow-on offer issue of Rs 20,000 crore.

This attack by so-called Hindenburg is from the US based investment firm that specialises in activist short selling. Very clearly there is a vested agenda and the Adani group has clarified on the allegations made. The fate of the FPO, which closes on Tuesday the January 31, still remains unclear.

At present levels, the floor price of the share and market price being far away, a reduction in price seems the only alternative if the issue is to be subscribed to. This outcome may happen only on Tuesday as there is no other instance of price being reduced midway through an issue, but only at the end.

In such a scenario, what does the budget have in store for the markets and the common man?

Revenues have been robust with GST clocking an average of Rs 1.5 lakh crore monthly and income tax from corporates and individuals have seen significant improvements.

The PLI scheme has done wonderfully well and has seen India becoming a large mobile phone exporter. Some tweaking of the scheme, extension to new industries and sectors and maybe the time frame may help further boost Make in India. At the same time, changes to customs duty to encourage investments in PLI may also be tweaked to incentivise local production.

The markets expect some relief in STT (securities transaction tax). With trading at the markets increasing rapidly with demat accounts almost touching the 11 lakh crore mark, this number has become big. The ongoing demand of rationalising tax on long-term capital gains tax and dividend is perennial.

Knowing that the salaried and middle class is clamouring for relief on the inflation front, the demand for higher basic exemption limit is reasonable. If the government obliges, it could do wonders.

With nothing negative expected in the budget, markets at rock bottom on account of an unrelated crisis, anything which strikes a chord with the markets could lead to a flare-up.

With January futures having expired on Wednesday, positions in the market are light and that is a redeeming feature for the market.

With mood and sentiment currently negative, the possibility that markets get lifted post budget is a very big possibility.

If I believe what three events could do so and hazard a guess, this is what I would say. Firstly focus on growth through infrastructure spend and creating the network to accelerate growth.

Providing impetus to the salaried class and middle class by providing a higher basic exemption limit and proportionate benefit in higher slabs and thirdly giving the thrust to woman and child development across rural India. I believe that if the budget delivers on these broad lines we would see a post-budget rally instead of a pre-budget rally.

The only negative factors working against Indian equities at present is the rich valuation and the outflow of money to Chinese markets. It had happened some time ago as well and at that time, investors burned their money as those markets did not rally.

# PhonePe envisions massive opportunity ahead across UPI, lending, insurance, ONDC

Fintech platform PhonePe on Wednesday said the company envisions massive opportunities ahead across UPI, lending, account aggregator, insurance, and ONDC. PhonePe recently raised \$350 million in funding from General Atlantic, a leading global growth equity firm, at a pre-money valuation of \$12 billion, making it a decacorn.

"General Atlantic is a really good blue chip global investor that has a long view on companies, which gives us the flexibility to be able to actually do at-scale investments in new sectors like insurance, lending, broking or ONDC," Sameer Nigam, Co-Founder & CEO, PhonePe, said.

Moreover, commenting on its relocation from Singapore to India, the company said it is here to stay for the next few decades.

"I think for the mission PhonePe is on, which is solving for at-scale financial inclusion and digitisation, the move to India was right. India is where we started and where we are focused on, and I think we will



be here for the next couple of decades," said Nigam.

While moving domicile, the company faced a few challenges, to which, he said: "Our investors have paid almost Rs 8,000 crore in taxes just to allow us to come back to India. Another challenge was to convince several thousand employees that they're ESOPs are back to zero vesting at a one-year cliff, because the law in India says if you migrate, you still have to start with a new one-year cliff."

The fintech platform also expressed its future strategy, to which it says the company wants

to fulfil the ambition of taking digital payments in India to a billion transactions a day, from close to half a billion, with NPCI, RBI and the entire Fintech ecosystem.

"We want to actually help scale payments with a whole bunch of new initiatives that are coming on UPI. We will be looking at launching new products and offerings be it lending on the merchant side, lending on the consumer side, a lot of new open API initiatives like account aggregator and ONDC," said Rahul Chari, Co-Founder & CTO, PhonePe.

## Rs 21.2 cr sent to Dubai via cryptocurrency in UP's Prayagraj



Investigations into transfer of cash to Dubai through cryptocurrency in Uttar Pradesh's Prayagraj have revealed that cash transactions worth Rs 21.29 crore have taken place, police said.

The police have also come across 35 bank accounts of the accused Krishna Avtar, who has been arrested and sent to jail.

The scam had come to light on January 2, following which police launched detailed investigations.

According to police officials, Avtar transferred cash from a gaming app to one Jai, based in Dubai.

Earlier, investigations revealed that Avtar converted cash worth Rs 3.75 crore into cryptocurrency and transferred it to a wallet based in Dubai within 10 days.

However, detailed scanning of his bank accounts showed that he transferred cash worth Rs 21.29 crore after converting it into cryptocurrency since he came in contact with Jai.

The police team has also come across information about his 35 bank accounts. It is scanning the transactions made into these bank accounts, according to a senior police officer aware of the finding, said the police.

## Dell acquires Cloud services startup Cloudify for '\$100 mn'

Dell Technologies has acquired Israeli startup Cloudify that is known for cloud orchestration and infrastructure automation.

According to reports, Dell spent close to \$100 million in buying the startup to boost its cloud services business, specifically its offerings in DevOps. A company spokesperson told TechCrunch that Dell Technologies "has completed the acquisition of Cloudify."

"This transaction allows Dell to continue to innovate our edge offerings," said the spokesperson.

In a US SEC filing, Dell referred to issuing of Class C common stock "in respect of certain outstanding and unvested options to acquire the ordinary shares of Cloudify Platform Ltd., an Israeli private liability company."

Cloudify is an open source,



multi-cloud orchestration platform featuring unique technology that packages infrastructure, networking, and existing automation tools into certified blueprints. Originally the startup was spun out from GigaSpaces in 2017. The startup raised less than \$8 million, according to PitchBook data.

Cloudify's environment-as-a-service packages infrastructure, networking, and automation tools into certified blueprints that it says its customers can use to manage heterogeneous cloud environments at scale, and to help bridge the gap between DevOps and IT service management (ITSM).

Cloudify includes in its technology ecosystem such partners as Amazon Web Services, Google Cloud Platform, Microsoft Azure, F5, Wind River Software, and ServiceNow.

Currently, the company is involved in a legal battle with Ashneer, after suing him and his family for allegedly siphoning off company funds worth Rs 88.6 crore.

According to its financial statement filed with the Registrar of Company (RoC), its former CEO Suhail Sameer took home Rs 2.1 crore in FY22.

Rajnish Kumar, BharatPe Chairman, received Rs 21.4 lakhs, while BharatPe board member Shashvat Nakrani was paid Rs 29.8 lakhs.

However, these remunerations do not take stock payments into account as the company incurred Rs 70 crore worth stock-based payment expenses in FY22, up 218 per cent (YoY).

MoneyControl was first to report about the remunerations to top BharatPe executives.

Meanwhile, BharatPe suffered huge losses to the tune of Rs 5,610.7 crore in the financial year 2021-22, due to a one-time non-cash expense related to

## BharatPe paid Rs 1.69 crore salary to Ashneer in FY22, Rs 63 lakh to his wife

Fintech platform BharatPe paid a salary of Rs 1.69 crore to its Co-founder and managing director Ashneer Grover in FY22, while his wife Madhuri Jain Grover who was the former head of controls at the company took home Rs 63 lakhs.

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change in fair value of compulsory convertible preference shares (CCPS).

In FY21, the company had posted a net loss of Rs 1,619.2 crore.

Apart from the CCPS cost, the company's adjusted loss grew 2.2 times to Rs 828.2 crore in FY22, from Rs 227.3 crore in the earlier fiscal year, according to its financial statement with the Registrar of Company (RoC).

Earlier this month, the company had clarified that the CCPS-related item is a "one-off and shall not be there from next year as we have now reclassified the compulsorily convertible preference shares from liability to equity".

Meanwhile, its revenue from operations went up 3.8 times to Rs 456.8 crore from Rs 119 crore in FY21, owing to a surge in payments volumes on loan disbursements.

Founded in 2018, BharatPe is currently serving 1 crore merchants across more than 400 cities.

## US venture capitalists anticipate Indian budget to give impetus to startup ecosystem

**NEW DELHI:** Ahead of the union budget for the next fiscal year, the US venture capital firms investing in India are rooting for a supportive measures for the development of the startup ecosystem in the country.

For the financial year 2023-24, Union Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman is set to table the union budget before the Parliament on February 1, 2023.

The venture capitalist community here in the US is very excited given the large number of unicorns emerging out of India in



recent years, reported ET. The venture capitalists want

to capitalise on Indian talent and invest in them, as per Arun

Kumar, managing partner of Celesta Capital. "As a US-based venture capital firm investing in India, we are keenly interested in policies and initiatives that will support the growth and development of the startup ecosystem in the country," Kumar told PTI.

Kumar further stated that signals and allocations in the budget that further the growth of new ventures based on innovation and entrepreneurship would be particularly welcome.

proposed transshipment port at Galathea Bay at Greater Nicobar in Andaman and Nicobar Islands will be advantageous

for the Bay of Bengal Initiative for Multi-Sectoral Technical and Economic Cooperation (BIMSTEC) member nations.



## IPA to create Centre for Maritime Economy and Connectivity in India with RIS

**NEWDELHI:** The Indian Ports Association (IPA) in collaboration with the Research and Information System for Developing Countries (RIS) will develop a Centre for Maritime Economy and Connectivity in India.

An agreement between the two organisations was recently signed in New Delhi.

Union Minister for ports, shipping and waterways Sarbananda Sonowal, who witnessed the signing ceremony, tweeted that the institute will pave way for seamless, cost-effective trade and commerce with neighbours.

Secretary handling the ministry Sanjeev Ranjan said the

## Union Budget 2023-24: Removal of 15% MAT tops Start-ups wish list

**NEW DELHI:** To promote start-ups, the industry has urged the Union Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman to do away with the Minimum Alternative Tax (MAT) of 15 per cent applied on start-ups.

Opening up about the expectations of start-ups from the upcoming union budget, Ashish Jain, CEO, The Start-up Board told KNN India in an exclusive interview that introduction of non-voting shares will help bring more investment into the start-ups, without founders losing control of their venture.

He suggested this because investors have started investing in the start-ups as it has started becoming a new asset class.

"They are interested in returns, instead of the controlling stake. Introduction of non-voting shares will help bring more investment into the start-up, without founders losing control of their venture.



This is quite prevalent in the USA," he added.

Jain explained that many start-up founders incorporate their company in Singapore, Dubai or other tax havens.

"These start-ups working in India for majority of their revenue, still are not called Indian start-up due to taxation policies. In the short period of 10 years, revenue from start-up have already reached USD 74 billion (IT industry in India is USD 327 billion worth), generating employment, creating IP

from India for products for the world among other benefits," he said.

He further suggested that make ESOPs table on sale of shares instead of taxability on allotment, as ESOPs in the start-up are difficult to be liquidated.

K Srinivas, Founder, Solar-Bull Energy LLP told media India that it has proposed the government to drop the GST on Solar Power Plants from 12 per cent to 5 per cent. "Aatmanirbhar Bharat Ro-

jgar Yojana (ABRY) scheme facilitates Start-ups and other MSME companies where the government has borne the Provident Fund for 2 years (both Employee portion & Employer portion) for all the new recruitments made up to March 31, 2023 needs to be continued for all new recruits," he said as it will encourage MSMEs and Start-ups to recruit more employees.

Calling for separate classification in GST for "Water Purifiers", Chandrasekaran J, Founder Director, Watsan Envirotech Private Limited has sought for a lesser GST of 5 per cent as against 18 per cent for Non-electricity-based water purifiers (gravity and UV based).

Start-up Founder of Zippytech Private Limited, Manoranjan Mishra has requested for the introduction of GST/MCA compliance holiday for 3 years or till certain revenue is generated.

# G20-Startup20 Engagement Group to launch Handbook for common terminologies

**THE MEETING WILL CREATE A GLOBAL NARRATIVE FOR SUPPORTING START-UPS AND FOSTERING SYNERGIES BETWEEN START-UPS, CORPORATES, INVESTORS, INNOVATION AGENCIES, AND OTHER KEY ECOSYSTEM STAKEHOLDERS.**

**HYDERABAD:** The G20 Startup20 Engagement Group will hold its inception meeting in Hyderabad from January 28 to 29, 2023, featuring delegates from G20 nations and nine special invitees from observer countries, representatives from multilateral organizations as well as the Indian start-up ecosystem.

Expected outcomes and key deliverables of Startup20 include the Official Policy Communi-

que, a Start-up Handbook with a set of commonly agreed upon definitions and terminologies, a Global Innovation Centre to foster collaborations across borders, and promotion of Startup20 as a Global Point of Contact for start-up ecosystems worldwide.

Formed under G20 after India assumed presidency it is anticipating a productive development of policy recommendations on entrepreneurship and



innovation priorities of and across G20 countries for the years ahead.

The meeting will create a global narrative for supporting start-ups and fostering synergies between start-ups, corporates, investors, innovation agencies, and other key ecosystem stakeholders.

Startup20 India Chair Dr. Chintan Vaishnav stated that as the world's third-largest start-up ecosystem, India is well-positioned to

lead the charge in supporting innovative start-ups, particularly in the sectors of global importance.

The Startup20 Engagement Group will work to harmonize the global start-up ecosystem through consensus-based definitions and promote a global community of knowledge sharing among start-up ecosystems to explore opportunities.

"Additionally, we aim to create supportive policies

for industry players and government organizations to work with startups," Chintan asserted.

The Startup20 has three main taskforces; the Foundation and Alliances Taskforce, Finance, and Inclusion and Sustainability.

The Startup20 activities will span over five events, starting with the inception event on January 28-29, 2023 in Hyderabad and the summit event on July 3, 2023 in Gurugram.



# INTERNATIONAL

## Indian student dies after being struck by a police vehicle in US

A 23-year-old student from Andhra Pradesh died after being struck by a police patrol vehicle in Seattle, a media report said.

Jaahnavi Kandula, a student of Northeastern University campus in South Lake Union, was walking near Dexter Avenue North and Thomas Street when she was hit by a Seattle Police vehicle on Monday, The Seattle Times reported.

Police arrived at the scene just after 8 p.m. and immediately started with CPR after they found Kandula with life threatening injuries. She was later transported to Harborview Medical Center in criti-



cal condition where she succumbed to her injuries. The officer driving the patrol SUV was responding to a priority one call at the request of the Seattle Fire Department

just after 8 p.m., according to the Seattle Police Department. The police did not name the officer but said in a statement that he has been with the department since November 2019.

"At this point in the investigation, we have no reason to believe the officer intended to hit that woman," Seattle Police Department spokesperson Detective Valerie Carson told Seattle Times.

Carson further said that Kandula's death will not be investigated as a use of force case, and the officer has not been placed on leave.

"I was in shock," Ashok

Mandula, victim's uncle, told Seattle Times after he was informed of the tragedy.

He said Kandula first travelled to the United States in 2021 from Adoni in Andhra Pradesh's Kurnool district, and spent a month with his family.

Daughter of a single mother who teaches in an elementary school in Adoni, Kandula was to receive a master's in information systems this December, Mandula told Times.

He added that Kandula's mother had taken a loan for her education. Detectives from the Traffic Collision Investigation Squad will lead the investigation, Seattle Police said.

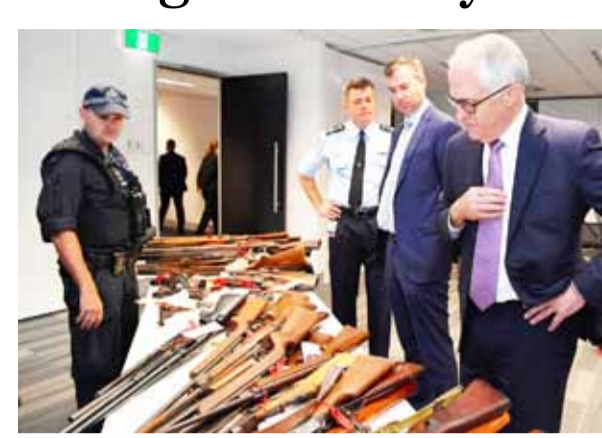
## Over 17,000 weapons surrendered under Australian gun amnesty

More than 17,000 weapons were surrendered in the first year of Australia's permanent national firearms amnesty, the government revealed on January 21.

The government released the first annual report on the amnesty program, which allows Australians to hand in unregistered, illegal or unwanted weapons without facing punishment, revealing 17,543 weapons were surrendered in the first 12 months, reports Xinhua news agency.

The permanent amnesty was set up in mid-2021 following temporary programs in the wake of the Port Arthur massacre in 1996 and again in 2017.

According to the Australian Criminal Intelligence Commis-



sion, there are approximately 260,000 illicit firearms in circulation in Australia.

Among the weapons handed in between July 2021 and June 2022 were 8,140 rifles, 2,896 shotguns and 789 pistols.

"It is an important measure to reduce the number of firearms circulating in our community, and keep Australians safe," the country's Attorney-General Mark Dreyfus said on January 21.

## US operation in Somalia kills senior IS leader

A US military operation in Somalia has killed a number of Islamic State (IS) members, including a key leader of the terror group, Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin announced.

"On January 25, on orders from the President, the US military conducted an assault operation in northern Somalia that resulted in the death of a number of IS members, including Bilal-al-Sudani, an IS leader in Somalia and a key facilitator for IS's global network," Austin was quoted as saying in a statement on Thursday.

"Al-Sudani was responsible for fostering the growing presence of IS in Africa and for funding the group's operations worldwide, including in Afghanistan.

"No civilians were harmed as a result of this operation. We are grateful to our extraordinary service members as well as our intelligence community and other inter-agency partners for their support to this successful counter-terrorism operation," the Defense Secretary added.

No US troops or civilians were killed in the operation, he said.

Wednesday's operation comes after US forces killed two top IS leaders in an airstrike in Syria late last year, CNN reported.

Al-Sudani was sanctioned by the US Treasury in 2012 for helping foreign fighters travel to a training camp of the al-Shabaab terror group and facilitating financing.

## Putin wishes Murmu, Modi on R-Day, hails India's contributions



**NEW DELHI:** Russian President Vladimir Putin on Thursday sent his wishes to his Indian counterpart Droupadi Murmu and Prime Minister Narendra Modi on the 74th Republic Day, hailing India's achievements in various fields.

In a statement issued by the Russian President's office, he said that India was making a significant contribution in ensuring international peace and security on the global stage.

Putin was quoted as saying

in the statement that India's achievements in the economic, social, scientific, technological and other spheres are widely known. "Your country is making a substantial contribution to ensuring international stability and security and to addressing vital issues on the regional and global agenda," he said.

"We set a high value on the relations of privileged strategic partnership between our states," he said, expressing confidence that "by working together we can ensure the continued growth of mutually beneficial bilateral cooperation in all areas. This undoubtedly meets the fundamental interests of the friendly peoples of Russia and India."

## Indian drunk driver jailed for injuring pedestrian in Dubai

**DUBAI:** An 39-year-old Indian man has been sentenced to one month jail in Dubai and fined Dh10, 000 after he drove over a woman's legs, leaving her seriously injured.

The Dubai Court of Appeal also found the Indian, who was driving under the influence of alcohol, guilty of fleeing the accident scene and revoked his deportation order, The National reported.

The man, driving his Nissan Patrol out of the car park of a hotel in Bur Dubai's Al Mankhool area last November, failed to see a woman sitting on the pavement with her legs stretched out into



the road. "We were in the car together when the incident happened," the man's friend told the court, The National

drove off," he said.

He was later tracked down and arrested, the report said, adding that the offender admitted to the charges during a police probe and in court.

The United Arab Emirates (UAE) has a zero-tolerance policy to drunk-driving, which is a criminal offence.

"According to Article 393 of UAE's traffic law, offenders causing a road death can face between one month and three years in prison or a fine as decided by the court," Nida Al Masri, a legal consultant from Justitia Advocates and Legal Consultants, told The National.

## China claims Covid wave has past its peaked

BEIJING: China's health authorities have said the Covid-19 wave is past its peak, with rapid decline in both severe cases and deaths in hospitals, but experts remain wary of the governments official data, the media reported.

According to China's Center for Disease Control (CDC), the number of critically ill patients in hospital peaked in the first week of January, then rapidly declined by more than 70 per cent, says the Guardian report.

The number of deaths also reached its highest level that week, the CDC data revealed.

Prof Chi Chun-huei, director of the centre for global health at Oregon University, said local officials were incentivised, via punishments and rewards, to under-report infection figures during the zero-Covid policy.

Now that policy was gone, they were incentivised to exaggerate infection rates and under-



report deaths, the Guardian reported.

"Most international experts know this very well, China's statistics are very unreliable," he said.

Covid cases have swept across China in recent months, escalating rapidly after the government suddenly ended its zero-Covid policy in early December 2022.

Last week a senior health official said 80 per cent of people had been infected in this wave, although it was not clear where the figures came from.

According to the data, there were 128, 000 critically ill Covid patients in Chinese hospitals on January 5, the highest number reached during this wave.

It described a peak inside hospitals over the western new year, with almost 10, 000 new critically ill cases a day from December 27 to 3 January, the Guardian reported.

## Jamaat-e-Islami Hind condemns the burning of the Quran in Sweden

**THE PROTEST OR CONDEMNATION SHOULD BE WITHIN THE AMBIT OF THE LAW AND IN A CIVILIZED AND PEACEFUL MANNER. JAMAAT-E-ISLAMI HIND DEMANDS THAT THE GOVERNMENT OF INDIA SHOULD CONDEMN THIS ACT AND CONVEY ITS DISPLEASURE TO THE SWEDISH EMBASSY IN INDIA**

**FW DESK**  
New Delhi



The Vice President of Jamaat-e-Islami Hind (JIH), Prof Salim Engineer has condemned the burning of the Quran outside the Turkish embassy in Stockholm, Sweden by a far-right activist. In a statement to the media, the JIH Vice-President said, "We unequivocally condemn the act of the burning of the Quran in Sweden.

It was a racist and provocative act and a hate crime. The person who indulged in this heinous act should be immediately arrested and prosecuted. Jamaat-e-Islami Hind believes that all reli-

gious books and personalities deserve proper respect and cannot be subject to any denigration and acts of slander or disparagement. There should not be any discrimination and we cannot be selective in the condemnation of such acts. Such desperate acts that seek to create a rift within communities should not be condoned by any civilized society.

We feel that even those harboring malice against the Quran should read it once and try to understand its message. It is the only religious book that rises above blind faith and dogma and appeals to intellect and reason. The Quran presents a very rational narrative about the metaphysical world that is both logical and convincing. We must unite in condemning these acts of insulting holy books and personalities. It is symptomatic of moral decadence and blind aggression against other faiths. We should avoid provocations and urge all to exercise utmost restraint.

The protest or condemnation should be within the ambit of the law and in a civilized and peaceful manner. Jamaat-e-Islami Hind demands that the government of India should condemn this act and convey its displeasure to the Swedish embassy in India."

## Bank of Canada hikes policy interest rate by 25 basis points

The Bank of Canada has increased its benchmark interest rate by 25 basis points to 4.5 per cent.

The bank's governing council expects to hold the policy rate at its current level while it assesses the impact of the cumulative interest rate increases, reports Xinhua news agency citing an official statement issued on Wednesday.

The bank conducted eight consecutive interest rate hikes since March 2022 and added 425 basis points in total to tackle inflation.

The country's inflation declined from 8.1 per cent in June to 6.3 per cent in December, reflecting lower petrol prices and, more recently, moderating prices for durable goods, the Bank of Canada said, adding that despite this progress, Canadians are still feeling the hardship of high inflation in their essential household expenses, with persistent price increases for food and shelter.

According to the bank, short-term inflation expectations remain elevated.

Year-over-year measures of core inflation are still around 5 per cent, but three-month measures of core inflation have come down, suggesting that core inflation has peaked.

Inflation is projected to come down significantly this year. Lower energy prices, improvements in global supply conditions, and the effects of higher interest rates on demand are expected to bring CPI inflation down to around 3 per cent in the middle of this year and back to the 2 per cent target in 2024, the bank said.

There is growing evidence that restrictive monetary policy is slowing activity, especially household spending.

Consumption growth has moderated from the first half of 2022 and housing market activity has declined substantially. As the effects of interest rate increases continue to work through the economy, spending on consumer services and business investment are expected to slow.

## Indian-origin Sikh engineer wins PM Rishi Sunak's award

**LONDON:** An Indian-origin Sikh engineer has won UK Prime Minister Rishi Sunak's Points of Light Award for designing an energy-efficient manual washing machine for displaced and low-income communities.

London-based Navjot Sawhney's hand-cranked washing machine is benefitting over 1, 000 families without access to an electric machine.

Navjot set up The Washing Machine Project some four years ago, with over 300 machines distributed worldwide so far to places including refugee camps, schools and orphanages.

"Winning the Points of Light award and getting recognised by the Prime Minister is a phenomenal privilege," Sawhney said after receiving the award.

"The Washing Machine Project's mission is to alleviate the burden of unpaid labour, mainly on women



and children. I'm so proud that giving back the dignity of clean clothes to those who hand wash them is getting the recognition it deserves," Sawhney added.

The machine is named after his neighbour Divya in India, who would spend up to 20 hours each week washing her family's clothes -- a burden which prevented her from pursuing paid work and caused her to suffer skin irritations and back pain.

The machine can help save up to 50 per cent of water and 75 per cent of time compared to handwashing clothes.

Navjot's machines are also helping Ukrainian families who have been forced to flee their homes and are currently living in humanitarian aid centres. In a personal letter to Navjot, Sunak said: "You have used your professional skills as an engineer to help thousands of people around the world who don't have access

## Indian man shot dead in US by 3 masked men

A 52-year-old Indian man died in the US after three masked men opened fire at him, leaving his wife and child injured, police said.

Pinal Patel and his family had arrived home from work when three masked individuals with guns targeted them last week on Thoroughbred Lane in Georgia, the Bibb County Sheriff's Office said.

Upon arrival, deputies found Patel, his wife Rupalben, and child Bhakti, suffering from gunshot wounds in the driveway of their home.

The family was transported to Atrium Health where Patel was pronounced dead on arrival by Deputy Coroner Luann Stone.

Rupalben and her daughter were listed in stable condition, the police said.

"Patel confronted the three



to electric washing machines".

Sunak said that the machines are giving families the «dignity of clean clothes» and empowering many women who have been held back from education and employment.

«Your ingenuity, compassion and dedication to improving the lives of others is an inspiration to us all,» Sunak wrote in the letter.

Previously employed by Dyson that manufactures vacuum cleaners, Navjot wanted to use his skills to improve quality of life for disadvantaged communities.

While volunteering in India with Engineers Without Borders, he saw the disproportionate burden placed on women to carry out hand-washing, inspiring him to design a manual, off-grid and fully sustainable machine.

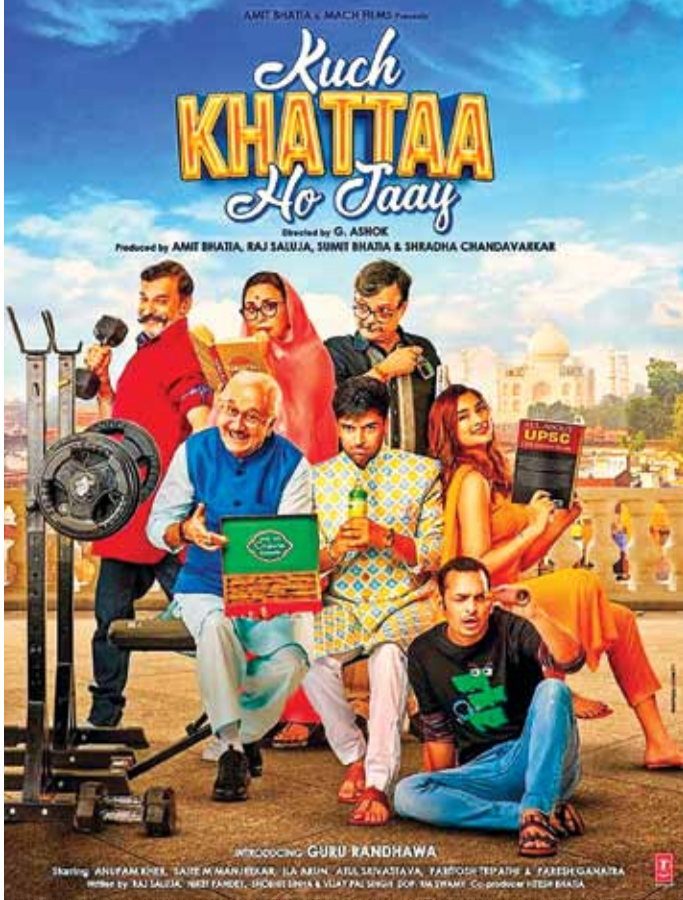
The Points of Light recognises outstanding individual volunteers who are making a change in their community.

and while doing so, shots were fired at the family," the Bibb County Sheriff's Office said in a statement.

"The three masked individuals then ran to a dark in colour vehicle waiting across the street occupied by a fourth person." Investigators have sought public assistance in locating the four-door vehicle and assistance in identifying persons of interest in this case.

No items were reported to have been taken from the family, the police said.





## 'Kuch KHATTAA Ho Jaay'

starring Guru Randhawa in acting debut wraps up its shoot

**MUMBAI:** The family entertainer film 'Kuch Khattaa Ho Jaay', which marks the acting debut of 'Lahore' hitmaker Guru Randhawa in Bollywood, wrapped up its shoot recently. The film also stars Anupam Kher, Saiee M Manjrekar, Ila Arun, Paritosh Tripathi, Atul Srivastava and Paresh Ganatra in pivotal roles. The film boasts of a perfect blend of a wide range of music and has some foot-tapping and soulful music. The film also threw a massive bash in the city to celebrate the same which was attended by the entire star cast and the pictures are really captivating. 'Kuch Khattaa Ho Jaay' has extensively been shot in striking locations across Agra and audiences can surely expect some grand and extravagant set up and scale of production. Guru, who commands a huge fan following is known for giving a new voice to the Punjabi music with his songs like 'Suit Suit', 'Slowly Slowly', 'Lahore' and several others. The film, produced by Mach Films, will now enter the post-production phase and after that it will be released in cinemas in 2023.

Resham anmol singh's new song yaari released at Chandigarh



**CHANDIGARH:** Popular Punjabi songs, tappe aur bolian... Punjabi songs touching the hearts of students and young generation tempting them dance to the beats of drums. This is the typical identity of Resham Singh Anmol.

His new song Yaari was released with much fanfare at the Press Club of Chandigarh. This new song by Resham Anmol Singh, Yaari the craze of Punjabi youth, has created a buzz in the market. Resham Singh Anmol, who is associated with the background of the village, is always ready to serve the society from the beginning, whether it is a matter of participating in the farmer's movement or the financial need of the needy farmers, he is always ready for social service. Raman Kumar, MD, Hot Shot Film Music at Chandigarh Press Club said that with the release of song Yaari, we are providing platform to budding artistes in the times to come. My aim is to take Punjabi songs to the world. Raman said that there is no dearth of talent in Punjab but youth have to work hard to get a good platform, that's why he has decided to give opportunity to all the talented budding artists under the banner of Hotshot Music.

## POTPOURRI

### Teaser of Salman Khan's upcoming film 'Kisi Ka Bhai Kisi Ki Jaan' : Leaked

**MUMBAI:** The teaser of Salman Khan's upcoming film 'Kisi Ka Bhai Kisi Ki Jaan' was shown during the screening of Shah Rukh Khan's action film 'Pathaan' in theatres, which was released on January 25. The teaser begins with Salman riding a bike in a desert and then hitting baddies in a metro. It also



shows him romancing actress Pooja Hegde. The almost one-minute-40-second teaser also shows a string of fight scenes, where Salman, sporting a rugged look, jumps from buildings, and beats up baddies.

In the end of the teaser, Salman looks dapper in a crisp white shirt even after he was beaten to a bloody

pulp. He mouths the dialogue: "Jab shareer, dil aur dimag mujhse kehte hain 'bas bhai, no more', main kehta hoon 'bring it on'." Directed by Farhad Samji, the film also stars Venkatesh and Shehnaaz Gill. The film is slated to hit the theatres by the end of this year, around Eid 2023.

### Richa Chadha's next is based on true stories of Covid second wave



Actress Richa Chadha will next be seen performing the role of a frontline worker during the second wave of the Covid crisis in a yet-untitled film.

Talking about the film, which is under the banner of Zee Studios, Richa says it is based on "real incidents".

"This is based on those real incidents that we all witnessed during the second wave of Covid. While there was loss and despair, there was also hope."

"In fact I was so moved by this kindness of strangers that I had started Kindry, a small social media initiative that only amplified stories of goodness, selflessness through the second wave."

The actress says that the "film takes a hard look at all our lives during the pandemic, where we were afraid to be human, there was enforced and mandatory distance."

"It talks about the doctors and nurses who were doing their job selflessly. I am honoured to play the role of one such resilient nurse."

The film is directed by Abhishek Acharya. Apart from that Richa has wrapped up the shoot of 'Girls will be Girls', the first movie of her co-owned home production.

The film is an Indo-French co-production which is being jointly produced by Pushing Buttons Studios, Crawling Angel Films and the French company, Dolce Vita Films.

### The return of the King: Shah Rukh Khan's 'Pathaan' opens at Rs 57 cr in India

**MUMBAI:** Bollywood superstar Shah Rukh Khan's latest release 'Pathaan', which was embroiled in a controversy surrounding a saffron colour bikini, has smashed box-office records of Hindi films.

The film has registered a record opening of Rs 57 crore (NBOC) across India. The film, which also stars Deepika Padukone and John Abraham, released in three languages: Hindi, Tamil and Telugu.

Of the Rs 57 crore of the film's business, Rs 55 crores come from the Hindi markets and the rest Rs 2 crores came from Telugu and Tamil territories, as per senior film trade analyst,



Taran Adarsh.

This film bypassed the Hindi collections of 'K.G.F.: Chapter 2', which stood at Rs 53.95 crore and the 2019 two hero film 'War', which collected Rs 51.60 crore. The latter, too, belongs to Yash Raj Film's - the production house behind 'Pathaan'.

In terms of worldwide collections, the film reportedly has minted Rs 100 crore, an achievable feat given that SRK enjoys a rock-solid fan-following among the Indian diaspora.

'Pathaan' marks the return of King Khan, as he is known, on the silver screen after 4 long years of wait. His last film was the ambitious 'Zero' directed by Aanand L. Rai, which was released in 2018. The film was a box-office disaster as it earned Rs 88.74 crore in India.

Prior to that, SRK's 'Jab Harry Met Sejal', which released in 2017, earned Rs 62 crore in India as per Box Office India.

Abdu Rozik shows his love for 'Pathaan', joins SRK fans outside Mannat

of a car and wearing a placard around his neck which said: "I still haven't made it until I meet you. I love you Shah Rukh Khan. So happy to sit here with all of your fans and wait for my turn. Only one dream left. Pathaan."

Abdu can be heard shouting in a video showing his love for SRK, saying: "I love Shah Rukh Khan."

After being in the news for all the wrong reasons, 'Pathaan' has made a grand opening, setting the record for the highest opening-day collection by a Bollywood film. Directed by Siddharth Anand, 'Pathaan' also stars Deepika Padukone, John Abraham, Dimple Kapadia and Ashutosh Rana.

Abdu will be next seen in the Salman Khan-starrer 'Kisi Ka Bhai Kisi Ki Jaan'.

**MUMBAI:** Abdu Rozik, who was most recently seen on 'Bigg Boss 16' and is a popular Tajikistani singer, was spotted outside Shah Rukh Khan's home in Mumbai, Mannat, showing his love for the superstar along with other fans waiting outside to meet and greet their hero.

In a picture going viral on social media, Abdu was seen standing through the sunroof

of the car and wearing a placard around his neck which said: "I still haven't made it until I meet you. I love you Shah Rukh Khan. So happy to sit here with all of your fans and wait for my turn. Only one dream left. Pathaan."

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### Actress Maira Dharti Mehra learns Punjabi for her role in 'Pandya Store'



**MUMBAI:** Actress Maira Dharti Mehra, who worked in TV shows such as 'Sasuraal Genda Phool 2', 'Yeh Rishta Kya Kehlata Hai', 'Kumkum Bhagya', 'Tera Yaar Hun Mai', 'Shaadi Mubarak', among others, shared how she learned Punjabi for her role in 'Pandya Store'.

She said: "Every character needs a certain depth of preparation and with new characters comes new challenges. To essay the role of Prerna, I had to learn basic Punjabi. As my family members usually speak pure Hindi, so I have no link with the Punjabi language. When I got this role, I studied about the language and learned a few Punjabi words. I worked on inculcating the Punjabi accent in my dialogues. I am still learning the language and proper pronunciation of words."

The actress was last seen in the web series 'Aashiqana 2'. She talked about her character in the show and said: "I am essaying the role of Prerna, a Punjabi girl who has a very positive aura and energetic vibes."

### 'Bigg Boss 16' : Tina lashes out at Shalin, says 'mind your language'

**MUMBAI:** 'Bigg Boss 16' contestants Tina Datta and Shalin Bhanot engaged in a heated conversation during a task, and Shalin said that Tina is the most irritating person in the house.

During a task, Nimrit asked Shalin: "Who is most irritating in the house?" To this, Shalin replied: "Tina is most irritating and she really does certain irritating things in the house."

Hearing this, Tina got upset and blamed Shalin for saying the wrong things to girls. "He loves defaming girls" She added: "Mind your language Shalin Bhanot"

Shalin also said that nobody wants to talk to Tina in the house: "Nobody wants to talk to you, baby".

Meanwhile, Bigg Boss announced a task held in the garden area with 4 stalls and scooters set up. In the task, 2 people are allowed to ride the scooter to any one favorable stall among the four which were divided as Vegetarian, Non-Vegetarian, Vegan, and others. These 2 people can shop only 10 items per round post-Bigg Boss announce their name.

However, a major fight happened between Priyanka Choudhary and Tina Datta over Shalin Bhanot returning the favour of offering chicken earlier.

Bigg Boss asked everyone to pack their things immediately. After this, he announced the permanent closure of Room number 2 and Room number 6.

The housemates started deciding on the division of rooms and this led to an exchange of some harsh words between Mandali and Priyanka.

Priyanka and Tina refused to exit room number 4.

Later, in the episode, Shalin Bhanot confessed that he feels uncomfortable with some of the gestures done by Tina to other females in the house.

### 'Pathaan' SRK poses with 'Tiger' Salman, Meezaan Jafri shares picture

Actor Meezaan Jafri has shared a picture posing with 'Pathaan' Shah Rukh Khan and 'Tiger' Salman Khan on social media.

Without revealing where the two stars were, Meezaan took to Instagram to share the picture where the two superstars are seen posing happily.

In the image, Salman is seen dressed in an olive green suit paired with a night blue shirt. Shah Rukh chose Indian wear as he was seen wearing a black kurta-pyjama. Meezaan captioned the image: "#PATHAAN in theatre's tomorrow." SRK currently awaits the release of 'Pathaan', which



is slated to release on Wednesday. The film also stars John Abraham and Deepika Padukone in lead roles. Salman will reportedly be seen in a cameo as 'Tiger' in the film. The 'Dabangg' star will be reuniting with actress Katrina Kaif for Tiger 3, which is set to release on Diwali 2023.



Border Security Force (BSF) DIG Sanjay Gaur Presents Sweets to BSF Personnel on the occasion of 74th Republic Day at the Attari-Wagah border, about 35 km from Amritsar on Thursday. PHOTOS: PRABHJOT GILL

### Soundous Moufakir of 'Splitsvilla' fame to make her acting debut with 'Continuity'



**MUMBAI:** After Splitsvilla' and 'Roadies', Soundous Moufakir has been roped in to play Roma in the movie 'Continuity'. She spoke about making her debut as an actor through Deepak Singh's next project.

Soundous, who hails from Morocco, had participated in the reality show 'Roadies' and currently she is part of the dating-based reality show 'Splitsvilla X4'. She said: "It was quite a pleasant surprise when sir offered me this film, and I didn't take a moment to say yes. I want to set a standard for myself in 'Continuity'." "It was a dream come

true to see me on the screen with my style and attire. I'm sure people will fall in love with this character. I'm playing a Punjabi girl, romancing and fighting for the love of her life," added Soundous.

She will be essaying the role of Roma in the movie which will be her first project as an actress. Soundous also shared various photos from the sets of the festival film on her social media handle and captioned them: "Continuity, soon on your screens. ROMA, a character who's very different from who I am. Thank you Deepak Singh for this opportunity."

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