

REGION

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## NIA RAIDS IN 6 HARYANA DISTRICTS AGAINST GANGSTERS TERRORISTS AND CRIMINALS



## Home Ministry gives nod to prosecute Delhi Dy CM Sisodia in snooping case

**NEW DELHI:** Union Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA) has given sanction to prosecute Delhi Deputy Chief Minister Manish Sisodia under the Prevention of Corruption Act in connection with the alleged 'Feedback Unit (FBU) snooping case'.

The Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) will now lodge a fresh case against Sisodia. The CBI in its preliminary inquiry report has found that the FBU formed through a Delhi cabinet decision on September 29, 2015 indulged in gathering political intelligence. Delhi Lt. Governor Vinai Kumar Saxena had also given his approval to the CBI to file a case against Sisodia and six other over allegations that the AAP government created a Feedback Unit under the



vigilance department to collect political intelligence.

"From the careful perusal of the note, it can be unambiguously observed that there was a concerted effort by the state government to create an agency that was outside its mandate and not within the constitutional

scheme of Governance. "There seems to have been a well conceived attempt to establish an extraneous and parallel covert agency with overarching powers of snooping and trespass, without any legislative, judicial or executive oversight whatsoever," L-G Saxena has observed in his order.

BANKING & FINANCE

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## ENTIRE RS 16,982 CRORE GST COMPENSATION CESS TO STATES TO BE CLEARED SAYS FINANCE MINISTER



YOGESH KANT  
New Delhi

AAP's Shelly Oberoi became the mayor of Delhi after defeating the BJP's mayoral candidate Rekha Gupta by a margin of 34 votes, MCD officials announced on Wednesday.

Voting began as the municipal house met after three previous failed attempts to hold the election to the top post.

BJP MPs Meenakshi Lekhi and Hans Raj Hans were among the firsts to cast their votes.

The exercise took place after much delay since the high-stakes MCD elections last month.

The mayoral election is being conducted following a Supreme Court order after three failed attempts earlier to hold the polls.

Oberoi polled 150 votes while Gupta received 116 votes out of the total 266 votes polled. The

POTPOURRI

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## WHY OTT HAS SUDDENLY EMERGED AS BIG STARS FAVOURITE PLATFORM...

## Centre seeks suggestions for effective implementation of union budget

**NEW DELHI:** The central government is organising 12 post-budget webinars inviting ideas and suggestions for better implementation of the initiatives announced in the Union Budget 2023.

Prime Minister, Narendra Modi on Thursday addressed the post-budget webinar on 'Green Growth'. He outlined three pillars for green growth and energy transmission. First, increasing the production of renewable energy; second, reducing the use of fossil fuel in the economy; and finally, rapidly moving towards a gas-based economy in the country.

Underlining the significant announcements in previous years' budgets, the Prime Minister highlighted schemes such as green credit for industries, PM Pranam Yojna for farm-



ers, Gobardhan Yojna for villages, vehicle scrapping policy for cities, Green Hydrogen and wetland conservation in this year's budget. The Prime Minister underlined that these announcements lay the foundation stone and pave the way for future generations. He said that India's commanding position in the renewable energy space will ensure a commensurate change in the world.

## Refuse to pay property tax, Mehbooba Mufti tells people in J&K



FW DESK

Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) president Mehbooba Mufti on Wednesday urged people of Jammu and Kashmir to refuse to pay property tax peacefully. She said that the imposition of the tax was part of the BJP's agenda of impoverishing the people of the Union Territory.

"The real aim is to make people of Jammu and Kashmir so poor that they don't demand anything. Look at the rest of the country, 80 crore people are getting free ration. They don't ask for jobs or cheaper fuel," Mehbooba said in Srinagar today. "They just wait for the 5 kg grain so that they can feed their children. They want to bring Jammu and Kashmir also to the same level." She said that the BJP wants "to bury people of J&K."

"They could not bring other States at par with J&K, now they are trying to bring us at par with other States," Mehbooba said. The former Chief Minister said the BJP has been a "disaster" for Jammu and Kashmir.

## AAP councillor Pawan Sehrawa joins BJP in Delhi

**NEW DELHI:** Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) councillor from Bawana, Pawan Sehrawa, on Friday joined BJP, minutes before the Municipal Corporation of Delhi's standing committee election. Soon after joining the saffron party, Sehrawa said AAP politics was suffocating and that he was pressured to create a ruckus in MCD House on Wednesday.

Polling for the Standing Committee got underway on Wednesday evening, hours after AAP's Shelly Oberoi was elected



the new Mayor of Delhi. No sooner did the process start, the House descended into complete pandemonium, with AAP

and BJP councillors exchanging blows, hurling water bottles, fruit and ballot boxes at each other leading to over a dozen

adjournments. The commotion continued way past midnight forcing the newly-elected Mayor to adjourn the House for the day.

Sehrawa was elected as a councillor in the 2017 MCD bypolls, representing the AAP, and is said to have undertaken various initiatives to improve the living conditions of the people in the area. Earlier, AAP leaders Shelly Oberoi and Aaley Mohammad Iqbal on Wednesday were elected as new Mayor and Deputy Mayor of Delhi.

## US President Joe Biden nominates Ajaypal Singh Banga to lead the World Bank

**NEW DELHI:** Ajaypal Singh Banga, who has been nominated by US President Joe Biden to lead the World Bank, is one of the illustrious alumni of Hyderabad Public School (HPS) who achieved top positions in their respective fields.

The former Mastercard Chief Executive had his schooling at HPS in the 1970s when his father Harbhajan Singh Banga, an army officer, was posted here.

Ajay Singh Banga, an Indian-American, is currently serving as vice chairman at equity firm General Atlantic.

Banga is one of the distinguished alumni in the long list that includes Microsoft CEO Satya Nadella, India's former permanent representative at the United Nations Syed Akbaruddin, Andhra Pradesh Chief Minister Y.S. Jagan Mohan Reddy and well-known cricket commentator Harsha Bhogle.

The premier educational institution of the city has also churned out powerful corporate honchos like founder and CEO of Fairfax Financial Holding Prem Watsa, Adobe Systems CEO Shantanu Narayan, Satya Nadella besides Ajay Banga.

The HPS alumni rose to great heights of success and fame in different fields like business, politics, civil services, armed forces, sports and films. Cobra beer founder and a member of UK Parliament Karan Billimoria, former Andhra Pradesh Chief Minister N. Kiran Kumar Reddy, All India Majlis-e-Ittehadul Muslimin (AIMIM) chief and Hyderabad MP Asaduddin Owaisi, former cricketer Venkatpathy Raju and Telugu actors Akkineni Nagarjuna and Rana Daggubati are among the other alumni of the school which is celebrating its centenary this year.



"It could not have come at a better time," Gusti Noria, President, The Hyderabad Public School Society, told to media while reacting to Banga's nomination for World Bank president.

"I am not entirely surprised, but this is something we are proud of. Good news keeps coming for HPS," he said.

"It has become the habit for HPS to churn out gems. There is something in the DNA of HPS, something in the air the students breathe in," he said.

He pointed out that Banga has joined the list of illustrious alumni who achieved top positions in their respective fields.

"HPS has produced leaders in different fields. This is because the sense of leadership is inculcated among children. The students develop leadership qualities from a young age and this helps them go places in whatever field they choose for themselves," he said.

Banga, who passed out of HPS in 1976, graduated with a Bachelor of Arts in economics from St. Stephen's College, Delhi University followed by PGP in Management from the Indian Institute of Management, Ahmedabad.

Starting his business career

with Nestle in 1981, Banga became president and CEO of Mastercard in 2010. Last year, he became vice chairman at General Atlantic.

Inspired by the famous Eton College of Britain, VIIth Nizam Mir Osman Ali Khan, the last ruler of Hyderabad State founded HPS in 1923. It was exclusively meant for the sons of the nobility.

It was only in 1951 that the HPS opened its doors for public. Even after Independence and Hyderabad State's merger with Indian Union, the school had the elitist tag as children of only powerful politicians, wealthy businessmen, IAS and IPS officers and celebrities used to get admission.

The school started admitting girls in 1984. HPS, which started with six students in 1923, today has nearly 3,000 students. It is run by a society comprising eminent people from all walks of life.

Spread over 130 acres in Begumpet near the old airport in the heart of the city, HPS is said to have the largest campus than Vatican City. Its main building is a heritage structure while the campus has trekking routes, rock-formations, two cricket fields, athletic arena and several hockey, football grounds and a big library.

## Mayor Shelly Oberoi will carry out inspection of landfill sites in next three months

FW DESK  
New Delhi

Delhi's newly elected Mayor Shelly Oberoi on Wednesday said the the AAP-led Municipal Corporation of Delhi will carry out inspection of landfill sites in the next three months.

Minutes after taking charge, she told the House, "We have to work together to fulfil the aspirations of people".

Oberoi defeated BJP candidate Rekha Gupta by 34 votes to emerge victorious in the mayoral polls that took place on Wednesday after much delay since the high-stakes civic polls and after three previous failed attempts to hold the election to the top post.

Later, addressing the media in her office, she fielded a



few questions before moving back to the House to chair the conduct of the election for the deputy mayor of Delhi.

"The 10 guarantees that CM Arvind Kejriwal has given to people, and the dreams that he has foreseen for Delhi,

we will work on them," the AAP leader said, when asked what will be her priorities as a mayor. Asked if the election for the six members of the Standing Committee of the MCD will take place today, she said, "yes".

## India's forex reserves slide to \$561 billion



**NEW DELHI:** India's forex reserves fell by \$5.681 billion to \$561.267 billion for the week ended February 17, according to RBI data released on Friday. This is the third week in a row when forex reserves have shown a dip. Last week, they had fallen by \$8.319 billion to \$566.948 billion. In October 2021, the country's forex reserves had reached an all-time high of \$645 billion. The reserves have been declining as the central bank has been using them to bolster the rupee amid global headwinds.

## Indian economy expected to grow 5.9% in FY24, lower than RBI estimate: Report

**NEW DELHI:** The India Ratings and Research in its latest report said that India's economy is expected to grow 5.9 per cent in FY24, lower than the RBI's estimate of 6.4 %.

India Ratings in the FY24 economic outlook released on Tuesday pointed out that GDP growth is projected keeping in mind factors such as normal-

ising pent-up demand, headwinds for exports due to global growth slowdown, and credit growth facing tighter financial condition.

"Although there are a few positives for India such as sustained government capex, deleveraged corporates, low NPA in the banking sector, Production-linked Incentive



scheme and likelihood of global commodity prices remaining

subdued, Ind-Ra believes they are still not sufficient to take the FY24 GDP growth beyond 6 per cent," Sumil Kumar Sinha, Principal Economist, India Ratings said. As per the report, Private Final Consumption Expenditure is estimated to grow 6.7 per cent in FY24 from 7.7 per cent in FY23, but it may not lead to a broad-based

consumption demand recovery because the current consumption demand is highly skewed in favour of the goods and services consumed largely by the households belonging to the upper income bracket.

"The goods and services of mass consumption have yet not shown a sustained pick-up," it added.

## IPTA asks UP Police to withdraw notice to Neha Singh Rathore

**LUCKNOW:** The national committee of the Indian People's Theatre Association (IPTA) has condemned the police notice served to Bhopuri folk singer Neha Singh Rathore on her popular song 'UP me ka ba' and demanded the immediate withdrawal of it.

National general secretary of IPTA, Rakesh, has termed the action of Uttar Pradesh Police as "intimidating and a threat to freedom of expression".

The IPTA national committee has urged its state and district units to organise solidarity programmes in support of Neha and send memorandums to the state government to withdraw the notice, he added. He also informed that IPTA



is proud that Neha will be part of its 15th national conference and cultural festival to be held in Jharkhand from March 17-19, 2023.

The police served notice to the singer for her song in which she condemned the death of a mother-daughter duo due to burns, while their house was being demolished in Kanpur Dehat recently.

## PM Modi reviews nine key infra projects worth over Rs 41,500 cr

**NEW DELHI:** Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Wednesday chaired a meeting of the 41st edition of PRAGATI and reviewed nine key infrastructure projects spread across 13 states having cumulative worth of over Rs 41,500 crore.

The Prime Minister advised the concerned ministries and state governments to use the PM GatiShakti portal for planning of infrastructure projects. He insisted on expeditious resolution of land acquisition, utility shifting and other issues for timely completion of projects.

The Prime Minister also emphasised on ensuring proper coordination between the Central government ministries and the state governments.

At the meeting, nine key infrastructure projects were reviewed. Among the nine projects, three projects are of the Ministry of Road Transport & Highways, two of the Ministry of Railways and one project each of the Ministry of Power, Ministry of Coal, Ministry of Petroleum & Natural Gas and Ministry of Health & Family Welfare.

These nine projects have a cumulative cost of over Rs 41,500 crore and relate to 13 states, including Chhattisgarh, Punjab, Bihar, Madhya Pradesh, Uttar Pradesh, Jharkhand, Kerala, Karnataka, Tamil Nadu, Assam, Gujarat, Maharashtra and Arunachal Pradesh.

PRAGATI is the ICT based multi-modal platform for pro-



active governance and timely implementation, involving the Centre and state governments. During the interaction, the

Prime Minister also reviewed 'Mission Amrit Sarovar', and undertook real-time view of Amrit Sarovar sites through

drones in Kishanganj, Bihar, and Botad, Gujarat.

Modi advised all the concerned ministries and state

governments to complete Amrit Sarovar work in mission mode before the onset of monsoon.

The Prime Minister also emphasised on block level monitoring for timely completion of the target of 50,000 Amrit Sarovars under the scheme.

The idea of Mission Amrit Sarovar is working to rejuvenate water bodies all across the country, which will help conserve water for the future. Once the mission is complete, the expected increase in water holding capacity is going to be around 50 crore cubic metre, the estimated carbon sequestration will be about 32,000 tonnes per year and expected increase in ground water recharge will be over 22 million cubic metre.

# Ruckus in MCD House rages overnight; councillors throw ballot boxes

FW DESK  
New Delhi

The late night showdown in MCD house during the election of the six Standing Committee members, continued till early Thursday with the AAP and BJP engaging in unabated sloganeering.

Councillors of both parties came to blows, threw the ballot boxes in the well and hurled water bottles at each other. The newly-elected MCD Mayor Shelly Oberoi had to be escorted out amid ruckus. The AAP alleged that the BJP women councillors were interrupting the voting process.

This led to constant disruptions which further delayed the election.

The House was adjourned nine times since last night amid pandemonium.

Besides raising slogans



against AAP, the BJP councillors also recited the 'Hanuman Chalisa'.

Earlier in the day, the House was adjourned for an hour after AAP candidates were elected to the post of Mayor and Deputy Mayor.

However, when the sitting

commenced after the adjournment, the election of six Standing Committee members was delayed which triggered sloganeering by BJP councillors.

The BJP councillors alleged that the AAP had pre-planned to delay the Standing Committee members election.

# Punish the real culprits, their protectors, and supporters: Jamaat-e-Islami Hind



FW DESK  
New Delhi

A delegation of Jamaat-e-Islami Hind on Wednesday visited Ghatmika village of Bharatpur district in Rajasthan and met the family members of Junaid (35) and Nasir (25), who were kidnapped and brutally murdered, and their bodies set afire in a Mahindra Bolero car in the Bhiwani district of Haryana on February 15. The delegation was led by the Jamaat-e-Islami Hind vice-president Prof. Mohammad Salim Engineer. The delegation met the two

victims' brothers and other family members and expressed their sympathy with the victims' families. The delegation also visited the village Eidgah where villagers have been staging a protest since February 15, demanding immediate arrest of all the accused persons and compensation of Rs one crore to each of the two families of Junaid and Nasir. "We support the villagers' protest and express our solidarity with the victims' families. We demand justice for the victims' families and adequate compensation for the two families to be given by the Rajasthan government.

# NIA raids in 6 Haryana districts against gangsters terrorists and criminals

SATISH HANDA

National Investigation Agency (NIA) in a campaign against hard core criminals including gangsters, terrorist funding and supplying arms and ammunition to anti-social elements conducted raids in search of criminals at 72 locations in different states including in Haryana, Punjab, Rajasthan, Delhi-NCR, Chandigarh, Uttar Pradesh, Gujarat and Madhya Pradesh. NIA teams raided hide outs of such criminals in seven districts in Haryana state also at Rohtak, Gurugram, Jhajjar, Sirsa, Narnaul, Dabwali and Yamunanagar which included in connection with the cases registered by NIA against gangsters and their criminal syndicates.

Information reveals that NIA teams conducted raid in search of a liquor supplier Ravinder Malik, Himanshu alias Bhau resident of village Retauli in Rohtak district



a most wanted criminal in three murder cases for which state government has also declared Rs One lakh reward. The team conducted raids for the arrest of Deepak alias alias Nikku at village Chhohchi in Jhajjar district but failed to find his whereabouts since his house was locked. CIA team also failed to arrest gangsters Kaushal, Surinder alias Chiku, Amit Dagar, Sandeep alias Bandar and Rupa all wanted in several criminal cases registered against them in Narnaul district.

During search of Tannu and Mannu a liquor smuggler also an associate of gangster Kala Rana at Yamunanagar, too, could not be arrested by CIA team during raids. The raids at the residence of Kuldeep Singh, Jagjit Singh and Ran Singh all working for the gangsters remained unsuccessful at Dabwali since NIA team failed to arrest them. Team also raided the residence of hard core criminal Happy at Sirsa and recovered 37 kg silver and Rs five lakh currency notes during search.

# No increase in SAP of sugarcane in UP



LUCKNOW: The Uttar Pradesh government has decided against revising the State Advisory Price (SAP) for the sugarcane, procured from farmers in the ongoing cane crushing season.

According to a notification issued by the cane development department, the SAP for the general variety of cane will remain unchanged at Rs 340 per quintal while the procurement price for early and late maturing variety has been fixed at Rs 350 and Rs 335 per quintal, respectively. The state government had last revised the SAP in September 2021, months ahead of the 2022 UP Assembly elections.

The notification to keep SAP unchanged was issued at a time when the state government is celebrating completion of 120 years of cane industry in UP. Officials said the decision was driven by the fact that the state government was more in favour of "efficient" and "timely" payment of cane dues to farmers. Industry sources said that over 72 per cent of the payment for cane purchased from farmers has been made in the current crushing season which is expected to last another three months. Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath has been stressing on timely payment of cane dues to farmers.

A senior office-bearer in the UP Sugar Mills Association (UPSMA) said that any increase in SAP at this point of time would have mounted arrears in the mills which are already burdened with the pressure of less revenue recovery in the wake of low cost of sugar in the open market. Millers said that as against a demand of around Rs 36 per kg, the sugar was being sold at Rs 33 per kg. The government is likely to take a call on revising SAP in the next crushing season — ahead of the next year's Lok Sabha elections. The SAP for sugarcane in Uttar Pradesh is reportedly the third highest in the country after Haryana and Punjab. Significantly, both Punjab and Haryana have increased the cane compensation by Rs 20 and Rs 10 per quintal, respectively, in the ongoing crushing season.



Clash between Supporters of 'Waris Punjab De' Chief Amritpal Singh and Punjab Police personnel as they headed towards police station in Ajnala to protest the arrest of his aide in a kidnap and assault case at Ajnala, 25km from Amritsar, on Thursday.



Waris Punjab De founder Amritpal Singh's associate Lovepreet Singh Toofan raise slogans along with supporters after his release from the Amritsar Central Jail, in Amritsar on Friday.

# IRS officer in Haryana arrested sent to three-day police remand



SATISH HANDA

A 2004 batch Indian Revenue Services officer of the rank of Assistant Commissioner in Excise & Taxation Department in Haryana state was arrested on Saturday and was produced in the court at Palwal on Sunday and sent to the police custody on three days remand. The Anti-Corruption Bureau (ACB) of Haryana arrested Dheeraj Garg, a former additional excise and taxation commissioner in a bribe case on the information of CM Flying Squad playing important role in the state to wipe out corruption from the state since past couple of years and pushed large number of corrupt government employees in the state as well as owners of the companies in private sector behind bars. Garg was transferred from the state excise and taxation department in October 2022 posted as Mission Director, Haryana Skill Development Mission on deputation to the Haryana government.

The Anti Corruption Bureau registered an FIR against the officials of excise & taxation department at Palwal and Faridabad on charges of collecting huge amount of bribes from transporters for letting them to evade payment of tax through a network of his subordinate employees in the department which caused heavy revenue loss to government towards GST. He was alleged collecting monthly from transporters in the area through employees working under him with a network of brokers and avoided to check vehicles passed without checking e-bills when Dheeraj Garg then was additional excise and taxation enforcement commissioner. According to ACB teams from Faridabad, Gurugram, Karnal and Panchkula jointly conducted raids at his 22 places at a time in which he had invested amount worth Rs 46 crore having present value of these 'benami' properties of value worth over Rs 200 crore at Chandigarh, Panchkula, Delhi and NCR.

# Man injured in mysterious blast in North Kashmir's Sopore

FW DESK

A man was injured in a mysterious blast in the Warpora area of Sopore in North Kashmir's Baramulla district on Thursday.

He was identified as Mohammad Jamal Dar, son of Ghulam Mohammad Dar.

The man, according to a local news agency, was digging earth at his orchard when the blast took place.

He was immediately shifted to a nearby health facility, where he was referred to a



Srinagar hospital. Police has launched the investigation into the case.

Sopore town, once a militant stronghold, has been peaceful over the last several years

# India's first case of Surfactant therapy to save the lungs of a premature baby

YOGESH KANT  
New Delhi

For the first time in the country, doctors have used "SALSA technique" (Surfactant therapy) to save the lungs of a 36 week old premature baby girl at Sir Ganga Ram Hospital in Delhi.

Surfactant therapy has been the mainstay of treatment for pre-term newborns with respiratory distress syndrome. This therapy is the delivery of a special liquid into the immature lungs of newborn, premature babies suffering from breathing difficulty, doctors said.

Surfactant is a liquid produced by the lungs, which keeps the airways (alveoli)



hospital said in a statement.

Doctors at the SGRH have claimed that this is "India's first case of surfactant therapy using the SALSA technique in a pre-term baby to save lungs". This case study has been published in the latest edition of Current Medicine Research and Practice journal, it said. Delivery of surfactant through "endotracheal intubation" has been the most commonly used technique. But there are two major problems associated with endotracheal intubation, one that it requires expertise and second that it is associated with complications, doctors at the hospital said.

In addition, there is also "an increased risk of chronic lung disease", they said.

# Proposal to develop Kurukshetra having 134 pilgrimage centre in 48-kos as tourist centre in Haryana

SATISH HANDA  
Kurukshetra

Haryana Governor Bandaru Dattatraya also the Chairman of Kurukshetra Development Board in a meeting with Chief Minister Manohar Lal Khattar and state government officers given a final shape to develop a historic as well as religious town Kurukshetra as a tourist centre in Haryana state similar to the Varanasi in Uttar Pradesh and promote it on the world map informing people about the importance of this place in the state. Among those prepared action plan in the meeting were Chief Minister Manohar Lal Khattar, Deputy CM Dushyant Chautala, Lok Sabha MP of area Nayab Singh Saini, Kurukshetra MLA Subhash Sudha, senior officers of Haryana state and board members. According to information, large number of



tourists from all over the country visit Kurukshetra to have a holy dip in the 'Sarovar'. A total numbers of 20 agenda items were discussed in this meeting to bring Kurukshetra on world map in which decisions were taken unanimously. A booklet of 'International Gita Mahotsav-2022' was also released on this occasion.

The Governor had directed state tourism department to prepare a booklet on the role and importance of 134 pilgrimage centre in 48-kos of Kurukshetra and structural infrastructure

should also be developed in these areas to provide benefits, facilities to the maximum number of visiting pilgrims. He said that the meeting of the Kurukshetra Development Board would be organized every year to take decisions regarding the development of the Kurukshetra Development Board. Governor said that efforts will be made to spread holy 'Geeta' preaches across the world. Chief Minister Khattar said that with effect from 28th April to May 1st this year International Gita Jayanti Festival is being celebrated at Australia.

# SGPC rebukes Haryana govt to stop interference in Gurdwara management

JAGMOHAN SINGH  
Amritsar

The Shiromani Gurdwara Parbandhak Committee (SGPC) taking notice of the use of force and violation of Sikh Maryada (code of conduct) by the Haryana Sikh Gurdwara Management Committee (HSGMC) (ad-hoc) for taking possession of Gurdwara Sahib Patshahi Chhevin in Kurukshetra with the help of the police administration, has rebuked the Haryana government to stop interfering in the Gurdwara management.

On Sunday, office-bearers of HSGMC (ad-hoc) broke the locks of golak (offering box) at Gurdwara Patshahi Chhevin in Kurukshetra and the SGPC's Haryana Sikh mission and locked the same with their locks, after which, the SGPC called a special and urgent



meeting of its executive. In the SGPC executive meeting presided over by SGPC President Harjinder Singh Dhami, the coercive action of HSGMC (ad-hoc) was condemned.

Talking to the press, Dhami said that under a deliberate conspiracy, the Haryana government wants to occupy the Gurdwara Sahibs in Haryana. "Under this intention of occupying Gurdwaras, the

office-bearers of government nominated HSGMC (ad-hoc) entered the historical Gurdwara Patshahi Chhevin in Kurukshetra and in an arbitrary action, they broke golak using a cutter. Later, the lock of SGPC's Haryana Sikh Mission at Kurukshetra under its Dharam Prachar Committee was also broken in the same manner and it was occupied", said Dhami.

# Doritos heat pods provide warmth and shelter to over 500 underprivileged people in Gurugram

FW DESK  
New Delhi

In partnership with the Municipal Corporation of Gurugram and The Social Lab, PepsiCo India, under its brand Doritos, launched special Heat Pods in Gurugram. The heat pods were installed in January and have provided warmth and shelter to over 500 underprivileged people in Gurugram. The pods have been installed at two prominent locations in Gurugram - Rajiv Chowk and Subhash Chowk - and will continue to provide relief to local communities till the change of the season.



Pods, these insulated shelters have been designed with in-built heaters, a warming system and are stocked with quilts to provide warmth and safety to 10 people at a time. The initiative reinforces the core message of the brand's latest launch, Doritos Sizzlin' Hot.

Expressing his gratitude, Dr. Vijay Pal, Joint Commissioner

MC Gurugram, said "We're thankful to PepsiCo India and The Social Lab for providing the local communities with facilities like the Doritos Heat Pods. This initiative helped people stay safe during the intense cold waves that took place especially in the month of January. We hope to be a part of more such endeavours that help society at large."

Speaking on the initiative, Sahil Arora - Chief Executive Officer, The Social Lab, said "We are proud to partner with PepsiCo India on this noble and innovative initiative & we look forward to helping the homeless people and aim to save as many lives as possible.

# Residents worried over twin city Ambala now turning as crime city

SATISH HANDA

The residents of twin city Ambala expressed worry over fast increasing crimes since past sometime as regard smuggling and sale of drugs, liquor and incidents of illegal sex scandals, cases of thefts, automobile lifting and snatchings. The town has witnessed various serious crimes in past couple of days. SHO Sadar police station Ambala Cantt on a clue about illegal sex business going on conducted a raid along with Anil Kumar DSP Ambala Cantt at Deep Hotel in Rai Market Ambala Cantt

and during search in the hotel rooms found a young couple including a girl from Nepal both lying in highly exposed condition in room No. 114 on Saturday late night. Police arrested four persons identified as Kamal, Jatin both employees managing the hotel along with the young couple. However, in hotel record the girl was shown as a resident of Ludhiana and there was no entry of her male partner in hotel record. Later, during preliminary investigation 'Nepali' girl admitted that she was brought on contract basis through a agent for illegal sex



business. SHO Naresh Kumar told media persons that a case was registered against six persons, of them four were arrested and search for the owner of hotel Deepak Batra and the agent Bharat started

by the police.

Information reveals that the name of many high profile persons is likely to be exposed in this case. The owner of Deep Hotel Deepak Batra is having another two restaurants in Ambala Cantt including Dilli Darbar and another under construction on the national Highway No. 1 which is presently lying sealed by the Municipal Committee Ambala Cantt. The bale application moved by Deepak Batra in the court of Additional Chief Judicial Magistrate Ambala on Monday was rejected and now the alleged accused has applied

for bale in Punjab and Haryana High Court. According to police investigation officer, police has traced out telephone numbers of several high profile persons from the call detail which are being examined by the police investigation team likely to expose their names also shortly. Police information reveals that three police teams has been constituted for the arrest of Deepak Batra conducting search for alleged accused went underground after the raid at Deep Hotel at Panchkula, Chandigarh, Mohali and Babylal conducting raids at his relatives.

# Nitin Gadkari lays foundation stone of the world's largest and unique Divyang Park

ANUBHUTI INCLUSIVE PARK IN NAGPUR, MAHARASHTRA

FW DESK

Union Minister for Road Transport and Highways Nitin Gadkari today laid the Foundation Stone of the world's largest and unique Divyang Park - Anubhuti Inclusive Park in Nagpur, Maharashtra.

Speaking on the occasion he said this park is being developed keeping in mind the vision of Prime Minister Narendra Modi to build an inclusive society. He said instead of sympathy, this park will show empathy, hence this park has been named Anubhuti Divyang Park.

Gadkari said through this park the message of inclusion will reach not only in the country but also in the whole world. The Minister said the park will have adapted facilities for all 21 types of disabilities. It will have facilities like touch and smell garden, hydrotherapy unit, water therapy, independent room for mentally challenged children, mother

Gadkari said Nagpur city is



one of the fastest growing cities of the country. In 2016, the central government passed the Rights of Persons with Disabilities Act for the rights of persons with disabilities. He said this law is to give the disabled the right to live with dignity. Taking initiative under this, the Central Government has created some Divyang Parks in South India and Madhya Pradesh. In this series, this 'Anubhuti Inclusive Park' is being built for disabled children and general citizens in

Pardi campus of Nagpur, he added.

The Minister said this is the world's first inclusive disabled park, a provision of about Rs 12 crore has been made by the Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment, Government of India, for this park being built in an area of 90 thousand square feet. He said here, various projects have been conceptualized for the disabled as well as for the general public and senior citizens.

## EPFO adds 14.93 lakh net members in the month of December, 2022

NEW DELHI: The provisional payroll data of Employees' Provident Fund Organisation (EPFO) released, highlights that EPFO has added 14.93 lakh net members in the month of December, 2022. Year-on-year comparison of payroll data reflects an increase of 32,635 in net membership addition in December, 2022 as compared to the corresponding month during last year in 2021.

Out of 14.93 lakh members added during the month, around 8.02 lakh new members have come under the social security coverage of EPFO for the first time. Among the newly joined members, highest enrolment is registered in the age-group of 18-21 years with 2.39 lakh members, followed by the age-group of 22-25 years with 2.08 lakh members. The age-groups of 18-25 years constitutes 55.64% of total of new members during the month. This indicates that majority of the members joining EPFO are first-time job seekers who are joining organised sector workforce of the country.

The data also highlights that approximately 3.84 lakh members exited while 10.74

lakh members exited and re-joined EPFO membership. These members switched their jobs and re-joined the establishments covered under EPFO and opted to transfer their accumulations instead of applying for final settlement thus, extending their social security protection.

Gender-wise analysis of payroll data indicates that enrolment of new female members has been 2.05 lakh in December, 2022. The percentage of new female member among the total new joiners has increased from 25.14% in November 2022 to 25.57% during the current month. Social security cover under the Employees' Provident Funds & Miscellaneous Provisions Act, 1952 has been extended to these female members for the first time.

State-wise payroll figures highlight that top five states in terms of net member addition are Maharashtra, Tamil Nadu, Gujarat, Karnataka, Haryana. These states together added 60.08% of net member addition during the month. Of all the states, Maharashtra is leading by adding 24.82% of overall member addition followed by the state of Tamil Nadu with 10.08% during the month.

# Congress to amend rules to pave way for Sonia, Rahul & Manmohan Singh in CWC



## THE DECISION TO AUTHORISE THE CONGRESS PRESIDENT TO CONSTITUTE THE NEW CWC WAS UNANIMOUS

RAIPUR: The Congress will amend 16 articles and 32 rules in the party's constitution, and one of them is on appointing a former Congress President and a former Prime Minister as the Congress working committee members. The proposal, if passed, will enable Sonia Gandhi and Rahul Gandhi to become the CWC members, and former Prime Minister Manmohan Singh will also become a member of the party's top decision mak-

ing body. In the steering committee held on Friday in Raipur, party president Mallikarjun Kharge was empowered to constitute the new CWC. Sources said Ajay Maken and Digvijaya Singh were in the favour of CWC elections, adding that there were arguments and counter arguments for the subject. Jairam Ramesh, party General Secretary, said, "The decision to authorise the Congress president to constitute the new CWC was unanimous."

## Rahul Gandhi, Priyanka attend wedding of Jitendra Singh's daughter in Alwar



ALWAR: Hundreds of members of erstwhile royal families and prominent politicians including Congress leaders Rahul Gandhi and Priyanka Gandhi Vadra, as well as Rajasthan Chief Minister Ashok Gehlot and former Chief Minister Vasundhara Raje attended the wedding celebrations of former Union Minister Jitendra Singh's daughter in Alwar. Jitendra Singh's daughter Manavika got married to Avijit Singh, a member of the former royal family of Pali, on Wednesday night. In view of the ceremony, police security was increased outside the Circuit House, helipad and the wedding venue Phool Bagh. Prominent guests from India and abroad reached Alwar for the royal wedding. A helipad was prepared at Kendriya Vidyalaya. A large number of policemen were deployed from here till Phool Bagh.

## Gadkari approves National Highway project worth Rs 410.83 Crore on EPC Mode in West Bengal



FW DESK

Union Minister for Road Transport and Highways Shri Nitin Gadkari approved Rs 410.83 Crore for the construction of a 4-lane Raniganj Bypass with a length of 5.261 km on NH-14 (old NH-60) in Paschim Bardhaman district on EPC (Engineering, Procurement and Construction) Mode in West Bengal.

In a series of tweets Shri Gadkari informed that NH-14 starts from its junction with NH-12 (Old NH 34) near Morgram connecting Rampur Hat, Siuri, Raniganj, Bankura, Garhbeta, and Salbani and terminating at its junction with NH-16 (Old NH 2) near Kharagpur in the West Bengal.

The Minister said the entire stretch is a 2-lane with a Paved Shoulder configuration. This corridor is acting as one of the prime corridors for the traffic plying from south Indian states and Odisha towards North Bengal, and northeastern states, he added.

Shri Gadkari said it connects many important Industrial, religious & agricultural areas like Kharagpur, Midnapore, Chandrakona Road, Garbeta, Bishnupur, Bankura, Raniganj, Pandabeshwar, Dubrajpur, Suri, Rampurhat, Nalhati, etc.

## RSS lodges FIR for 'misleading news items'

LUCKNOW: The Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS) Awadh Prant Prachar Pramukh, Ashok Kumar Dubey, has filed an FIR under IPC 153 A (promoting enmity between groups) and other relevant charges against the executive director of a prominent newspaper and reporters of several news publications and channels for their report about a new RSS headquarter coming up over 100 acres of land in Ayodhya.

The FIR was filed at the Hazratganj police station in Lucknow.

In his complaint, Dubey alleged that the accused persons deliberately maligned the image of RSS by publishing a report on February 14.

This report was also circulated by a news channel.

Dubey said that it is a "mischievously designed fictitious news based on unsubstantiated and imaginative facts" and issued a denial on behalf of RSS.

He has also added in the FIR that the fake news reports have



misled readers into wrongly believing that the RSS has lost its path of "Param Vaibhav" and is now working on the line to "acquire immovable property of 100 acre land at Ayodhya, in collusion with the state government".

Whereas the fact is that the RSS already has its office, Saket Nilayam, at Ayodhya for the last many years.

Dubey alleged that it appears that as part of a motivated plot, despite being cognizant of the full facts, the media reports were "aimed at harming the goodwill

and reputation of RSS by publishing fake news".

Assistant Commissioner of Police, Hazratganj, Arvind Kumar Verma, said that an FIR against the accused news organisations' reporters and an executive director has been lodged under the charges of IPC 153 A (promoting enmity between groups), IPC 505 (statements conducing to mischief) and section 66 of the IT Act.

"Our probe is on and statements will be taken from the accused soon," he said.

## Nadda launches book on 'Modi'

BJP national president J.P. Nadda on Wednesday launched a book "Modi: Shaping a Global Order in Flux" in Chanakyapuri here.

While addressing the readers, Nadda said, "This book is going to open a debate on how PM Modi has taken a decision which has changed India's image worldwide. It's necessary to understand what was the image of India before Modi ji came to power."

Recalling the old image, Nadda said, "The economy was declining, India had an image of a corrupt state, repeated terrorist attacks and a lack of stable govt. The very sad part was that the authority of the PM was eroded". He further said, "Unlike in the past, India doesn't shy to take positions.

For a long time, India has been shying from taking hard positions. However, under PM Modi, on international issues, India can take a stand on complex issues. A classic example is the Russia-Ukraine war". Praising the New India, BJP national

## Barbs continue to fly over Naba Das death as CBI seeks FBI help to investigate the murder



Even as Odisha police delve deeper into the motive behind the sensational murder of former health minister Naba Kishore Das on January 29 in the western Odisha town of at Brajrajnagar a war of words has erupted between the ruling Biju Janata Dal (BJD) and the opposition over the state government's move to seek the help of the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) of the United States to crack the case by finding out what was the exact mental state of the assassin, Gopal Das, a sub-inspector of police.

Making a statement in the state Assembly on the case Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik recently said, "The State Crime Branch is seeking the help of the Federal Bureau of Investigation of the United States of America, as they have the best expertise in behavioral analysis in such cases."

"We have requested the Ministry of Home Affairs, Government of India to facilitate an evaluation of the behavior of the accused by the Behavioral Support Unit of the FBI of the United States of America. I want to reassure the house that no stone will be left unturned in ensuring a full, fair and open investigation in the case with the assistance of the best forensic experts in India and abroad," Patnaik added.

Patnaik also expressed his shock over the politicization of the sensitive case. "In the aftermath of this terrible incident, the manner in which this very sensitive case is being politicized has shocked me as

well as the people of Odisha. It is disturbing to see the baseless and malicious allegations that are being made. Independent judiciary is one of the strongest pillars of our democracy. After the Honourable High Court has appointed a retired High Court Judge to monitor the investigation of the case, the whole police investigation will be subjected to judicial scrutiny. So, what is the need to do politics in the case and make baseless and malicious allegations? We should all respect and have faith in our independent judiciary," said the Chief Minister who expressed shock over the fact that the killer was a policeman.

However, opposition appears unfazed by Patnaik's statement that some leaders of opposition, especially those belonging to the BJD, have been pointing accusing fingers on the entire state police force. Senior BJP leader and Leader of Opposition in the state assembly, Jayanarayan Mishra hit out at the ruling party. "Chief Minister woke up after 24 days of Naba Das' death. There is nothing new in his statement. The Crime Branch investigation is still revolving around Gopal Das. The CB is shying away from inves-

## Hizbul Mujahideen terrorist shot dead in Pakistan



FW DESK

Bashir Ahmad Pir, also known as Intiyaz Alam, was shot dead on Monday in Pakistan's Rawalpindi. He was a "top-ranking commander" for Hizbul Mujahideen, which has been fighting Pakistan's proxy against India in Kashmir. Alam is believed to have been close to Hizbul Mujahideen chief Syed Salahuddin. In October 2022, Alam was designated as a terrorist under the Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act. He was identified as a "launching commander" of Hizbul Mujahideen, "especially for infiltrating into Kupwara, and coordinating with other terrorist groups for terrorist activities in Jammu and Kashmir".

## Mpower and NIMHANS sign a strategic MOU to support the on-ground implementation of Tele-MANAS for pan India

ARUN KUMAR RAO  
Bangalore

Mpower, a mental health initiative of the Aditya Birla Education Trust, has signed an MOU with NIMHANS (National Institute of Mental Health and Neuro-Sciences) to support the implementation of Tele-MANAS services across India. As part of the collaboration, Mpower will be responsible for setting up, operating, and managing all day-to-day affairs for the Tele-MANAS centres. NIMHANS, on the other hand, will provide Mpower with access to the platform, operating guidelines,



and framework needed to operate the centers.

Mpower will leverage its expertise in providing seamless, standardized, and world-class mental health services to beneficiaries of Tele-MANAS.

This collaboration aims to ensure the Successful on-ground implementation of Tele-MANAS services, as well as the accessibility and availability of trained experts and professional mental health counsel-

ling services to those in need.

Speaking to media on the collaboration Dr. Neerja Birla, Founder and Chairperson of Mpower and Aditya Birla Education Trust said "Mpower is proud to partner with NIMHANS to provide support for Tele-MANAS. I strongly believe that public-private partnerships, such as ours, which incorporate standardization, trained manpower, and technological support for government programs, can catalyze and transform systems and service delivery, ultimately achieving the goal of providing quality mental health services to all.

ARAVIND MOHAPATRA  
Bhubaneswar

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tigating the motive behind the murder. CM is still not willing to hand over the investigation to the CBI and has put his faith in the FBI," said Mishra who was one of the first to question how an official gun was issued to the accused police officer if he was of unstable mind and under treatment for a mental illness.

The ongoing budget session of the Odisha Legislative Assembly has been witnessing repeated ruckus over the issue with both BJP and Congress attacking the government. The BJP has also been raising heat over the issue outside the assembly. Senior BJP leader and former director general of police Prakash Mishra has alleged that portraying the accused police officer Gopal Das as a mental patient was a deliberate plan of Odisha government to make the court take a lenient view on his crime. Mishra said, "I have gone through the media reports and have been closely observing the developments after the murder of the minister. I feel that the prosecution will present before the court that since Gopal is a mental patient, his punishment can be relaxed."

## Maharashtra highlights fisheries, millets in UN Year of Cereals

DOMINICK RODRIGUES  
Mumbai

Maharashtra Chief Minister Eknath Shinde has declared that in addition to the "green" and "eco-friendly" industries -- other industries boosting the fishery business in Maharashtra will be given priority since fishermen risk their lives for their business by coping with the high tide daily.

Highlighting Union Minister for Fisheries, Animal Husbandry and Dairying Parshottam Rupala's comment that recent times have witnessed the fishing community's loss during NDRF drawing "meagre" assistance, he said that efforts would be made to ensure that criteria for such is amended.

The Chief Minister was speaking during the valedictory program of the "Third Phase" of Sagar Parikrama+ that had been organized at the Sassoon Docks here in welfare schemes for fishermen and fishery business in



collaboration with the Central and Maharashtra governments.

While Maharashtra has a 720-kms long coastline, the state government will be giving priority to all developmental works related to tourism and fisheries, besides also beautification and redevelopment of "Koliwad" (fisherfolks villages). "The State Government will emphasize on the facilities and security extended to the Koli community, which is described as "Dariyacha Raja" ("King of the Seas)," Shinde said while noting that issues related

to refund of diesel and cold storage will also be resolved at the earliest.

The past few days had witnessed damages occurring to nets of 10 fishermen that were gutted and left them in a loss, he said while declaring that Rs 54 lakhs would be given to them from the Chief Minister Assistance Fund.

Union Minister Parshottam Rupala said that Prime Minister Narendra Modi has made available Rs 20,000 crores for the "Matsya Sampada Yojana" which could be availed by the

Maharashtra's fishing community, besides cold storage facilities also being soon provided to them. Calling for 'mass awareness' among the fishing community so that such benefits could trickle down through the fisherfolks generations, he said this would also ensure the continued practice of rearing and preserving fisheries.

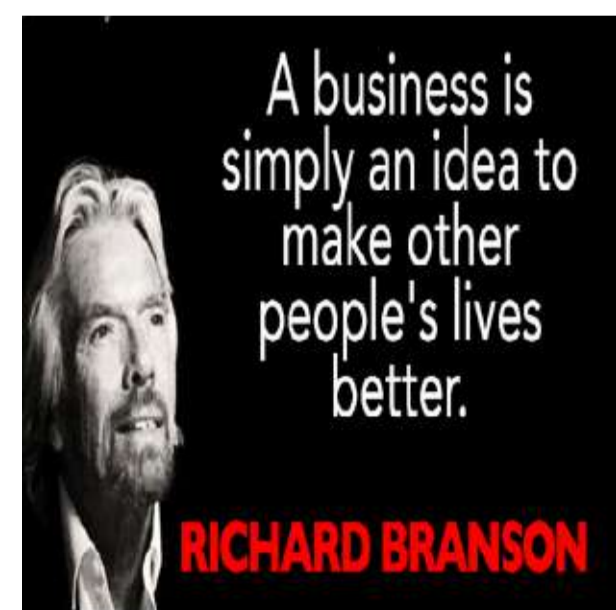
In another event, the Maharashtra Chief Minister inaugurated the "Millet Festival" here recently in the wake of the United Nations announcing 2023 as the "International Year of Cereals." The state government's department of marketing has prepared an action plan of millet marketing and value chain, that highlights its benefits alongside its position in the food chain, creating a new consumer class for its sales and also an organized value chain from product to consumers at cheaper rates to consumer, besides also increased prices for the producers.

## More cross-border digital payment links required

The recent launch of a cross-border link for real-time person-to-person money transfers between India and Singapore is a significant step towards facilitating seamless financial transactions between the two countries. The token instantaneous cross-border remittances made by the Reserve Bank of India Governor and the Monetary Authority of Singapore's Managing Director signify the potential of this link to make a tangible difference in the lives of millions of people. The cross-border link will enable individuals wishing to remit funds for the 'maintenance of a relative' or as a 'gift' to transfer the money seamlessly using the UPI at the Indian end and the PayNow app at the Singapore end. This will be particularly beneficial for the Indian diaspora in Singapore and tens of thousands of migrant workers employed in Singapore's construction, marine shipyard, and services sectors. These individuals can now send money back home to their families with ease and in a timely manner. The link is a testimony to the strong economic ties between India and Singapore. It is noteworthy that six banks in India, including three state-run, two private and the Indian unit of Singapore's DBS Bank, will be facilitating inbound remittances to their account holders, while one private lender and the three public sector banks will enable their Indian customers to send money using the link. In Singapore, customers of DBS Bank and the non-bank lender Liquid Group can avail of the transfer facility. The launch of the cross-border link is a testament to the power of technology in bridging geographic boundaries and facilitating cross-border transactions. It is a significant step towards enhancing financial inclusion, promoting cashless transactions, and promoting digitalization in the two countries. In conclusion, the launch of the cross-border link for real-time person-to-person money transfers between India and Singapore is a welcome step that will have a positive impact on the lives of millions of people.

### LETTERBOX

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## THE FINANCIAL WORLD

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DR. SRIDHAR KUNDU

## Capex Shot- Aim at the bull's eye



Public spending is essential for economic growth and balancing development. It helps in building a conducive infrastructure for the growth of the private sector and thus, crowds a large pool of private investment into the economy. Since independence, India has set a good example of a mixed economy where, both the public and private sectors co-exist with dignity and harmony and celebrate each other's glory.

Spending by both the public and private sectors in creating fixed assets, such as machinery and equipment, and the development of new technology is called Gross Capital Formation (GCF). The GCF helps in value addition to growth and generating new employment opportunities in the economy.

In 1950, the total GCF share in India's GDP was 15 percent which included 3 percent from the public sector and the rest 12 percent from the private sector. The pre-reform period witnessed rising participation from the public sector in capital formation. In 1990, the total GCF share in India's GDP was 27 percent with 10.5 percent from the public sector and 16.5 percent from the private sector. The macro-economic reforms in 1991 helped the opening of the economy and liberalisation of various restrictive trade practices which resulted in the growth of private sector participation. Between 1991 and 2007, the private sector GCF share in India's GDP went up to 32 percent whereas, the public sector share remained in the range of 7 to 9 percent.

The economic downturn in 2008 and its post-era witnessed a sharp decline in private-sector investment with no change in the status quo of the public sector. In 2019-20, the total GCF share in India's GDP was 30 percent with 23 percent share from the private sector and 7 percent from

the public sector.

Further, the 2020 covid-19 pandemic and subsequently, the other global headwinds such as the Ukrainian war expected to bring down the sentiment of private sector investment in the economy. Therefore, the need of the hour is to raise the public sector investment in capital formation to encourage private-sector participation and to bring the economy back to equilibrium with higher growth and stability.

Since 2021-22, the union government has adopted a policy to increase the capital outlay share in its total spending. In 2020-21, the capital outlay in the total union budget was 12.1 percent which was 0.3 percent higher than the same in 2014-15. In 2021-22, this share increased to 15.6 percent, and further in 2022-23(RE), it increased to 17.4 percent.

The union budget 2023-24 proposed a capital outlay of Rs.10 lakh crores which is a rise of about 33 percent from the previous year's BE and, compared to the previous year's RE, the rise is about 37.4 percent. The capital outlay in this budget FY24 has received a higher priority with a 22.2 share in the total budgeted expenditure.

In the whole government's policy frame-

work of capital spending in 2023-24, the physical infrastructure adorns the highest priority. Both, the Ministry of Road, Transport and Highways (MoRTH) and the Ministry of Railways (MoR) share about 50 percent of the total budgeted capital outlays. The capital outlay of about Rs. 2.6 lakh crores is provisioned for the MoRTH and the MoR is provided with a capital outlay of Rs. 2.4 lakh crores in 2023-24. The Ministry of Defence stands as the other major stakeholder in the total budgeted capital outlay of about Rs. 1.7 lakh crores.

Capital formation in the physical infrastructure certainly improves connectivity and thus, supports easing the transport of raw materials at lower cost, and again, facilitates the reach of the final output to each single demand hub. The life cycle of the product improves with the development of physical infrastructure and contributes to the growth of the industry.

During the post-pandemic period, the industrial sector witnessed a slower rate of recovery. The Index of Industrial Production (IIP) registered a growth rate of 5.4 percent during April-December in 2022 compared to its previous year. The growth rate recorded

in the last week of December 2022 is less than 5 percent.

Further, there is a reduction in the share of industrial products including construction in India's GDP during the post-reform period. In 1991, the share was about 35 and it came down to 28 percent in 2021-22. Manufacturing shares 16.7 percent followed by 7.3 percent share from the construction sector, 2.2 percent from electricity, and 2.1 percent from the mining sector in India's GDP in 2021-22.

The economic growth and development of a nation depend on the strength of its industrialisation. The industrial sector generates value addition and provides employment opportunities. It absorbs the surplus labour force in the economy which remained disguised in the agriculture and allied sector. The forward movement of the public sector through higher capital investment is certainly a welcome step to help the private industries mostly the micro, small and medium ones (MSMEs) to grow and develop.

However, the past trend shows that the total budgeted capital outlays are not fully utilised within the limited time frame. In the current year 2022-23, the RE of capital outlay is 2.3 percent lower than the BE. In 2014-15, the difference between the BE and Actual capital outlays was 15 percent and in 2017-18, this difference was 18 percent. The difference shows the delay of a project which would add to rising cost overruns and thus, limit the growth process. The government's administrative machinery needs to build strength and maintain transparency in completing the projects on time which would restore confidence in the private sector and encourage them to join with the public sector in nation-building.

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

JAYAN JOSE THOMAS EXPLAINS HOW BETTER FOOD SECURITY, HEALTH AND EDUCATION WILL HELP YOUNG POPULATION



## A Budget for youngsters

The world is indeed looking up to the Indian economy as a 'bright star', as the Finance Minister noted in the Budget speech on February 1. In 2020, India accounted for 20.6% of the worldwide population of 15 to 29 year olds. Which means that in the years ahead, one out of every five workers deployed globally could be an Indian. No doubt, the rest of the world foresees a fortune in India's young population. But are our policymakers doing enough to realise the possibilities that are unfolding?

The key proposals in this year's Union budget are the following. On the one hand, there will be a considerable increase in capital expenditures, for the building of physical infrastructure, mainly in transport, energy and defence. The figures under this head are expected to be higher by Rs 3.2 trillion (or lakh crore) in 2023-24 compared to the corresponding level in 2022-23 (revised estimates). While the growth of the tax revenues is going to be modest, the government is nevertheless committed to reducing the fiscal deficit — the shortfall in government's receipts relative to its expenditures — to 5.9% of GDP. That could have been achieved only by reducing the spending on some other sectors.

The axe has fallen on subsidies and social sector expenditures. Compared to its previous year, in 2023-24, the Union government's expenditure on food subsidy will fall by Rs 0.9 trillion (or 90,000 crore), on fertilizer subsidy by Rs 0.5 trillion, and on the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA) by Rs 0.3 trillion. The marginal increases in the allocations on health, education, agriculture and the Anganwadi scheme are unlikely to make an impact, after taking into account the effect of inflation.

Public-private complementarities



A jump in capital spending by the government, as proposed in the Budget, is a much-needed step to reinvigorate the Indian economy. Investment (for buying new machines and building roads and factories) as a proportion of income or GDP indicates the rate at which a country's productive capabilities are growing. In India, this proportion rose steadily during the mid-2000s and peaked at 42% in 2007, which was even better than China's record at that point in time. High rates of investment translated into extremely fast rates of economic progress in the country, which lasted until the early 2010s.

The disruptions and the uncertainty caused due to the global financial crisis in 2007-08 had been a turning point. China responded to the crisis by increasing domestic investment, a large part of which coming from its public sector. On the other hand, in India, the government restrained its expenditures, worrying about the rising fiscal deficits. As public expenditures nosedived, private investors lost confidence as well. Investment as a proportion of GDP was on a steady downward slide, falling to 33.8% in 2013-14 and 27.3% in 2020-21. If the proposed investments by the government come through, and they indeed crowd in private investments as the Finance Minister has predicted, that can set the stage for a revival of the Indian economy.

In contrast to capital expenditures, subsidies and social sector spending are considered 'wasteful' and, therefore, it is believed, a cut on their outlays will not hurt economic growth. Quite the contrary, a reduction in social expenditures not only worsens the existing social inequalities but can also dampen the prospects for long-term growth. Only 9.8% (in 2020-21) of India's workers are in regular jobs that provide some form of social security. Therefore, measures such as MGNREGA and free provision of food have been a clutch at straw for millions of poor Indians, hit as they have been by the COVID-19 pandemic and joblessness.

### Invest in future

Public expenditures on the social sectors constitute an investment for the future — more so for a country with a predominantly young population. The income a destitute mother receives for work through MGNREGA may ensure that her children do not have to go to school with empty stomachs. Underinvestment in education and health will undercut India's chances in a global economy that is increasingly dominated by knowledge. In 2022, only 2.6% of the nearly 1.9 million candidates who wrote the National Eligibility cum Entrance Test (NEET) in India for admission to undergraduate medical courses managed to secure a seat for MBBS in a government college. Every year, millions of young women and men in the country are denied the opportunity for affordable basic and higher education. At the same time, there is frustration among the educated that there are too few decent jobs for many of them. Government expenditure on health and education can provide a boost to both the supply and the demand fronts in a knowledge-driven economy: more new jobs as teachers and doc-

tors, especially for women, and a greater supply of younger professionals and skilled workers.

Unwarranted fears about fiscal deficit inflated fears about the fiscal deficit and government debt will only be counterproductive in a country possessing vast reserves of untapped human and other resources as India does. Only a small portion of India's public debt is owed to external agencies (amounting to 4.2% of GDP in 2022), which does not pose a threat of the kind that external debt had created in Greece or is creating in Sri Lanka now. India's government debt is held largely by domestic financial institutions, including public sector banks, insurance companies and provident funds. In other words, this is a debt the government owes to the people of this country, whose savings the financial institutions have mobilised.

If the government is borrowing to build resources that help generate new jobs and incomes, it is in fact setting off a virtuous cycle. Higher incomes and higher levels of development will also lead to the creation of fresh savings, which will help pay off the debts. Many middle-class Indian families take loans for their children's education partly because they recognise that an educated child will open the door for upward mobility of the entire family. Would it not be so much better if the state borrows instead, to feed and educate all its young citizens? In this way, the children belonging to asset-poor and socially disadvantaged households too will get a chance to pick up the qualifications required to enter the new economy. No one will dispute that India will need a vast army of scientists, engineers and nurses to fulfil its global ambitions.

Jayan Jose Thomas is a Professor of Economics at the Indian Institute of Technology Delhi. Views are personal

### BOOKS: REVIEW

## New book spells out how 15 Corps prepared for D-Day

The 15 Corps of the Indian army, also known as Chinar Corps, has been instrumental in carrying out New Delhi's political command in the tumultuous state of Jammu and Kashmir. The Corps played a crucial role during the critical year of 2019 when the special status of Jammu and Kashmir was revoked. In his recently released book titled 'Kitne Ghazi Aaye, Kitne Ghazi Gaye', retired Lieutenant General K.J.S. 'Tiny' Dhillon, an Infantry veteran from the Rajputana Rifles, shares his experiences leading up to the events of August 5, 2019. The book, published by Penguin Veer, has 23 chapters spread over 300 pages, but it is chapters 16 to 19 that form the backbone of the book. These chapters focus on three significant events of 2019, namely the Pulwama attack, Balakot strike, and the revocation of Jammu and Kashmir's special status.

Dhillon took over as 15 Corps

commander on February 10, 2019, and on February 14, the Pulwama attack took place. He writes that he was taken by surprise when he received a call in the middle of the night at around 2 a.m., informing him of a breakfast meeting with Home Minister Amit Shah during his visit to Srinagar on June 26, 2019. During the meeting, the retired general came to know about the Bharatiya Janata Party's intentions of revoking Jammu and Kashmir's special status.

Dhillon writes, "It is suffice to say that the issues flagged by Mr. Shah included the current law and order situation, the potential for it to deteriorate immediately after any declaration by the government (reading down of articles 370 and 35-A), repercussion of the latter on the LOC, and the pros and cons from the perspective of an anticipated Pakistani reaction on the path-breaking declaration that was now certain to follow."

Dhillon was confident that the

**'the home minister's knowledge and in-depth assessment of the situation, including the likely fallouts, was exceptional, and that the home minister was ready with counter-plans for every possible eventuality'**

situation would remain peaceful in Kashmir following the revocation of the special status, and he gave his personal assurance to Home Minister Shah during the meeting. The retired general's confidence was based on the recent experience of the Team Security Forces in handling the events before and after militant



Kitne Ghazi Aye  
Kitne Ghazi Gaye:  
A Memoir: A True  
Life Account of  
Bravery And  
Sacrifice of An  
Army Soldier  
By Lieutenant  
General K.J.S.  
'Tiny' Dhillon  
Penguin Veer  
320 pages, Rs 699

commander Zakir Musa's death in May 2019.

The retired general shares an important anecdote in the book about his wife's reaction after the meeting with Home Minister Shah. His wife asked him how the meeting with the home minister was, to which he responded, "Bees yuvraj mil kar bhi iss bande ka muqabla nahi kar sakte." The author praises the home minister's understanding of the Kashmir situation and Pakistan. He writes that the home minister's knowledge and in-depth assessment of the situation, including the likely fallouts, was exceptional, and that the home minister was ready with counter-plans for every possible eventuality.

Secrecy was crucial for the security apparatus in Kashmir, and the retired general writes that he

was the senior-most army officer in Kashmir when the abrogation was declared. No one else in the 15 Corps had the slightest idea about what was about to come. Even the General Officers Commanding or the staff at Corps Headquarters were kept in the dark. Secrecy was a precondition without compromising on the preparations. The retired general had chosen the Chinar House as the main base to execute the plan for revoking the special status. He writes that the Chinar House was the most secure place where all those who 'knew it' used to assemble and discuss minor details.

Furthermore, the book also sheds light on the challenges and difficulties faced by the security forces during the Balakot strike, which was carried out in response to the Pulwama attack. The author describes the meticulous planning and preparation that went into the operation, including the selection of the target, the timing of the strike, and the deployment of the fighter jets.

In conclusion, 'Kitne Ghazi Aaye, Kitne Ghazi Gaye' provides an insider's perspective of the events leading up to the revocation.

# IVCA Conclave highlights Climate Change driving global Investment in India

**DOMINICK RODRIGUES**  
Mumbai

India's growing annual improvement in energy growth continues to play a key role in growth of GDP, where the underlying economy is important and locking down people constrains the consumers – especially during the COVID-19 period, where the poor were left with a lot of debt and the rich with a lot of their own money.

"India is still a lower-middle income economy+ and getting risk capital early here – which matters more than in the USA – accelerates growth as lots of minor startups need to scale up," Neelkanth Mishra, Managing Director, Co-Head of Equity Strategy, Asia Pacific and Head of India Securities Research, Credit Suisse, said in his keynote address on "A Resilient India in a Turbulent World" during a two-day IVCA Conclave 2023 held in Mumbai recently.

Noting that India's 'long-standing' weakness in manufacturing may have turned a corner, he emphasized the cyclical revival in real estate, export boost to manufacturing, rise in global share and increas-



ing government tax collection with high tax collection likely to provide more space in FY24 alongside continuing global headwinds and BoP pressures impacting growth.

"Concern on BoP has shifted from energy to weak capital flows, and domestic flows are larger than foreign flow since 2016. Equity is expensive and keeping FIIs away as India is more expensive than the rest of the world. Global markets are assuming that the worst is over and interest rates will fall," Mishra said, adding "Asset prices have gone up and real estate prices globally saw a sharp uptick during Covid-19, while India's real estate is recovering after a 10-year downcycle."

In a panel discussion on "Cli-

mate Investing: Leading the way for the world," the moderator Anjali Bansal, Founder, Avaana Capital, emphasized that "while over one Trillion dollars investment is needed to address 'Climate Change,' India is an investment opportunity -- for everything in the world -- with its whole spectrum being public policy-led and as a huge market for climate investments.

Other speakers called for "genuine decarbonisation," energy mix change from coal to gas, innovations and investment strategies, while also noting that India's future lay in climate technology and innovations.

Urging technology and traditional industry to work together, Karan Mohla, General

Partner, B Capital, highlighted the need for corporates and technology to work 'hand-in-hand', and take into consideration the scale at which innovation could be applied in the 'real world' with support of traditional industries. "India's ecosystem has developed in the last few years with focus on innovative use of agritech etc, where technology will play a big role."

"India's climate opportunity highlights energy demand and the next 20 years will see doubling of energy consumption," Dhanpal Jhaveri, Vice-Chairman, Everstone Group and CEO, Eversource Capital, said, adding "India needs to find ways to invest in climate space while making profits. The next five years will be the most interesting for all of us."

Describing the environment climate change as a +multi-Trillion dollar+ opportunity for the future, Cate Ambrose, CEO and Board Member, GPCA, said investors like "Canadian Pension Fund," Sovereign Funds etc are "thinking decades into the future to put their large-scale funds to work for decades to come. There is need to see energy transition and fund managers, besides

educating LPs."

"\$100 trillion would be needed to be captured for the strategy in dealing with Climate Change," said Vikram Raju, Managing Director and Head of Climate Investing – Private Credit & Equity, Morgan Stanley. "The USA is a +laggard+ in dealing with climate change, while India has begun shifting goalposts in this regard," said Dhruva Purkayastha, India Director, Climate Policy Initiative & Director, USICEF.

Moderator Anjali Bansal recalled how she noticed at the recent G20 meet various groups looking at climate change and sustainability.

Another panel discussion on "Trends and Strategies for PE investing in India" highlighted experienced private equity fund managers sharing their experiences across multiple fund deployments on 'Investing Strategies'; their learnings from how the strategies have evolved from when they invested through their first fund to what it is now; how macro and micro-economic factors have changed the way they choose their companies; and recent trends in PE investments and outlook for 2023.

## Bengaluru-based EV Startup River, Lunches Indie, the SUV of Scooters

**ARUN KUMAR RAO**  
Bengaluru

Bengaluru-based electric vehicle (EV) startup River launches 'Indie, the SUV of scooters'. The scooter brings a revolutionary new design offering several never before seen features that expand the ways a scooter can be used. Indie is conceived and designed in the River R&D facility in Bengaluru and will be manufactured at the River Factory in the outskirts of the city, said

Aravind Mani, Co-Founder and Chief Executive Officer of River said during the Launch that "River's mission is to improve the day-to-day lives of people through a design-first approach. Our first product Indie is a bold statement, combining two different offerings – utility and lifestyle. It will be the most sensible scooter with the right mix of practicality, capability and style.", Indie features 14 inch wheels, the first of their kind in any electric scooter being sold in India. The large wheels offer a commanding riding position and great ride ability and manoeuvrability on variety of road conditions. The scooter has the largest storage in any scooter with a massive 43L under the seat storage and a 12L front glove box. The exclusive Lock



& Load pannier-stays on the sides offer an array of customizations to serve different purposes and are a first of their kind on any type of scooter, He added.

Vipin George, Co-Founder and Chief Product Officer at River said, "The signature twin beam headlamps and a unique tail lamp design give the scooter a distinct look while ensuring maximum visibility on the road. The motorcycle-inspired clip-on handlebar provides better handling and stability. Indie also features "Safeguards", another signature design element that protects the body panels

in the event of a fall. "Indie is inspired by the modern Indian who is always on the move, who wants to make the most of every day. The unique combination of design elements and technical specs give Indie a distinct character, something that inspires you to do more and be more.", He added.

About the Indie scooter Arvind Mani, said, The riding position is ergonomically designed to comfortably accommodate individuals of different heights. Indie has the longest and widest seat in the segment, ensuring uncompromising comfort.

## Bata India unveils campaign to promote its Sneaker Studios

**FW DESK**  
New Delhi

Bata India, India's leading footwear brand, unveiled its Sneaker Studio concept through a youthful campaign. With 300 sneaker styles from 9 brands to choose from, the campaign celebrates the free-spiritedness of the youth and urges them to live limitless.

Conceptualized by Contract India, the campaign follows the journey of four friends traversing the path of a spontaneous life, highlighting how Bata sneakers enable them to live this journey. The film starts with a snippet of Sneaker Studio where the friends are surprised by the range of sneakers available making them spoil for choice. The film goes on to capture their adventures from jumping in a lake, to skateboarding and dancing at a beach party with one constant companion – Bata Sneakers.

Gunjan Shah, MD and CEO, Bata India Limited said: "Over the last few years, the youth has been increasingly gravitating towards sneakers for their style and comfort. For the Sneaker Studio campaign, we combined the youth's love for sneakers with their passion for spontaneity and unbridled experiences. We now have over 300 stores with Sneaker Studio concept wherein we offer upto 300 sneaker styles from 9 brands under one roof, offering the largest variety of choices for all the impromptu adventures of the GenZ and Millennials."

## Hindustan Petroleum's Barmer greenfield refinery to reduce India's import reliance: Hardeep Puri

**NEW DELHI:** Petroleum Minister Hardeep Puri on Tuesday said that the greenfield refinery cum petrochemical complex at Rajasthan's Barmer will turn out to be a "jewel of the desert", as it would help in job creation in the region.

The minister, who was in Barmer on a visit to the refinery complex, said that it will process 9 metric million tonnes per annum of crude and produce more than 2.4 million tonnes of petrochemicals, which will reduce import bill on account of petrochemicals.

This project will act as an industrial hub not only for



western Rajasthan but will also steer India to its vision of achieving 450 metric million tonnes per annum refining capacity by 2030, he added.

The greenfield refinery cum petrochemical complex is be-

ing set up by a joint venture company HPCL Rajasthan Refinery Ltd (HRRL) of the HPCL and Rajasthan government, where both have stakes of 74 per cent and 26 per cent, respectively.

## IoTechWorld Avigation ties up with Vasant Rao Naik Marathwada Krishi Vidyapeeth to promote agri-drones

**SUSHIL DEV**  
Gurugram

Leading agri-drone manufacturer IoTechWorld Avigation today announced it has signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with Vasant Rao Naik Marathwada Krishi Vidyapeeth (VNMKV), Parbani, Maharashtra to promote the use of unmanned aerial vehicles to boost farm productivity in the country.

This agreement by the Gurugram-based company with a leading academic institution for creating awareness among farmers about the use of technology for increasing farm output, besides furthering research in drone technology.

Last month the agri drone manufacturing company has announced a similar tieup with Mahatma Phule Krishi Vidyapeeth (an Agriculture University), Rahuri, Maha-



rashtra. The latest MoU was signed by Dr Indra Mani, Vice Chancellor of VNMKV on behalf of the University, while Anoop Kumar Upadhyay, Co-Founder & Director signed on the behalf of IoTechWorld Avigation.

Upadhyay said IoTechWorld Avigation is on the forefront of promoting drone technology and partnerships with universities are aimed at furthering research activities.

Giving details about the MoU with VNMKV, he said both the parties will work in co-operation in science and

technology and promote the use of drones in agriculture.

"Both the signatories to the agreement will work together to develop agricultural training centre and Remote Pilot Training Organization (RPTO) at VNMKV university," he added.

Deepak Bhardwaj, Co-founder IoTechWorld said tie-ups with universities will help the company to further research in the drone technology, besides creating awareness among farmer groups.

"The use of agri-drone is catching up among farmers and several farmers' organi-

zations too have joined the campaign. These unmanned aerial robots are of great use as they not only help in saving cost, but time also," he said.

Another major objective of the tie up is to farmer friendly training module and create drone pilots at the proposed RPTO at the university.

IoTechWorld will be the technical partner in setting up of Remote Pilot Training Organization (RPTO) for Agricultural Drones with VNMKV, which in turn will help reduce drone pilot shortage in the country, he added.

As per Government estimates India will require at least 1 lakh drone pilots by next year.

It is to be noted here that IoTechWorld has its own RPTO where farmers are trained to fly drones. The company also helps farmers in obtaining drone pilot license.

## Delhi's 'Mandi' gets buzzing as Altigreen opens its second dealership in the national capital

**FW DESK**  
New Delhi

India's leading commercial electric vehicle maker Altigreen today inaugurated its second brand-new retail experience centre in the national capital – in Azad Nagar, Mandi Market. This is the company's 17th retail dealership in India, following the launches in major metros like Mumbai, Chennai, Hyderabad and Bangalore.

Much like Altigreen's experience centres in other cities, the new dealership in Delhi will allow EV enthusiasts to access Altigreen's range of electric cargo vehicles. Altigreen opted to continue its existing partnership with Sai Shreeja Auto LLP in Delhi, for the second dealership, too. Sai Shreeja Group is a lead-



ing automobile group situated in Delhi/NCR, with association with some of the worlds most renowned Automobile Brands like M.G Motors, Hyundai & Ford. The Altigreen Retail Experience Centre in North Delhi was launched at the hands of Dr. Amitabh Saran CEO Altigreen.

With the launch of this retail dealership, Altigreen is focusing on providing its consumers an enhanced and never-seen-before experience with world-class and modern infrastructure. Every element of the dealership

has been designed to lend a welcoming feel especially to the autorickshaw drivers walking in out of curiosity. Altigreen has left no stone unturned to ensure the dealership reflects the company's ethos of respect, empathy, and gaining the trust of consumers through transparent dialogue.

Dr Amitabh Saran, Founder and CEO, Altigreen, said, "We are very grateful for the opportunity to contribute to Delhi's march towards becoming the EV Capital of India, and for Delhi to become a cleaner, greener and pollution-free place. Sai Shreeja group has decades of experience in automobile retail which will be very helpful in strengthening its EV reach across the state, after its first dealership in Okhla.

## Airbus partners with Indian Institute of Science to advance aerospace education and research

**FW DESK**  
Delhi

Airbus and the Indian Institute of Science (IISc), Bengaluru, signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) to expand access to aerospace education and research in the country. The partnership will help foster relevant skills and develop a leading pipeline of talented workforce that will power the future of the aerospace sector in India.

The MoU was signed in the presence of institute represen-

tatives and senior Airbus management at Aero India 2023, a biennial air show and aviation exhibition held in Bengaluru.

Under this agreement, both Airbus and IISc will collaborate to develop curriculum, training, modules and promote research and innovation on topics such as sustainability, engineering, cybersecurity, artificial intelligence and big data, that are relevant to the aerospace sector. It will also give students an opportunity to engage with Airbus experts who will mentor them on their research projects and

help them apply their learnings to address future challenges of the aerospace sector.

"The Indian aerospace sector is on a growth trajectory. This is further broadening the scope for talented professionals in the country who have the right skills to meet future needs. The partnership with IISc will foster potential synergies in the aeronautical sector that will help develop the next generation of aerospace professionals in the country," said Suraj Chettri, Director, Human Resources, Airbus India & South Asia.

## Netflix lowers subscription costs in over 30 countries



**SAN FRANCISCO:** Streaming giant Netflix has lowered the price of its subscription in more than 30 countries, in an effort to draw in subscribers who have access to a growing number of streaming options.

Recent price reductions by the streaming giant include Middle Eastern countries (Yemen, Jordan, Libya and Iran), sub-Saharan African markets such as Kenya, and European nations (Croatia, Slovenia, and Bulgaria), reports The Wall Street Journal. "In Latin America, nations including Nicaragua, Ecuador, and Venezuela have seen reductions in subscription costs, as have parts of Asia including Malaysia, Indonesia, Thailand and the Philippines," the report mentioned. The cost reductions only applied to specific Netflix tiers in the affected countries. "It definitely goes against the recent trends not just for Netflix, but for the broader streaming industry," John Hodulik, a media and entertainment analyst at UBS Group AG, was quoted as saying. "Some of these cuts on a percentage basis are substantial," he added. Netflix's Co-Chief Executive, Greg Peters, had also hinted during a January earnings call that the company is searching for markets where they might raise rates to support ongoing content expenditures. "We think of ourselves as a non-substitutable good," Peters said. According to him, the streaming giant also has a chance to get new customers in markets where it doesn't currently hold a dominant position.

## Ekart, India's leading Supply Chain network, announces 'Warehousing as a Service' for brands, manufacturers and retailers across industries

**FW DESK**  
Bengaluru

Ekart, India's largest supply chain network will now make its warehouses across the country available to brands, manufacturers, retailers, and SMEs as a part of its vision to become a 4PL (fourth-party logistics) player in the country. The initiative will enable brands of all sizes, manufacturers, and retailers from across industries to leverage Ekart's technologically advanced fulfillment centers for flexible, affordable, and scalable inventory storage solutions.

The end-to-end warehousing services by Ekart will include ready-to-use best-in-class warehousing space, order management, integrated logistics, and inventory management further helping brands scale their business. Ekart will also offer specialized facilities such as temperature-controlled storage and storage for high-value inventory



for businesses in need of these requirements.

Ekart has a pan India supply chain network spread across more than 20 million sq feet. To begin with, it will offer four dedicated sites across Bilaspur in Haryana, Malur in Karnataka, Saidham in Mumbai, and Uluberia (West Bengal), as well as 17 shared sites across India to businesses of all sizes. The expansive warehouses will ease the fulfillment process of orders for customers by helping reduce the transit time and better delivery speed. The state-of-the-art, Grade-A fulfillment centers are equipped to facilitate the safe and speedy delivery of orders. Ekart's capability to handle 80+ product categories will also now be available to the brands.

## Andhra Pradesh launches investment attraction blitzkrieg ahead of Global Investors Summit 2023

**DOMINICK RODRIGUES**  
Mumbai

Andhra Pradesh is on an investment attraction "blitzkrieg" for its Global Investors Summit 2023+, where it held an "Investors Meet" here recently that witnessed a huge gathering of Maharashtra's business fraternity.

The event is the fourth of many such meets being organised in the run-up to the Global Investors Summit on March 3 and 4, 2023 in Visakhapatnam.

Gudivada Amarnath, Minister for Industries, Infrastructure, Investment & Commerce, Information Technology, Handlooms & Textiles, Andhra Pradesh, said here that Investors from Maharashtra ("where Mumbai is India's economic hub with over 14% of India's GDP, and contributing to 20% of industrial output") would get tailor-made business incentives for investments from the Andhra Pradesh Government,

Assuring the AP government's +fastest single-window clearance, usable coastline, ports, quality power, abundant land bank, state-of-the-art infrastructure+ to Maharashtra investors for collaborating businesses for growth, the Minister noted that the industry meet would help improve cooperation between the growth-oriented, economic power-house states in the country.

Amarnath said that Andhra Pradesh -- with its diversified portfolio across industry (including sectors such as automobiles, chemicals, aerospace & defence, pharmaceuticals, textiles etc), Infrastructure (ports, road network), IT/ITES, Startup ecosystem, Gems & Jewellery, Finance, Tourism -- boasts of the highest per capita income of \$3,800 in 2021-22. "At the moment, 89 large projects are under active implementation with a total investment of Rs 2.2 Lakh Crore (USD 27.54 billion) with potential to create employment for



20,000 people," he added. Being the Champion State in "Ease of Doing Business," and with availability of large industrial land banks, 530 industrial estates, 293 industrial parks, 31 MSME parks, 6 special economic zones (SEZs), 3 information technology SEZs, and 3 major industrial corridors, Andhra Pradesh is a competitive investment destination on India's east coast.

Highlighting the State's rich history of economic and industrial development across multiple sec-

tors that continuously contributed to the growth of India's economy, Buggana Rajendranath Reddy, AP Minister, Finance & Planning, Commercial Taxes, Legislative Affairs, Skill Development & Training, said that the state is taking big strides as evident from its economic growth that recorded GSDP growth rate of 11.43% -- the highest among all states in FY22 -- and in the last three years, the state's exports have increased at a CAGR of 9.3%.

"The past few years have

witnessed the Andhra Pradesh Government undertaking several path-breaking reforms and initiatives to strengthen governance, improve business environment, promote policy stability, drive competitiveness and enhance transparency towards boosting the investment climate," he said. The government is also inviting businesses to set up shop in its vibrant city of Visakhapatnam -- which ranks among India's top 5 cleanest cities, as per the recent Swachh Bharat Rankings.

Describing Visakhapatnam as the environmentally-resilient "City of Destiny," Audimulapu Suresh, AP Minister for Municipal Administration & Urban Development, said that this city is the State's biggest urban agglomeration with its 85-kms coastline and is a growing port city with 20 million residents, 5.8 million households, and 681.92 square km of land, besides an international airport coming up soon.

## Entire Rs 16,982 cr GST compensation cess to states to be cleared says FM

**NEW DELHI:** Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman said that the entire GST compensation cess for June 2022 totalling Rs 16,982 crore will be cleared.

She said this while addressing a press conference soon after the 49th meeting of the GST Council ended.

She also informed that Rs 16,524 crore to six states which have submitted the accountant general's (AG) certificate will also be released.

Delhi, Tamil Nadu and Telangana are among the six states which have submitted AG certificates.

Though submission of AG certificate is a requirement for the states to seek GST compensation, Sitharaman said that it wasn't a strict pre-requisite, as 90 per cent of funds are anyway released to the states, while the remaining amount is given after the AG certificate is submitted.

The GST Council meeting, which was held at Vigyan Bha-



van here, discussed matters pertaining to setting up of appellate tribunals and curbing tax evasion in pan masala and gutkha businesses.

The group of ministers' (GoM) report on taxation for pan masala was accepted by the council.

At the meeting, the GST Council decided to reduce GST on pencil sharpeners and certain tracking devices. Exemp-

However, no decision could be arrived at by the fitment committee for SUVs and MUVs.

Sitharaman said that the GST Council decided to tax services supplied by courts and tribunals under the reverse charge mechanism.

She also informed that the decision on the GST Appellate Tribunal has been accepted with change in language and the modification in draft will be circulated within a week.

Sitharaman said that she expects to finalise the GoM report on GST tribunals with slight modifications so that it is ready by March 1 and can be included in the Finance Bill.

The GoM's report on online gaming could not be taken up at the meeting as the Chairman of the GoM, Meghalaya Chief Minister Conrad Sangma, could not attend the meeting due to the upcoming Assembly elections in the state, the Finance Minister said.

## Paytm now offers lightning fast UPI payments that never fail in peak hours

**NEW DELHI:** Paytm Payments Bank has become the only platform to exclusively offer UPI LITE payments, which enables faster real-time transactions with a single tap on the Paytm app. Paytm UPI LITE will never fail even during peak transaction hours, even when banks have success rate issues, the company said in a statement on Friday. Paytm UPI LITE aims to make digital payments more accessible to people across the country. UPI LITE, enabled by National Payments Corporation of India (NPCI), aids users to carry out multiple small value UPI transactions without using a PIN.

Using Paytm UPI LITE, users can carry out quick and seamless transactions of value up to Rs 200 at a time at a lightning fast speed. "It provides super-fast, convenient and hassle-free transaction experience as users don't have to enter a PIN every time they make a payment. Moreover, users can transfer UPI balance back to the same bank account anytime, without



any charges," said the company.

With this, only one money transfer entry is made in the user's bank account, which declutters bank statements as customers will daily receive an SMS from the bank containing a history of all UPI LITE transactions made during the previous day. To drive adoption, the company said it is offering Rs 100 cashback to users for activating UPI LITE and adding Rs 1,000 as balance.

"As pioneers of QR and mobile payments, we have taken UPI to every nook and corner of the country. We are proud

to launch UPI LITE as a step forward in our commitment to payments that are scalable and never fail. With Paytm UPI, payments never fail, transactions are superfast and you don't see clutter in your bank statement," said a Paytm Payments Bank Spokesperson.

Currently, nine banks support Paytm UPI LITE — Canara Bank, Central Bank of India, HDFC Bank, Indian Bank, Kotak Mahindra Bank, Punjab National Bank, State Bank of India, Union Bank of India, and Utkarsh Small Finance Bank.

**High Level Symposium on Digital Public Infrastructure for Innovative, Resilient, Inclusive Growth and Efficient Governance ahead of 1st Finance Ministers & Central Bank Governors Meeting**

**FW DESK**  
Bengaluru

On the side-lines of the 1<sup>st</sup> G20 Finance Ministers and Central Bank Governors Meeting under G20 India Presidency, a High-Level Symposium on Digital Public Infrastructure (DPI) was held on Feb 23, in Bengaluru, India.

The Symposium saw a panel discussion on DPI for Innovative, Resilient, Inclusive Growth and Efficient Governance with participation of Union Finance and Corporate Affairs Minister Smt. Nirmala Sitharaman; Dr. Sri Mulyani Indrawati, Minister of Finance, Republic of Indonesia; Mr. Roberto de Oliveira Campos Neto, Governor, Central Bank of Brazil; Ms. Kristalina Georgieva, Managing Director, International Monetary Fund; and Mr. Agustín Carstens, General Manager, Bank for International Settlements.

Ajay Seth, Secretary, Department of Economic Affairs, Ministry of Finance, Government of India, and India's G20 Finance Deputy, welcomed the eminent panellists. The discussions were moderated by Nandan Nilekani, co-chair of India's G20 Task Force on Digital Public Infrastructure for Economic Transformation, Financial Inclusion and Development and Former Chairman, Unique Identification Authority of India (UIDAI).

Opening the Symposium, Seth stated how digital innovations have emerged as a great leveller and enabler of growth and through the experiences of many countries, including India, it is evident that DPI are one of the most transformational digital innovations.

Nilekani elucidated the roles and examples of DPI and brought out India's success story in developing a new approach to solving societal and service delivery problems using DPI which led to cost savings for governments, increase transparency and accountability while encouraging access to finance and innovations.

The panellists discussed their experiences and noted the potential of DPI for leading to growth and empowerment of people through increased accessibility, inclusion, accountability and productivity gains. The contribution of DPI for expanding the reach of government and private sector to the last mile, particularly in the time of the pandemic was underscored by the panellists.

Leveraging DPI for inclusive growth and development is being steered by the G20 India Presidency as a key priority. The discussions in the Symposium threw light on the potentials of DPI for leading to innovative, resilient, and inclusive growth while providing a means for efficient governance.

To steer the work under this priority, the G20 India Presidency has also constituted a Task Force on Digital Public Infrastructure for Economic Transformation, Financial Inclusion and Development. The Task Force is co-chaired by Shri Amitabh Kant, G20 Sherpa of India, and Shri Nilekani and is constituted to guide the work during the G20 India Presidency.

## Centre and RBI will take necessary efforts to control inflation: Nirmala Sitharaman

**NEW DELHI:** Union Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman said on Monday as retail prices have again risen above comfort levels the Indian government and the RBI are taking steps to control inflation. Speaking at a post-budget industry interaction in Jaipur, she said the government has increased the import of edible oil as required to rein in inflation and provided free grains to the poor since the COVID-19 pandemic, and would "continuously monitor prices".

Last week, India's annual retail inflation rate rose above the central bank's upper tolerance band for the first time in three months to 6.52 per cent in January, as prices rose for food products such as cereals and wheat.

The RBI will take necessary steps to manage inflation within «expected limits», said the FM, who was accompanied by other finance ministry officials including the chief economic adviser.

Economists have said the soaring prices of cereals such as wheat and rice were a concern for the Indian economy even though the January inflation data may have overstated the extent of the increase.

## Prices of cereals to be about 15% higher: CRISIL

**NEW DELHI:** The prices of cereals are expected to be 14-15 per cent higher next fiscal as compared with the past five year average, said CRISIL in a report.

The reason? Vagaries of climate change, strong global demand, and rise in domestic demand. Even in the current fiscal, cereal prices have risen significantly on-year in the first ten months. While prices of wheat and paddy rose 8-11 per cent, those of maize, jowar and bajra jumped 27-31 per cent, the report notes.

CRISIL expects wheat production to be higher in the current rabi season. Despite the continued ban on exports and discontinuation of the Pradhan



Mantri Garib Kalyan Anna Yojana from January 2023 (free foodgrain scheme announced in April 2020) which are expected to bring the stock position up to a comfortable level compared with the previous year.

## FreshToHome raises \$104 mn led by Amazon Smbhav Venture Fund

**NEW DELHI:** Fresh fish and meat e-commerce platform FreshToHome on Tuesday said it has raised \$104 million in Series D funding with Amazon Smbhav Venture Fund leading the round.

Existing investors Iron Pillar, Investcorp, Investment Corporation of Dubai (the principal investment arm of the Government of Dubai), Ascent Capital and others also participated in this round.

The funds will strengthen FreshToHome's mission to make 100 per cent preservative and



antibiotic-residue free fish, seafood, and meat accessible and affordable to millions of meat lovers" Pro'icorn' with operational profitability across the company. As we strive to offer

more value to our farmers and fishers, customers, employees and investors, our focus is on profitability and sustainable value creation," said Shan Kavadil, CEO and Co-founder,

anticipated to be higher, too, provided monsoons are normal and well-spread.

However, the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration has predicted a about 49 per cent chance of El Nino impact on south-west monsoon between June-July 2023 and 57 per cent between July-September, the report notes.

"This remains a key monitorable, as it might impact rainfall for kharif and lead to drought conditions, as happened during the previous strong El Nino year (2015) when the southwest monsoon was 14 per cent below normal and kharif cereal production declined 2-3 per cent on-year," CRISIL said.

FreshToHome. New investors joining this round include E20 Investment Ltd, Mount Judi Ventures and Dallah Albaraka.

Launched in 2015, FreshToHome operates in more than 160 cities in India and the UAE and offers more than 2,000 certified fresh and chemical-free products.

"Our vision with the \$250 million Amazon Smbhav Venture Fund is to empower the next generation of innovative, technology enabled companies led by visionary founders," said its spo'espersion.

## Pakistan's current account deficit shrinks 90% in Jan: SBP



**ISLAMABAD:** The State Bank of Pakistan (SBP) said the country's current account deficit shrank by 90 per cent in January from the same month last year as the government continued with its strategy to restrict imports to evade an external payment crisis.

Pakistan's current account deficit fell to \$0.24 billion in January from \$2.47 billion in the same month of the previous year, recording a 90.3 per cent decrease, Xinhua news

agency reported citing SBP data.

On a month-on-month basis, the current account deficit went down from \$0.29 billion in December 2022, showing a 17 per cent decrease, according to the data.

Cumulatively, the current account deficit stood at \$3.80 billion in July-January of the current fiscal year 2023, compared with \$11.56 billion in the same period of the fiscal year 2022, the central bank added.

## Inaugural G20 FinMin, Central Bank Governors meeting in Bengaluru



**BENGALURU:** The first G20 Finance Ministers and Central Bank Governors (FMCBG) meeting, under the G20's Indian Presidency, is scheduled to take place in Bengaluru between February 24-25.

The meeting is aimed at fostering a meaningful exchange of ideas among ministers and Governors to address some of the key global economic issues.

Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman and Reserve Bank of India (RBI) Governor Shaktikanta Das will jointly chair the meeting, official sources said. The G20 FMCBG meeting will be preceded by a meeting of G20 Finance and Central Bank Deputies (FCBD) on February 22, which would be co-chaired by Economic Affairs Secretary Ajay Seth and RBI Deputy Governor Michael D. Patra. Union Informa-

tion & Broadcasting Minister Anurag Thakur, will inaugurate the G20 FCBD meeting. The first G20 FMCBG meeting under the G20 Indian Presidency will see the participation of Finance Ministers and Central Bank Governors of the G20 members, invitee members and heads of international organisations. In all, there will be 72 delegations attending the meeting.

The meeting will be spread over three sessions on February 24-25, covering issues such as strengthening multilateral development banks to address shared global challenges of the 21st century, financing for resilient, inclusive and sustainable cities of tomorrow, and leveraging Digital Public Infrastructure (DPI) for advancing financial inclusion and productivity gains.

## Sony, Zee, Star channels go off air over pricing issues

**NEW DELHI:** India's three prime television broadcasters Zee Entertainment, Star, and Sony have gone off the cable network due to the pricing issues after the implementation of the New Tariff Order 3.0.

This new move has disrupted the Indian media landscape and is expected to affect nearly 45 million consumers of cable TV operators.

The Telecom Regulatory Authority of India (Trai) had restored the maximum retail price (MRP) of a TV channel to be a part of a bouquet in the last November. With its order, the television channel prices in the bouquet rose by about 10-15 per cent.

The NTO 3.0, which was



implemented on February 1 with the price increased in the range of 10-25 per cent, had led to disputes between media companies and local cable operators, and resulted into many channels being taken off the air due to pricing disagreements.

The All India Digital Cable Federation (AIDCF) on Saturday said that its members

are not signing the new agreements as a mark of protest against unreasonable pricing by the broadcasters.

Meanwhile, in a statement, the Indian Broadcasting and Digital Foundation (IBDF) said that some cable operators did not sign fresh agreements forcing them to disconnect their services after serving due notice.

## DRI seizes 101.7 kg smuggled gold worth Rs 51 crore in Golden Dawn Operation across India

**FW DESK**  
New Delhi

In a pan India operation Directorate of Revenue Intelligence (DRI) has busted a gold smuggling syndicate of Sudanese nationals operating through Nepal border. The DRI, in different interceptions in Patna, Pune and Mumbai seized a total of 101.7 kg of smuggled gold valued at Rs 51 crore (approx.). The seized gold, mostly in paste form, was being brought to Patna through the Indo-Nepal border and then transported via train or by air to different parts of the country, largely to Mumbai.

The DRI officials intercepted three Sudanese nationals in the late night of 19.02.2023 boarding a train at the Patna Railway Station destined to Mumbai. Gold paste containing gold weighing 37.126 kg in 40 packets was recovered from 2 Sudanese who had ingeniously concealed it in specially made cavity of the sleeveless jackets worn by them. The third person was the handler coordinating the smuggling activity at the border area and arranged the transport of smuggled gold.

The second set of two Sudanese lady nationals were intercepted on 20.02.2023



in Pune while travelling from Hyderabad to Mumbai via Bus and 5.615 kg of smuggled gold in assorted form was recovered from them concealed in their hand bags.

The third set of two Sudanese nationals travelling to

Mumbai from Patna were intercepted at Mumbai Railway Station on 20.02.2023. Gold paste containing gold weighing 38.76 kg in 40 packets was recovered from 2 Sudanese who had concealed it in similar fashion.

Acting swiftly on the leads provided by the smugglers/carriers, the DRI officers recovered about 20.2 kg smuggled gold in assorted forms along with Rs 74 lakh worth foreign currency and Rs 63 lakh Indian currency from different premises in Mumbai being used for extraction/ storage of smuggled gold. Three persons were apprehended in this follow up action.

DRI has earlier unearthed various novel modus operandi of smuggling foreign origin gold into India such as smuggling from the north eastern part of the country either through courier route of logis-

tics company or using concealment methods in vehicles or in person by bus, train, flight etc. or recovery of gold from sea bed in Tamil Nadu Coast, after it was thrown by smugglers from the fishing boat etc apart from the traditional modes used by the smugglers.

In the present operation, code named Golden Dawn, DRI seized a total of approximately 101.7 kg gold valued at Rs 51 crore along with Rs 74 lakh worth foreign currency and Rs 63 lakh Indian currency and arrested 7 Sudanese and 3 Indian nationals so far. Further investigation is in progress.

# INTERNATIONAL

## Beyond partisanship, Indian-American community leaders see political headway in Haley candidacy

**NEW YORK:** Beyond partisanship, Indian-American leaders view Nikki Haley's bid for the Republican presidential nomination as an example of the community making political headway.

"Haley represents the headway the community has been steadily making," Thomas Abraham, the chairman of the Global Organisation of People of Indian Origin (GOPIO).

Indian-Americans now have five in the 435-member House of Representatives which is close to the percentage of Indian-American citizens and Kamala Harris as Vice President, he said.

Indian-Americans in both parties have aspired for the highest offices, he said.

He also pointed to Rishi Sunak becoming the British Prime Minister as an example of people of Indian-origin rising to top leadership positions.



M.R. Rangaswami, the founder of Indiaspora, said: "It is exciting to see another Indian-American step up to run for the highest office in the US."

"Over the past decade, we have witnessed our community going from no representation to now having a Vice President and five members of Congress."

Indiaspora is an organisation that promotes leadership by people of Indian descent worldwide.

"It is gratifying to see our community participate in all facets of public service," Rangaswami said.

A sign of the growing political involvement of Indian-Americans is that in the 2020 general elections over 300 from the community ran for city, state and federal offices, he said.

For Rajwant Singh, the Chairman of the Sikh Council on Religion and Education (SCORE), Haley's candidacy has a special resonance as her turban-wearing father's visibility in public events at her side shows the rich heritage of Sikhism and Sikhs' participation in American life.

Haley's father appeared by her side wearing a bright red turban during the televised Senate Foreign Relations Committee hearings to confirm her as the Permanent Representative to the UN.

He was also a prominent presence when she was sworn in as the Governor of South Carolina.

"You may disagree with her policies and her political views but it is still a remarkable journey," he said.

"It is important for Americans to see that she belongs to a rich heritage and turban-wearing Sikhs are part of her immediate family," Rajwant Singh said.

"This widens the horizon for many people including Sikhs to aspire for the highest office in the US."

Danny Gaekwad, a Republican Party activist and fundraiser who had hosted former President Donald Trump's meeting with Indian-Americans during the 2020 campaign, called Haley "a role model for Indian-Americans".

"I hope she wins, but regardless of the primaries' outcome, she will have made a mark on American politics as an Indian-American -- I emphasise, as an Indian-American proud of her heritage," he said.

He said that it is rewarding to see Indian-Americans taking the lead in politics.

"Even though I am a Republican, I am happy to see Indian-Americans rising in the Democratic Party also like (member of the House of Representatives) Raja Krishnamoorthy."

## Infectious diseases a near-term concern in quake-hit Turkey, Syria: ECDC



**STOCKHOLM:** The next two to four weeks may see the emergence and spread of infectious diseases in the quake-hit areas of Turkey and Syria, the Stockholm-based European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control (ECDC) said.

"Food and water-borne diseases, respiratory infections and vaccine-preventable infections are a risk in the upcoming period, with the potential to cause outbreaks, particularly as survivors are moving to temporary shelters," Xinhua news agency quoted the health body as saying in a statement.

The ECDC said that "the damaged utility infrastructure, including water and electricity, causing limited access to clean water, inadequate sanitation and hygiene facilities, improper refrigeration and cooking systems may increase the occurrence and transmission of food- and waterborne illnesses".

The agency predicted that a surge of cholera cases in the affected areas is a significant possibility in the coming weeks. Other food and/or waterborne diseases, such as hepatitis A, norovirus and rotavirus, can also cause

outbreaks in camps.

Moreover, the agency said respiratory infections, such as Covid-19, seasonal influenza and other respiratory viruses are "a particular concern" to the very young and the elderly, who are more vulnerable to complications. "Crowding conditions in temporary settlements can increase the risk of transmission of vaccine-preventable diseases, such as measles, varicella, meningitis or poliomyelitis," it said.

"Rescuers are at increased risk of tetanus from injuries and open wounds caused by contact with debris," it added. The ECDC said that "the availability of clean water and control of food handling are among the top measures to avoid the spread of these diseases". Continuity of routine vaccinations should be ensured, and addressing prior vaccination gaps is also essential. "Setting up health surveillance systems by public health staff will facilitate the early warning and detection of outbreaks," it said. "International organisations are planning to deploy mobile laboratories in the affected areas, and they can also provide expert assistance to both affected countries."

## India tells Pakistan to revisit its past responses to taunts; some weaponised humour



**UNITED NATIONS:** India dismissed Pakistan's attempt to link Kashmir to the Ukraine situation calling it a mischievous provocation and advised it to look at New Delhi's previous rights of reply, some of which weaponised humour.

Pratik Mathur, a counsellor at India's UN Mission, said on Thursday: "India chooses this time not to respond to Pakistan's mischievous provocations. Our advice to the delegate of Pakistan is to refer to our numerous rights of reply that we have exercised in the past."

"Pakistan has only to look at itself and its own track record as a state that harbours and provides safe havens to terrorists and does so with impunity."

He was responding to Pakistan's Permanent Representative Munir Akram, who brought up Kashmir while explaining why Islamabad abstained on a resolution calling on Russia to end its invasion of Ukraine.

India has repeatedly stressed in responses that Jammu and Kashmir is an integral part of India and any disputes between New Delhi and Islamabad are bilateral matters under the 1972 Simla Agreement between Prime Minister Indira Gandhi and Zulfikar Ali Bhutto, who was then the president. It has also pointed out the role of Pakistan in promoting terrorism and its treatment of minorities.

In a memorable line, a diplomat said of Pakistan, "the land of Taxila, one of the greatest learning centres of ancient times, is now host to the Ivy League of terrorism". India has lampooned Pakistan as having a "Pavlovian response" for raising Kashmir regardless of the topic under discussion at the UN. And because its attempts are ignored by other members of the UN, Pakistan ritually brings up Kashmir which an Indian diplomat has described as "ploughing a lonely furrow". On another occasion, an Indian diplomat said after hearing former Pakistan Prime Minister Imran Khan's talk about terrorism, "we were left wondering, was he referring to himself?"

"This is the country which is an arsonist disguising itself as a firefighter." "Pakistan is now 'Terroristan' with a flourishing industry producing and exporting global terrorism."

## American Born in North Korea Shares His Extraordinary Story in New Book

**San Francisco:** As the Korean War broke out, Joon Bai's family left their hometown in North Korea — near the Chinese border — and made the journey to Seoul, South Korea, on foot, during the coldest months of the year. Just 13 years old, freezing and starving, Bai endured unthinkable hardships but emerged with a resilience that would later inspire him to return to his home country again and again to provide humanitarian aid.

"They don't have freedom, and they don't live like other human beings," Bai said of North Koreans during a recent interview. Bai traces his extraordinary life story and the lessons he learned about courage, overcoming adversities and finding hope in his powerful new memoir, *Promises: The Life and Love of an American Born in North Korea*.

"We only hear about North Korea for its nuclear and missile threat to world peace, but we never hear an ordinary North Korean voice," Bai said. "I want to speak for the 23 million ordinary North Koreans." From his early childhood years in what is now North Korea, Bai lived through the devastation of World War II and the Korean War, before finding his way to America as an exchange student. After earning his engineering degree and embarking on a successful career in business, he eventually opened his own factory in rural Pennsylvania, buoyed by the support of his beloved wife, Kyuhee, and his mother.

Hard-won success at hand, Bai returned to North Korea to help famine-stricken people, spending millions of dollars and saving countless lives. It was an effort, Bai notes, that was inspired by his mother and wife, and the Christian faith they instilled in him.

Along his eventful journey, Bai's passion and devotion led him to write and produce a stirring movie, *The Other Side of the Mountain*, a wrenching love story with a message dear to Koreans on both sides of the border — unification.

Promises traces all of these experiences and more. It is an inspirational account of values, character, persistence and — above all else — the power of love and faith.

## Ex-UK PM Liz Truss Backs India for permanent UN Security Council seat

**DOMINICK RODRIGUES**  
Mumbai

"India should become a permanent member of the UN Security Council and I support a greater role for India as a key global player," said former UK Prime Minister Liz Truss while reiterating India's position as an emerging global economic superpower.

Emphasizing that "India needs to make the case and fight back against capitalism," she said India and the UK needed to work more closely together economically and on security while deepening their relationship.

"India's voice is going to be incredibly important as we see in it the greatest hope for our



future, a free democracy that is growing rapidly, a country of pluralism, a country where free speech and the ability to get things done are improving all the time," she said during the two-day ABP "Ideas of India"

summit held here recently.

Highlighting India's role in the new power play, Truss said that India and UK need to back each other more closely on trade and investment alongside working together on critical supply

chains. "We are investing more in green energy like solar panels and while these economic decisions will affect freedom and democracy in future, we are looking forward to the India-UK trade deal finishing as soon as possible," she said. Describing the next few years as "critical for our security and democracy," she said India's economic clout is equally important as the country has grown significantly in past years and security is a very critical part of it. Expressing her confidence in India's capabilities, she said India has a huge cultural and economic influence on Britain and "I want India to do even more using the dynamism and opportunity this country is creating."

## 29 US states under winter weather alerts

More than 65 million people across 29 US states are under winter weather alerts that include warnings of severe icing and extreme coldness.

A massive winter storm is expected to bring heavy snow and a torrent of rain to most of the northern US this week, with "extreme impacts" felt across a wide swath of the country, CBS News reported on Wednesday.

The upper-level pattern will intensify in the coming days as millions of Americans, from the Pacific Northwest to the Northeast, brace for oncoming snow, frozen rain, strong winds and potential flash flooding.

The extreme weather is likely to make travel dangerous and lead to power outage in many



regions, Xinhua news agency reported. California is bracing for several feet of snow expected in the mountains with a few inches possible in lower elevations, according to the US National Weather Service in Los Angeles.

"Now is the time to prepare for a cold and dangerous winter storm expected for much of the week," the weather service in Los Angeles tweeted.

## PM Modi and PM of Singapore Lee Hsien Loong participate in the Virtual Launch of UPI-PayNow Linkage between India and Singapore

**UPI PAYNOW LINKAGE WILL MAKE CROSS BORDER REMITTANCES EASY, COST-EFFECTIVE AND REAL TIME**

**NEWDELHI:** Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Prime Minister of Singapore, Lee Hsien Loong participated in the virtual launch of real time payment linkage between the Unified Payments Interface (UPI) of India and PayNow of Singapore. Shaktikanta Das, Governor of Reserve Bank of India and Ravi Menon, Managing Director, Monetary Authority of Singapore made live cross-border transactions to each other using their respective mobile phones.



Singapore is the first country with which cross border Person to Person (P2P) payment facility has been launched. This will help the Indian diaspora in Singapore, especially migrant workers/students and bring the benefits of digitalisation and FINTECH to the common

man through instantaneous and low-cost transfer of money from Singapore to India and vice-versa. Acceptance of UPI payments through QR codes is already available in selected merchant outlets in Singapore. The virtual launch was preceded by a phone call between

the two Prime Ministers, wherein discussions were held on areas of mutual interest. Prime Minister thanked Prime Minister Lee for his partnership in taking the India-Singapore relationship forward and looked forward to working with him under India's G20 Presidency.

## Seattle becomes first US city to ban caste bias despite opposition by some Hindu groups

Seattle has become the first US city to ban caste discrimination pushing back against opposition by several organisations representing Hindus.

The City Council on Tuesday approved the legislative measure sponsored by Councillor Kshama Sawant, a member of the radical Socialist Alternative party.

The legislation, modelled after laws against racial bias, seeks to ban caste-based discrimination in jobs, housing rental and sales and in public places like hotels, restaurants and stores.

It pitched some Hindu organisations, which opposed it, against an assortment of leftist groups, civil rights groups and a

union which linked it to broader civil rights and socio-economic issues in the US. The legislation was passed after heated discussions when the public was allowed to comment on it. Over a hundred people had signed on to speak but only some could speak because of time limits.

A National Public Radio reporter, Lilly Ana Fowler, tweeted from the Council chamber that things "calmed down after a bit of chaos" before the vote with "lots of shouting with people holding signs that say 'stop gaslighting Dalits' while others hold signs saying, 'Shouting lies does not make them true'".

Pramila Jayapal, who heads



the Congressional Progressive Caucus, tweeted her support for the legislation: "I'm proud to see Seattle leading the country by taking steps to end this discrimination and ensure that all people are able to live freely and thrive."

The Democrat's House of Representatives constituency includes most of Seattle.

The Coalition of Hindus of North America (CoHNA), which spearheaded the opposition, however, said the legislation would promote prejudice

against South Asians.

It "advances nothing but bigotry against the South Asian community by using racist, colonial tropes of 'caste'", the organisation said.

"It is also shocking to see the blatant singling out of a minority community based on nothing but unsubstantiated claims based on faulty data from hate groups," it added.

Samir Kalra, the managing director of another organisation, the Hindu American Foundation (HAF), said: "Seattle has taken a dangerous misstep here, institutionalising bias against all residents of Indian and South Asian origin, all in the name of preventing bias."

## US cuts visa delays in India, vows to do more

**WASHINGTON:** The US said that it had issued 36 per cent more visas to Indians so far this year than in pre-Covid-19 pandemic times because of "number one priority" being accorded to cutting of wait-time that has included unprecedented steps such as remote processing of applications from India, sometimes all the way in Washington D.C.

The longest wait-time, typically for first-time visitors, is down from over 1,000 days to about 580, as a result of such measures that also include interview waiver for repeat visitors, additional staffing at consular operations in Indian missions and "Super Saturdays" when mission staff just process visas all day. From summer stateside renewal of visas will be allowed in some categories on a pilot basis.

"It is the number one priority that we're facing right now," said Julie Stufft, the senior official of the State Department's consular operations, told reporters while referring to the extraordinary delays in the processing of US visas in India.

"We are absolutely committed to getting us out of the situation where people — anyone in India — seeking a visa appointment or a visa would have to wait a lengthy time at all. That's certainly not our ideal."

As a result of these efforts so far this year, Stufft said further "We've issued 36 per cent more visas than we did before the pandemic in India. Just to say that again, 36 per cent more visas processed now than during the before the pandemic in normal times and that is a huge percentage increase and I think it will actually go up as the year goes on. It's only February."

Long waiting times for US visa processing post-pandemic, specially for first-time visitors, have become a key issue in the bilateral relationship and it was raised by External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar at the last 2+2 meeting between the two countries' Foreign and Defence Ministers in Washington D.C. last September. Secretary of State Antony Blinken had assured him then that the US had a plan to address the issue.

Frustration over these visa delays had led many in India to ask if they were symptoms or manifestation of deeper problems in the bilateral relationship. And there was a perception that the delay was intentional.

## PM interacts with NDRF personnel involved in 'Operation Dost' in Türkiye and Syria

**NEW DELHI:** The Prime Minister interacted with the National Disaster Response Force personnel involved in 'Operation Dost' in earthquake-hit Türkiye and Syria.

Addressing the personnel, the Prime Minister lauded them for their great work in 'Operation Dost' in earthquake-hit Türkiye and Syria. The Prime Minister elaborated on the concept of Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam. The Prime Minister said in Türkiye and Syria the Indian team reflected the spirit of the entire world being one family for us.

Highlighting the importance of quick response time during a natural calamity, the Prime Minister referred to the 'Golden

Hour' and said that the speedy response of the NDRF team in Türkiye drew the attention of the entire world. He said that the quick response highlights the preparedness and training skills of the team.

Recalling the images of a mother who blessed the members of the team for their efforts, the Prime Minister noted the pride that every Indian felt after witnessing every image of rescue and relief operations that was carried out in the affected areas. The Prime Minister underlined the unmatched professionalism and the human touch and said that it plays a crucial role when a person is dealing with trauma and has lost everything.



The Prime Minister also praised the acts of compassion shown by the team.

Remembering the 2001 earthquake in Gujarat and recalling his time as a volunteer there, the

Prime Minister also recalled the Machhu Dam tragedy in 1979. "On the basis of my experiences in these calamities, I can appreciate your hard work, spirit and emotions. Today I salute you all," the Prime Minister said.

He underlined that those who are capable of helping themselves are called self-sufficient but those who have the capability to help others in their time of need are called selfless. This, he said, applies not only to individuals but to nations also. That is why in the past few years India has nurtured its selflessness along with its self-sufficiency. "Wherever we reach with the 'Tiranga', there is an assurance that now that the Indian teams have arrived, the situa-

tion will start getting better", the Prime Minister said as he threw light on the role of Tiranga in Ukraine. The Prime Minister also talked about the respect that the Tricolor earned among the local people. The Prime Minister also remembered how the Tricolor worked as a shield for everyone in Ukraine during Operation Ganga. Similarly, evacuations were conducted in very adverse circumstances from Afghanistan in Operation Devi Shakti. The Same commitment, the Prime Minister said, was evident during the Corona pandemic when India brought back every citizen home and earned global goodwill by supplying medicines and vaccines.

As a result of these efforts so far this year, Stufft said further "We've issued 36 per cent more visas than we did before the pandemic in India. Just to say that again, 36 per cent more visas processed now than during the before the pandemic in normal times and that is a huge percentage increase and I think it will actually go up as the year goes on. It's only February."



# Why OTT has suddenly emerged as BIG Stars favourite Platform...

KAVITA SHARMA

Lights... Camera... Action, the veteran star Nana Patekar is all set to debut on OTT. He is teaming up with Ace Director Prakash Jha for a political webseries named "Lal Batti". The shooting of the series has already started in Prayagraj, Uttar Pradesh. The Actor will be playing lawyer-cum politician and will unite with actor Sanjay Kapoor after 21 years. The most Energetic and charismatic Bollywood Actor Anil Kapoor with "Night Manager" and another talented one Shahid Kapoor with "Farzi" have already made their mark on OTT.

Beautiful and Talented Madhuri Dixit returned with "The Fame Game" and Ajay Devgan astonished everyone with his Crime Series "Rudra"- The Edge of darkness.

After the Bleak time of the pandemic, OTT emerged as a popular destination. The concept of OTT allowed its viewers



to access anything, anywhere and anytime. According to a report, OTT consumption rose drastically with majority of its consumers streaming their videos at home on their favorite platforms. "No doubt OTT is a fantastic platform, and the need of good content is also growing".

It has opened new doors for artists like us, Manoj Bajpayee recently said in an event. The Family Man Actor in a literature festival was found saying that "OTT is like a railway station where some stalls sell obscene books while some lit-

erature books, it depends on the viewers what to choose." He also said that OTT has given him the freedom to do all genres of work that people have not experienced earlier.

Manoj Bajpayee is coming up with a new family drama series "Gulmohar" on Disney hotstar, with yesteryears versatile Actors, Sharmila Tagore and Amol Palekar.

One of the most promising leading men on OTT is Pankaj Tripathi, The Actor has already appeared in two seasons of Mirzapur and the third season is expected this year.

## Shalin Bhanot, Eisha Singh, Monalisa to be seen playing lead roles in 'BEKABOO'



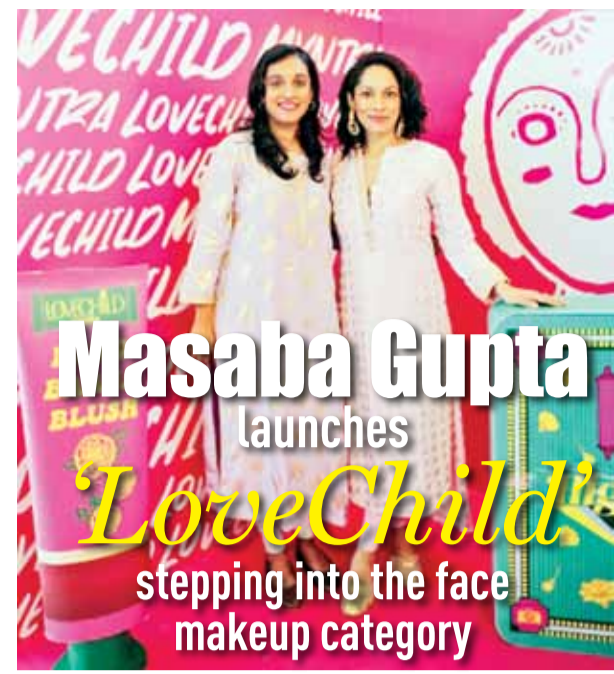
MUMBAI: The well-known faces of the entertainment industry Shalin Bhanot, Eisha Singh, and Monalisa have been roped in to play the lead roles in the new fantasy drama 'Bekaboo'. It also features Zain Imam and Shivangi Joshi in prominent roles.

Shalin, who was recently seen on the popular reality show 'Bigg Boss 16' and is known for his participation in 'Roadies 2', and 'Nach Baliye 4', said: "I want to thank my viewers for the overwhelming amount of love they've showered on me

during my stint in 'Bigg Boss 16'. I'm grateful to have Ekta Kapoor offer me a lead role in 'Bekaboo' just before my exit from the house. I feel that I won the show before the winner was announced."

While talking about being part of the show, he added: "Exploring the fantasy revenge drama genre is a first for me and I will be seen essaying the role of a rakshas, who is about to discover the secrets of his lineage. This show is about to reinvent the fantasy genre and elevate it to a whole new level on TV."

## POTPOURRI



MUMBAI: Couturier leading fashion designer-actress Masaba Gupta launched her beauty brand 'LoveChild' on Wednesday in association with lifestyle fashion e-commerce platform, Myntra. Adding to its existing line of products like lipsticks, eye

Nakhre'. Enriched with nourishing oils and skin loving ingredients, the product line promises flushed cheeks and contoured cheekbone for the wedding season.

Both Highlighted Nakhre and Band Baaja Blush are formulated keeping all Indian skin tones in mind with all formulations and shades being tailor-made for every mood and occasion.

Commenting on the association and new launches, Masaba Gupta, Founder of LoveChild, said: "These two new launches are my current favourite beauty products - nothing like a good highlighter and some blush. Each shade has been curated to suit everyone from a light skinned girl to the brown kudi (girl)." Highlighted Nakhre was earlier called '100 Watt Glow' but it sounded very American so, Masaba went ahead with the final title as she considers her brand to be an India first then global brand.

## Zeenat Aman says No plan to return to silver screen, but not closing that door either



MUMBAI: Veteran Bollywood actress Zeenat Aman has debunked all speculation claiming that her presence on social media is because she is all set to make a return to the silver screen. She said that she is not planning a comeback, but neither is she closing that door. Zeenat took to Instagram, where she also shared that since her debut at 16, she has experienced the perils of "being misquoted, taken out of context, censored, and gossiped about." She wrote: "There's been some speculation that my presence here is the precursor to my return to the silver screen. I am a notoriously private person, and I suppose this sudden sharing has set tongues wagging."

"The truth is that I have been in the public eye since I was 16-years-old, and have experienced the perils of being misquoted, taken out of context, censored, and gossiped about. Now as a septuagenarian I am enjoying the opportunity to reflect on my life and career in my own words." "That too without any pressures from managers or studios or brands."

# Shahid Kapoor brings A-game to Goodbye Sania Mirza the table with Khiladi campaign

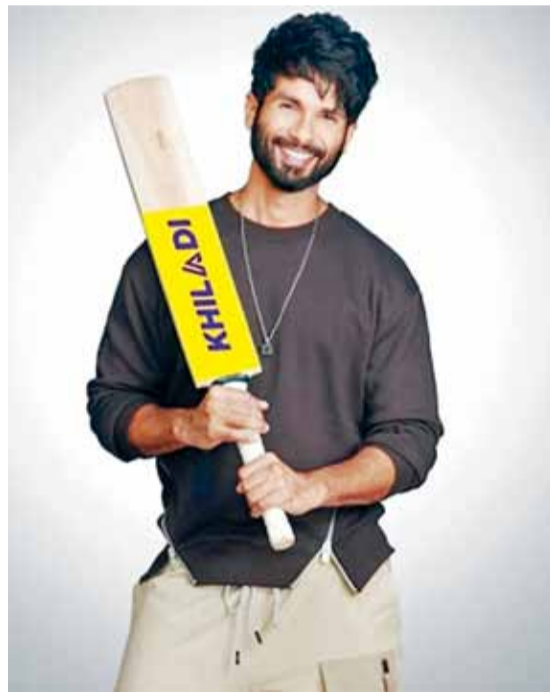
SUNIL THALIYAL

MUMBAI: Bollywood actor Shahid Kapoor, who is basking in the success of his recently released streaming show, 'Farzi', has shot for the campaign of sports platform khiladi.com.

Energetic versatile and jovial, the actor changed the vibe in the studio, as soon as he stepped in for the campaign shoot of the sports platform. While the shoot was fun, it reflects in the final output as well. The first reel which has gone live on the actor's Instagram handle, shows him in an office set up.

Donning a blue shirt paired with a striped waistcoat, he is seen kicking his feet up on the table while his boss negotiates his bonus percentage.

The boss raises the bar of the bonus while Shahid keeps on coolly refusing until they reach the common consensus. When Shahid finally consents to the amount he closes with the punch line "Kyu Ki Khiladi apna bhav janta hain."



Sania Mirza, the undisputed queen of Indian tennis for over two decades, has retired. She announced the end of her decades long career at the WTA 1000 event in Dubai on Tuesday. She came onto the court for the final time, alongside the USA's Madison Keys. In the first round, the Indo-American duo lost the match 4-6, 0-6 to the Russian duo of Veronika Kudermotova and Liudmila Samsonova.

She rose to fame in the male-dominated sport of tennis in India, where no one expected a female tennis player to represent India and win a grand slam or medal in an international championship, as their male counterparts had done. All were simply following tennis players such as Maria Sharapova, Anna Cornivova, Venus Williams, Serena Williams, and others. But, thanks to Sania Mirza, she broke the jinx that women in India



couldn't become world beaters in sports.

Sania was a competent player, but she was known more for her fashion sense than her athletic abilities at the beginning of her career. But, by her hard work and determination, she was able to achieve various milestones and leave her imprint on the minds of people not just in India, but all around the world.

Sania won six Grand Slam

championships and 44 WTA titles during her career. She teamed up with Zhang Shuai from China for her most recent doubles victory at the Ostrava Open in the Czech Republic in 2021. She finished her Grand Slam career as the runner-up in mixed doubles at the Australian Open last month.

She won the Hyderabad Open in 2005, becoming India's first WTA singles champion. She had

the potential to be a good singles player, but persistent wrist injuries forced her to focus solely on doubles in 2013. She was also the first Indian woman to be ranked 27 in the World Tennis Association's singles rankings, which were issued in mid-2007.

In 2012, she made headlines when Leander Paes, Mahesh Bhupathi, and the All India Tennis Association (AITA) used her as "bait" for their own personal gain. She was caught in the crossfire of three major egos over who she should partner with in the mixed doubles event at the London Olympics. She hadn't yet come into her own, but writing an open letter accusing all three of chauvinism was a start.

She has been a well-known supporter of gender equality, particularly in sports. After she rocketed to popularity in 2005, a group of Muslim experts issued a fatwa, labelling her choice of on-court clothes of a short-sleeved T-shirt and skirt "un-Islamic" and "corrupting". She remained undeterred by such diversions, focused on the game, and went on to become a professional tennis player.

## UNICEF names Bollywood actor Ayushmann as its National Ambassador for Child Rights

MUMBAI: Bollywood actor Ayushmann Khurrana, who is known for his knack for off-beat scripts and roles, was on Saturday appointed as the National Ambassador of Child Rights for UNICEF India.

As a part of his duties, Ayushmann will work with UNICEF to ensure the rights of every child to survive, thrive, be protected besides promoting their voice and agency in decisions that concern them.

"It is truly an honour to further my advocacy for children's rights with UNICEF India as a National Ambassador. I am passionate about the issues facing children and adolescents in India. As UNICEF's Celebrity Advocate, I have interacted with



children and spoken on internet safety, cyberbullying, mental health, and gender equality. In this new role with UNICEF, I will keep up a strong voice for children's rights, especially for the most vulnerable supporting

solutions for issues that impact them the most," Ayushmann said. Ayushmann was appointed as UNICEF India's Celebrity Advocate in September 2020 to advocate on ending violence against children and the broader

child rights agenda. Most recently, he focused on inclusion and non-discrimination through gender inclusive sports on World Children's Day 2022 with Sachin Tendulkar, Regional Ambassador for UNICEF South Asia, and girls and boys participating in the event from across India.

Welcoming Ayushmann as the National Ambassador for Child Rights, Cynthia McCaffrey, UNICEF India Representative, said, "I am delighted to welcome Ayushmann Khurrana as UNICEF India's National Ambassador. Ayushmann's strong commitment over the last two years as UNICEF's Celebrity Advocate has helped amplify and drive the work of protecting the rights of children.

## 'Pathaan' has zoomed past the fabled Rs 1,000 crore gross worldwide

'PATHAAN' GROSSES RS 1000 CRORE WORLDWIDE

Bollywood stars Shah Rukh Khan, Deepika Padukone and John Abraham's latest action entertainer 'Pathaan' has zoomed past the fabled Rs 1,000 crore gross worldwide becoming the first Hindi film to breach this milestone in phase one of its release.

'Pathaan', on its fourth Monday, saw a solid jump again at the box office. It collected Rs 1.25 crore net in India (Hindi - Rs 1.20 crore, All Dubbed versions - Rs 0.05 crore).

'Pathaan' has now recorded \$45.94 million in the overseas



territories alone, while net collection in India stands at Rs 516.92 crore (Hindi - Rs 498.95 crore, Dubbed - Rs 17.97 crore)! The total worldwide gross is an incredible Rs 1000 crore (India

gross - Rs 623 crore, overseas - Rs 377 crore).

The film, directed by Siddharth Anand also stars Ashutosh Rana and Dimple Kapadia.

## The Lexicon International School, Wagholi, organized a workshop on Memory Enhancement



FW DESK New Delhi

The Lexicon International School, Wagholi, organized a two-day Memory Enhancement workshop to help students prepare for their examination. Amarendra Chitale conducted the workshop for the students of class XI, showcasing techniques that help in enhancing memory. These techniques focused on training the brain to enhance its data retention capabilities.

The human brain is a super-computer that has tremendous abilities of memorization. It has infinite potential to remember things right from birth.

## Edvoy and Trent University launches TEX, first ever learning centre by Indian Study abroad consultancy

FW DESK New Delhi

Edvoy, a tech platform supporting and enabling international study abroad, and Trent University, Canada, have joined hands to launch a new joint venture, 'TEX Advanced Learning Centre'. Sadiq Basha, Founder and CEO of Edvoy, and Dr. Leo Groarke, President of Trent University, signed the agreement in February 2023.

The jointly owned campus of TEX Advanced Learning Centre will be based in Oshawa, Canada - nearby Trent University's Durham and Peterborough campuses in the Greater Toronto Area. The reason behind the location is that the area is growing the tech sector and promoting eco-friendly infrastructure which makes it more prominent in finding placement opportunities.

The venture will be focused on quality education and have a student strength of 2000 to enroll in their program. It will provide courses in much less amount than other institu-



tions and they have reduced the cost by more than \$8000 Canadian dollars.

As per the Canadian government rules, the country allows 1 million students from all over the world to study in Canada. In the year 2022, 226450 Indian Students went to study in Canada which is a great chance for students who want to study abroad.

TEX offers the best services to the Indian students by providing mental health support, housing solutions, Visa fast-tracking and Visa related programs and also organizes special events to socialize new students with the society. Whereas Trent University will continue its legacy of providing world-class teaching.

A complete **KNOWLEDGE CAPSULE**

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