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BEL WINS ORDERS WORTH RS 4,300 CR FROM INDIAN ARMY AND INDIAN NAVY

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DILJIT DOSANJH AND GURDAS MAAN HAVE JOINED FORCES FOR THE ICONIC TRACK 'CHALLA'

Punjab CM orders special Girdawari to assess loss due to incessant rain

CHANDIGARH: In wake of the incessant rain across the state, the Punjab Chief Minister Bhagwant Mann on Friday ordered special girdawari to ascertain the loss of crop, orchards and houses due to untimely rainfall in the state. Disclosing this here today a spokesperson of the Chief Minister's Office said that the Chief Minister has directed the Financial Commissioner (Revenue) to issue detailed instructions to the concerned Deputy Commissioners to immediately carry out girdawari



in the areas lashed by rains to ascertain damage caused to

crops, orchards and houses on the priority. He asked the officers to ensure that the report is submitted at the earliest so that adequate compensation as per government's norms is given to the affected people. The Chief Minister assured the people that the government is committed to safeguard their interests against nature's fury. He said that every effort will be made to compensate the farmers and labourers for the losses suffered due to the current spell of recent rains in the state.

FinMin predicts 7% GDP with moderate inflation in FY23

NEW DELHI: In the fiscal year 2022-23, India's economy is expected to grow at 7 per cent while retail inflation would moderate despite global headwinds, said the Finance Ministry on Monday. It would be in line with wholesale inflation which fell to a 25-month low in January. India's current account deficit is estimated to fall in FY23 and FY24 supported by the gains from high services exports, the moderation in oil prices, and the recent fall in import-intensive consumption demand. It will provide a buffer to the rupee in uncertain times, Monthly Economic Review by



the ministry said. This will provide a much-needed cushion to India's external sector at a time when the Fed is likely to raise rates further and ensure that India's external finances are not a major cause of concern, it said. The jump in net service exports over the previous year is a critical development as India increases its market share in

both IT and non-IT services, whose demand has been triggered by the pandemic, it said, adding, imports are also less costly now with the easing of global commodity prices. "With a manageable current account deficit and a growth rate highest among the major economies in FY23, the Indian economy has shown a new-found resilience in sailing through the turbulence caused by the pandemic and geopolitical stress," it said. Macroeconomic stability is likely to receive a further boost in FY23 as the current account deficit is set to narrow from the year-beginning estimates, it added

India may witness exports recovery from second half of FY24: Report



NEW DELHI: Despite a modest recession in the US and Europe, India's exports is likely to recover by the second half of FY24, said Fitch Ratings.

Renuka Chowdhury to file defamation case against PM Modi



NEW DELHI: After a Surat court held Rahul Gandhi guilty in a 2019 criminal defamation case over his remarks about Prime Minister Narendra Modi's surname, Congress leader Renuka Chowdhury announced that she would file a defamation case against Modi since the latter supposedly linked her laughter to 'Surpanakha', a demoness in Hindu mythology in a House proceeding. Taking to Twitter, Chowdhury on Friday said that Modi insulted her by his remark made in Parliament in 2018. She also posted a video of the House proceedings. She added: "This classless megalomaniac referred to me as Surpanakha on the floor of the House. I will file a defamation case against him. Let's see how fast courts will act now."

Punjab government should stop arresting innocent Sikh youths: Harjinder Singh Dhami

IT IS BIG MISTAKE OF GOVERNMENT TO PRESENT PRACTICE OF CONSCIOUSNESS IN SIKH YOUTH AS A CRIME

JAGMOHAN SINGH
Amritsar

The Shiromani Gurdwara Parbandhak Committee (SGPC) President Harjinder Singh Dhami has strongly condemned the excesses being done by the police against Sikh youths in Punjab for the past few days. Harjinder Singh Dhami has said in a statement that it is not right to deliberately target innocent Sikh youths in Punjab.

The statement of the SGPC president on the backlash of Police action whereupon conducted flag marches and searches across Punjab in their manhunt for radical preacher Amritpal Singh, arresting 34 more supporters and shifting four men in custody to a jail in far-off Assam. "It is not in the interest of the state to arrest the youths by creating fabricated stories without any charge. Punjab has seen many eras and it is very unfortunate that the present government of the state has added another chapter to the situation", said Dhami. SGPC President clearly said that the Sikh youth of Punjab have contributed a lot to the progress of not only the state but



also the country and the world. But it is sad that Sikh youths are looked at with suspicion repeatedly. The present government of Punjab is also making a similar mistake, he said. He said that if any fault of someone comes to light, then legal action can be taken against him. "The government should not create an atmosphere of terror

in the state in the guise of any phenomenon. It would be a big mistake of the government to present the practice of consciousness in the Sikh youth as a crime", said Dhami. Advising the Punjab government to stop such actions, SGPC President said that if the government is sincere and serious, it should provide employment opportunities to the youth of Punjab. He also said that misuse of government machinery only for political gain is not justified. A Sikh hardliner outfit 'Damdami Taksaal' chief Giani Harnam Singh Dhuma in a statement issued said that Punjab Government should forthwith stop to harass Sikh youths in Punjab by slapping

false cases as number of Sikh were being arrested. He said all the arrested Sikh youth should be released unconditionally as such action of Punjab police inviting disturbance in the State and would create law and order problem. He urged the Punjab chief Minister Bhagwant Mann to intervene in the issue to ensure the release of arrested Sikh youths and status of Bhai Amritpal Singh. He asked the chief Minister that Bhai Amritpal Singh should be handed over to Sikh community without further delay. At the same time Dhuma urged all the Sikh outfits to come on a single platform to raise voice in favor of Bhai Amritpal Singh.

Home minister inaugurates Sharda Devi temple near LoC in J&K

FW DESK

The union government will make efforts to open a corridor in Pakistan-Occupied Kashmir for Sharda Peeth pilgrimage on the lines of the Kartarpur corridor in Punjab, the announcement was made by Home Minister Amit Shah after he virtually inaugurated the Sharda Devi temple at Teetwal in Kupwara district on Wednesday.



The temple has been built on the banks of the Kishanganga river along the Line of Control. "Sharda Peeth should be opened for pilgrims on the pattern of Kartarpur corridor," the home minister said.

Congress MP Rahul Gandhi sentenced to 2 years in defamation case, released on bail

FW DESK
Delhi

The Lok Sabha MP from Wayanad Rahul Gandhi was found guilty and sentenced to two years in prison over his remarks about PM Modi surname by a Surat court, Gujarat on Thursday. He has been released on bail and his sentence was suspended for next 30 days to let him appeal the decision. Gandhi was convicted under Section 500 (dealing with



defamation) of the Indian Penal Code by a Gujarat court in the 2019 defamation case. Surat, Gujarat is Prime Minister Narendra Modi's home state. The case was filed by BJP MLA and Ex-Gujarat minister Purnesh Modi for saying "How come all thieves have the common surname Modi? Purnesh claimed Gandhi had defamed the Modi community by his remark. After the verdict Rahul Gandhi tweeted, "My reli-

gion is based on truth and non-violence. Truth is my God, non-violence the means to get it." While addressing a rally at Kolar in Karnataka ahead of the 2019 Lok Sabha elections, targeting PM Modi over his last name Congress leader Rahul Gandhi said, "Nirav Modi, Lalit Modi, Narendra Modi... how come they all have Modi as common surname? How come all the thieves have Modi as the common surname?"

NCRTC, HRIDC inks agreement to deploy "SPEED" for smooth monitoring of its projects

YOGESH KANT
New Delhi

The National Capital Region Transport Corporation (NCRTC) and Haryana Rail Infrastructure Development Corporation Ltd (HRIDC) on Thursday signed an agreement to deploy systematic program evaluation for efficient delivery of project "SPEED" for smooth monitoring of its projects, in house IT solution developed by the NCRTC.



SPEED is an application with focused features and capabilities keeping in view the grassroots-level practical requirements

pre-construction to construction levels that involve land acquisition, utility identification, and site clearance, all of which can be tracked through SPEED. It also captures daily progress from field units and enables engineers to input information in real time from the site, allowing for improved collaboration, seamless tracking of progress and faster decisions for maximum efficiency. HRIDC is going to implement a number of rail projects including, the Haryana Orbital Rail Corridor (HORC) connecting Palwal to Sonapat via Sohna, Manesar and Kharkhoda.

Rahul Gandhi disqualified from Lok Sabha



NEW DELHI: Rahul Gandhi's disqualification from the Lok Sabha as an attempt to silence his voice by the Centre against whom the leader had been asking tough questions and said the party will launch nationwide protests over the issue. Congress leader Rahul Gandhi was disqualified as a member of the Lok Sabha a day after he was given a two-year jail term by a Surat court on March 23 in a 2019 defamation case involving his remarks on PM Modi. Rahul Gandhi had mentioned the names of fugitives Nirav Modi and Lalit Modi along with that of PM Modi to wonder "how was it possible that all the thieves had a common surname Modi" in a speech made during the 2019 Lok Sabha poll campaign in Karnataka's Kolar district. The defamation case was then filed by former Surat MLA and ex-minister Purnesh Modi taking objection to Rahul Gandhi's remarks. According to the BJP leader, Rahul had defamed the entire Modi or Modi community through his remarks. The jail-term gave fodder to the ruling BJP whose president JP Nadda attacked the former Congress chief saying he had insulted the backward classes. Rahul was granted a bail for 30 days and the Congress said it would appeal to get a stay on conviction in the Sessions Court, High Court and even Supreme Court, if needed.

PM launches multiple initiatives to eradicate tuberculosis by 2025 with 3 months short treatment programme

YOGESH KANT
New Delhi

On the occasion of the World Tuberculosis Day, Prime Minister Narendra Modi launched a range of initiatives to eradicate tuberculosis and emphasized the need for public participation in the total eradication of TB. He said that India is working on the target of ending it completely by the year 2025 five years before the global target, at the World TB summit at Varanasi on Friday. He also highlighted that the government is starting a 3 months treatment programme for the prevention of TB instead of a 6-month course. He informed that earlier, the patients had to take medicines for 6 months every day but now, in the new system, the patient will have to take medicine only once a week. He also launched various initiatives including the TB-Mukt Panchayat, the official pan-India rollout of a shorter TB Preventive Treatment (TPT), the Family-centric care model for TB and the release of India's Annual TB Report 2023. PM also laid the foundation stone of the National Centre for Disease Control and High Containment (BSL) Laboratory here and unveiled the site for Metropolitan Public Health Surveillance Unit (MSU). While speaking at the "One World TB Summit", held in his Parliamentary constituency in Varanasi, Uttar Pradesh, PM Modi said India had made appreciable progress in the eradication of Tuberculosis mainly due to



public participation. After launching the TB-Mukt Panchayat initiative, PM asserted that the commitment and the determination with which country dedicated itself to tackling TB after 2014 is 'unprecedented'. "It is great initiative and under this campaign, every representative of the village panchayat will take a resolution that their villages will be completely TB-Free. The India's efforts are important, the Prime Minister said, as this is a new model for the global war on TB. He elaborated on a multi-pronged approach against TB in the last 9 years. He listed people's participation, enhancing nutrition, treatment innovation, tech integration and wellness and prevention such as Fit India, Yoga, and Khelo India type of interventions. Regarding people's participation, the Prime Minister talked about the Ni-kshay Mitra Campaign in helping TB patients. He informed that about 10 lakh TB patients have been adopted by citizens and even children aged 1012 years have come forward.

Financial help to the TB patient under the programme has reached up to one thousand crore rupees. He termed the movement 'inspirational' and expressed happiness that even Pravasi Indians are participating in this. Noting the major challenge of nutrition for TB patients, the Prime Minister highlighted the contributions of Ni-kshay Mitra Campaign in helping TB patients. He underlined that the government had announced a Direct Benefit Transfer scheme for TB patients in 2018 and as a result, approximately Rs 2000 crores have been directly transferred into their bank accounts for their treatment, where more roughly 75 lakh TB patients have benefitted from this. "Ni-kshay Mitras have now become a new source of energy for all TB patients", the Prime Minister said. Noting that it is extremely difficult to arrive at new solutions by practicing outdated ways, the Prime Minister said that the government has worked with new strategies so that TB patients do not fall out of their treatment.

Akali Dal Sanyukt meets Governor, demands immediate release of the Sikh youth implicated in false cases

CHANDIGARH: A delegation led by Shiromani Akali Dal (Sanyukt) President and former Union Minister, Sukhdev Singh Dhindsa today met the Punjab Governor Banwarilal Purohit, in detail, discussed the unfortunate events that are happening in Punjab lately. The delegation included former President of Shiromani Committee Bibi Jagir Kaur, Justice Nirmal Singh (retired) and Karnail Singh Panjoli. Meanwhile, a memorandum was also handed over to the Governor by the delegation demanding the immediate release of the Sikh youths who were falsely implicated in criminal cases. Later addressing the media



outside the Punjab Raj Bhawan and expressing concern over the tense situation in Punjab, Sukhdev Singh Dhindsa said that Punjab is currently going through a very critical time. The Punjab government with its repressive policies is taking unconstitutional action by implicating and arresting

innocent Sikh youth in cases based on mere suspicion. "A meeting has been held with the Governor of Punjab to improve the deteriorating situation of the state at present. Along with this, a memorandum has also been submitted to the Governor urging him to intervene and

ask the Mann Government to immediately release the innocent Sikh youths who have been implicated in false cases," said Sukhdev Singh Dhindsa. He said that the Aam Aadmi Party government led by Chief Minister Bhagwant Mann, instead of maintaining peace and communal brotherhood in the state, is making efforts to defame the patriotic Sikh community. "Mann Government under the pretext of maintaining law and order is only implementing oppressive policies, innocent Sikh youths are being trapped in felony false cases and this brutality on these Sikhs needs to be stopped immediately," said Sukhdev Singh Dhindsa.

Headache for Sukhu government as Punjab, Haryana oppose water cess move

SHIMLA: Himachal Pradesh Chief Minister Sukhwinder Singh Sukhu's biggest resource mobilisation move to tackle state's worst fiscal crisis seems to have hit a roadblock, as also possibly a legal tangle.

Within three days, after the state assembly passed a bill -- Himachal Pradesh Water Cess on Hydropower Generation Bill, 2023 to levy cess on water being used by hydro-power producer companies in the state, two neighbouring states have come-out against the bill.

State Governor Shiv Pratap Shukla is yet to give his assent to the bill which Chief Minister claims will fetch an additional resource of Rs 4000 cr to the state every year from 172 hydel projects. Till now, the state has been getting a free power share of 12 percent from the independent power producers including Bhakra-Beas Management Board (BBMB), NHPC, NTPC,



SJVN Ltd and private power producers.

Himachal Pradesh also gets a share of 7.19 percent from the BBMB as per decision of the Supreme Court as its legitimate right in the combined assets of three states -- Punjab, Haryana and Himachal Pradesh under Punjab State Reorganisation Act 1956.

This week, the Himachal Pradesh assembly passed a bill unanimously to levy water-cess

on the hydro-power projects, located in the state. The bill replaced an ordinance which the Congress government had promulgated only a month back.

Quick to oppose the move, Punjab and Haryana state assemblies passed separate resolutions to strongly oppose the move to impose Water Cess on Hydropower Projects for non-consumptive use of water for power generation.

In the Haryana assembly,

Chief Minister Manohar Lal Khattar said, "This water cess is illegal and not binding on the State of Haryana and therefore the same should be withdrawn immediately by the Himachal Government."

The resolution passed by the House even has urged the central government to prevail upon the Himachal Pradesh government to withdraw the bill/ordinance as the same is in violation of the Central Act i.e. Inter State Water Disputes Act, 1956.

"With this new levy there will be an additional financial burden amounting to Rs 1, 200 crore per annum on partner states out of which around Rs 336 crore will be burden on the state of Haryana. This new levy is not only an infringement of the exclusive rights of the state over its natural resources but will also result in additional financial burden for generation

of power resulting in the higher cost of generation of electricity," Khattar said.

On the same lines, Punjab Chief Minister Bhagwant Mann and Water Resources minister Gurmeet Singh Meht Hayer said they would not pay a single paisa to Himachal Pradesh and even warned that Punjab could also levy cess on apple trucks coming to the state from Himachal and also on tourists going to the hills.

Mann, while terming it an attack on the federal structure, said that it violates the Inter State River Water Disputes Act, 1956.

In Shimla, adopting a firm stand, Chief Minister Sukhwinder Singh Sukhu told the state assembly on Thursday that Himachal Pradesh was well within its right to impose water cess on hydro-power generation as it didn't in any manner had violated the Inter State River Dispute Act 1956.



Punjab Chief Minister Bhagwant Mann pays tribute to Shaheed Bhagat Singh on his martyrdom day, at his village KhatkarKalan in Nawanshahr near Jalandhar on Thursday.

PHOTO: PRABHJOT GILL

Two arrested for murder of Punjab truck driver in Lucknow



LUCKNOW: Two youths have been arrested in connection with the murder of a truck driver from Punjab whose body was found inside the driver's cabin. The accused -- 19-year-old Rohit Kumar and 26-year-old Kamal -- are residents of Sitapur. During interrogation, Rohit told police that the truck driver Harpinder, 60, originally from Faridkot district, tried to harass him sexually under the influence of alcohol. In order to save himself, he attacked Harpinder with an iron weapon. DCP East Hridesh Kumar said: "The accused also told us that in order to destroy the evidence, they drove the truck to the outskirts of the city and fled with its key and some money and even threw the weapon at a secluded place. "The two have been booked under IPC sections of 302 (murder) and 201 (causing disappearance of evidence)." Earlier on Monday, police found Harpinder's body inside the truck with an Uttarakhand number plate.

Work of fitting golden plates at Sachkhand Sri Harmandar Sahib begins

JAGMOHAN SINGH Amritsar

As part of the maintenance sewa (voluntary service) of golden plates and minakari (inset work of painting) at Sachkhand Sri Harmandar Sahib, golden plates were refitted inside the sanctum sanctorum of the shrine today.

The sewa was handed over by the ShiromaniGurdwaraParbandhak Committee (SGPC) to Guru Nanak NishkamSewak-Jatha (GNNSJ), Birmingham, UK, which carried out the necessary repair work. After Ardas (Sikh prayer), head granthi of Sri



Harmandar Sahib GianiJagtar Singh, SGPC President Harjinder Singh Dhami, SGPC members Paramjit Singh Khalsa, BhaiRajinder Singh Mehta, Bhagwant Singh Sialka, head of GNNSJ BhaiMohinder Singh and SGPC secretary Partap Singh arrived at Sikh shrine with golden plates

and started the sewa of fitting them with devotion. Dhami said that preservation works are done from time to time for golden plates and frescos at Sri Harmandar Sahib and accordingly the service has been assigned to Guru Nanak NishkamSewakJatha by the SGPC.

Forty MPs detained by police at Vijay Chowk released

NEWDELHI: A total of 40 MPs from the Congress and four other parties, who were earlier detained by the Delhi Police in connection with the protest march from Parliament House on Friday, have been released, a police official said.

According to the senior police official, 40 MPs and four others from opposition parties had to be detained for violation of prohibitory orders.

"They were detained and taken in a bus to New Police Line in Kingsway Camp in GTB Nagar. Hours later, they were released," said the official.

According to opposition, the leaders and MPs, including K. C. Venugopal, Adhir Ranjan



Chowdhury, K. Suresh, Manickam Tagore, Imran Pratapgarhi, Rajmohan Unnithan, and Mohammad Jawaitd were among others detained by police and taken to nearby police

station marching towards Vijay Chowk from Parliament reiterating their demand for a JPC probe into the Adani issue. "Under the Modi Raj, even protesting outside Parliament

is a crime. Delhi Police have detained opposition MPs, as we took a march towards the Rashtrapati Bhavan to reiterate our demand for a JPC on the Adani Mega Scam. They will not succeed in shaking our resolve," Venugopal wrote on Twitter while sharing video and photo of leaders and MPs in the police bus.

Earlier addressing the media at Vijay Chowk, several leaders, including Congress President Mallikarjun Kharge, also raised the issue of Rahul Gandhi's conviction in a 2019 criminal defamation case by a Surat court and alleged that the government was targeting the opposition with cases to suppress their voices.

Strong earthquake tremors lasting for several seconds shake North India

CHANDIGARH: Earthquake tremors were felt in Punjab and Chandigarh. Along with this, there is news of earthquake shocks felt in Pakistan's Punjab as well. Currently there is no news of any kind of damage. After the shocks of the earthquake, people came out of their houses in panic. It is being told that the tremors of the earthquake were felt for several seconds. Earthquake tremors were felt in Delhi-NCR at around 10.15 pm. Earthquake tremors were also felt in UP, Punjab, Jammu and Kashmir,



Uttarakhand, Bihar. Its magnitude is said to be 5.5. The epicenter of the earthquake was Afghanistan. Apart from India, earthquake shocks were also felt in Afghanistan, Pakistan, Kazakhstan and China.

Immediately revoke NSA imposed on arrested Sikhs: Akali Dal-Badal

BIG CONSPIRACY TO DEFAME SIKHS AND PUNJAB :VIRSA SINGH VALTOHA

JAGMOHAN SINGH Amritsar

ShiromaniAkali Dal Senior leader Virsa Singh Valtoha today asked Punjab Government to immediately withdraw National Security Act (NSA) imposed on arrested Sikh youth under ongoing crackdown in the state and innocent Sikh youth should be released immediately.

Addressing a press conference here today, Virsa Singh Valtoha said that it was shocking to see that Punjab Police has registered cases against Sikh youth under NSA on instructions from Punjab Government and have sent them to Central Jail Dibrugarh in Assam. He said that NSA is considered a black law not only in the country but worldwide. He said that imposing NSA in an ordinary law and order situation cannot be termed wise in any manner. He said that Akali Dal has always advocated that those should be punished under the law who have violated law. He said that guilty of the attack on Ajnala Police station should be dealt with as per law of the land. He said that Punjab Police and courts are capable of doing so.

He said that imposing NSA on instruction from the Centre is unjustified in every manner. He said that it was most unfortunate for Punjab that Chief Minister Bhagwant Mann was working as a puppet in the hands of Delhi



Chief Minister ArvindKejriwal and under their rule Sikh youth are being made targets.

Talking about BhaiAmritpal Singh, Valtoha said that if police had to arrest Amritpal Singh, they could have arrested him from his residence in the morning on that day and there was no need to enact drama in the matter. He said that whatever happened has led to spread of terror and fear in Punjab. He said that most unfortunate is that the National media is presenting Sikhs and Punjab as anti national. He said that Sikhs have made a significant contribution for the Independence of the country and they need no certificate from anyone. He said that even now Sikhs were ready to make any sacrifice for the nation if the need arises.

Valtoha said that though we can have ideological differences with BhaiAmritpal Singh but the manner in which his name was

being used to defame Sikhs as anti national was strongly condemnable and this will not be tolerated at any cost.

He said that Akali Dal has always advocated for peace and communal harmony in the state and this unity and harmony was not at stake. He said that Punjab has already paid a heavy price in the past and the country has also suffered because of it and they should not be thrown in same situation. He said that we have repeatedly said that whoever breaks law, he should be dealt with according to law. Responding to a question on action against the wife of BhaiAmritpal Singh, Akali Dal leader said that daughters and sisters are always respectable and they should not be dragged in these matters whatsoever. He urged Chief Minister and Police officers to desist from dragging her name in the issue.

NIA seals 2 Popular Front of India offices in Rajasthan



NEW DELHI: The National Investigation Agency (NIA) has sealed two offices of the banned organisation Popular Front of India (PFI) in Rajasthan, and also frozen 10 of its bank accounts, an official said on Friday.

An official said that NIA is investigating the criminal conspiracy hatched by PFI leaders and cadres in Rajasthan to drive a wedge between different communities in the country through radicalisation.

"The banned organisation has also been conducting training of gullible Muslim youth in handling of weapons. They have been raising funds to carry out acts of terror and violence with the ultimate objective of establishing Islamic rule in India by 2047," the

official said. Earlier, on March 13, the NIA had filed chargesheet against two individuals -- Mohammad Ashif a.k.a. Asif of Kota, and Sadiq Sarraf of Baran in connection with the case.

The official said that during the investigation into the case registered in September 2022, it was learnt that the offices of the PFI at Jaipur and Kota were being used for organising terror training camps.

These trainees, mostly young Muslim youth, were being radicalised and trained in the use of dangerous weapons, such as knives and swords, to attack, assault, and murder by targeting vulnerable points of the body, including the head, neck and chest.

Lecture on Mental Health at KCW



FW DESK

The NSS department in collaboration with department of sciences, Khalsa College for Woman (KCW) organized an extension lecture on the topic of Mental Health and Meditation. The researcher and Associate Professor, Dr. Davinder Singh Johal from Department of Psychology, Guru Nanak Dev University was the keynote speaker in this lecture who emphasized on the importance of mental health

for the students by shedding light on the mental issues such as stress, anxiety, depression, bipolar disorder. He also suggested some remedies to deal with this problem. The staff and the students were highly motivated to follow healthy diet and stress free routine in their life. Principal Dr. Surinder Kaur thanked Dr. Johal for sharing his valuable insights on current mental health issues and congratulated the whole team for organizing such event.

Punjab CM, dedicates Vallah Railway Over Bridge to state in Amritsar

SAYS MOVE WILL HELP IN DECONGESTING TRAFFIC IN THE HOLY CITY

JAGMOHAN SINGH Amritsar

Punjab Chief Minister Bhagwant Mann on Saturday dedicated the newly constructed Railway Over Bridge at Vallah to decongest the traffic thereby facilitating the pilgrims coming to the city.

"This is a historic initiative that will help in decongesting the traffic in the historic city to benefit the residents, devotees and commuters" said the Chief Minister while address-

ing the gathering to dedicate the project.

The Chief Minister said that this is a humble initiative by the state government to give fillip to the development of this holy city. He said that lakhs of devotees daily pay obeisance at Sri Darbar Sahib, Durgiana Mandir, Jallianwala Bagh, Bhagwan Valmiki Tirath and others on this sacred land. Bhagwant Mann said that this project will facilitate them in easily approaching the city and paying obeisance.

The Chief Minister said that about Rs 33 crore has been spent on this ambitious project at Amritsar-Sahnewal section of



the Railways. He said that this project has come up with collaboration of the centre and the state government adding that Amritsar Improvement Trust has spent Rs 18.83 crore on this

ROB. Bhagwant Mann said that Rs 14.12 crore was share of the Railways out of which Rs 7.48 crore has been received whereas Rs 6.64 crore is still pending. He congratulated the people

of state especially of the holy city for successfully organizing the Education session of G-20. He said that in these sessions representatives of powerful countries which constitute around 80% of the globe have participated. Mann expressed hope that these deliberations will form the bedrock for bringing qualitative changes in the education sector in the member countries.

The Chief Minister said that the state government has not left any stone unturned for ensuring comfortable stay for the visiting delegates. He said that with the proactive support and cooperation of the people of the city, the efforts of the state government

had delivered desired results and the delegates had enjoyed the warm hospitality of the state. He said that the delegates will take along with them the vivid memories of their visit to Punjab which will be part of their journey of life forever.

The Chief Minister asserted that he is the votary of the fact that the democracy with diverse ideas and views is always a successful one. In the same manner, Bhagwant Mann said that in democracy opposition and ruling party both are important adding that both of them should make concerted efforts for the development of the state.

I am fighting for India's voice, ready to pay any price, says Rahul Gandhi

ON FRIDAY MORNING, RAHUL GANDHI WAS SUSPENDED FROM THE LOK SABHA FOLLOWING HIS CONVICTION IN A CRIMINAL DEFAMATION CASE

Hours after being expelled from the Parliament following his conviction in a criminal defamation case, senior Congress leader Rahul Gandhi said on Friday that he is ready to pay any price for expressing the voice of India.

"I am fighting for India's voice... Ready to pay any price," Rahul Gandhi tweeted.



On Friday morning, Rahul Gandhi was suspended from the Lok Sabha following his conviction in a criminal defamation case. The Lok Sabha Secretariat also declared his constituency in Kerala's Wayanad as vacant.

According to the Representation of the People Act, a lawmaker sentenced to imprisonment for two years or more shall be disqualified "from the date of such conviction" and remain disqualified for another six years after serving

prison time. On Thursday morning, a court in Surat found Rahul Gandhi guilty and sentenced him to two years in prison in a 2019 criminal defamation case over his remarks about Prime Minister Narendra Modi's surname. The Congress leader, however, was granted bail and his sentence was suspended for 30 days to allow him to appeal the Surat court verdict.

The case was filed against Rahul Gandhi by BJP MLA and ex-Gujarat minister Purnesh Modi for saying "how come all thieves have the common surname Modi" while campaigning in Karnataka ahead of the 2019 Lok Sabha elections.

Rahul at his first youth convention rally in K'taka announces stipend for unemployed youths

ARUN KUMAR RAO
Belgavi (Karnataka)

Former Congress President Rahul Gandhi, at his first rally in Karnataka since the Bharat JodoYatra announced that the party, if voted to power in the coming assembly elections, will pay Rs 3000 unemployed graduates a month and Rs 1500 to diploma holders per month for two years.

Rahul Gandhi addressing a huge gathering at "YuvaKranti-Samavesh", a youth convention in Belgavi, he said, his padyatra from Kanyakumara to Kashmir sent out a message that the country belongs to everyone and not just a select "two or three" and certainly "not Adaniji's alone". During youth convention, He along with party president MallikarjunaKharge, KPCC President



D K Shivakumar, Opposition leader Siddaramaiah and other leaders unveiled "YuvaNidhi", the party's fourth election promise in Karnataka.

Gandhi said, while urging people to vote for Congress. "The Congress government will also provide employment to 10 lakh people in the state and 2.5 lakh vacancies in the government will be filled". The decision to provide an allowance he said

concerns raised by Youth during the BharatjodoYatra. "We understand your (youth) problem and that BJP are not providing jobs", he added. Congress had earlier announced 200 units of free electricity for all families (GruhaJyothi scheme), Rs 2000 per month for the woman head of the family (Gruha Lakshmi) and 10 Kg free rice for BPC families (Anna Bhagya).

Meantime ruling Bjp Chief Minister Bommai said, "Congress promise of a monthly stipend to unemployment youth is a bogus scheme. Congress made similar promises in four other state, but it is yet to be fulfilled". On Rahul Gandhi announcement for unemployed youth, state BJP issued statement that Karnataka has one of the lowest unemployment rates in the entire country.

Two more aides of Amritpal lodged in Dibrugarh jail



GUWAHATI: Two more aides of pro-Khalistan self-styled radical preacher Amritpal Singh were brought to Assam on Tuesday and lodged at the Dibrugarh central jail, a top police source said.

A team of Punjab Police arrived at Dibrugarh's Mohanbari airport on Tuesday morning with the two arrested aides whose identities have not been revealed, according to the source.

Amritpal Singh's uncle Harjit Singh and four other associates are also lodged at the same prison.

Harjit Singh arrived at the jail on around 8.30 a.m. in the morning.

When media asked Prasanta Kumar Bhuiyan, IG (Law & Order) of Assam Police, as to where Harjit Singh had first landed in Guwahati or the Jorhat Air Force base, he said: "I am not aware of whether Amritpal Singh's uncle and other aides were brought to Dibrugarh today or not."

Notably, Bhuiyan reviewed the security measures at Dibrugarh central jail on Monday.

He held several meetings with district police officers and prison authorities.

Kashmir: Tulip Garden, Asia's largest, opens for public



FW DESK Srinagar

The Tulip Garden in Srinagar, the Asia's largest, where 1.5 million flowers bloom, opened for the public on Sunday.

Formerly known as Siraj Bagh, the Indira Gandhi Memorial Tulip Garden was opened in 2008 by then chief minister of Jammu and Kashmir Ghulam Nabi Azad to boost tourism in the Valley. Spread over an area of about 30 hectares the garden is located in Zabarwan foothills surrounding famous Dal lake. Jammu and Kashmir Lieutenant Governor Manoj Sinha at the opening ceremony said that about 68 varieties of tulips will bloom in the garden this year. He said that last year the garden witnessed 3.60 lakh visitors, which is the highest since it was opened. The LG expressed hope that this year's visitor footfall surpasses last year's numbers. A new tulip garden will also be opened in April in Sanasar area of the Jammu region in which 2.75 lakh tulips of 25 varieties will bloom.

BSF fire at Pakistani drone along Jammu border



FW DESK

The Border Security Force (BSF) fired at a Pakistani drone along the International Border in Samba district of Jammu and Kashmir, official sources said.

This was followed by a massive search operation in the area.

The BSF troops manning the Chamliyal border post in Ramgarh sub-sector picked up a blinking red light in the air, believed to be a drone, from Pakistan around 2.30 am and fired over two dozen rounds to bring it down, they said.

The suspected drone, the officials added, subsequently returned to the Pakistani side.

The search operation was launched in the forward villages adjoining Chamliyal, Sapwal and Narayanpur border outposts to ensure that there was no dropping of any weapons or narcotics.

The open fields in Dug, Channi-Sapwal and Asampur villages are also being searched by the BSF personnel who were deployed in strength for the operation, the officials said.

'Misuse of ED, CBI against Oppn', SC to hear plea by 14 political parties on April 5

NEW DELHI: Fourteen political parties, including the Congress, Trinamool Congress, AAP, NCP, Shiv Sena (UBT), on Friday moved the Supreme Court against the alleged misuse of investigative agencies in arresting opposition leaders and sought guidelines on arrest.

The parties sought guidelines to fulfil and realise the guarantee of personal liberty entrenched in Article 21 of the Constitution, for all citizens, including those targeted for exercising their right to political dissent and for performing their duties as the political opposition.

The political parties forming the petitioners are: Congress, DMK, RJD, BRS, Trinamool Congress, AAP, NCP, Shiv Sena (UBT), JMM, JD(U), CPI(M), CPI, Samajwadi Party, J&K National Conference, together representing 45.19 per cent of the votes cast in the last Assembly polls, and 42.5 per cent of the votes cast in the 2019 general elections, and holding power in 11 states/union territories.

Senior advocate A.M. Singhvi mentioned the matter before a bench headed by Chief Justice D.Y. Chandrachud for early hearing.

The top court agreed to hear the matter on April 5.

The counsel clarified that they are not attempting to affect the ongoing investigations. The plea said that 14 op-



position political parties have filed a petition, in light of the alarming rise in the use of coercive criminal processes against their leaders and other citizens exercising their fundamental right to dissent and disagree with the central government.

The plea submitted that investigating agencies such as CBI and ED are being increasingly deployed in a selective and targeted manner with a view to completely crush political dissent and upend the fundamental premises of a representative democracy.

The petition has been drawn and filed by advocate Shadan Farasat and settled by Singhvi.

According to the plea, only 23 convictions under the Prevention of Money Laundering Act, 2002 (PMLA) have been secured as of now, even as the number of cases registered by the ED under the PMLA have

risen exponentially (from 209 in 2013-14 F.Y. to 981 in 2020-21, and 1,180 in 2021-22).

"Between 2004-14, of the 72 political leaders investigated by the CBI, 43 (under 60 per cent) were from the Opposition of the time. Now, this same figure has risen to over 95 per cent. The same pattern is reflected in ED's investigations as well, with the proportion of Opposition leaders from the total number of politicians investigated rising from 54 per cent (before 2014) to 95 per cent (after 2014)," it further added.

The petitioners have sought from the apex court certain prospectively applicable guidelines governing the arrest, remand, and bail of persons in offences (which may or may not be punishable with imprisonment for above seven years) not involving serious bodily harm (thereby obviously

excluding homicide, rape, terrorism etc.).

"As for arrest and remand, the petitioners seek that the triple test (whether a person is a flight risk, or whether there is a reasonable apprehension of the tampering of evidence or of the influencing/intimidation of witnesses) be used by police officers/ED officials and courts alike for arrest of persons in any cognizable offences except those involving serious bodily violence. Where these conditions are not satisfied, alternatives like interrogation at fixed hours or at most house arrest be used to meet the demands of investigation.

"As for bail, the petitioners seek that the principle of 'bail as rule, jail as exception' be followed by all courts throughout, especially in cases where non-violent offences are alleged, and that bail be denied only where the aforementioned triple-test is met," the plea added.

It further contended that where special laws such as PMLA with stringent bail conditions are concerned, the petitioners seek that such bail provisions be harmonised with Article 21 of the Constitution.

"As such, therefore, where it appears that the trial is unlikely to complete within six months, the accused be released on bail even under special laws unless the conditions in the triple-test are not fulfilled."

Post-Covid Scenario to see skeletal muscle loss in 15% population by 2036

DOMINICK RODRIGUES Mumbai

By 2036, about 15% of the population is likely to be affected by ageing-related skeletal muscle loss and frailty, while COVID-19, cardiovascular diseases and 'affected' genes provide a "fertile" ground for research since the COVID virus affects the cells and membranes in the human body, according to Researchers.

This finding is part of the ever-growing science of pathology in the detection of human diseases and medical solutions, that was highlighted at a global conference on oncology, reproductive medicine data analytics/bioinformatics (proteomics) computational pathology, artificial intelligence, data science etc.

Professor Arvind Ramanaathan, Faculty, Head Research, Institute for StemCell Science and Regenerative Medicine (In-STEM), Bangalore highlighted this detail while speaking on the "Emerging Science" about 'Lipids in Human Diseases' at the two-day Pathfinders Global Pathology Conference 2023 held in Mumbai recently.

Replying to questions, he said the solution lay in "denying the virus entry into the human resource," while studies had shown that athletes often had a high fat layer in their muscles which was utilised well in their athletic efforts while also keeping away disease.

Describing lipids comprising 40,000 molecules as a 'diverse class' of compounds deeply associated with the human system's



physiology and health, he said the structural database revealed that 47,000 lipids have been discovered till date.

"Hundreds of 'Triglycerides' play important roles in disease detection of the spectrum of - even rare - disorders noticed today," he said, adding "Lipids play an important role in identifying cardiovascular, cancer problems and mass-spectrometry-based approaches help in identifying and quantifying such different lipids - even if they are lying hidden at a rate of 2-per-million." "Genomes contain more details than Proteins," Dr Sridhar Sivasubbu, Senior Principal Scientist, CSIR: Institute of Genomics and Integrated Biology, New Delhi, said in answer to the question "Gene, RNA or Protein: what should one chase and when?"

"Fish are in the same genetic group like humans and the zebrafish was used by us in research - where a student discovered bleeding in its brain that was then knocked down by molecular docking," he said, adding that "Vascular Associated Endothelial RNA (VEAL2) was discovered and characterised high in BP patients."

To a question why greater pathology efforts were not being

put in post-COVID-19 about this disease and its gene-altering risks, Dr Sandip Shah, Executive Director, Neuberger Diagnostics, said the Institute of Genomic Studies of India and the Pune Institute of Viral Research have been given this permission by the Indian Government.

"COVID virus is a RNA virus entering the cell cycle and changing the protein production of the normal cell, where it affects the endothelial cells of the cardiovascular system by increasing coagulation or clot formation in the blood vessels," he said, adding "That is the reason we find not only cardiovascular disease or heart attacks, but also paralytic strokes occurring after the COVID-19 pandemic and specifically after the +Delta+ virus came in." "The second COVID wave has created a lot of problems with the protein formation in the body. So, knowing that genetic sequence messenger RNA - and when it will come out - is necessary as it is having a coding for the protein formation and that change in the coding due to the virus has created a problem for the hypercoagulable state in which the blood vessels have been infected, resulting in clot formation and heart attack or strokes."

Unseasoned Rainfall brings damage to Crops

KAVITA SHARMA

Mahendra Singh of Modi Nagar was planning to get his wheat crops harvest in a day or two but is deeply shattered after the uncertain rainfall in the region. Half of his crops are damaged due to rainfall and hailstorm. Swaran Singh of Punjab has also planned to harvest his crops in a week but the sudden downpour is a big loss for him. This is not the story of only Swaran Singh and MahendraSingh, farmers across the country are facing the same crisis. Unseasoned rains and hail in parts of Uttar Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan, Punjab, Haryana and Maharashtra etc over the



past three four days has caused damaged to the wheat, gram, pulses and other crops. The farmers across the nation are demanding adequate compensation.

The untimely rains in mid-March has damaged the Rabi crops and would result in low yield. According to a report, the

rains have been beneficial for vegetables and mangos but it has damaged litchi crop in Bihar. The wheat yield is likely to impact in North-Western states, could lead to decline this year.

The farmers of Maharashtra are also facing the same issue as their crops of wheat, pulses, bananas, grapes, gram,

mangoes are also damaged after this hail storm. The onion crops in Nasik is affected by 5-10 percent. The farmers of Assam have shifted their produce of fruits and vegetables to the safer places.

The sudden impact of climate change is not only a warning but a concern. According to a report by Crisil Market Intelligence and Analytics, the cumulative rains have been 20 percent more than the normal. Vinod Kumar a farmer in Uttar Pradesh is demanding compensation, most of my crops are damaged, Our variety of wheat commands more than 4000 per quintal, but I don't think I can get more than 2000 this time, said Kumar.

JIH Women's Wing's colloquium calls for more constructive women participation in socio political arena

NEWDELHI: Eminent women, in a national colloquium organized by the Women's Wing of Jamaat e Islami Hind (JIH) have concluded that efforts should be made to get more constructive women participation in the socio-political arena and only this will lead to a welfare nation.

Women personalities from socio political background participated in the colloquium on the topic 'Socio Political Engagement of Women: Way Forward,' and shared their experiences in overcoming the challenges in the field.

Delivering her inaugural address, JIH National Secretary Rahamathunnissa A. said, "the provision is there as per the constitution and the various laws in the country but we fail at practical implementations due to the complex realities of our social structure." Asserting that men and women should work

complementing each other for any nation to progress, she said that only through conscious efforts in education, awareness, training, making public places more female friendly and reservation could changes be brought.

National Coordinator of All India Unorganized Workers Congress and Bharat JodoYatra, SheebaRamachandran has lamented that the condition of women is pathetic even though we have women representatives in the highest political positions in the country. Commenting that equal rights with active participation of women is merely in preaching and not in practice, she urged every organization to give equal consideration for women. National President of Indian Union Muslim League, Women's Wing, FathimaMuzaffer motivated women to work for their rights



by themselves, reminding the verse from the Quran that "the Creator does not change the condition of people unless they change themselves". She advised women to support each other and not compete with each other, they need to be at peace and be the peace givers. Welfare Party of India's (WPI) National General Secretary, SheemaMohsin mentioned the pathetic condition

of women in India. Pointing out that women are made targets for community-based enmity thus attacking their dignity and honour, Sheema said that the society should be restructured to provide total security to women and that they should be made aware of the provisions in the constitution for meaningful participation.

In her concluding address,

JIH National Secretary .AtiyaSiddiqua asked the women to become sensitive towards the evils to control them in the society, develop confidence and adopt a right approach towards problem solving, which can be done both at Govt. level by protesting, writing to the authorities, providing Memorandums etc. and also at local level by visiting personally and addressing the problems. "Today, women are representatives in many political wings but their role is only as a rubber stamp while the actual power holders and decision makers are the men behind them. Developing a recognizable personality is the need of the hour for a woman which is possible in a collective environment," she added.

The programme convener, AsmaImtiyaz, ShaistaRafat, Anshida M Sajid, ArefaParveen and FakhiraTabassum also spoke on the occasion.

Global stagflation fears rise amid persistent inflation

Recent economic data in India and global financial developments are causing concerns of stagflation in major economies, including India. The retail inflation reading for February from India's NSO at 6.44 per cent contradicts the RBI's forecast of 5.7 per cent for Q4 inflation. Even though the RBI raised its benchmark interest rate by 250 basis points since May 2021, core inflation remains persistently elevated, indicating difficulty in controlling price gains. The Monetary Policy Committee members cited the persistence of core inflation as justification for continuing to tighten monetary policy at their last meeting in February. Food prices also show disconcerting trends, with key categories in the food basket registering high year-on-year inflation and sequential hardening. Cereals and products saw inflation accelerate to 16.7 per cent in February, while milk and products quickened to 9.65 per cent, fruits surged to 6.38 per cent, and spices slowed a tad to 20.2 per cent. The prediction of a likely El Niño this year raises concerns about the outlook for food prices. Policymakers need to focus on containing inflation, but the rising uncertainty about the growth momentum sustaining in the face of the heightened risks of a recession in advanced economies raises the risk that higher credit costs may further dampen consumption. However, failure to engender enduring price stability could lead to stagflation. Supply side measures such as GST rationalisation and fuel price cuts need to be expedited to address the overall macro-economic outlook, which appears worrying. It is essential for policymakers to take proactive measures to address these challenges and ensure a sustainable and stable economic environment that supports growth and protects the well-being of citizens. This may require a combination of monetary policy measures, structural reforms, and targeted fiscal interventions to tackle the root causes of inflation and promote inclusive growth.

LETTERBOX

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DR. KONDA REDDY CHAWVA RAISES CONCERN OVER SHRINKING AREA OF FORESTS, WHICH AT PRESENT COVERS 31% OF THE EARTH'S LAND SURFACE

Healthy forests for healthy people

Humanity today faces numerous global challenges. These include the COVID-19 pandemic and related economic hardships, international conflicts, food insecurity, poverty, climate change, land degradation, water pollution, and biodiversity loss. The world is now looking for solutions that are cost-effective, equitable, and can be easily implemented. Forests contribute significantly to addressing many of the challenges mentioned above. Forests have the ability to combat climate change and provide a range of ecosystem services that could support livelihoods for rural communities.

The United Nations General Assembly declared 21 March as the International Day of Forests (IDF) in 2012. The IDF raises awareness of the indispensable role of different types of forests in supporting a wide range of benefits to human health that include food security and nutrition, thereby aligning with the 2030 Agenda of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), particularly SDG 3 (Good health and well-being) and SDG 15 (Life on land).

Forests are of global importance. Forests provide habitat for 80% of amphibian species, 75% of bird species, and 68% of mammal species. More than 18% of the total forest area is in legally established protected areas. Nevertheless, forest biodiversity remains under threat from deforestation and forest degradation. The Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO's) latest report on State of the World's Forests (2022) states that forests cover 31% of the Earth's land surface (4.06 billion ha) but the area is shrinking, with 420 million ha of forests lost due to deforestation between 1990 and 2020. The rate of deforestation is declining but was still 10 million ha per year during the period of 2015-2020.

Climate change is a major threat to forest health and this is manifested in a number of ways. For instance, there are indications that the incidence and severity of forest fires and pests are increasing. The COVID-19 pandemic also had a significant impact on



THE FAO'S LATEST REPORT ON STATE OF THE WORLD'S FORESTS (2022) STATES THAT FORESTS COVER 31% OF THE EARTH'S LAND SURFACE BUT THE AREA IS SHRINKING, WITH 420 MILLION HA OF FORESTS LOST DUE TO DEFORESTATION BETWEEN 1990 AND 2020

forest value chains and trade in early 2020. There is a possible longer-term link between forests and disease. More than 30% of new diseases since 1960 are ascribed to land-use change, including deforestation, and 15% of 250 emerging infectious diseases have been linked to forests. Deforestation, specifically in the tropics, has been associated with an increase in infectious diseases such as malaria and dengue. Moreover, worldwide almost 90% of deforestation is driven by agricultural expansion such as the conversion of forest to cropland or grassland for livestock grazing. FAO's report on the State of the World's Forests (2022) suggests three forest-based pathways as a means for tackling local to global challenges—first, halting deforestation and maintaining forests; second, restoring degraded lands and expanding agroforestry; and finally yet importantly, sustainably using forests and building green value chains.

The Government of India (GoI) has launched a global movement on Lifestyle for Environment (LiFE), or Mission LiFE. This is designed with the objective of mobilizing at least one billion Indians and other global citizens to take individual and collective

action for protecting and conserving the environment. In India, at least 80% of all villages and urban local bodies are intended to become environment-friendly by 2028.

As per the Economic Survey of India (2022-23), one of the quantifiable targets of India's nationally determined contributions (NDCs) is to achieve an additional carbon sink of 2.5 billion to 3.0 billion tonnes through additional forest and tree cover by 2030. The country ranks third globally with respect to the net gain in average annual forest area between 2010 and 2020. This gain is mainly attributed to the robust framework and policies of the GoI and State governments that have promoted and protected forests. Initiatives such as the National Afforestation Programme (NAP), Green India Mission (GIM), Compensatory Afforestation Fund Management and Planning Authority (CAMPA), Green Highway Policy-2015, Policy for enhancement of Urban Greens, National Agro-forestry Policy, and Sub-Mission on Agro-forestry (SMAF) are among the key ones.

A robust forest ecosystem acts as a vital carbon sink. The Indian State of Forest

Report (ISFR) estimates the carbon stock (which is the quantity of carbon sequestered from the atmosphere and stored in biomass, deadwood, soil, and litter in the forest) of forests to be about 7,204 million tonnes in 2019, which is an increase of 79.4 million tonnes of carbon stock as compared to the estimates in 2017. Among the Indian states, Arunachal Pradesh has the maximum carbon stock in forests (1023.84 million tonnes), followed by Madhya Pradesh (609.25 million tonnes).

The FAO bolsters GoI's efforts in the conservation of forest landscapes by fostering sustainable agrofood systems. FAO works in 8 States, viz., Chhattisgarh, Haryana, Madhya Pradesh, Mizoram, Odisha, Punjab, Rajasthan, and Uttarakhand, to promote the diversification of crops and restoration of landscapes. These efforts seek to mainstream biodiversity conservation, climate change, and sustainable land management objectives and practices into Indian agriculture to enhance multiple global environment benefits (GEBs). Such actions support harmonization between India's agricultural and environmental sector priorities and investments so that the achievement of National and GEBs can be fully realized without compromising India's ability to strengthen rural livelihoods and meet its food and nutrition security requirements.

Governments and business entities need to direct funding for a recovery towards long-term policies aimed at creating sustainable and green jobs and further mobilizing private sector investment, and empowering and incentivizing local actors to take a leading role in the forest pathways. Healthy forests are crucial for all aspects of a healthy planet, from livelihoods and nutrition to biodiversity and the environment, but they are facing risk. It's up to us to safeguard these priceless natural resources.

Dr. Konda Reddy Chawva is the Officer-in-Charge, of the Food, and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) Representation in India. Views are personal.



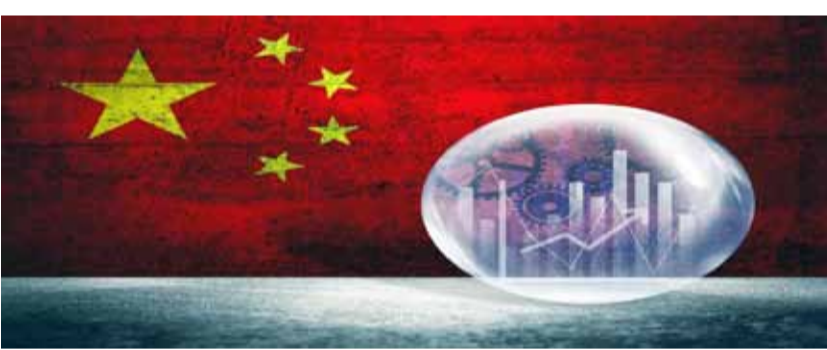
ALICIA GARCIA HERRERO SAYS CHINESE ECONOMY FACES STRUCTURAL DECELERATION AS INDIA ENJOYS DEMOGRAPHIC DIVIDEND

A resilient India, but growth pangs for China

The Chinese government (in the last government report of Chinese Premier Li Keqiang before he stepped down, and in the backdrop of the reopening of the country after three years of zero-COVID-19 policies) has disappointed observers with the projection of a growth target of around 5% in 2023, which is lower than that of last year (5.5%) and even lower than the expected GDP growth for India in 2023 (6.1% according to the International Monetary Fund). This is all the more surprising if one considers that India is benefiting from the positive impact of the country reopening after COVID-19 lockdowns while China should benefit from its reopening only this year. Still, growth will remain rather meagre for a simple reason: the Chinese economy is in a process of structural deceleration while India is still enjoying its benefits of its demographic dividend.

On sustainable growth

It is clear that Mr. Li was being cautious about the growth target this year. But why? First, the Chinese government, especially the new Premier Li Qiang, does not want to run the risk of undershooting its growth target again, as it happened in 2022. Even if consumption is recovering, external demand remains weak and it is hard to know whether private investment will indeed rise given the doubts about the role of the private sector in the Chinese economy as well as increasingly cautious sentiment being expressed by foreign investors. Further, the real estate sector is



still dragging down growth.

Beyond 2023, the government's push for a structural shift of the Chinese economy is still on the way. Over the last few years, tighter regulatory measures have been introduced to contain financial risks and achieve more social objectives such as a green economy, food security, etc. This is an important signal by the Chinese government, recognising that too high a growth is no longer possible nor desirable as it only aggravates financial imbalances. In fact, sustainable growth has become a key concept in China's new economic narrative. It is hard to tell if this relates to the government's firm belief that the quality of growth is what matters the most for Chinese citizens today, or an expression of the recognition that pushing growth up too much is only going to create additional imbalances.

Job creation and foreign investment

Against such a backdrop, job security

is one of the most important objectives of the sustainable growth narrative, which is enshrined in a higher target for new jobs (12 million), compared to what it was in the last past years (11 million, except for the even lower target in 2020 after the COVID-19 pandemic in China). The revision of the employment target reflects the government's concern about the job market, especially young workers (the unemployment rate reached almost 20% in spring 2022).

The need for jobs explains China's recent charm offensive to retain foreign direct investment in China as it is an important source of job creation. The sentiment for supply chain diversification is not going to help China fulfil the employment objective as investors are looking at new pastures, with India likely to be a major beneficiary. India also needs to create as many jobs as possible (at least 13 million a year, which is more than China's target). Foreign investors are beginning to contribute more substan-

tially to job creation in India, which given the country's sheer size in terms of market size and labour force could pose challenges for China as it tries to hold on to foreign direct investment within the country. The forces pushing foreign investors out of China are in plenty: from containment by the United States at the highest end of the value chain, which is forcing bifurcation, to higher wages at the lowest end. In addition, China's push for self-reliance is certainly not helping with the future plans that foreign investors have in mind for China.

All in all, the 5% growth target is consistent with the current challenges that the Chinese economy faces as well as the government's more diversified objectives beyond economic growth. Creating more jobs is a quintessential part of China's new sustainable growth narrative, but China is confronted with more competition than before, especially from India because of its market size and the large labour pool. While India and China may not be too different in size and population, growth prospects differ substantially. At the National People's Congress, Premier Li had to lower the GDP target further; in contrast, India remains resilient. An acceleration of this pattern is to be expected in the next few years, especially if the reshuffling of the value chain continues, pushed by geopolitics and high costs in China.

Alicia Garcia Herrero is Adjunct Professor at the Hong Kong University of Science and Technology. Views are personal.

BOOKS: REVIEW

Book offers personal account of leadership coaching skills

In today's world, coaching is often associated with competitive exams or academic tutoring for students, leaving leadership coaching struggling to gain recognition for its value. "Unfiltered: The CEO and The Coach" offers an incisive account of a coaching engagement, from start to finish. The book provides an inside view of how Saurabh Mukherjee, the CEO, and Ana Lueneburger, the coach, engaged with each other in an authentic, vulnerable, and real conversation that led to a transformative experience.

The book highlights essential stages of coaching, from meet and greet to closure, answering fundamental questions such as how coaching can help, what it entails, what to keep in mind while choosing a coach, what a conversation looks like, how a coach establishes comfort with

a client, what happens between sessions, and how to close a session. This is a valuable contribution to organizations and leaders navigating the ambiguous world of this nascent coaching industry, narrated as a personal experience to lend a human touch.

The power of coaching is experienced in how invested the CEO is in his growth journey. Between sessions, the CEO immerses himself in reading material the coach has shared, working on various tools that were inputs into the session, and continuing the reflective practice. This highlights that work in the session is as important as work between sessions.

The coach shares her style of coaching where she works on leveraging the strengths of the client. Hence, she uses various frameworks such as culture mapping and values in action assessment that are appropriate to the

The resource section of the book is very generous in frameworks and book references

leader's situation and personality. The resource section of the book is very generous in frameworks and book references. Chapter 6 of "Unfiltered" truly lives up to its name, where a Fish Bowl excerpt is shared, with both the coach and CEO courageously sharing their inner narratives. The reader is in both people's heads, bringing out their vulnerabilities and strengths, making for a very authentic human narrative, a critical element for a transformative experience.

The book concludes with both the CEO and coach's reflections over a five-year journey. The narrative has an easy and organic flow,



Unfiltered: The CEO and the Coach
By Dr Ana Lueneburger
Penguin Business
304 pages;
Rs499

making it an easy read.

It is important to keep in mind that this is one journey between two powerful and invested individuals and must not be generalized. The experience varies given how the coach and client are invested and as the dynamics of the relationship emerge and evolve. Every session, client, coach is unique.

"Unfiltered" is a must-read for both coaches and organizations considering hiring a coach for their senior leaders. As a Master Coach, the reviewer wishes they had read this book during their early training days in the run-up to the mastery credential.

A pioneering book, Unfiltered: The CEO and the Coach, for the first time, opens the doors that

normally shield the confidential world of coaching conversations. The book, through its candour, helps readers fully grasp the life-changing impact that coaching can have.

Conceived as a leadership development book, the authors share the narratives (both individual and mutual) of their partnership over the course of five years. The resultant narrative provides not just unique insights that executives and entrepreneurs will find useful for their own development but also deep insights into how, by understanding ourselves, we move towards mastery over the world at large.

Ana Lueneburger has had a global career with organizations such as INSEAD, Danone and the Boston Consulting Group. Saurabh Mukherjee works for Marcellus Investment Managers and is the bestselling author of 'The Unusual Billionaire', 'Coffee Can Investing: The Low-Risk Road to Stupendous Wealth and Diamonds in the Dust: Consistent Compounding for Extraordinary Wealth Creation.'

BEL wins orders worth Rs 4,300 Cr from Indian Army and Indian Navy

ARUN KUMAR RAO
Bengaluru / New Delhi

The Ministry of Defence (MoD), Govt of India, has signed a contract worth Rs. 3,000 Crs with Navratna Defence PSU Bharat Electronics Ltd (BEL) for supply of Integrated Electronic Warfare Systems for the Indian Army, statement from BEL said here.

The Integrated Electronic Warfare Systems for Indian Army are state-of-the-art with cutting-edge technologies, and have been indigenously developed and manufactured by BEL based on Defence Electronics Research Laboratory (DLRL), DRDO, design. These integrated systems will be a real force-multiplier and will further enhance the electronic warfare capability of the Indian Army in leaps and bounds.

Further, BEL has also received several contracts totalling



up to Rs. 1,300 Crs (approx.) during the last fortnight from the Indian Navy for supply of indigenously developed Fire Control, Gun Fire Control, Surveillance, Tracking, ESM, Sonar Systems, etc. statement said.

The Ministry of Defence (MoD) has already signed two contracts worth Rs. 3,800 Crs with BEL for supply of Medium Power Radar and Digital Radar Warning Receiver (RWR) for the Indian Air Force.

The Medium Power Radar

(Arudhra) for Indian Air Force is a state-of-the-art 4D Surveillance Radar equipped with Active Aperture Phased Array Radar technologies based on Solid State TR Module Transmission. The Radar is indigenously developed and being manufactured by BEL based on Electronics and Radar Development Establishment (LDRE), DRDO, design. The above system will further enhance the surveillance capability of the Indian Air Force with

the state-of-the-art modern radar technologies including best-in-class ECCM capabilities.

The Digital RWR for fighter aircraft of Indian Air Force has been indigenously designed and developed by Combat Aircraft Systems Development & Integration Centre (CASDIC), DRDO. The supply of advanced EW Systems will significantly enhance the battle-suitability of IAF fighter aircraft while undertaking operational missions against adversaries.

These are flagship projects showcasing the indigenous design and manufacturing capabilities of the Indian Defence industry led by BEL, involving other public sector and private sector companies and MSMEs. These projects will add another milestone to the 'Atmanirbhar Bharat Abhiyaan' and 'Make in India' initiatives of the Government of India.

Bengaluru-based auto booking app, becomes part of ONDC's open network for mobility initiative



ARUN KUMAR RAO
Bengaluru

NammaYatri, a Bengaluru-based auto booking app, becomes part of ONDC's open Network for mobility initiative. NammaYatri tech enables drivers to offer their services directly to customers with zero commission. ONDC (Open Network for Digital Commerce), a section 8 non-profit organisation, was set up by the Government of India's commerce ministry to democratise digital commerce. ONDC's open mobility initiative will be a boon to customers in multiple ways – it will lead to the customers being able to book rides from their favourite apps as well as enable the integration of multiple modes of transportation such as metro, auto, buses which will make travelling more affordable and hassle-free. ONDC bets big on open mo-

bility network by on boarding NammaYatri on the network. NammaYatri has 45,000 drivers and 4.5 lakh customers and is 100% open-sourced. Open mobility will enable interoperable & multimodal transportation and inclusive growth.

Announcing the partnership during the Press conference, T Koshiy, the CEO of ONDC, said, "We are excited to welcome NammaYatri to the ONDC network. An open mobility network on ONDC will build a large ecosystem of customers and service providers, fuelling many innovations & possibilities. First, it increases customer convenience by digitising and integrating all mobility services. Then, it provides equal opportunities to mobility players of all sizes and between existing and new players. It also helps drivers and service providers to earn a livelihood not beholden to

platform interests. Finally, it amplifies the impact and the leverage of public transportation systems. What UPI and NPCI did to digital payments, ONDC intends to do for mobility." He added.

NammaYatri, built and launched by Juspay Technologies in partnership with Bengaluru drivers, has set records to be the first community-led initiative with nearly 45,000 drivers and 4.5 lakh customers. The app recently became 100% open, and called for citizens' collective participation. The app currently clocks nearly 1 lakh weekly trips and intends to further amplify its growth by being part of the ONDC network.

Anurag Jain, Secretary, Department for Promotion of Industry & Internal Trade said, "To make transportation convenient and affordable in our growing cities, it is important to provide a seamless experience to users. Open systems like ONDC enable the collaboration and interoperability needed to make it happen. Moreover, by unbundling, systems become more inclusive and efficient. NammaYatri under the ONDC umbrella is a great start to the collaborative framework for sustainable futuristic solutions to mobility. I wish the team huge success in the endeavour." He added.

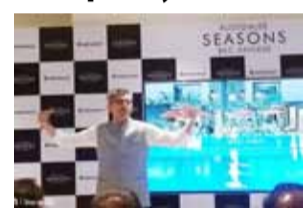
Zigly expands its national footprint; plans to grow 2X by 2024



FW DESK
New Delhi

India's first tech-enabled omnichannel pet care brand, is all set to strengthen its national footprint with the launch of its first experience center in Bengaluru. The expansion is in line with the company's aim of growing 2X by 2024 with a commitment of ensuring the best pet care needs without any compromise. This remarkable achievement is a reflection of the brand's unwavering dedication to delivering pet care products and services that seamlessly blend quality, style, and affordability. With increased brand visibility and customer touchpoints, Zigly strives to be more accessible with a commitment to ensuring the highest level of customer satisfaction. The experience center in Bangalore is located in Aswan Plaza, Koramangala, and is built across 2,200 square feet. The experience center is strategically located in a densely populated area that is home to numerous pet families, enabling easy access to the brand's superior pet care products and services.

Real Estate growth through Redevelopments, reduced stamp duty



DOMINICK RODRIGUES
Mumbai

"The Government needs to reduce stamp duty on housing from five percent to three percent to make it more affordable for buyers, while also enabling the positive growth of the Real Estate sector which is at the heart of the GDP and the +driver+ for as many as 265 industries," according to Boman Irani, CMD, Rustomjee Group. "Redevelopment is the order of the day in Mumbai with focus on green landscaping and its slums being replaced by more affordable homes. With technology costs supposed to come down, it's time for registration costs to reduce and the emphasis being on building new homes since they are more energy efficient than old buildings," he said, adding "There should be no +head-butting+ between tenants and new buyers in redevelopment projects."

"Our endeavour is to continually redefine Mumbai on the lines of London and other countries," Irani said while highlighting plans here recently for more "rejuvenating and invigorating" redevelopments in the prominent BKC Annex section of Bandra suburb in North-west Mumbai adjoining the picturesque Sealink and Metro. "We tried to follow the Shanghai model of Real Estate development, but we have now come of age where we can contribute to the Government's thinking process," he said, adding "We are leaning towards the London/UK model and also the East where the landscaping is more upmarket." Noting receipt of the "Occupancy Certificate" for the company's gated community Rustomjee Seasons' sixth last tower, Irani described this project as "one of the fastest-constructed" with the "fastest slab cast in barely seven days" that had been applauded by stakeholders across the spectrum.

Leading job portal Indeed lays off 2,200 employees, CEO 'heartbroken'

Call it ironic but leading job portal Indeed that helps thousands land their dream jobs has itself laid off 2,200 employees, or 15 per cent of its workforce.

An 'heartbroken' Indeed CEO Chris Hyams announced that job cuts come from nearly every team, function, level and region at Indeed and Indeed Flex.

"We anticipate we will be letting approximately 2,200 people go. This is roughly 15 per cent of our team. The specific decisions on who and where to cut were extremely difficult, but they were made with great care," he said in a blog post late on Wednesday.

"Leading a company whose mission is to help people get jobs, every single day I think about how important a job is in a person's life. Losing a job is extraordinarily hard, financially and emotionally," he added.

The CEO said he will take a 25 per cent cut in base pay. Additionally, more than 75 per cent of "my total compensation



is directly tied to Indeed revenue growth, and is at risk given current trends," he said.

The company will share information directly with everyone impacted and everyone outside of the UK, Ireland, the Netherlands and Japan will receive an email informing them of their status. If your position has been eliminated, the subject will be "Your Position Has Been Impacted." If your position has not been eliminated, the subject will be "Your Position Has Not Been Impacted." "In the UK, Ireland, the Netherlands and Japan, unfortunately, local regulations

will mean a longer wait. We will communicate with all of you today to outline the specifics in your region," said the CEO. Under the severance agreement, employees will receive 16 weeks of base salary, or two weeks for every year of service, whichever is greater.

"A cash payout equivalent to your RSUs scheduled to vest on May 1. For employees whose initial grant date was August 1, 2022 or later, you will receive a partial payout for RSUs that vest on May 1 with the standard one year vesting cliff waived," Hyams informed.

CDRI to hold two-day hybrid conference on resilient infrastructure



FW DESK
New Delhi

Coalition for Disaster Resilient Infrastructure (CDRI), a group of 31 nations led by India, will host a conference on the "need to integrate resilience in infrastructure" in the national capital in April.

CDRI Director General Amit Prothi said, "Our annual flagship event will see a gathering of over 90 global experts from more than 20 countries, representing 50 global organisations, the private sector and academia. It will focus on helping scale up potential solutions for a more resilient world and facilitating disaster and climate adaptation objectives. This will be the fifth edition of the International Conference on Disaster Resilient Infrastructure (ICDRI) 2023, which will start

on April 4, he said, adding the theme of the conference is 'Delivering Resilient and Inclusive Infrastructure: Pathways for Risk-Informed Systems, Practices and Investments'.

The two-day hybrid conference seeks to emphasise the need to integrate resilience in infrastructure and ensure access, delivery and continuity of essential services to people and communities in the face of increasing exposure and impact of disasters. David Puig, Ambassador, Embassy of the Dominican Republic in the Republic of India, who also attended the pre-event press meet, said, "CDRI's work is extremely relevant for Small Island Developing States (SIDS). Although these countries contribute the least to climate change, they are most at risk from rising sea levels.

Chemical sector in India is set to grow to \$250 billion by 2040 : Arun Baroka

FW DESK
New Delhi

Chemical including the petrochemical industry makes an important factor in India's growth story as the government is committed to provide a conducive environment for sustainability, safety, and growth, stated Shri. Arun Baroka, IAS, Secretary, Department of Chemicals & Petrochemicals, Ministry of Chemical & Fertilizers, Government of India, at India's Specialty Chemicals Conclave - "Making India Self Reliant & Local to Global." The conclave was organised by the Associated Chambers of Commerce & Industry of India (ASSOCHAM) to deliberate on key topics such as Import substitution, Academia & Industry Collaborations, Expanding Exports, and Integrating India into the global supply chain.

Neuberg Diagnostics highlights latest labs, Centre of Excellence



DOMINICK RODRIGUES
Mumbai

Even as speedy medical intervention continues to be in demand in the modern day world amidst emerging diseases like COVID-19 that left a tragic impact on an unprepared humanity, India is witnessing diagnostic centres springing in this regard with a top medical chain Neuberg Diagnostics recently announcing launch of its three regional reference laboratories and a "Centre of Excellence" for Oncopathology in Mumbai. Maharashtra Deputy Chief Minister Devendra Fadnis inaugurated online the three state-of-the-art regional reference laboratories at Dahisar, Chembur and Vidyavihar and Centre of Excellence for Oncopathology in Mumbai.

Those present included Dr GSK Velu, Chairman and Managing Director, Neuberg Diagnostics, Dr Ajay Shah, Managing Director, Neuberg Ajay Shah Laboratory, Dr Rajesh Bendre, Technical Director, Neuberg Diagnostics and Dr Jay Mehta, President & Head, Neuberg Oncopath.

Describing the launch of these new labs as a "significant milestone" for Neuberg Diagnostics' mission to provide world-class pathology services,

Dr. G.S.K. Velu, Founder and Chairman of Neuberg Diagnostics, reiterated the commitment to using latest technology and scientific advancements in improving patient outcomes and providing accurate diagnosis and treatment monitoring.

He said Neuberg Diagnostics' has partnered with Dr. Ajay Shah – one of the oldest and leading medical diagnostics networks -- to establish the laboratory in Dahisar and has set up a large standalone reference lab in Chembur. Highlighting Neuberg Diagnostics' overseas expansion plans, he said this included establishing a presence in East Africa, West Africa, Sri Lanka, Nepal, Bangladesh, and Germany. Presently based in South Africa, USA and the UAE besides India, Neuberg Diagnostics is one of the top four Indian Pathology laboratory chains with over 150+ labs and over 2000-plus touch points across 4 countries. The new labs will process about 5000 samples daily, besides accessing the entire lab medicine test menu of over 6000 investigations covering routine & advanced investigations including genomics, proteomics, metabolomics, proteomics, oncopathology, transplant immunology and newborn screening.

Microsoft & Tech Data Bring 3rd Edition of Tech Mart to Chennai

FW DESK
Delhi

As small and medium businesses (SMBs) increasingly adopt technology to transform their businesses, Microsoft remains committed towards empowering them in their ability to innovate and succeed in today's digital economy. In line with this commitment, Microsoft and Tech Data, A TD Synnex Company, are hosting the third edition of Tech Mart in Chennai on March 24, 2023.

Tech Mart in Chennai will serve as a one-stop window, offering one-on-one expert consultations, solutions showcase and technical sessions to help organizations reimagine their business with technology. Through these interventions, businesses will be able to experience tools and solutions that can help them better manage resources, processes and operations to drive optimization, efficiency and productivity. The event will showcase solutions that can help businesses migrate, manage and optimize applications, infrastructure and data on Cloud, improve their security posture, enhance productivity and collaboration as well as gain insights into solutions across HR, Operations and Customer Relationship Management.

Tamil Nadu has the third-largest number of Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs) in India, constituting a significant 8% share and hosting approximately five million thriving enterprises. The state continues to take several steps to improve the ease of doing business and create an investor-friendly climate to promote investments in the MSME sector. The opportunity to unlock technological prowess for these businesses to scale and succeed is clearly tremendous. This is also a clear outcome of the Microsoft SMB Voice and Attitudes to Technology Study 2022, which revealed that SMBs in India are the most optimistic about future cloud adoption, with 27% of SMBs in India being all or mostly cloud based – a percentage that is expected to be global average in 2-3 years.

At Microsoft, our constant endeavor is to empower businesses with the right technology so they can Do More With Less. Initiatives such as Tech Mart are aimed at showcasing the possibilities that technology can unlock for organizations by meeting their unique needs, addressing their business challenges, and empowering them in today's digitally empowered economy.

Shahi Exports and KMIT partner to support at-risk women against poverty, human trafficking

SHAHI EXPORTS AND KNOW ME INDIA TRUST (KMIT) HAVE ANNOUNCED A PARTNERSHIP AIMED AT EMPOWERING VULNERABLE AND AT-RISK WOMEN IN INDIA



job opportunities or support in opening a small business to women from vulnerable social and economic communities, particularly those at risk of human trafficking and exploitation. The program will also provide mentorship and motivation to encourage and support women in their journey toward financial stability and independence.

The partnership furthers the joint vision of both organizations, creating a sustain-

able and direct employment pathway for the most disadvantaged and at-risk women in Jharsuguda, Odisha. The pilot program launched here in Odisha intends to train, educate, and prepare women from disadvantaged communities with limited access to stable employment. Upon completion of the training, the participants will be offered job opportunities at Shahi - India's largest manufacturer and exporter of ready-made garments.

Anant Ahuja, Head of Organizational Development at Shahi Exports, said, "We are delighted to partner with Know Me India Trust to create this opportunity for women from disadvantaged communities.

Our company is built on the foundation of empowerment of women and a spirit to contribute towards the development of communities in which we operate. This partnership is aligned with our efforts to promote sustainable livelihoods, fight against human trafficking and modern slavery, and provide opportunities for women to become financially independent."

Data suggest that about eight million people in India are trapped in human trafficking. The number of persons trafficked for forced labour in India comes within the range of 20 to 65 million. And 90% of the trafficking occurs domestically, intrastate, or interstate.

IFC to invest Rs 600 cr in Mahindra & Mahindra's new last-mile EV firm

Global development institution IFC will invest Rs 600 crore in a new last-mile mobility (LMM) company, a wholly-owned subsidiary of Mahindra & Mahindra that will be newly incorporated (NewCo), it announced on Wednesday.

IFC's first investment in an EV manufacturer in the country, and the first in electric three-wheelers globally, will be in the form of compulsory convertible instruments at a valuation of up to Rs 6, 020 crore.

The Rs 600 crore investment will result in an ownership of between 9.97 per cent to 13.64 per cent for IFC in NewCo.



NewCo will house the last mile mobility division, including three wheelers (Alfa, Treo, Zor) and four-wheeler SCV (Jeeto).

"With the electrification of

the last mile mobility business at scale, we will move a step further in our commitment to be a Planet Positive' by 2040. This also presents a tremendous opportunity for growth

for micro and women entrepreneurs," said Anish Shah, MD and CEO, Mahindra & Mahindra.

India has committed to reducing its emissions profile by 45 per cent by 2030, and simultaneously aims to achieve 80 per cent EV penetration for two-and three-wheelers, 70 per cent for commercial vehicles and 30 per cent for private cars in the same timeframe.

"India is the largest three-wheeler market globally, and this investment marks a significant step towards scaled domestic production of electric vehicles catering to this segment, as well as small commercial vehicles,"

said Hector Gomez Ang, IFC's Regional Director for South Asia.

According to Rajesh Jejurikar, Executive Director and CEO (auto and farm sector), Mahindra & Mahindra, being the market leaders in this segment: "We have an opportunity to drive higher EV penetration in this segment and provide a more sustainable as well as profitable option to microentrepreneurs".

IFC, a member of the World Bank Group, works in more than 100 countries. In fiscal year 2022, IFC committed a record \$32.8 billion to private companies and financial institutions in developing countries.

Former Brazilian President Dilma Rousseff to head BRICS Bank



BEIJING: Former Brazilian President Dilma Rousseff was "unanimously" elected on Friday as the head of the New Development Bank (NDB), a multilateral financial institution set up by the BRICS (Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa) countries. Rousseff, 75, succeeds her compatriot Marcos Troyjo, the Shanghai-headquartered bank announced. "The Board of Governors of the NDB of the BRICS, (Brazil, Russia, India, China, South Africa), unanimously elected Rousseff as the President of the Bank, effective immediately," a press release from the bank said.

Cabinet approves exemption to NTPC to invest in NTPC Green Energy



NEW DELHI: The Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs (CCEA) on Friday granted exemption to NTPC Ltd for making investment in NTPC Green Energy Ltd (NGEL), its wholly-owned subsidiary. The CCEA also exempted NGEL's investment in NTPC Renewable Energy Ltd (NREL) and its other joint ventures and subsidiaries, subject to a ceiling of 15 per cent of its net worth beyond the monetary ceiling of Rs 5, 000 crore to Rs 7, 500 crore, towards achieving a target of 60 GW renewable energy (RE) capacity by NTPC Ltd, official sources said. The exemption given to NTPC will help in improving India's global image as a green economy. It will also decrease India's dependency on conventional sources of energy by diversifying India's energy generation and will also decrease the country's coal import bills.

Govt hikes raw jute MSP by Rs 300 to Rs 5,050 per quintal



NEW DELHI: The government on Friday increased the minimum support price of raw jute by Rs 300 to Rs 5,050 per quintal for 2023-24 season. The decision was taken at the Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs (CCEA) meeting chaired by Prime Minister Narendra Modi. "The approval is based on recommendations of the Commission for Agricultural Costs and Prices (CACP)," I&B Minister Anurag Thakur told reporters.

Gold prices set to go up: Experts

Gold prices set to go up: ExpertsGold prices will go up further if the US Federal Reserve hike the interest rates by 25 basis points (bps) or lower along with "non-visible" or "hawkish" speech, a research analyst said.

"Any hike in line with 25 basis point or lower along with non visible or hawkish speech will be strongly positive for Gold and levels of 2040-2050 in Comex and 61500 odd will be seen in coming days," said Jateen Trivedi, VP, Research at LKP



Securities. On the flip side, any higher hike than 25 bps with "hawkish" speech shall bring Comex Gold back to \$1, 940-odd levels and Rs 57, 000 in MCX which shall again act as buying bets, he added. Trivedi said the yellow metal

has been given strong returns since 2019. Prices were at Rs 31, 000/10 grams and have now touched Rs 60, 000 giving nearly 100 per cent returns in the last four years. He said the gold prices has also been surpassing major volatile events like trade war since 2019, Covid-19, and the Russia-Ukraine war.

This year, Gudi Padwa is being celebrated even as gold prices are headed for historic highs in the Indian markets, said Somasundaram PR, Re-

gional CEO, India at World Gold Council. "As economic growth influences demand significantly and this gets reflected in gold purchases on such auspicious days, demand is poised for good growth in 2023," he said.

"Price pressures could keep rural demand subdued. Urban buying and digital gold accumulations which permit flexible low-ticket sizes could be emerging stories during this festive season," Somasundaram added.

Odisha CM to visit Japan to woo investments for state



BHUBANESWAR: With the aim to attract investments for the state, Odisha Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik is planning to visit Japan in April, reported TOI quoting government source.

During his trip to the country, the chief minister is expected to meet top investors with the goal to boost foreign investments in Odisha.

As per reports, the CM-led delegation will showcase Odisha's investment potential and friendly policies to attract investments in sectors such as food processing, chemicals, plastics and petrochemicals besides textiles, apparel and tourism.

Japan has been one of the country partners for Odisha's

flagship business summit, Make in Odisha (MIO), in the last two editions in 2018 and 2022.

With 45 per cent intents in the first two MIOs held in 2016 and 2018 turning into actual investments, Odisha is far ahead of national average of 22 per cent in translating intents into actual investments, industry minister Pratap Keshari Deb told the assembly on Friday.

Responding to a question by BJD MLA Debi Prasad Mishra during the question hour, the industry minister said that Odisha has been emerging as a preferred investment destination because of political stability and conducive business environment.

Investment in healthcare workforce key to accelerating India's economic growth: Experts

NEED TO STRENGTHEN QUALITY OF HEALTHCARE WORKERS, ESPECIALLY THE NURSING STAFF

FOCUS ON WOMEN'S HEALTH KEY TO THE GROWTH OF THE COMMUNITY AND THE NATION

INTEGRATION OF MODERN AND TRADITIONAL MEDICINE TO FACILITATE THE ILLNESS TO WELLNESS JOURNEY

FW DESK
New Delhi

ASSOCHAM Foundation for CSR, under the aegis of Associated Chambers of Commerce and Industry of India (ASSOCHAM), one of the apex trade associations of India, today kick-started the first edition of the Awareness Summit on 'Illness to Wellness' in New Delhi. The key objective of the two-day summit is to initiate a dialogue on promoting and building a 'New India-Healthy India'.

The first session on day one of the summit saw a panel of distinguished experts discuss the possible ways to strengthen the healthcare workforce with the objective to ease the healthcare burden of the country.

In his address during the inaugural session, the Guest of Honour Shri Bhubaneswar Kalita, Chairperson, Parliamentary Standing Committee on Health and Family Welfare, Government of India said, "Making healthcare affordable, accessible

and available to all can help us attain the Sustainable Development Goal of ensuring healthy life and promoting well-being for all age groups. Our main challenge is the lack of a diversified and qualified workforce and we must work towards improving the status quo as workforce is the soul of our healthcare system. There should also be a focus on improving women's health for larger interest of families, communities and nation in order to reduce the burden on public healthcare infrastructure and spending."

Sharing his thoughts during the inaugural session, Mr. Anil Rajput, Chairperson, ASSOCHAM National CSR Council, said, "India is at the cusp of an exciting and transformative time as it aims to reach \$26 trillion in economic prosperity in its AmritKaal. I strongly believe that when the workforce is healthy and capable, our nation can achieve its full potential across all domains. The Government of India has also accorded top-

most priority to it, making it a fundamental pillar for a 'Swastha and SamruddhaRashtra'. It is my firm conviction that India's determined strides in the economic sphere can gain even greater momentum if the health of its citizenry remain sound. This will ensure that the wealth follows and our dream of a healthy and wealthy nation can become a reality."

Dr. G. C. Khilnani, Chairman, PSRI Institute of Pulmonary, Critical and Sleep Medicine and Former Professor & Head, Pulmonary, Critical Care & Sleep Medicine, AIIMS, New Delhi, said, "The preparedness of our health infrastructure got exposed during the Covid pandemic. Despite having 95000 ICU beds and 48000 ventilators, which seems like a reasonable number, India suffered greatly during the pandemic. Although ramping up the infrastructure is important, outcomes will not improve if adequate attention is not paid to enhancing the quality of health workforce, especially

the staff nurses. Healthcare workers also matter if we wish to improve the outcome. The Indian healthcare system has improved a lot but more needs to be done for the workforce." Joining the session virtually, (Padma Bhushan) Dr. S. K. Sarin, Senior Professor, Department of Hepatology & Director, Institute of Liver and Biliary Sciences, New Delhi, said, "Creating a healthier generation is not doctors' effort alone; it is a team effort. Instead of following a pyramid structure, we should adopt a bottom-up approach, starting from villages. We should utilize ASHA workers to better document and understand the healthcare needs of our citizens."

Dr. T. S. Kler (Padma Bhushan), Chairman, Fortis Heart and Vascular Institute, Fortis Memorial Research Institute, Gurugram & Fortis Hospital, VasantKunj, said, "I am deeply concerned about the shortage of trained nurses in the country. Policies should be in

place to ensure decent pay packages and respect for these crucial healthcare workers. Besides this, it is also important to reduce the healthcare burden of the country by allowing euthanasia. Introducing policies related to mandatory insurance, minimum health curriculum in schools and decreasing reservation should also be considered."

The inaugural edition of the ASSOCHAM Awareness Summit has a goal to promote widespread knowledge about various health-related concerns for the betterment of everyone's well-being. The summit will feature more than 60 distinguished physicians, specialists, and wellness professionals from both India and abroad, who will share their insights on various topics across nine sessions. These sessions will delve into a range of areas, including healthcare workforce strengthening, nutrition, women's health, mental health, sickle cell diseases, Ayush, elderly care and the digital healthcare landscape.

Online Frauds: Threat is not Subsiding



SATISH SINGH

Even though digitalization is increasing rapidly in India, but along with it the incidents of online frauds are also increasing rapidly. It was told in the Lok Sabha on 13 March 2023 that 65,045 cases of online fraud were registered in FY 2022, in which Rs 226.4 crore of customers were involved, while in FY 2021, 70,655 cases of fraud were registered and Rs 226.6 crore were involved in them. These cases of online fraud included transactions involving debit cards, credit cards, internet banking etc. These figures also show that the number of online frauds decreased in FY 2022 as compared to FY 2021, but the amount involved remained almost the same.

The analysis also revealed that ATM fraud cases are concentrated in a few states. In 5 states of the country, three fourth frauds are being done through cards. Maharashtra is on top in this matter. Here, 26,085 fraud cases were registered in FY 2022, involving an amount of Rs 74.62

crore, which means an average online fraud of Rs 28,606 was done every day in this state. 40 percent of the total fraud incidents in the country have happened only in Maharashtra. During this period, 8,075 cases involving Rs 24.35 crore were registered in Delhi, which was 12.4 per cent of the total frauds registered. This data also shows that even though Maharashtra is a developed state, its people are less financially aware, otherwise there would not have been so many incidents of frauds.

If we analyse the online fraud cases bank wise, 33,296 online fraud cases were registered in Kotak Mahindra Bank in FY2022, which was almost half of the total fraud cases. However, in FY 2021, 65 per cent of the cases were reported in this bank, amounting to Rs 57.72 crore, while during FY 2021, fraud incidents of Rs 64.23 crore were reported in this bank. Axis Bank had a fraud of Rs 25.07 crore in FY2022, which was 10 per cent of the total fraud incidents. 6,124 cases of online fraud were reported in this bank during this period.

During FY22, ICICI Bank reported 5,002 cases involving Rs 34.39 crore, while



HDFC Bank reported 3,866 cases involving Rs 10.61 crore. Whereas American Express Banking Corporation registered 2,258 cases involving Rs 5.83 crore.

ICICI Bank reported 1,390 fraud cases involving Rs 32.67 crore in FY 2021 and both amount and fraud cases increased in this bank in FY 2022. It is noteworthy that in the financial year 2021, the number of fraud incidents in the country's largest bank, State Bank of India, registered a decline of 40 percent and during the financial year 2022 only frauds of Rs 22.62 crore were committed in this bank. These figures show that public sector banks have achieved significant success in reducing online frauds as compared to private banks.

In March 2023, Mr. Prafulla P. Sarda, a businessman from Pune, had sought information from the Reserve Bank of India in RTI about the incidents of online fraud in Indian banks, in response to which the central bank informed that from January 2014 to December 2022 in Indian banks A total of 1,40,736 cases of ATM and debit card frauds involving an amount of Rs 507.12 crore were reported, while 1,37,237 cases of credit card fraud involving an amount of Rs 514.90 crore were reported during the period. Whereas the number of frauds committed through internet banking was 61,561 and Rs 354.78 crore was involved in these.

It is noteworthy that in the financial year 2014-2015, the number of ATM and debit

card frauds was just 71, which increased to 36,978 in the financial year 2019-2020. Similarly, the amount of ATM and debit card fraud in FY 2014-2015 was Rs 1.51 crore, which increased to Rs 102.13 crore in FY 2019-20. However, in the financial year 2022-23, the number of ATM and debit card frauds came down to 7,395 and the amount involved also came down to Rs 29.21 crore.

During the financial year 2014-15, only 119 cases of credit card fraud were registered, amounting to Rs 3.41 crore. In the financial year 2019-20, the number of frauds increased to 26,580 and the amount stuck was also Rs 74.69 crore, but in the financial year 2022-23, the number of credit card frauds came down to 20,017. However, the 'stuck amount' in the case increased to Rs 93.89 crore.

The number of internet bank frauds was 42 in the financial year 2014-15 and the amount involved was Rs 2.20 crore, but in the financial year 2020-21 the number of frauds increased to 20,476 and the amount involved also increased to Rs 86.66 crore. However, in the financial year

2022-23, the fraud cases came down to 8,121 and the amount stuck also came down to Rs 69.96 crore.

It is clear from the data, despite all the efforts being made by the banks and the Reserve Bank of India, credit cards remain the easiest medium to commit frauds. Along with this, cyber fraudsters are also succeeding in committing fraud through internet banking, ATM, and debit cards.

Online fraud can be reduced only when people are made financially aware. For this, banks, government, and banking experts should be made aware to all through newspapers, television, cinema, and radio, as well as seminars/workshops should be organized regularly in schools, colleges, offices, villages etc.

It is clear from the above, caution is the only protection. Do not be greedy. This is the root of all problems. Do not come into psychological pressure. Do not hesitate to seek the help of the police in case of threats. Be fearless, only then online fraud can be avoided.

Satish Singh, Mumbai Based Senior Columnist, views are personal

Crypto exchange Binance temporarily suspends all spot trading



DELHI: Leading blockchain and cryptocurrency platform Binance on Friday announced that it has temporarily suspended all spot trading on its platform as it works to resolve an issue. "We are aware of an issue impacting spot trading on Binance. All spot trading is currently temporarily suspended as we work to resolve this as soon as possible. New updates will be shared here," the company tweeted. Moreover, the CEO of Binance, Changpeng Zhao from his Twitter account @cz_binance shared an update saying that the crypto exchange "encountered a bug on a trailing stop order". "Initial analysis indicates matching engine encountered a bug on a trailing stop order (a weird one)," Zhao tweeted. "Recovering. Est 30-120 min ish. Waiting for more precise ETA. Deposits & withdrawals are paused as a SOP (standard operating procedure). Funds are #SAFE," he added. Binance commands over 60 per cent of all crypto spot volume. According to Arcane Research, the world's largest crypto exchange has also increased its market share of Bitcoin spot volume to over 90 per cent in recent quarters, because of zero commission.



country, Mrinal Mohit, CEO, BYJU'S India business, had said that "these measures will help us achieve profitability in the defined time frame of March 2023".

At a group level, BYJU'S had said its top priority is to achieve "overall profitability by March 2023".

However, this appears impossible now with the company still struggling to stem growing losses.

Between April-July 2022, the company logged a revenue of Rs 4, 530 crore. Post that, there has been no communication from the company about the pending results. The edtech unicorn reported a loss of Rs 4, 588 crore for the fiscal year that ended on March 31, 2021.

INTERNATIONAL

L20 adopts two Joint Statements on Universalisation of Social Security & Women and Future of Work as outcome of two-day inception meet

CALLS FOR RESOLVING ISSUES OF SOCIAL SECURITY PORTABILITY AND PLUGGING GENDER GAP IN GLOBAL WORKFORCE

JAGMOHAN SINGH
Amritsar



The Labour20 (L20) engagement group's inception meet in Amritsar, Punjab, as part of India's G20 presidency, today adopted two Joint Statements as the final outcome of the two-day deliberations, one calling for resolving the question of portability of social security among G20 nations as a first step towards universalisation of social security, and another for plugging the gender gap in the global workforce.

In a statement issued here today stated that trade union leaders, labour studies experts and delegates from 20 nations at the Labour20 inception meeting under India's G20 presidency had

deliberated the Universalisation of Social Security on the first day, and the last day of the event witnessed productive discussion on Women and Future of Work, in dedicated sessions to thrash out issues and concerns.

The Joint Statement on Universalisation of Social Security stated that the question of portability of benefits within the G20 nations is a low hanging fruit, which could be addressed by the grouping at no time and pointed out to the BRICS deliberations for an intra-group arrangement in this regard. Incidentally, BRICS

nations are members of G20. The Joint Statement on Women and the Future of Work called for upskilling of women workforce globally to meet the emerging challenges of tech-intensive industry and the post-pandemic job market, and asked the governments and employers to shoulder this responsibility. It also called for recalibrating how women in the informal sector, and in family-raising roles, contribute to global economy, and asked for valuing that contribution.

Union Minister for Labour and Employment BhupendraY-

adav addressed the delegates from a virtual platform on 19th March when he said the world had resolved to recover together post-pandemic, and to make the recovery a human centric process, for which there was a need to collectively ensure that workers were equipped with the skills and knowledge necessary to thrive in the dynamic environment.

Yadav agreed that universal social security and its portability across the world is an important issue that G20 and L20 must focus on. He said the informal sector must be brought under the ambit of social security. "There has to be sustainable mix of social insurance and social assistance schemes for social security," he added.

Keeping in line with vision of 'Narishakti' or 'Women Power' of Prime Minister Narendra Modi, the Minister said women's participation in labour force has to be enhanced which would in turn lead to creation of equitable, inclusive and developed society.

UN Chief urges elimination of racial discrimination in all forms



UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres has urged the international community to take action to address racism wherever and whenever it arises, and eliminate all forms of racial discrimination.

Guterres made the remarks while addressing a UN General Assembly event marking the International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination, which is observed on March 21, Xi-

nhua news agency reported. Racial discrimination is one of the most destructive forces dividing societies, responsible for death and suffering on a grotesque scale throughout history, he said.

Today, racial discrimination and the legacies of enslavement and colonialism continue to ruin lives, marginalise communities and limit opportunities, preventing billions of people from achieving their full potential, he added.

"Xenophobia, prejudice and hate speech are rising. Political leaders scapegoat migrants, with devastating impact," said Guterres.

He pointed out that after a period of increased global awareness of racism, some countries are experiencing a vicious backlash against anti-racist policies and practices.

The UN chief also underscored the need to address racism in the digital age, noting that white supremacist influencers profit from racism on social media platforms, and artificial intelligence algorithms amplify and digitise racial discrimination. "We need to resist and reverse these trends resolutely and condemn and eliminate racial discrimination in all its forms," Guterres said. "We must take action to address racism wherever and whenever it arises, including through legal channels."

Canada's Consumer Price Index rose 5.2% year over year in February



Canada's Consumer Price Index (CPI) rose 5.2 percent year over year in February, following a 5.9 percent increase in January, the largest deceleration in the headline CPI since April 2020, the national statistical agency said.

Statistics Canada said on Tuesday that the deceleration in February was due to a base-year effect, for the second consecutive month, which is attributable to a steep monthly increase in prices in February 2022, reports Xinhua news agency.

Excluding food and energy, prices were up 4.8 percent year over year in February 2023, following a 4.9 percent gain in January, while the all-items excluding mortgage interest cost rose 4.7 percent, after increasing 5.4 percent in January, it said.

According to Statistics Canada, on a monthly basis, the CPI was up 0.4 percent in February, following a 0.5 percent gain in January.

Compared with January, Canadians paid more in mortgage interest costs in February, which was partially offset by a decline in energy prices.

On a seasonally adjusted monthly basis, the CPI rose 0.1 percent.

While inflation has slowed in recent months, having increased 1.2 percent compared with six months ago, prices remain elevated.

Compared with 18 months ago, for example, inflation has increased 8.3 percent, Statistics Canada added.

Indian Authorities must immediately release Kashmiri journalist Irfan Mehraj: Amnesty International India



SRINAGAR: Amnesty International India while responding to the arrest of Kashmiri journalist, Irfan Mehraj, in Srinagar by the National Investigation Agency (NIA) in connection with a "terror funding case", Aakar Patel, chair of board at Amnesty International India, said:

"The arrest of Kashmiri journalist Irfan Mehraj under terror charges is a travesty. The arrest is yet another instance of the long-drawn repression of human rights and the crackdown on media freedoms and civil society in the region of Jammu and Kashmir. The stifling of the rights to freedom of expression and association continues unabated in Kashmir.

Indian-American renamed to University of Central Florida Board

Florida Governor Ron DeSantis announced the reappointment of Indian-American Digvijay "Danny" Gaekwad to the University of Central Florida Board of Trustees.

Gaekwad's appointment is subject to confirmation by the Florida Senate, the Governor's office announced on Friday.

Baroda-born Gaekwad is the Founder and Chief Executive Officer of NDS USA, the Founder of Danny G Management, the Founder of Danny



Development and Investments, and Owner of DG Hospitality. He is the immediate past

Chair of the Visit Florida Board of Directors and currently serves on the Enterprise Florida and Space Florida Board of Directors. As the son of a Judge and grandson of a Colonel in the Indian Army, Gaekwad graduated in Political Science from Maharaja Sayajirao University of Baroda. A community leader based in Ocala, Florida, Gaekwad arrived in the US with his wife Manisha in 1987 to live the American Dream.

US and Canada have reached a deal on a decades-old asylum agreement

Over the years, his companies have created thousands of jobs in Florida and other parts of the US, contributing hundreds of millions of dollars to the economy, a University of Florida release stated. In 2016, he was recognized by then Florida Governor Rick Scott with the "One Million Jobs" certificate of appreciation for his contribution "in helping Florida job creators add 1 million jobs between December 2010 and December 2015".



In a significant move, the US and Canada have reached a deal on a decades-old asylum agreement that would restrict certain migrants from seeking protections in Canada, media reports said citing informed officials.

Biden, who is currently on a visit to Ottawa, and Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau will make a formal joint statement on the deal on Friday.

Signed in 2002, the Safe Third Country Agreement applies to individuals who have transited through a country where they could've made an asylum claim because it's deemed safe, as the name of the agreement implies, reports CNN. It is in effect at ports of entry, and individuals entering at a land port of entry may be ineligible to make a claim and be returned to the US. But Roxham Road is not an official crossing, meaning that people who transit there could still seek protections in Canada even though they passed through the US.

As a part of the deal, Canada will create a new refugee programme for 15,000 migrants fleeing persecution and violence in South and Central America, the BBC quoted officials as saying to the media. Besides this deal, Biden will also talk about a series of economic and trade issues with Trudeau. Speaking to CNN earlier on Thursday, the Canadian leader said that "there's a lot of work being done... Hopefully we'll be able to make an announcement to reassure Canadians and Americans that we continue to handle migration seriously".

Uganda: Reject anti-LGBTI law that criminalizes same-sex sexual activity

FW NEWS

Responding to the news that Uganda's Parliament has passed a law that criminalizes consensual sexual activity between adults of the same sex, Tiger-eChagutah, Amnesty International's Regional Director for East and Southern Africa, said: "President Yoweri Museveni must urgently veto this appalling legislation, which was passed following a rushed vote on Tuesday evening. The law, dubbed the '2023 Anti-Homosexuality Bill', amounts

to a grave assault on LGBTI people and is contemptuous of the Ugandan constitution. "This ambiguous, vaguely worded law even criminalizes those who 'promote' homosexuality or 'attempt to commit the offence of homosexuality'. In reality, this deeply repressive legislation will institutionalize discrimination, hatred, and prejudice against LGBTI people, including those who are perceived to be LGBTI and block the legitimate work of civil society, public health professionals, and community leaders.

"Instead of criminalizing LGBTI people, Uganda should protect them by enacting laws and policies that align with the principles of equality and non-discrimination enshrined not only in Uganda's Constitution, but also the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights. The 2023 Anti-Homosexuality Bill criminalizes same-sex activities between consenting adults. Anyone caught committing this "crime" could face up to 10 years behind bars. It also criminalizes the "promotion" of homosexuality, a provision

that encourages homophobia. The 2023 Anti-Homosexuality Bill is not the first time the Ugandan Parliament has attempted to recriminalize homosexuality since the striking-down of Uganda's Anti-Homosexuality Act, a colonial-era provision from the 1950 Penal Code Act, in 2014. On 3 May 2021, Parliament passed the Sexual Offences Bill, which sought to criminalize any "sexual act between persons of the same gender," as well as anal sex between people of any gender.

CBL International Limited – Announces Pricing of US\$13,300,000 Initial Public Offering



Kuala Lumpur (Malaysia): CBL International Limited, together with its wholly owned subsidiaries ("CBL International" or the "Company"), is an established marine fuel logistic company currently focusing on the Asia Pacific region, providing one-stop solutions for vessel refueling. CBL International today announced the pricing of its initial public offering of 3,325,000 ordinary shares ("Shares") at a price to public of US\$4 per Share for the total offering size of approximately US\$13.3 million, assuming the underwriters do not exercise their over-allotment option to purchase additional Shares. The Shares will begin trading on March 23, 2023, U.S. Eastern time, on the Nasdaq Capital Market under the symbol "BANL". The offering is expected to close on March 24, 2023, subject to customary closing conditions.

The Company has granted the underwriters a 45-day option to purchase up to an aggregate of 498,750 additional Shares to cover over-allotments at the initial public offering price, less underwriting discounts. If the underwriters exercise their option to purchase the additional Shares in full, the total proceeds from the offering are expected to be

approximately US\$15.3 million. The Company intends to use the net proceeds from the Offering for (i) enlarging the number of local suppliers to enhance its competitiveness as well as to increase the service options available in the Singapore and South Korea markets; (ii) further increasing the Company's business market shares in existing markets; (iii) cash collateral to conduct trade financing activities with financial institutions, thus creating transaction records for further acquisition of bank financing to facilitate the Company's business growth; (iv) procuring and developing a centralized management information system in order to enhance the Company's daily management control and treasury management; and (v) other working capital and general corporate purposes.

Pacific Century Securities, LLC is acting as lead book running manager of this offering. Loeb & Loeb LLP is acting as counsel to the Company, and The Crone Law Group, P.C. is acting as counsel to Pacific Century Securities, LLC.

A registration statement on Form F-1 (File No. 333-267077) related to the offering has been filed with the U.S. Securities

and Exchange Commission (the "SEC") and was declared effective by the SEC on March 22, 2023. The offering is being made only by means of a prospectus forming a part of the effective registration statement.

This press release does not constitute an offer to sell or the solicitation of an offer to buy the securities described herein, nor shall there be any sale of these securities in any state or jurisdiction in which such an offer, solicitation or sale would be unlawful prior to registration or qualification under the securities law of any such state or jurisdiction.

We are a bunkering facilitator in the bunkering industry, headquartered in Malaysia. We focus on providing marine fuel according to the required international standards with competitive prices and timely delivery services at ports agreed between our customers and us. Over the years, with our experienced management team, we have established an extensive supply network to provide our customers with more options and flexibility in fulfilling their vessel refueling requirements. Our supply network, which focuses on expanding our localities of services, covers ports in many places in the Asia Pacific,

including but not limited to South Korea, PRC, Taiwan, Hong Kong, Malaysia, Singapore, Philippines, and Thailand. Going forward, we intend to allocate more resources to further expand our supply network, targeting continual market share enhancement.

Certain statements in this announcement are forward-looking statements, including but not limited to, the Company's proposed offering. These forward-looking statements involve known and unknown risks and uncertainties and are based on the Company's current expectations and projections about future events that the Company believes may affect its financial condition, results of operations, business strategy and financial needs, including the expectation that the offering will be successfully completed. Investors can identify these forward-looking statements by words or phrases such as "may," "could," "will," "should," "would," "expect," "plan," "intend," "anticipate," "believe," "estimate," "predict," "potential," "project" or "continue" or the negative of these terms or other comparable terminology. The Company undertakes no obligation to update or revise publicly any forward-looking statements to reflect subsequent occurring events or circumstances, or changes in its expectations, except as may be required by law. Although the Company believes that the expectations expressed in these forward-looking statements are reasonable, it cannot assure you that such expectations will turn out to be correct, and the Company cautions investors that actual results may differ materially from the anticipated results and encourages investors to review other factors that may affect its future results in the Company's registration statement and other filings with the SEC.

Death Toll from Earthquake in Pakistan and Afghanistan Rises to 20, More Than 200 Injured

DELHI: The death toll from the earthquake that shook large parts of Pakistan and Afghanistan rose to 20 on Wednesday. The number of injured also rose to over 200.

An earthquake of 6.5-magnitude shook and damaged buildings, triggered landslides and sent people running into the streets, BBC Urdu reported. The epicentre of the earthquake was a mountainous region in Afghanistan's north-eastern area which borders Pakistan.

The tremor that struck Jurm valley also was felt as far as the Indian capital of New Delhi. A Kabul resident told news



agency AFP that they never felt such tremors in their entire life. The resident was a woman who rushed out of her fifth-storey apartment following the earthquake. At least nine deaths were reported from Pakistan's Khy-

ber Pakhtunkhwa valley. Three deaths were reported from Afghanistan. One child died in Afghanistan's Laghman province, situated near the Afghanistan-Pakistan border.

"There are about 2,000 to 3,000 people in our village and we all spent the night outside under the sky. We were all scared and stayed awake the entire night," a resident from the Jurm valley told news agency AFP.

The report by BBC said that several families were outside celebrating the Persian New Year or Nowruz when the quake struck.

Failure of drug regulator to ensure quality medicines!

M.Y.SIDDIQUI

Recent deaths in Gambia, Uzbekistan and the USA, caused by toxic and contaminated medicines manufactured in and exported by India, has put a question mark on the oversight, efficacy and quality control mechanism of the drugs regulator, the Central Drugs Standard Control Organisation (CDSCO). Be it the quality control of both branded and generic medicines, their pricing, rampant manufacturing and marketing of spurious drugs across the country, collusion of National Medical Commission (NMC) and CDSCO, thriving of drug mafia impacting diagnostics, prescriptive medicines, commercialization of healthcare system as a whole are symptomatic of the malaise of all round failure of both the regulators, resulting in fleeing of the people. Medical doctors in private corporate hospitals working on periodic target basis for both diagnostic and prescriptive medicines, in case of failing to meet the target, are



fired instantly, is yet another scam indicating crass commercialization and high costs of healthcare, happening with the connivance of the regulators.

Other glaring scams are presentation of precious gifts to doctors, to those responsible for bulk procurement of drugs for their hospitals, funding of their foreign pleasure tours, even financing education of their wards abroad, all through benami transactions subsumed in broad marketing promotions expenditure in their annual balance sheets. Some

other important ongoing scam is collusion between drug mafia, pharmaceutical industry and marketers of expired branded drugs with their date of manufacture, MRP, date of expiry erased ingeniously, new dates and other patent identity embossed on the expired drugs in bulk making such drugs fresh and marketed by online dealers at a hefty discounts, thus playing with the lives of people. Lack of accountability of the regulators is pervasive and in violation of all democratic norms and accountability of the government to the people.

There is big money in the medical world and the entire healthcare system is riddled with massive corruption wherein drug mafia, medical education mafia and physicians (multi-discipline medical doctors) in government and private hospitals play major role in cahoots of both the regulators in total collusion with all stakeholders resulting in all round exploitations of the people. Only now the government has woken up to revamp regulators after India's image as 'pharmacy of the world' has been tarnished. Earlier, M/s Ranbaxy, initially and for quite some time known as India's largest drug producer with hyped high standards of quality, when investigated by the US regulators and others, fell from grace and ultimately was liquidated from the pharmaceutical world. It now stands dismantled with no trace of it with persons at the helm in that defunct enterprise facing prosecution with some in jails.

Diljit Dosanjh and Gurdas Maan have joined forces for the iconic track 'CHALLA'

CHANDIGARH: Two of the greatest forces of Punjabi music -- actor-singer Diljit Dosanjh and veteran singer Gurdas Maan -- have joined forces for the reimagined version of the iconic track 'Challa'.

The song, which is almost four decades old, has been given a new texture by the two popular singers. Speaking about the project, Gurdas Maan said: "Close to 40 years ago, we created the original 'Challa'. I thought it is time to revisit the classic again. What better way to do it than with Diljit. The song 'Challa' means the world to me. It represents celebration, union and separation in the most earthy and Punjabi way. It is a song that is very special to both Diljit and myself, so it was an incredible experience being able to recreate it with him."

Diljit said: "Challa' is an iconic Punjabi song that is close to our hearts and very special to me. It means a lot to me to have been able to recreate it with Gurdas Maan Saab, and I hope that when the listeners hear it, they will feel the same connection with it as we have all these years."



In addition, Nimrat Khaira and Tarsem Jassar have also released their tracks. While Nimrat's track is titled 'Raanjha' which is a romantic number, Tarsem's track is called 'Maan Punjabi' which is about Punjabi identity. All the three songs are Spotify singles and are part of the audio streaming platform's collaboration with the Punjabi music stars. Nimrat said: "I have been

wanting to record a Punjabi folk song for a long time, and this Spotify Singles opportunity came at the right time. 'Raanjha' is a song that is very close to my heart. We went through several options of folk songs, but once I dubbed 'Raanjha', I knew we had arrived at the song we wanted to make."

All the songs are currently available to stream on Spotify. Tarsem said: "Maan Punjabi is a song that is very close to my heart. It depicts the character of Punjab, Punjabi, and Punjabiya. Creating this song as a Spotify Single has been an extremely memorable experience for me and I look forward to the listeners enjoying it as much as I have enjoyed creating it."

According to Spotify Wrapped, the year-end campaign that highlights what listeners streamed in India, 'Excuses' by A.P. Dhillon, Intense, and Gurinder Gill was the most streamed song on Spotify in India, while the late Sidhu Moose Wala's 'Moosetape' was the most-streamed album.

Additionally, four out of the 10 most streamed songs in India were in Punjabi.

Devotees at Navratri festival in Amritsar



Hindu devotees offer prayers to an idol of goddess Sheetla Mata on the first day of Navratri celebrations at Mata Longa Wali Devi temple in Amritsar on Wednesday. PHOTOS: PRABHJOT GILL

Kangana once again took on Diljit Dosanjh warned about getting arrested for supporting' Khalistanis



DELHI: Bollywood actress Kangana Ranaut once again took on Punjabi actor-singer Diljit Dosanjh and cryptically warned him about getting arrested for "supporting" Khalistanis.

Kangana took to Instagram, where she borrowed a line 'Pols aagai pols' from a trending meme over the crackdown on radical Sikh preacher and Waris Punjabi De chief Amritpal Singh by Punjab Police and tagged Diljit Dosanjh. Kangana took to Instagram stories, where she shared a post by a food delivery group. It showed a variety of lentils with 'pulse aagai pulse' written on it. Kangana tagged Diljit and wrote just saying. She added a Khalistan sticker on Instagram Stories, with the word crossed out. For the caption, she wrote: "Diljit Dosanjh ji pols aagai pols." "All those who supported Khalistanis, remember next number tumhara hai, pols aa chuki hai, yeh woh waqt nahi hai jab koi bhi kuch bhi karta tha, desh ke saath gaddari ya tukde karne ki koshish ab mehngi padegi." She wrote in another post. Kangana and Diljit have previously engaged in a war of words in 2020 during farmers protest.

Keeya Khanna joins Aditya Roy Kapur and Mrunal Thakur in Gumraah



KULBIR SINGH KALSI Chandigarh

Keeya Khanna, who is known for her work in the Punjabi film industry, has bagged a new movie. As per a reliable source, the actress, who has entertained masses in projects like Marriage Da Garriage, Chal Bhaag, Punjabiyan Da King, Yaar Anmulle 2, Dakuan da Munda, will be seen in Aditya Roy Kapur, and Mrunal Thakur's upcoming crime thriller 'Gumraah'. Helmed by debutant director Vardhan Ketkar, 'Gumraah' is being produced by Bhushan Kumar's T-Series and Murad Khetani's Cine1 Studios. Based on true events, the crime thriller features Aditya in a double role for the very first time in two completely different avatars. Mrunal on the other hand will be seen playing a cop. Ronit Roy is also a part of the cast.

Guneet Monga visits Amritsar's Golden Temple with her Oscar trophy

AMRITSAR: Producer Guneet Monga sought blessings at the Golden Temple in Amritsar and even took along her Oscar trophy to the holy place.

Guneet was joined by her husband Sunny Kapoor and celebrity chef Vikas Khanna. She shared a reel of her visit, where she was seen offering prayers while holding the trophy in her hand. She was also seen making langar and having it as well with Sunny at the Golden Temple.

Vikas captioned the video: "When you dedicate your honours to your ancestors. Thank you Guneet for showing us the power humility and love."

Another video shows Vikas's mother driving Guneet to the Golden Temple.

"From being a dreamer to becoming one of the most powerful producers in the World. Here it is to you Guneet, you made every Indian wealthier. My Ma had said 2 months ago that if Guneet wins an Oscar, I'll drive her to The Golden Temple," he wrote as he shared a clip showing him and his mother welcoming Guneet.

Guneet and director Kartiki Gonsalves' film 'The Elephant Whispers' won an Oscar under the Best Documentary Short Film category.



MultiFit promotes overall fitness with their iFit Model

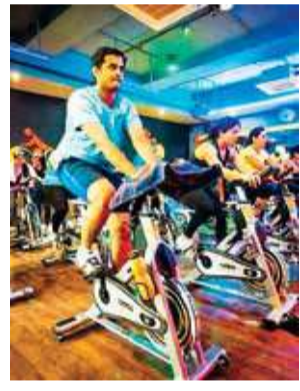
THE IFIT MODEL HELPS CLIENTS TO DEVELOP TECHNIQUES AND EXERCISES THAT ARE BEYOND THE MACHINES

MultiFit, UK's Elite, India's Largest Functional & Strength Training Brand, has introduced a fitness training module, iFit. MultiFit's iFit Model is based on extensive practical training experience of its core team. The iFit Model is designed to Integrate the science and fitness training in a manner that helps come closer to attaining the perfect Mind-Body-Soul balance.

MultiFit believes in developing a holistic body and a mind together. Through the iFit model, It takes into account physical, mental, and emotional factors as well as lifestyle and nutrition in order to create a program specifically tailored to help people in their fitness journeys. The goal of the iFit Model is to help individuals achieve their fitness goals by providing them with a comprehensive and personalized fitness plan that is tailored to their individual needs.

The iFit Model includes a wide variety of exercises, ranging from Endurance Training, Boxing, MMA, Yoga, Dance Based Therapies, High Intensity Batch Trainings, Calisthenics, Strength Training and Looping.

The different activities are designed to make everyday workout more enjoyable to an extent that it can be practised anywhere if a person for some reason is not able to come to the gym. With this, members also get an advice on Nutrition and a healthy lifestyle which is important to keep this module



running. Multifit is not just about creating a perfect body. At Multifit, our aim is to develop the mind and body in a conducive environment and we achieve this by breaking the monotony of regular workouts. Here all different exercises are given equal importance along with functional training as we believe that healthy mind leads to a healthy body. Through iFit, we have trainers who have devised a program that defines overall wellness and we filter it down to all our members, says Deepti Sharma, Director, MultiFit.

The iFit Model is a comprehensive approach to fitness that helps individuals reach their goals in a safe, effective, and sustainable way. It is designed to help people achieve their fitness goals by providing them with a personalized plan that addresses physical, mental, and emotional factors. By taking into account lifestyle and nutrition, the iFit Model helps individuals create a holistic fitness plan that is tailored to their individual needs. With its wide variety of exercises and motivational strategies, the iFit Model helps individuals stay motivated and reach their goals.

'Gumraah' stars Aditya Roy Kapur in a dual role along with Mrunal Thakur



MUMBAI: The trailer of the upcoming film 'Gumraah' was unveiled on Thursday. It begins with a "well-planned murder" by an unidentified assailant during a rainy night. Actress Mrunal Thakur then appears in the role of a cop, who is on a hot pursuit of the killer. Aditya Roy Kapur's character is shown to be the suspect but then it all changes when it is revealed that Aditya's character has a doppelganger. The trailer promises unmissable drama, lots of twists and a mystery that will unfold as it releases for the big screen. 'Gumraah' stars Aditya Roy Kapur in a dual role along with Mrunal Thakur who will essay the role of a lady cop for the first time. Helmed by debutant director Vardhan Ketkar, the film is being produced by Bhushan Kumar's T-Series and Murad Khetani's Cine1 Studios. The film will have a theatrical release on April 7.

Australia won the ODI series and moved up to the top spot

SUNIL THAPLIYAL

"Australia won the ODI series 2-1 after defeating India in the third match of the series on Wednesday in Chennai. It was India's first ODI series defeat on home soil since 2019. India not only lost the series but also the top spot in the One-Day International rankings to Australia. After losing the series, India fell to second in the ICC One-Day International standings, level with Australia on 113 rating points.

After losing the opening match, Australia won two in a row to win the series 2-1. They



outperformed Indian batsmen and dominated on Indian pitches with their bowlers. It will provide Australia with a psychological lift ahead of the One-Day International World Cup in India in October.

Australia scored 269 runs in 49 overs after deciding to bat first. Kuldeep Yadav and Hardik

Pandya both claimed three wickets. Virat Kohli made 54 runs in India's chase but couldn't save his team from defeat.

On the other hand, the Indian batsmen gave a dismal performance and fell short of expectations. Only KL Rahul was able to score a century, but the other hitters, including Rohit, Virat, Shubham Gill, and Pandya, all failed to convert their innings into huge ones despite having a solid start. Surya Kumar Yadav led down his fans by failing to score a single run in this series and striking out in all three innings.

Manipur to host first Int'l football tournament



SUNIL THAPLIYAL

India will host the Hero tri-nation international football tournament in Manipur to prepare for the upcoming Asian Football Confederation Cup, the quadrennial international men's football championship of Asia organised by the Asian Football Confederation (AFC). Team India will face Myanmar and Kyrgyzstan on March 22 and 28, respectively, at Imphal's Khuman Lampak Stadium. In the FIFA rankings, India is rated 106th, whereas Kyrgyzstan and Myanmar are ranked 94th and 159th, respectively.

This will be the first international football event in Manipur, a state that has produced over 50 Indian national team players. Moreover, this will be Team India's first time competing in Manipur. The friendlies in the inter-

national windows are critical for the National Team to reach the appropriate standards before the Asian Cup later this year. The Blue Tigers squad is comprised of youthful players who have excelled at the domestic level and are eager to get their first taste of the coveted international football.

"We all are aware of football's popularity in Manipur. The state has produced a huge number of footballers, both men, and women, but never before has a national team match been organized in the state. Having launched Vision 2047 recently, our aim is to take quality football to the furthest corners of the country. Manipur's vibrant football culture makes them deserving hosts, and so they have been given charge of hosting the Senior National Team's matches." AIFF President Mr Kalyan Chaubey said in a press conference.

Session on Environmental, Social & Governance Concerns in Real Estate Held: Chandigarh Literary Society

KULBIR SINGH KALSI Chandigarh

"Sustainability has become extremely vital to the real estate sector as well for the Communities. Not only are green buildings the fad because of their improved green impact, but also because a low-carbon building is proven to have lower operating and maintenance costs compared to a generically built structure, constructed without proper consideration for environmental protection. That's why we are developing India's first fully Bioclimatic township 'The Wellness City' on Chandigarh-Patiala road, as the project focuses on sustainable and environment-friendly buildings," said Sumit Singla,



CEO of Prime Land Promoters and Developers (PLPB).

Singla was taking part in a conversation on the pertinent subject of Environmental, Social, and Governance (ESG) Concerns in Real Estate with Ms. Simranjit Kaur at the Spring Lit Fest 2023, organized

by the Chandigarh Literary Society.

The moderator, Simranjit Kaur engaged Singla in an interesting conversation. On a question related to the need for eco-friendly housing, Singla said, "Bioclimatic architecture is when we design with nature and not against it. We are ensuring that the buildings are in total harmony with nature where residents get ample wind, sunlight, rain, heat, humidity, and other natural phenomena."

A complete **KNOWLEDGE CAPSULE**

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