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## 'COMPLETE VIOLATION OF FEDERALISM': RAGHAV CHADHA ON CENTRE'S ORDINANCE



NEW DELHI: Union Minister Raghav Chadha slammed the Congress for criticising the inauguration of the new Parliament building by Prime Minister Narendra Modi on May 28.

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## BERNSTEIN PEGS RELIANCE INDUSTRIES LIMITED'S STAKE IN RETAIL ARM AT \$111 BILLION



NEW DELHI: The Indian economy is on the right track to surpass the 7 per cent growth rate in the Fiscal Year 2023, according to a report by the State Bank of India.

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## SUNNY LEONE TALKED ABOUT HOW ONE CALL FROM 'BIGG BOSS'



NEW DELHI: India's foreign exchange reserves dropped by \$6.05 billion to \$593.48 billion during the week ended May 19, RBI said on Friday.

# New Parliament building to be inaugurated on May 28th

## 21 opposition parties to Boycott the Event

KAIVITA SHARMA  
New Delhi

The much awaited New Parliament Building is all set to be inaugurated now. Prime Minister Narendra Modi will do the honours of the new Sansad on May 28th, but the opposition is boycotting the event as President Draupadi Murmu is not being invited to the ceremony. The opposition accuses the government and the PM Modi of ignoring and sidelining President Draupadi Murmu who is a constituent of the Parliament. Around 21 parties have decided to stay away from the ceremony while BJP and its allies will attend the function.



They said they find no meaning in the new building as the soul of democracy has been sucked out. Congress leader Rahul Gandhi in a tweet have said "Parliament is not built by Bricks of ego, but through constitutional values". The opposition parties in a joint statement have said that "undemocratic acts are not new to the Prime Minister. His decision of inaugurating the new parliament by himself and completely sidelining the President Draupadi Murmu is a grave insult and assault on our democracy. He has hollowed our Parliament. They accused the Prime Minister for suspending and disqualifying the members of the parliament who have raised their voice for the issues of the people. "We will continue to fight in spirit, in letter and in substance against the government, they said.

But on the other hand Government is blaming the opposition parties for making it an issue. Several Union Ministers have slammed the opposition for playing politics over the issue. It is the prerogative of the Lok Sabha speaker to decide who will inaugurate the new building. Assam Chief Minister Himanta Biswa calls opposition boycott a "drama" while Union Affairs minister Hardeep Singh Puri reminded how Prime Minister Indra Gandhi had inaugurated the Parliament Annex building on October 24th, 1975. And Rajiv Gandhi inaugurated the Parliament Library on August 15, 1987.

While there is a divide within opposition also, Andhra Pradesh Chief Minister Nara Chandrababu Naidu's YSR Congress and Shromani Akali Dal will attend the ceremony. According to SAD, "this is a moment of pride and we should not play politics over it". Union Home Minister Amit Shah said the new building is Prime Minister's vision of creating a new India, which is a combination of India's culture and traditions.

# SBI endorses RBI forecast for Indian economy growing at 7 pc in FY23



NEW DELHI: The Indian economy is on the right track to surpass the 7 per cent growth rate in the Fiscal Year 2023, according to a report by the State Bank of India. SBI in its research report titled Ecwrap, pointed out that the growth will be primarily driven by the manufacturing sector. India's growth in the fourth quarter of FY23 is likely to be 5.5 percent, bringing the country's growth for FY23 to 7.1 percent. This is consistent with the National Statistical Office's (NSO) January advance estimates, which predicted 7 per cent growth for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2023, the report said.

growth, looking for a renewed surge in resilient manufacturing while supporting the services sector to embrace enhanced efficiency. The local consumption and investment are expected to benefit from improved prospects for agricultural and related activities, increased business and consumer confidence, and strong credit growth, while supply responses and cost conditions are expected to improve as inflationary pressures ease, Ecwrap report points out. The Indian government's emphasis on capital expenditure in the Union Budget 2023-24 is expected to attract private investment, strengthen job creation and demand, and boost our growth potential, according to the report. The RBI estimates Q4FY23 Real GDP growth at 5.1 per cent, while the National Statistical Office (NSO) estimates FY23 growth at 7 per cent. The RBI forecasts GDP growth of 6.5 percent in 2023-24, with 7.6 percent in the first quarter (Q1).

## Forex reserves drop by USD 6 billion to USD 593.48 billion



NEW DELHI: India's foreign exchange reserves dropped by \$6.05 billion to \$593.48 billion during the week ended May 19, RBI said on Friday. The drop in the kitty has snapped two consecutive weeks of increases. In the previous reporting week, the overall reserves had increased by \$3.5 billion to take the overall quantum just shy of \$600 billion. In October 2021, the country's forex kitty had reached an all-time high of \$645 billion. The reserves have been declining as the central bank deploys the kitty to defend the rupee amid pressures caused majorly by global developments. For the week ended May 19, the foreign currency assets, a major component of the reserves, declined by \$4.654 billion to \$524.945 billion, according to the Weekly Statistical Supplement released by the RBI on Friday. Expressed in dollar terms, the foreign currency assets include the effect of appreciation or depreciation of non-US units like the euro, pound and yen held in the foreign exchange reserves. Gold reserves dropped by \$1.23 billion to \$45.13 billion, the RBI said. The Special Drawing Rights (SDRs) were down by \$137 million to \$18.28 billion, the apex bank said. The country's reserve position with the IMF was down by \$35 million to \$5.13 billion in the reporting week, the RBI data showed.

## Hardeep Puri slams Congress for criticising inauguration of new Parliament building

NEW DELHI: Union Minister Hardeep Singh Puri slammed the Congress for criticising the inauguration of the new Parliament building by Prime Minister Narendra Modi on May 28. In a series of tweets, Puri said: "From criticising the New Parliament Building & questioning its very necessity despite many of them advocating for it before but not executing it, Congress President & other worthies are now shifting the goalpost by generously misquoting an article a day from the Constitution! They should feel better if they remember Oct 24, 1975 the day when Indira Gandhi inaugurated the Parliament Annex! Or August 15, 1987 when Rajiv Gandhi laid the foundation of the Parliament Library! "So, instead of now finding articles to justify their hypocrisy why can't they just smile & join India on this momentous achievement & her march to greatness!" He also attached a screenshot of comments of Congress leaders Shashi Tharoor and Manish Tewari. Puri's remarks come amid a war of words between the Congress and BJP over the inauguration of the new Parliament House.



the Tribal communities only for electoral reasons. While Former President, (Ram Nath) Kovind was not invited for the New Parliament foundation laying ceremony... The President of India Droupadi Murmu is not being invited for the inauguration of the new Parliament Building, " he said. Taking a swipe at the government, Kharge added: "The Parliament of India is the supreme legislative body of the Republic of India, and the President of India is its highest Constitutional authority. She alone represents government, opposition, and every citizen alike. She is the First Citizen of India." "Inauguration of the new Parliament building by her will symbolise Government's commitment to Democratic values and Constitutional propriety. The Modi government has repeatedly disrespected propriety. The Office of the President of India is reduced to tokenism under the BJP-RSS Government," he said, attacking the government. On May 28, Modi will inaugurate the new Parliament building -- a triangular-shaped four-storey building with a built-up area of 64,500 square metres.

## Mamata assures Kejriwal of full support over Centre's ordinance on bureaucratic service

KOLKATA: West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee on Tuesday assured her counterpart in Delhi and AAP supremo Arvind Kejriwal of full support of the Trinamool Congress in the Rajya Sabha against the Union government's ordinance to negate the Supreme Court's order handing over administrative services in the national capital to the elected government there. While the BJP is poised to get the ordinance passed in the Lok Sabha owing to its numerical superiority, the situation might turn tricky in the Upper House where the Trinamool Congress has 12 MPs. Banerjee made this announcement after an hour-long meeting with Kejriwal and Punjab Chief Minister Bhagwant Mann here. Delhi Education Minister Atishi and AAP's



Rajya Sabha member Raghav Chadha were also present at the meeting. "If all the opposition parties unite against the BJP on this ordinance issue, the saffron party can be surely defeated. If that happens, it will be a moral defeat for the BJP before the 2024 Lok Sabha polls. And if any miracle happens, the fate of the current Union government will be uncertain," Banerjee said. Kejriwal, on his part, alleged that after any Assembly elec-

## SC grants interim bail on medical grounds to AAP leader Satyendar Jain

NEW DELHI: The Supreme Court on Friday granted interim bail for six weeks to Satyendar Jain, Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) leader and former cabinet minister in the Delhi government, on medical grounds. A bench comprising Justices J.K. Maheshwari and P.S. Narasimha granted interim bail for six weeks to Jain to get treated in a private hospital of his choice and added that the bail will be subject to conditions imposed by the trial court. The bench said Jain should not go to the media to make any statement on the issue and stressed that he should also not attempt to influence witnesses in the case. The top court turned down the Enforcement Directorate (ED) plea that Jain should be first examined by a panel of doctors in AIIMS. The top court will take up the matter in the second week of July, when it will consider Jain's medical reports. Senior advocate Abhishek Manu Singhvi represented Jain and additional solicitor general S.V. Raju represented the ED. On May 18, Singhvi had submitted before the apex court that his client has extreme health problems, he has lost over 30 kgs and is a skeleton now. In April this year, the



Delhi High Court had dismissed bail pleas of Jain and his two aides in a money laundering case being probed by the Enforcement Directorate (ED). Justice Dinesh Kumar Sharma said that Jain is an influential person and cannot be said to have satisfied the twin conditions for bail under the Prevention of Money Laundering Act (PMLA). "The simple fact is the CBI has filed a case of disproportionate assets (DA). The present court cannot go into the validity of these proceedings. Facts show that certain DA were masked. The court has to see the prima facie case. The broad probabilities indicate that the companies associated with him are controlled and managed by him. Learned special judge order (rejecting bail to Jain) does not have any perversity. Order is well reasoned," the judge said. Jain has been in custody since May 30 last year. A trial court had on November 17, 2022, dismissed the leader's bail application.

## 'Bogus', says Cong on 'Sengol' claims of Centre



NEW DELHI: The Congress on Friday hit out at the BJP for spreading "false narrative" on 'Sengol' saying that there is no documented evidence whatsoever of Mounbatten, Rajaji and Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru describing this "as a symbol of transfer of British power to India" and all claims to this effect are plain and simply "bogus". In a tweet, Congress General secretary communication in-charge Jairam Ramesh said, "Is it any surprise that the new Parliament is being consecrated with typically false narratives from the WhatsApp University? The BJP/RSS Distortions stand exposed yet again with Maximum Claims, Minimum Evidence." Jairam Ramesh said that a majestic spectre conceived of by a religious establishment in then Madras province and crafted in Madras city was indeed presented to Nehru in August 1947. "There is no documented evidence whatsoever of Mounbatten, Rajaji & Nehru describing this spectre as a symbol of transfer of British power to India. All claims to this effect are plain and simple - bogus. Wholly and completely manufactured in the minds of a few and dispersed into WhatsApp, and now to the drum-beaters in the media. Two of the finest Rajaji scholars with impeccable credentials have expressed surprise," he said. The Congress Rajya Sabha MP said the spectre was later kept for display at the Allahabad Museum. "What Nehru said there on December 14, 1947 is a matter of public record despite whatever labels may say," he said. "The spectre is now being used by the Prime Minister and his drum-beaters for their political ends in Tamil Nadu. This is typical of this brigade that embroiders facts to suit its twisted objectives. The real question is why is President Droupadi Murmu not being allowed to inaugurate the new Parliament?" he said.

## Concerned over Satyendar Jain's health condition, Kejriwal attacks Centre

NEW DELHI: Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal on Thursday expressed his concern over Satyendar Jain's health situation, and attacked the Central government for targeting AAP leaders. Satyendar Jain, the jailed former health minister, was admitted to the Deen Dayal Upadhyay hospital after he slipped in the washroom of Tihar jail. "The person who worked tirelessly day and night to provide excellent treatment and promote good health to the public is now being targeted by a dictator who seeks to eliminate this virtuous individual," Kejriwal said in a tweet in Hindi. "This dictator is solely focused on his own agenda, dis-



regarding the welfare of others. His self-centered nature blinds him from seeing the bigger picture. However, it is important to remember that a higher power is overseeing everything. God, in His infinite wisdom, will ensure justice prevails for all," he said. "I offer my prayers to God for Satyendar ji's swift recovery. May God grant them the strength to confront and overcome these challenging circumstances," he further wrote on Twitter.

# PM Modi set to install historical and sacred 'Sengol' in the New Parliament House

YOGESH KANT  
New Delhi

History will repeat itself on Sunday, when Prime Minister Narendra Modi will install the "Sengol", sacred symbol of fair and equitable governance, in the newly constructed Parliament building, Home Minister Amit Shah said on Wednesday. This is the same Sengol that was accepted by the first Prime Minister of India, Jawaharlal Nehru at his residence on the night of 14th August 1947, in the presence of several leaders. Recalling the entire event that took place on the occasion of India's independence, Home Minister Amit Shah said, "Even after 75 years of independence, most of the people in India are not aware of this event in which India's transfer of power took place through handing over of



Sengol to Pt Jawaharlal Nehru. It was a special occasion on the night of August 14, 1947, celebrating India's independence. On this night Jawaharlal Nehru received the 'Sengol' from the Adheenams (Priests) of the Thiruvadhurai Adheenam (Mutt) in Tamil Nadu, who had specially arrived for the occasion. It was precisely the moment in which power was transferred by the British into the hands of Indians. What we are celebrating as independence is actually marked by the very moment of handing over the 'Sengol'. The Prime Minister took a decision to adopt the Sengol as a national symbol of the Amrit Kaal. The new building of Parliament will witness the very same event, with Adheenam (Priests) repeating the ceremony and vesting the Hon'ble PM with the Sengol. The Home Minister further

elaborated on the Sengol and said, "The Sengol is profound in meaning, which is derived from the Tamil word 'Semmai', meaning 'Righteousness'. It is blessed by the high priests of a leading Dharmic Mutt in Tamil Nadu. The Nandi, with its unyielding gaze as the beholder of 'Nyaya', is hand-carved at the top. Most importantly, the recipient of the Sengol has the "order" ("Aanaai" in Tamil) to rule justly and fairly. This is what is most appealing, for those elected to serve the people must never forget this." The same Sengol from 1947 will be installed by the Hon'ble Prime Minister in the Lok Sabha, prominently close to the Speaker's podium. It will be displayed for the Nation to see, and will be taken out on special occasions. Home Minister Amit Shah said that the Parliament House is the most appropriate and sacred place to install the

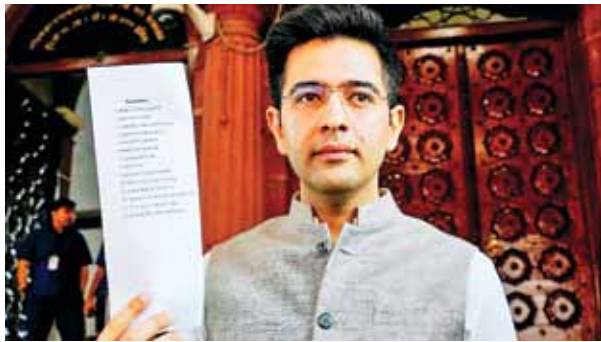
historic "Sengol". The establishment of "Sengol", makes the spirit of 15 August 1947 unforgettable. It is the symbol of the promise of boundless hope, boundless possibilities and a resolve to build a strong and prosperous nation. It will be a symbol of the Amrit Kaal, which will witness the glorious era in which India will be taking its rightful place. "This historic plan has been prepared in consultation with the presidents of Adheenam. All 20 Adheenam presidents will also be present on this auspicious occasion to shower their blessings in reminiscence of this sacred ritual. I express my gratitude to them. I am glad that 96-year-old Wummi Bangaru Chettyji, associated with its construction, will also participate in this sacred ceremony. I express my gratitude to him," said Shah.



# ‘Complete violation of Federalism’: Raghav Chadha on Centre’s ordinance

**NEW DELHI:** A day after the Central government brought an ordinance to negate Supreme Court judgment placing ‘services’ under the control of the state government in the national capital, AAP Rajya Sabha MP Raghav Chadha slammed the government saying that it is complete violation of federalism, constitutional powers given to elected governments.

In a series of tweets, Chadha said: “To overturn a well thought out, unanimous Constitution Bench judgment by a reckless political Ordinance, in complete violation of - Federalism: part of basic structure of Constitution, Constitutional Powers given Elected Governments, Principle of Accountability of Civil Services to Ministers and is not just



Contempt of Court but also Contempt of the Electorate.” His remarks came a day after the Centre issued ordinance to negate Supreme Court verdict that gave Delhi government control of ‘services’.

The Central government has brought an ordinance to set up a permanent authority known as the National Capital Civil Service Authority whose chairperson will Delhi Chief Minister along with Chief Secretary, Delhi, Principal Secretary (Home), to make recommendations to the Delhi LG regarding matters concerning transfer posting, vigilance and other incidental matters.

However, in case of difference of opinion, the decision of the LG shall be final.

On May 11, a five-judge constitution bench of the Supreme Court ruled that it is ideal to hold that a democratically elected Delhi government should have control over its officers and the LG is bound by the advice of the elected government in everything other than public order, police, and land. The top court stressed that if the government is not able to control and hold to account the officers posted in its service, then its responsibility towards the legislature as well as the public is diluted.

The ordinance came after the apex court gave the Delhi government control in services matters, including transfer and posting of officers.

# Arvind Kejriwal slams Delhi Police for ‘misbehaving’ with Sisodia

**FW DESK**  
*New Delhi*

Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal on Tuesday slammed the Delhi Police for “misbehaving” with former Deputy Chief Minister Manish Sisodia at the Rouse Avenue Court here.

“Does the police have the right to misbehave with Manish ji like this? Has the police been asked from above to do this?” Kejriwal asked on Twitter while retweeting a video posted by AAP Minister Atishi

In her tweet, Atishi had said: “Shocking misbehaviour by this policeman with Manish ji in Rouse Avenue Court. Delhi Police should suspend him immediately.”

In response, Delhi Police rubbished the allegations and claimed it was “propaganda”.



“The allegations of police misbehaviour towards Mr. Manish Sisodia during his appearance at the Rouse Avenue Court is propaganda. The police’s response, as seen in the video, was necessary for security reasons. Making statements to the media while in judicial custody is prohibited by law,” the Delhi Police tweeted in Hindi.

Earlier in the day, the Rouse Avenue Court had extended Sisodia’s judicial custody till June 1 in connection with the Delhi excise policy case being investigated by the Enforcement Directorate (ED). The jail authorities were also directed to consider his request to provide him chair and table for study purposes.

# Several high profile officers in Haryana either trapped or on ACB radar



**SATISH HANDA**

Earlier, action was being taken by Anti Corruption Bureau (ACB) in Haryana state against large number of employees working in government offices in the state allegedly involved in corrupt practices. Alok Mittal, Additional Director General Police also chief of ACB and CID Haryana state told that on getting green signal from Haryana Chief Minister Manohar Lak Khatter the Bureau has started campaign against senior officers in the state allegedly involved in corrupt practices and there is a long list of such officers either facing investigation in corruption cases against them by ACB including nearly six bureaucrats of IAS rank against whom corruption charges have already been framed and there is a long list of those senior officers allegedly involved in corrupt practices on ACB radar likely to face action in the near future.

Among those senior IAS bureaucrats facing corruption charges against them at present include the names of Vijay Dahiya an IAS officer formerly working in Haryana Kausal Vikas Nigam presently went underground when ACB framed charges against him, Another IAS officer Dharminder Singh, formerly working as Additional Commissioner in Faridabad Municipal Corporation was arrested on the report of SIT constituted against him was arrested from his Gurugram residence allegedly accepted bribe for amount worth Rs 1.11 crore for allotment of a tender misusing his power.

# Rahul Gandhi traveling in a truck without informing Haryana Police is a big violation of security rules : Home Minister



**SATISH HANDA**  
*Ambala*

Haryana Home and Health Minister Anil Vij has termed a huge violation of security rules regarding the travel of Congress leader Rahul Gandhi in a truck. While interacting with the media persons, he said that Congress leaders go to the courts daily for the imposition of SPG. However, Rahul Gandhi is now going in an unknown truck which is violation of security rules and without informing the Haryana Police. Home Minister said that if he wanted to take a truck tour, he would have told me, I would have sent the truck with security from here, in which he would have roamed as much as he wanted. He said that it is good that Rahul Gandhi should roam around in the truck itself, it is a good thing so that people will come to know.

Countering MP Deepender Hooda’s statement of making electricity and other facilities free in Haryana, Home Minister Anil Vij taunted that “Na Nau Man Tel Hoga na Radha Nachegi”, he said that Hooda’s government would never come, so no one gets fooled by saying whatever they want. He said that Congress had given many bluffs earlier also and people have seen what they did after coming to power. In the matter of Congress opposing the new Parliament House, Home Minister Anil Vij said that Congress has vowed to oppose every good work. He said that our scale is that when we protest, we know that we are doing a good job.

# Health Expert takes over as Central Railway’s Chief Public Relations Officer

**MANMOHAN SINGH NAULA**  
*Mumbai*

Dr Shivraj Manaspure, MBBS, MD (Physiology), a member of the Indian Railway Traffic Service 2011 Batch, has been appointed Chief Public Relations Officer (CPRO) at Central Railway. Dr Manaspure succeeds Shivaji Sutar. Now Mr Sutar is a Director, Information and Publicity in Railway Board. Earlier Dr Manaspure was a Senior Divisional Commercial Manager, Bhusaval Division, Central Railway. Dr Manaspure has held various positions with Central Railway, including Senior Divisional Operation Manager



for the Mumbai Division and Divisional Operation Manager for the Solapur Division. He was also the Deputy Chief Operation Manager for the Mumbai Construction Department.

Dr. Shivraj Manaspure was honoured with the General Manager’s Zonal Award in 2016 for his outstanding performance in train operations. In recognition of his remarkable administration of local suburban trains and mail express trains in the Mumbai Division, he was also awarded the Best Punctuality Zonal Shield for 2019-20. His achievements have significantly improved Mumbai Division’s infrastructure and ef-

fectiveness, enabling the efficient operation of suburban services and mail/express trains. In addition, he significantly contributed to rationalising the suburban timetable and expanding suburban services.

Furthermore, He played crucial role in rationalisation of suburban time table which created paths for additional suburban services. He was instrumental in planning and execution of completion of Thane-Diva new 5th and 6th lines, arrangement of various maintenance blocks for construction of these new lines simultaneously keeping suburban trains running for almost 180 days of block period.

# Despite the delay in Navi Mumbai Metro, CIDCO has not imposed any monetary penalty on the contractor



**RS 291 crores primary increase in expenditure**

**MANMOHAN SINGH NAULA**  
*Mumbai*

The Bhoomipujan of Navi Mumbai Metro was performed by the then Chief Minister of Maharashtra Prithviraj Chavan. Even after 12 years today, a Satellite City Navi Mumbai’s metro service has not started. The shocking information that despite the delay in this work, no penalty has been imposed on the contractors. This has come out from the information provided by the CIDCO

administration to RTI activist Anil Galgali. Interestingly, the documents show that there has been a preliminary increase of 291 crores in the cost of metro work.

RTI activist Anil Galgali had sought various information related to Navi Mumbai Metro from the CIDCO administration on February 16, 2023. According to the information given by the CIDCO administration in its reply dated 26th April 2023, there are various reasons for the delay in the work. Belapur to Pendarh under CIDCO Navi Mumbai Metro Route No. 1 is 11.10 km long and has a total of 11 metro stations.

# Yogi slams Opposition for boycotting new Parliament inauguration

**LUCKNOW:** Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath has said that the remarks by the opposition members regarding the inauguration of the new Parliament building are “unfortunate” and will “weaken democracy”.

The chief minister said, “May 28 is going to be a momentous day in the history of free India, when Prime Minister Narendra Modi will be inaugurating the new Parliament building and will be gifting it to the people of India. Instead of making this historic occasion a dignified and proud moment, the Opposition, including Congress, is making statements. This is unfortunate and irresponsible. This weakens democracy. I think the country will not accept this under any circumstance.” He further said, “The new Parliament has been built, keeping a hundred years in mind, and has been constructed with a lot of foresight. The new Parliament building will also set an example for the world. However, remarks by Opposition leaders are unfortunate.” Yogi Adityanath said, “This is not the first time that the Prime Minister is inaugurating such a space. Earlier, the Parliament’s annex was inaugurated by late Prime Minister Indira Gandhi, the Parliament Library’s foundation stone was laid by late Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi. There are many such examples. But even after this, the way the



Opposition is trying to malign this historic occasion, the citizens of India will not appreciate this.” It is noteworthy that as many as 19 opposition parties, including Congress and AAP, have announced that they will boycott the inauguration of the new Parliament building, which is to be held on May 28.

The opposition, in a joint statement, said, “When the soul of democracy has been sucked out of Parliament, we find no value in a new building. We announce our collective decision to boycott the inauguration of the new Parliament building.” The opposition parties said that the President is not only the Head of State but also an integral part of the Parliament. “She summons, prorogues, and addresses the Parliament. She must give her assent for an Act of Parliament to take effect. In short, the Parliament cannot function without the president. Yet, the prime minister has decided to inaugurate the new Parliament building without her,” the opposition parties stated.

# OPPO announces the Launch of its latest Smartphone, the “OPPO F23 5G”

**ARUNKUMAR RAO**  
*Bengaluru*

OPPO, the leading global smart devices brand, announces the launch of its latest Smartphone, the OPPO F23 5G. With the sale of F21 series, Bangalore has raised its market share by 73% and currently operates 35 service stations in the state. OPPO F23 5G, equipped with large 5,000mAh battery, 67W SUPERVOOC™ fast charging, and OPPO’s Batter Health Engine, is built for those suffer low battery anxiety.

Damyant Khanoria, Chief Marketing Officer, OPPO, said, “At OPPO, we understand that monophobia, or the fear of being without a mobile phone or being unable to use it, is a real concern for many Smartphone users. With the OPPO F23 5G, we’re proud to offer innovative technologies like Battery Health Engine and SuperVOOC fast charging, which provides reliable and convenient battery performance for a seamless experience. So, you can focus on enjoying the things you love to do with your phone without worrying about its battery life.”

During the press conference highlighting the recent research by OPPO & Counterpoint indicated that 3 out of 4 people in India have No-



monophobia—the fear of being left without a phone—triggered mostly by low/dead battery. The study also revealed that 46% of respondents charge their phones twice daily, 92% use power-saving mode to deal with battery discharge issues, and 60% of Smartphone users will buy a new phone if their current one does not have a good battery.

The F23 5G phone is equipped with the Qualcomm Snapdragon 695 5G SoC and comes with 256GB storage that can accommodate 80 full-length movies, over 1,00,000 images, or 40,000+ songs, making it ideal for individuals on the go; the device also supports expandable memory up to 1TB via SD card. And its 8GB RAM can be extended by a further 8GB from storage via OPPO’s RAM expansion technology. The F23 5G runs on ColorOS 13.1, which enhances privacy and performance with features like screen translate that allows you to point the camera at a script for instant AI-based translation, auto pixelate user photos in messaging apps, and a private safe to secure all your sensitive documents and photos.

For premium looks, the F23 5G sports OPPO Glow, which comprises millions of nano-level etchings on the back to resemble microscopic diamonds; its 3D curved back is fingerprint resistant and has a slight curve on each edge to make it more comfortable to grip. The device has undergone the most rigorous durability tests in the lab to assess its resistance to physical drops, water damage, radiation, climate impact, and signal stability.

# McLaren drives in hybrid sports car Artura in India at Rs 5.1 cr



**2993 CC twin-turbocharged V6 petrol engine, paired with an eight-speed transmission and a lithium-ion battery pack**

**FW DESK**

British luxury carmaker McLaren Automotive on Friday said it has launched the hybrid sports car Artura in India with a price starting at Rs 5.1 crore (ex-showroom). The company produces the cars at its UK-based facility and then ships the units to various locations, including India. The price of the car varies on the level of personalisation ordered by the customer.

“Our impact in the Indian market in our first year has been outstanding, and we look

forward to continuing to provide our customers with an exceptional service and the ultimate driving experience,” McLaren Automotive Managing Director APAC and China Paul Harris noted.

The model comes with a 2,993 CC twin-turbocharged V6 petrol engine, paired with an eight-speed transmission and a lithium-ion battery pack, which provides the supercar with instant torque and improved throttle response. The package generates a combined power output of 680PS and 720 Nm of torque. Artura’s top speed is electronically limited to 330 kilometres per hour with 0-100 kilometres per hour reached in just three seconds and 0-200 kilometres per hour in 8.3 seconds.

# Education sector must take a skill-based approach says Dr. Vinay Sahasrabuddhe

**NEW DELHI:** At the ASSOCHAM 16th International Education Summit & Skill Development Summit 2023, Dr. Vinay Sahasrabuddhe, President of the Indian Council for Cultural Relations (ICCR), spoke as a guest of honor, and said that since education and skill development go hand in hand, private universities need to be quality-oriented in terms of studying values. It will result in individuals with the appropriate values and abilities for future youth. The National Education Policy (NEP) 2020, which demanded extensive sectoral change and a structural makeover, became a watershed moment for the Indian educational system. The policy advocated including life skills in the curriculum because it was of the opinion that education needed to go beyond academic results to

concentrate on the overall development of our future generations.

In her special address, Prof. (Dr.) Pankaj Mittal, Secretary General of the Association of Indian Universities, stressed the necessity for curricular modifications and transformative education. These changes must take into account students’ goals in the Indian society. The development of life skills is a tool for empowering kids and securing their future in the globalized world we live in today. It gives them the appropriate developmental tools, generates creative solutions to problems, gives them a channel for communication and relationship development, and teaches them accountability. It also helps them develop their communication and cooperation abilities with others.

Prof. Ashutosh Sharma,



President, Indian National Science Academy focused on the relation between industry and education and how education is largely determined by industrial needs. The model of education should align with what society needs for the requirement of growth. We should work on building an inclusive, qualitative and collaborative education ecosystem, he added.

Aspiring India’s G20 education aspirations, talking about the student’s future Kunwar

Shekhar Vijendra, Chairman, ASSOCHAM National Council on Education & Co-Founder & Chancellor, Shobhit University said as technology is changing it is essential that education and skill development aligns with future requirement of jobs. Ethics are values that play an important role for life skills for a country like India. Reskilling, Upskilling and multi skilling are important factors to change the education system.

Dr. Madhu Chitkara, Co-Chair, ASSOCHAM National Council on Education & Pro-Chancellor, Chitkara University NEP implementation is a welcoming step to embed life skills in students’ lives. Sahil Chalana, Founder & CEO, CollegeDunia said universities play a major role in building a professional career and thus increasing the capacity of skill-

ing and advance technology upgradation is required to meet market standards.

Ravin Nair, COO, QS I-Gauge talked about tech enabled learning that has the potential to revolutionize the education landscape by making it more accessible. It is time to evolve to development of critical thinking, creativity and innovation, he said.

Young people drive sustainable growth and are predisposed to play a major role in defining the future of the country, according to Dr. Mahendra Sharma, Co-Chair of the ASSOCHAM National Council on Education and Pro-Chancellor and Director General of Ganpat University. This emphasizes the importance of making an investment in developing the requisite 21st-century skills and competences.

# Delhi: Four arrested for extorting money from men trapped through dating app

**NEW DELHI:** Four men were arrested for allegedly trapping people by approaching them on a dating app meant for the LGBTQ community and later extorting money from them by threatening to share their private videos with their families, police said on Friday.

The accused were identified as Arun Kumar (22), Vishal Kohli (24), Rajesh Kumar (42) and Anuj (21), they said. Deputy Commissioner



of Police (Southeast) Rajesh Deo said the accused persons used to make fake profiles on Grindr app, chat with the targets to get friendly with them and lure them into taking part in sexual activities.



## 'Mission successful': Kejriwal gets NCP's full backing for Delhi fight in Parliament

**MUMBAI:** Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal and his Punjab counterpart Bhagwant Mann on Thursday met Nationalist Congress Party President Sharad Pawar who offered his "full support" to the Aam Aadmi Party in its fight to safeguard its powers against the Bharatiya Janata Party-led Central government. "Democracy is under attack from the BJP. We must all unitedly safeguard it. Efforts are being made to deprive the rights of governments elected by the people and create hurdles for them. We shall fully support the AAP's fight in parliament," declared Pawar after his half-hour meeting with Kejriwal-Mann and other leaders.

Pawar said that this is no longer restricted to Delhi or any individual party, but a national problem concerning every state, especially the non-BJP states and he would speak with all non-BJP parties to join and unitedly fight this movement to protect democracy with the AAP.



Kejriwal said that great injustice was being done by the BJP to the people of Delhi even after the 8-year long legal battle in the Supreme Court and now the Centre has brought the Ordinance to usurp the state's rights on appointments of officials. "This struggle has gone beyond Delhi. It's a fight to safeguard the federal structure of the country which the BJP is trying to undermine," he said.

Referring to the BJP's machinations in non-BJP states, Kejriwal said that if the people vote against it, then the BJP buys out its MLAs to topple the government, or put Central investigating agencies to hound their leaders or harass them through the Governors who do not allow the elected governments to function. "This is the message that if the people don't vote for the BJP,

then they will either bring it down or not allow it to function. This must stop and we have to unitedly save democracy and the federal structure," urged Kejriwal.

"We are said to be the world's biggest democracy, but the reality is that attempts are being made to kill it through various means. The state Raj Bhavans have become like BJP headquarters and the Governors interfere in every routine work of the state government and don't allow them to work," added Mann. On Wednesday, Kejriwal and Mann met former Maharashtra CM Uddhav Thackeray and secured the Shiv Sena-UBT's support in his campaign for Delhi's rights, and has earlier met other CM's and political leaders around the country.

Armed with two consecutive successes in Maharashtra, a beaming Kejriwal said he will take an appointment to meet Congress President Mallikarjun Kharge and Rahul Gandhi for their support in his crusade.

## Kejriwal, Bhagwant Mann meet Uddhav Thackeray; seeks Sena support in tussle against Centre

**The ordinance, which comes a week after the Supreme Court handed over the control of services in Delhi excluding police**

**MUMBAI:** Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal met Shiv Sena (UBT) head Uddhav Thackeray at the latter's residence in Mumbai on Wednesday to seek support for the AAP's fight against the Centre's ordinance on control of services in Delhi. He was accompanied by Punjab Chief Minister Bhagwant Mann, Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) Rajya Sabha members Sanjay Singh and Raghav Chadha, as well as Delhi minister Atishi. Kejriwal, the AAP's national convener, will also meet Nationalist Congress Party president Sharad Pawar to seek his support against the Centre's ordinance. On Tuesday, Kejriwal and



Punjab Chief Minister Bhagwant Mann met West Bengal CM Mamata Banerjee in Kolkata as part of their nationwide tour to garner support for the AAP's fight against the Centre's ordinance. The Centre on Friday promulgated an ordinance to create an authority for transfer and posting of Group-A officers in Delhi, with the AAP government calling the move a deception with the Supreme Court verdict on control of services. The ordinance, which comes

a week after the Supreme Court handed over the control of services in Delhi excluding police, public order and land to the elected government, seeks to set up a National Capital Civil Service Authority for transfer of and disciplinary proceedings against Group-A officers from the DANICS cadre. Transfer and postings of all officers of the Delhi government were under the executive control of the lieutenant governor before the May 11 verdict of the apex court.

## PM Modi to be in Ajmer on May 31



Prime Minister Narendra Modi will be visiting Ajmer in Rajasthan on May 31, said party leaders on Tuesday. He will address a public meeting on the occasion of completion of nine years of his government. BJP has started preparations to accord a grand welcome to the PM, said party workers. Party leaders furnished this information saying that earlier it was BJP national president J.P. Nadda who was scheduled to visit. However, now, preparations are being made for PM Modi's scheduled visit. BJP workers said that a place has been proposed for the programme where he will address the public meeting. A decision in this regard will be taken in the BJP meeting to be held on Tuesday. Modi can also announce 'gifts' on completion of nine years of the government. There is a possibility of scheduling a few inaugurations and foundation laying programmes on this occasion. Earlier, it was expected that Modi will be visiting Sikar, however now party leaders said that he will be coming to Ajmer on May 31.

## Sitharaman appeals to Oppn parties to rethink on boycott

**NEW DELHI:** Asserting that power transfers never happen merely at the shake of hands, Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman appealed to opposition parties to reconsider their decision to boycott the dedication of the new Parliament building scheduled on May 28, saying it is a "temple of democracy." Addressing reporters here, she said 20 "adeemans" (pontiffs) from Tamil Nadu have been invited for the inauguration, where the 'Sengol' will be installed, as did in 1947 to symbolise the power transformation from the British. Prime Minister Narendra Modi is scheduled to inaugurate the new Parliament building on Sunday. Sitharaman said in a veiled attack on the Congress that its former chief Sonia Gandhi had laid the foundation stone for the Chhattisgarh assembly building instead of the Governor of that state earlier.



## Vice President Dhankhar decorates 35 BSF personnel for bravery, meritorious service



**NEW DELHI:** Vice President Jagdeep Dhankhar on Wednesday decorated 35 Border Security Force (BSF) personnel, including two for displaying bravery in thwarting a cattle smuggling bid along the India-Bangladesh border in West Bengal, for rendering commendable service. The personnel of the border force were felicitated during an investiture ceremony and the annual 'Rustamji memorial lecture' that was delivered by Dhankhar at the Vigyan Bhawan here. The lecture is organised in the memory of the BSF's first chief and founding father K F Rustamji, who was the director general of the force during 1965-74. He died in 2003.

## BSF shot down Pak drone carrying 3.3 kilogram heroin at Indo-Pak border village in Amritsar



**JAGMOHAN SINGH Amritsar**

Border Security Force have shot down a Pakistan drone in the Indo-Pak border village of Amritsar sector.

In a statement issued here today stated that on 20th, at about 2048 hours, BSF troops deployed in depth area, heard buzzing sound of a suspected Pak drone, in the area near Village - Dhanoe Kalan - Amritsar sector.

As per the laid down drill, BSF troops immediately reacted to intercept the drone and successfully downed the Pak drone with Contraband.

During initial search of the area, BSF troops recovered a Drone (Quadcopter, DJI Matrice, 300 RTK) alongwith a consignment containing three packets of Narcotics, attached with the Drone by the means of iron ring, from the farming fields of Indo-Pak Village - Dhanoe Kalan in Amritsar.

Luminous strips were also found attached with the consignment for easy detection of Smugglers. The gross Weight of the recovered consignment of heroin was - 3.3 Kgs.

## Uttarakhand's first Vande Bharat Express train flags off

**FW CORRESPONDENT New Delhi**

In a major boost to rail connectivity and passenger comfort, the Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Thursday virtually flagged the first Vande Bharat train reaching Uttarakhand which will run between Delhi and Dehradun.

The Delhi-Dehradun Vande Bharat will be the 17th running train service in the Vande Bharat network, marking a significant progress towards the improvement of the country's railway network and the enhancement of passenger experiences.

Equipped with state-of-the-art amenities for passengers, the first such train will start its regular runs from May 29 and reduces the journey time between Dehradun and the national capital to four-and-45 minutes from the six hours and 10 minutes it takes on the Shatabdi Express. "The New train, covering 302 kilometers and will run all days of the week except Wednesday," the official said. "Tickets from Delhi to Dehradun in the AC chair car will cost Rs 1,065 and Rs 1,890 in the executive chair car," he added.

"This train, which was designed and manufactured entirely in India, boasts several notable features that set it



apart from traditional trains. Equipped with modern amenities and advanced technologies, the Dehradun Vande Bharat Train ensures a comfortable journey for its passengers. The train's aerodynamically-designed exterior not only enhances its aesthetic appeal but also contributes to its speed and efficiency," official said.

The 22457 Delhi (Anand Vihar) to Dehradun will depart from Anand Vihar railway station at 17:50 and reach Dehradun at 22:35. It will make halts at Meerut City, Muzaffarnagar, Saharanpur, Roorkee, Haridwar.

"The Dehradun Vande Bharat Train offers high-speed connectivity, allowing passengers to reach their destinations in reduced travel times. With

security features. CCTV cameras are installed both inside and outside the train, enhancing surveillance and ensuring a secure environment for all travelers. Additionally, emergency communication systems and fire detection systems have been incorporated, guaranteeing prompt assistance in case of any unforeseen circumstances," he added. "Global tourists want to visit India to see the country and understand it. This is a great opportunity for Uttarakhand," the prime minister said at the launch. Addressing the flag-off ceremony, Modi said he just returned from a tri-nation tour and can say that the whole world looks towards India with great hope.

"The world appreciates the way India has strengthened its economy over the past few years despite various challenges," he added. The prime minister also mentioned various road and rail projects undertaken in Uttarakhand by the BJP's «double-engine government» to boost connectivity. During the virtually inauguration of the Vande Bharat route, the Prime Minister also unveiled newly electrified sections of rail lines in the state. With the new sections included, Uttarakhand's entire rail route is now 100% electrified, the release said.

"The train also prioritizes passenger safety with its advanced

## NIA conducts searches at 15 locations in Jammu and Kashmir

**FW DESK**

The National Investigation Agency (NIA) conducted searches at 15 locations in seven districts of Jammu and Kashmir in connection with two terror-related cases.

The districts where searches are underway include Srinagar, Pulwama,



Avantipora, Anantnag, Shopian, Poonchh, and Kupwara.

The NIA is carrying out the searches in coordination with the Central Reserve Police Force and Jammu and Kashmir Police.

One case was registered by NIA's Delhi branch in 2021, while the other was lodged

by the agency's Jammu branch in 2022.

This follows previous raids conducted by the NIA on May 15 in Budgam, Shopian, Pulwama, Srinagar, and Anantnag districts, as well as searches conducted on December 23, 2022, in Kulgam, Pulwama, Anantnag, Sopore, and Jammu districts.

## Open tenders to be called soon for broadcasting Gurbani from Sachkhand Sri Harmandar Sahib: SGPC President

**SAYS DUE TO LACK OF KNOWLEDGE ABOUT SIKH PRINCIPLE OF MIRI PIRI, CM BHAGWANT SINGH MANN MAKING ABSURD STATEMENTS**

**JAGMOHAN SINGH Amritsar**

Shiromani Gurdwara Parbandhak Committee (SGPC) President Harjinder Singh Dhama said that open tenders will soon be called for Gurbani broadcast from Sachkhand Sri Harmandar Sahib. He said that a five-member committee has been formed for this task, which will decide the terms and conditions. The SGPC President that unnecessary controversy is being deliberately created by some people regarding the Gurbani broadcast and it is said that the Chief Minister (CM) of Punjab Bhagwant Singh Mann is also a participant in it.

Dhama in a statement said that as per the rules, since 1998, the SGPC had given the rights to broadcast Gurbani from Sri Harmandar Sahib to various channels, under which the current agreement with G-Next Media Private Limited (PTC Channel) is



up to July 2023. This last agreement was signed on July 24, 2012, for 11 years and now, after its expiration, a fresh process will be carried forward. He also said that under the ongoing agreement, G-Next Media had decided to give Rs 1 crore annually (with a 10% annual increase) to the education fund of SGPC, according to which all the due amount has been deposited so far.

He said that a Maryada (conduct) is mandatory for the broadcasting of Gur-

bani, due to which everyone cannot be given the freedom to broadcast it. "Whoever gets the right to broadcast Gurbani will have to respect the religious sentiments of the Sangat (community + pilgrims) besides following the norms and rules laid by the SGPC. Worldwide broadcasting of Gurbani should also be ensured. On the other hand, if open broadcast of Gurbani is allowed, many cases will arise against the Maryada, especially the controversy regarding advertising," said

Harjinder Singh Dhama. He said that the SGPC is very serious about Gurbani broadcasting, while Punjab CM Bhagwant Singh Mann is doing politics on this subject. "Bhagwant Singh Mann sometimes asks the Sangat to stop putting money in Golaks (offering boxes at Gurdwaras) and sometimes tries to create confusion regarding the issue of Gurbani broadcast. It does not suit the person holding the responsible position of the Chief Minister," said

Dhama. In response to Bhagwant Singh Mann's comments about him, the SGPC president said that if the Chief Minister can tell that he is not a parrot of Delhi?

"Bhagwant Singh Mann does not know the history of Shiromani Akali Dal (SAD) and the SGPC," he said.

Reminding Mann about the history, SGPC President said that Master Tara Singh remained President of SAD as well as the SGPC. Moreover, Mohan Singh Nagoke and Mohan Singh Tur simultaneously remained Presidents of SAD as well as Jatbedars of Sri Akal Takht Sahib.

The Chief Minister is making absurd statements because he lacks knowledge about the Sikh principles of Miri Piri (Sikh doctrine of a close relationship between devotion and power)," said Dhama. The SGPC President advised Punjab CM to pay attention to the governments work and speak within his limitations.





## India-Australia bilateral relations back in spotlight

Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi's three-day Australian visit highlighted the increasing bipartisan support, notably since Labour Party's Anthony Albanese took office a year ago. Initially scheduled for a Quad meeting, the visit became primarily bilateral following the U.S. President's withdrawal and Japan's preference for a shorter Quad Summit in Hiroshima. Modi's address to the Indian diaspora and business groups in Sydney received considerable attention, with Albanese in attendance. Their sixth meeting within a year saw significant announcements, including new Australian and Indian consulates in Bengaluru and Brisbane respectively. They agreed on Migration and Mobility and finalized a Green Hydrogen Task Force. Defence and security ties, renewable energy, critical minerals, and a commitment to a Comprehensive Economic Cooperation Agreement by year's end dominated their talks. Despite differing views on Russia's Ukraine invasion and Western sanctions, they concurred on the need for a free and open Indo-Pacific and managing China's assertiveness. Modi's interaction with the Indian diaspora was a key feature of the visit. The leaders acknowledged the large turnout at Sydney's SuperDome, with Modi attributing the strength of bilateral relations to the Indian diaspora in Australia. However, he also addressed issues related to conflicts among Indian-origin groups and reiterated concerns about anti-India, anti-Modi vandalism raised during Albanese's India visit. While attacks on Indian consulates warrant bilateral concern, New Delhi must determine the attention it gives to Australian citizens' attacks on their counterparts and property. The growing incidents are alarming, but their high-profile during state visits may not necessarily fortify mutual understanding or promote the three D's - Democracy, Diaspora, and Dosti (Friendship) - that Modi highlights as binding the nations. How these development turn out in the future in terms of strengthening the bilateral relations is yet to be seen but the recent event can be a step forward.

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## THE FINANCIAL WORLD

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SIMMI SIKKA & DAVID DURANI ON WHY LIBRARIES NEED DESIGNATED CORNERS OFFERING PRE-READING RESOURCES AND ENGAGING ACTIVITIES

## Libraries: Empowering Knowledge Hubs

"Libraries are more than just a storage place for books, they are treasure troves filled with creativity and knowledge. And that knowledge can be empowering."  
- R.L. Hemlock, an author



Aman (name changed), an early-grade child from a rural area of Chhattisgarh, lit up when he saw the Room to Read library for the first time. He looked around the lively and colourful room filled with attractive storybooks, wide-eyed! The librarian understood his excitement as well as his reluctance to approach the bookshelves. Aman was quickly reassured that he could take and read any book he wanted, as many times as he wanted! He flipped through the books, moving from one bookshelf to the next. Aman began spending more time with books during his school's library period after that, exploring the vibrant world of stories. His eagerness to learn about these stories compelled him to concentrate on reading the illustrations and text. Thus began his positive relationship with the library and his love of reading. He later described his book-reading journey as one filled with challenges, surprises, and, finally, fun. Seema (name changed) from Madhya Pradesh was a shy ten-year-old who kept to herself. Reading was difficult for her as a first-generation learner. Her first encounter with a library occurred in 2019, when Room to Read India and UNICEF collaborated to establish a library in her school. Her interest in the stories and story characters grew after she began attending library sessions and listening to her teacher narrate stories. Seema's teacher, a trained librarian, encouraged her to bring the books home with her. What began as casual story listening evolved into an engrossing and ultimately engaging reading acquisition process. Seema had read over forty books in a matter of months. Her

love of reading also allowed her to freely interact and express herself. According to neuroscience research, we are not naturally wired to read, unlike oral language, which is hard-wired into our brain. Children begin to recognise speech sounds as early as infancy, but reading as a skill must be learned. Each one of us, who has to learn to read, has to create new circuit in the brain! Reading literally changes the brain and allows us to make new connections between visual region, language region, regions for thought and emotion, in order for us to read and make meaning. Reading science demonstrates that learning to read is a complex process. In order to become a skilled reader, many strands such as phonological awareness, decoding, language structure, vocabulary, and comprehension must be interwoven. Children acquiring the skill to decode, simultaneous need to understand and comprehend what is being read - for which vocabulary and background knowledge is essential. A child ought to be reading at her decoding level and parallelly exposed to text beyond her decoding level. We all love a story. We are all natural storytellers and children are no exception. A library rich with diverse books that capture

children's imagination helps them associate reading with pleasure. Accumulated research with children emphasizes the importance of reading for pleasure, especially the positive links with children's literacy development such as breadth of vocabulary, positive reading attitudes and reading attainment. (Clark & Rumbold, 2006). Additionally, children's literature and enhanced orality around it, strengthens comprehension and fluency, specifically in Akshara languages. Interaction with books also builds vocabulary and acquire complex language. A library, thus serves a great purpose of creating a larger emotional and cognitive landscape for literacy, by establishing meaning as the main propeller - a critical outcome for effective reading. A comprehensive approach for children learning to read should be immersed in teaching the reading skills as well as creating an enabling reading environment, with lots of opportunities to interact with variety of text for them to become independent and fluent readers. However, in the Indian context, especially in rural areas, children aren't exposed to books. Engaging quality reading material sometimes remains out of reach even after getting enrolled in a school. The anecdotes shared above outlines the importance of having libraries in school. For children like Seema, a disengaged student, all that was needed was an inviting space (sometimes even a corner) called library. The print rich environment was a first step that encouraged her to take a deeper interest in the process of reading. The librarian had an equally important role in bringing these storybooks to life. While Seema and Aman are on the way to acquiring the essential skill of reading, which serves as a basic building block for academic achievements, there still are so many who are not. Imagine if this approach is followed across, how it could help a whole generation of children, especially in underserved communities, who face many challenges in receiving a

good education, and a lack of access to books limits their personal development and future educational attainment. Providing access to books and a positive reading experience during library period can transform children's reading habits. The first few years of a child - the foundational years, as defined in the National Education Policy 2020, are the most crucial years because that's where majority of the learning takes place. It is important to engage our early learners in discussions through an age-appropriate books. In fact, learning to read should start long before a child enters school. Children with fundamental pre-reading skills participate actively and are also found to be better at acquiring early literacy skills, once they enter school. However, pre-schoolers don't get exposed to books, particularly in disadvantaged families, due to accessibility and affordability of good books. The public and community libraries are in a strong position to drive these initiatives and can be an important entity, in these communities. Unfortunately, most public libraries in India do not have a separate and engaging area for children. There is a need to create a reading corner in our public libraries that includes not only access to reading resources that will imbue pre-reading skills, but also engaging activities such as storytelling that are specifically designed to promote the enjoyment of reading among children aged 0-5 years. Children's attitudes toward reading begin to form long before they become literate, and their early reading successes may have a significant impact on their later attitudes toward reading. (Suggate et al., 2013; Tompkins, 2011).

*Simmi Sikka is Associate Director, Quality Reading Material at Room to Read India, while David Durani is Manager, Communications with Room to Read India*



TULIKA AVNI SINHA EXPLAINS WHY INDIA MUST AIM TO CREATE INCLUSIVE, DIVERSE INTELLIGENT MACHINES

## A word of caution about India and the AI wagon

There has been a rise in warnings against Artificial Intelligence (AI) by technology leaders, researchers and experts, including Geoffrey Hinton (artificial intelligence pioneer), Elon Musk (co-founder and CEO of Tesla), Emad Mostaque (British AI expert), Cathy O'Neil (American mathematician, data scientist, and author), Stuart J. Russell (British computer scientist), and many others. Recently, the World Health Organization called for caution in using AI for public health care. But there have been fewer voices in India to echo NITI Aayog's initiative for Responsible AI; some journal papers and articles warn of impending dangers. Instead of waiting for more industry leaders in India to add their names to this list, we need to realise that the time to pay attention and prepare is now. The possibility of a dystopian world where machines surpass humans is a more remote potential threat, the likelihood of which needs more discourse and deliberation. The more immediate threat that algorithms and artificial intelligence pose is that of reinforcing biases, de-emphasising representation and trivialising diversity. With the background of the Indian States, their many languages, colours, cultures, and traditions, this threat can propagate more inequity and further exclusion for marginalised groups and minorities, which can translate into high costs in terms of livelihoods, opportunities, well-being, and life. A recent report by the United Nations Development Programme and Aapti Institute highlighted that 'algorithmic bias has [the] greatest impact on financial services, healthcare, retail, and gig worker industries'. This report has also flagged that AI-generated credit scoring exhibited a tendency to assign lower scores



to females compared to males, even when their financial backgrounds were similar. Research on application in health-care diagnosis has identified significant biases against people of colour since most of the data used to train the model was from the United States and China, lacking representation of all communities even from within these countries. With this background, it is imminent that we pause and think before jumping onto the AI roller coaster. Both commercial and government players in India are already evolving from Big Data towards AI for better targeting, efficiency, profits, as well as 'perceived and (mostly) intended' social welfare. The sensational popularity of ChatGPT is on the rise as social impact organisations and government agencies use it to customise their own public information systems and communication mechanisms. The Government of India continues to increase its budget allocation to emerging technologies each year, including AI, and has set up teams and an agenda for AI deployment and use. However, as the most populous country with the second largest

Internet user base is inclined towards this innovation and modernisation, there needs to be more discussion around the data being used to train and build these algorithms. It is essential to redirect our focus towards the underlying foundations, governance, and ethical considerations of these systems and their operations before their adoption affects our daily lives. **The world of machine learning** AI depends on Big Data or programmatic rules to learn about and simulate human intelligence, communication, and (potentially) actions. Machines learn from massive volumes of data created and provided by humans and are programmed to identify patterns and learn to replicate to make decisions. This translates into a replication of human languages, communication styles, competencies, capabilities and logic alongside stereotypes, biases, belief systems and preferences. While these algorithms are designed to improve through feedback loops and programmatic corrections, they lack a moral compass; and unlike humans, they do not question stereotypes, norms, culture or traditions. Machines do not have a sense of fairness or empathy that a society, especially with minorities and disempowered communities, leans on. Furthermore, machines generalise learnt patterns to the population without knowing if the data used to train them are diverse and complete, with adequate representation from all communities and groups affected by their application. For example, algorithms can potentially sift through volumes of resumes, career trajectories, and the performance of previous employees in an organisation and learn that men are more productive than women

in general, take long leave much less, and are more suited for leadership roles. Why? Because, historically, organisations have had a disproportionately high number of men in their leadership, do not offer paternity leave leading women to take a break from their careers to raise children, and are often ranked high on performance in comparison to their women colleagues by their male supervisors. This problem can have deeper layers of race, caste, geography, educational background, and so on. Every bias that we have had in the past can be learnt as a rule and insight, and applied as a generalisation. Other examples of this can include assigning potential drug abuse to a specific geography, potential criminal activity to a specific community, a (misleading) intellectual supremacy to a fraternity, or a stereotypical gender attribution to a profession based upon past data, patterns and historical records. In a way, algorithms learn from and project the past into the future. **Requirements** What compounds this problem is the poor state of administrative data in India across States. There is no good quality data available at present to train algorithms with an Indian context and background. Representation of marginalised groups and communities in privately collected and held data is even worse. *Tulika Avni Sinha is a public policy professional who works with state governments and multilateral institutions in India on the design, adoption, and implementation of data policies and systems. She is a former Mason Fellow at the Harvard Kennedy School. Views are personal.*

### BOOKS: REVIEW

## GauZ's debut novel unmask the invisible heroes of society

"Standing Heavy" is a debut novel by GauZ, an Ivorian writer and journalist, that illuminates the shrouded realities of colonial policies and the extremities of capitalism. Written while GauZ himself was working as a security guard in Paris, the book is a satirical yet touching exploration of societal obscurity, as seen through the eyes of the often overlooked. Originally released in 2014, "Standing Heavy" has been applauded and awarded for its unique perspective and raw portrayal of a marginalized existence. Now translated into English by Frank Wynne, the book has made it onto the International Booker Prize shortlist, creating an exciting buzz within the literary community. GauZ draws heavily from his personal experiences as an immigrant in France. As an undocumented

student, he had to navigate the complexities of an unfamiliar society, working as a security guard. This job offered him a vantage point to view society with an unmatched clarity which later fuelled his writing. His experience, both as an immigrant and a security guard, led GauZ to shed light on the irony of invisibility that African security personnel experience. His narrative, presented with a distinct African touch, speaks for the unseen who "pedal down in the hold so that the upper decks may peacefully enjoy their champagne and their caviar." "Standing Heavy" unveils the deeply entrenched racial stereotypes that shape societal structures in France, where security guards are mostly of African origin because "Black men are scary". GauZ recounts this with an ironic tone, illustrating the dehumanizing treatment Africans face in a consumerist soci-

ety while also humorously critiquing everyday absurdities. The narrative is peppered with poignant reflections on historical and contemporary issues such as African history, colonialism, 9/11, and consumerism. It also highlights the dichotomy of human nature, as seen in the security guard's interactions with store visitors, revealing a range of human behaviors from the compassionate to the ludicrous. GauZ's style of narrative brings a unique kind of humor that doesn't shy away from the severity of the issues he tackles. The hilarity intertwined with the dark undertones of the narrative allows readers to approach serious themes without being overwhelmed. A unique feature of this novel is the satirical take on African history and its colonial overhang. Translator Frank Wynne recognized resonances with the works of Ivorian novelist Ahmadou Kourouma in GauZ's narrative, creating a layered and rich reading experience. Wynne has translated Kourouma's novels, such as "Waiting for the Wild Beasts to Vote" and "Allah is not Obligated,"



Standing Heavy By GauZ MacLehose Press; 176 pages; Rs 499

the story of a child soldier. Overall, "Standing Heavy" is a powerful debut novel that presents an insightful and humorous perspective on society, race, and capitalism, unmasking the absurdities of life as an African security guard in Paris. It's an important addition to contemporary literature, inviting readers to acknowledge the oft-ignored experiences of the marginalized. An essential read for those seeking an authentic exploration of societal complexities and human resilience, "Standing Heavy" is sure to leave an indelible mark. "Standing Heavy" is more than a commentary on colonial policies and capitalism. It is also a reflection on the human condition, as viewed through the lens of those often marginalized. The security guard, the protagonist of the narrative, presents a study in contrasts - a figure of authority yet seen as invisible, a symbol of fear yet personally engaging in the innocence of babies, appreciating their lack of shoplifting tendencies. This fascinating dichotomy presents a wider perspective of society, human behavior, and the skewed lens through which we view the world.



# TEDxGateway returns to Mumbai with a lineup featuring iconic speakers & remarkable ideas to inspire the future

The upcoming edition in association with the Aditya Birla Group will spotlight 24 speakers and will be hosted at the National Centre for the Performing Arts (NCPA) on 4th June 2023

**MUMBAI:** TEDxGateway, India's largest platform for breakthrough ideas, and conversations presented in a radical format, is scheduled to take place in Mumbai on Sunday, 4th June at the National Centre for the Performing Arts (NCPA JBT).

Known to bring together an exceptional list of creators, thinkers and catalysts from across the world, this edition too will play host to individuals - on stage and in the audience, who through their work, have reimagined and revitalised the will to challenge the world we live in. Attendees who have previously been witness to this exchange have described their time at the events as one that offers a glimpse into the



future, in the company of those creating it. Accepted globally as a platform for the exchange of ideas, TEDxGateway 2023 will continue to give firsthand access to ideas and conversations that have potential to propel us into a better future. For the first time, this year, the platform will present the Big Idea Scholarship Pass by the Aditya Birla Group. If you are a young innovator with on your way to build the next big thing or a truth teller in the early stages of your career or know of

someone who is, the Big Idea Scholarship & Pass gives you the opportunity to be present at TEDxGateway 2023 in the same venue as some of the world's most enterprising and creative minds. TED has always been the cornerstone of innovation, insight, and storytelling. It has built a worldwide community committed to lifelong learning and to sparking positive change. As an extension of this thought in India, TEDxGateway addresses the curiosity, creativity, and enterprise

of our audience. We have always passionately believed in the power of ideas that will change attitudes, lives and, ultimately, the world. The upcoming edition this June in Mumbai, will be bold and brilliant — without apology. At TEDxGateway 2023, we're shining a spotlight on 24 dazzling ideas from some of the world's most extraordinary risk-takers and innovators. Attendees can expect a fast paced and curated daylong conference that will explore the most pressing questions of our

time. The mainstage sessions will celebrate pioneers making power moves, and those who tirelessly show up as allies and advocates, setting in motion a community that is driven by curiosity, connecting both the speaker and listener." said Yashraj Akashi, Curator of TEDxGateway and Senior Ambassador for the TEDx Program.

Speaking about the association, Percy Chowdhry, Director, Rustomjee Group, said: "Rustomjee is excited to partner with the upcoming edition of TEDxGateway and welcome the platform back in its physical form to Mumbai. Our philosophy at Rustomjee is to bring people together and form happy & healthy communities. And it is truly the power of ideas that have formed our blueprint for impactful change. Similarly, TED and TEDxGateway have been at the forefront of nurturing a global community - spanning domains, cultures, walks of life; and driven by curiosity. With this association, we look forward to an exchange of game-changing ideas that promises to set the foundation for our future."

# Panipat handloom industry facing nearly 72 per cent drop in exports

SATISH HANDA  
Panipat

The Chairman of Haryana Chamber of commerce & Industry Vinod Dhamija also an exporter told The Financial World that since past three years world famous Panipat textile and handloom industry is facing severe crisis for one reason or the other adversely affected exports to nearly 23 countries across the world due to spread of epidemic outbreak Covid in the country as well as across the world followed by prologndn Ukraine- Russia war and presently due to fast rising prices of cotton thread increased from Rs 160 to Rs 330 per kg and yarn the price increased from Rs 120 to Rs 190 per kg as well as heavy increase in freights as a result the production cost of products have drastically increased, by 15-18% besides hike in shipment expenses during export.

Dhamija told that there are over 450 manufacturing units at Panipat producing handloom products, carpets, blankets, bed sheets and curtain cloth having annual turnover more than Rs 45000 crore which included over Rs 20000 crore exports to large number of countries across the world including USA, Russia, Italy, Germany and almost every European as well as Asian country. He said that the exports have been



reduced to only 27-28% at present due to heavy slump in past couple of years and the manufacturers at Panipat are now dependent only on domestic sale as such several manufacturing units as well as small scale units working for big manufacturers have either become sick or closed down. Dhamija said, in case the situation does not improve further for another 4-5 years the textile industry in the town will further collapse. He said, Panipat textile and handloom industry needs immediate subsidies as well as incentives provided by the government to remain alive.

In a recent meeting with Deputy Chief Minister Dushyant Chautala, the entrepreneurs of textile & handloom industry Panipat had submitted a memorandum demanding 11 points in support of industry which included two prominent projects - installation

of a common boiler and a zero liquid discharge (ZLD) plant to make available treated water to the industry. Bhim Rana, President of Panipat Dyers Association told that Panipat industry have requirement of nearly 25 crore liter water every day and there is an immediate need for ZLD plant which costs nearly Rs 1800 crore. He said that Haryana state government had approved installation of this plant in 2017 on the terms that Union government will bear 50% cost on this project and the remaining 50% amount towards the cost will be shared between the Haryana state government and the industry entrepreneurs in the town but in-spite of approval of this project the same is hanging in files without any action since past over five years. Bhim Rana said that we are prepared to bear the cost of water as discussed.

# ASSOCHAM and ICAI Collaborate to Combat Money Laundering and Enhance Stakeholder Capacity

**NEW DELHI:** The Associated Chambers of Commerce & Industry of India (ASSOCHAM) and the Institute of Cost Accountants of India (ICAI) have joined hands through the signing of a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU). This strategic collaboration aims to drive professional and organisational development in the realm of money laundering prevention and related transnational financial crimes. By jointly identifying and implementing capacity-building initiatives, promoting awareness, and offering diploma and certificate programs, the



partnership seeks to foster good governance and ensure greater transparency in the economy. The alliance leverages the expertise of both ASSOCHAM and ICAI to collaborate on a range of endeavours, including

education, research, training, and other activities that facilitate the fair and transparent implementation of the Prevention of Money Laundering Act, 2002, and associated laws and regulations.

# Metalpha's Next Generation Fund I Secures a Strategic Investment from Crypto Leader

**HONG KONG:** Metalpha Technology Holding Ltd, a global crypto-based wealth management company, today announced its Next Generation Fund I ("The Fund"), formed in partnership with NextGen Digital Venture Limited, has secured a \$5 million anchor investment from the world's leading crypto company ("The Investor").

This strategic investment comes at a time of high growth for Metalpha's licensed fund products, serving broad market demand among institutional investors, family offices and high-net-worth individuals for exposure to crypto. The Next Generation Fund I provides a regulated and compliant channel to invest in Grayscale Investments LLC's products through structured derivatives. The Fund is raising \$100 million in capital from global investors and has secured \$20 million as of March, 2023. "We are excited about the future of our licensed funds products. We aim to capitalize on the fast growing digital assets industry here in Hong Kong and provide our clients with competitive, complaint products worldwide," said Adrian Wang, President of Metalpha Technology Holding Ltd.

"We extend our gratitude to Metalpha for their unwavering support and appreciate the recognition from the Investor. As a company that has weathered multiple Bitcoin cycles, their expertise is invaluable to our mission and increased our confidence in the GBTC investment. At NextGen Digital Venture, our aim is to offer legitimate and secure exposure to the rapidly evolving crypto landscape, pro-



viding a trusted bridge between traditional and digital assets for investors." Jason Huang, Founding Partner of NextGen Digital Venture Limited.

**About Metalpha Technology Holding Limited**

Founded in 2015, Metalpha Technology Holding Limited (NASDAQ: MATH) went public on October 20, 2017. The listed Company, through its subsidiaries, is dedicated to providing investment and wealth management services with a full-service, institutional-grade platform. With dedicated blockchain expertise, the Company aims to become a leader in the field of crypto wealth management services, bringing robust innovation and transparency to the customers and businesses it serves.

**About NextGen Digital Venture**

Founded in 2023, NextGen Digital Venture aims to be the premier platform in Asia for providing traditional finance with exposure to cryptocurrencies. NDV's goal is to connect traditional capital with emerging technologies that are on the verge of widespread adoption. NDV team comprises experienced professionals from leading investment firms, top-tier family offices, and successful tech startups, reflecting our unwavering commitment to delivering reliable and trustworthy financial solutions to clients.

# Lenovo India logs \$1.9 bn in FY23, over 5 mn products being made locally



**NEW DELHI:** Consumer technology major Lenovo on Wednesday said that it registered a total of \$1.9 billion revenue in India in FY22-23. After a year of industry and global uncertainties, Lenovo said it is witnessing positive signs of the market stabilising and expects the entire PC and smart devices market to resume year-to-year growth in the second half of 2023.

"While we are experiencing a cyclical slowdown in the PC segment, our growth engines of Solutions and Services Group (SSG), Motorola, and Infrastructure Solutions Group (ISG), have played a pivotal role in mitigating the downturn," Shailendra Katyal, Managing Director, Lenovo India, said in a statement. "We have supported this growth by investing in nurturing local talent and capabilities in India and continue to expand our local manufacturing

presence, with over 5 million products being made in India," he added.

While Group revenue was impacted due to the softness in the device market, revenue from non-PC businesses reached a fiscal year high of nearly 40 per cent, fuelled by Solutions and Services Group (SSG) and Infrastructure Solutions Group (ISG). "Our clear strategy is working, even in the face of global uncertainties. Going forward, we will continue to invest in R&D to capture the next wave of growth opportunities, so we are well prepared for the future," said Yuanning Yang, Chairman and CEO.

In the India traditional PC market, Lenovo was second with a 15.7 per cent share in Q1 2023 despite witnessing a decline of 37.5 per cent YoY, according to the latest IDC report.

# ONGC asked to pay damages for crude oil leak in Bharuch district



**Bharuch (Gujarat)** The Gujarat Pollution Control Board (GPCB) has ordered the Oil and Natural Gas Corporation (ONGC) to pay Rs 50 lakh in damages for the spillage of crude oil from its pipeline in Bharuch district, an official said on Friday. It has been alleged that 25 camels died after drinking water contaminated with the spillage on Sunday, though the central government-controlled oil major has denied it. An agricultural field near Kachhipura village was found covered in crude oil leaked from a pipeline belonging to ONGC on Sunday, said Bharuch-based GPCB regional officer Margi Patel.

# OpenAI offers 10 grants worth \$100K each to democratise AI



Microsoft-backed ChatGPT developer OpenAI has introduced 10 grants worth \$100,000 each for building prototypes of "a democratic process for steering" artificial general intelligence (AGI). The company said that its goal is to fund experimentation with methods for gathering nuanced feedback from everyone on how AI should behave. "While these initial experiments are not (at least for now) intended to be binding for decisions, we hope that they explore decision relevant questions and build novel democratic tools that can more directly inform decisions in the future," the company said in a statement late on Thursday. The last date to apply for an OpenAI grant is June 24. Grant recipients are expected to implement a prototype, engaging at least 500 participants and will be required to publish a public report on their findings by October 20. "The primary objective of this grant is to foster innovation in processes -- we need improved democratic methods to govern AI behaviour," OpenAI wrote. "We believe that decisions about how AI behaves should be shaped by diverse perspectives reflecting the public interest." AGI should benefit all of humanity and be shaped to be as inclusive as possible, according to OpenAI. According to recent reports, Sam Altman-run OpenAI has closed a \$175 million investment fund focused on empowering other AI startups, with backing from Microsoft and other investors.

# Indian-origin billionaire Mukesh Jagtiani passes away in UAE

**DUBAI:** Indian-origin billionaire Mukesh Wadhmal Jagtiani, who founded the Landmark business group and expanded it across the Gulf region, died here on Friday at the age of 70, according to media reports. Jagtiani, who was also known as "Micky Jagtiani" ranked 511 on the Forbes' 37th annual world's billionaires list earlier this year, died of age-related problems, the Khaleej Times reported. "Micky Jagtiani has passed away. The chairman and owner of Landmark Group was 70 and passed away peacefully, surrounded by his loving family," the report said, citing a statement issued by the company.

# Disney begins 3rd job cut round, 2,500 employees to be affected

**Disney+** Entertainment giant Disney has started its third round of layoffs that will affect over 2,500 employees across the board, the media reported. Although Parks and Resorts remain largely untouched, no particular division is being targeted by pink slips this week, according to Deadline, citing sources. As part of a cost-cutting measure, the company began removing dozens of titles from its streaming platforms this week. According to the report, the television division, which was hit hard in the second round of job cuts, is largely spared this time with a small number of layoffs. Moreover, the report mentioned that the new round of job cuts comes as media companies struggle to deal with the effects of the ongoing writers' strike,



which has stopped the development and production of films and television shows. The first round of layoffs began in March when Disney CEO Bob Iger announced three rounds of layoffs as the company aims to reduce its workforce by around 7,000 workers. In April, Disney kicked off its second round of layoffs, affecting 4,000 employees. The entertainment giant revealed in February that it expects to save \$5.5 billion as a result of layoffs and other cost-cutting measures.

# Efforts to create an environment of decent job

**DR. SRIDHAR KUNDU**

In my previous column "Towards providing decent employment", I argued that economic growth at lower level of equilibrium in the previous decade has not helped to generate adequate employment opportunities in the country. It would be difficult to meet the target set by the SDG (8) by 2030 without adequate measures taken to kickstart the economy for a double-digit growth figure. I too highlighted that rising Labour Force Participation Rate (LFPR) helps add diversity in the labour supply portfolio and contributes to equity in economic growth. Rising LFPR cannot be a reason behind the rising unemployment as indicated by a few mainstream economists. In this column, I emphasise on the varying standard of living of the households whose members are working in different categories of employment. The Periodic Labour Force Survey (PLFS) by NSSO broadly defines the households under four categories in terms of their

primary source of income in both rural and urban areas. These are self-employment, regular wage or salary earning, casual labour and others. In the absence of a credible source of information regarding household income, the average household monthly consumption expenditure (MCE) is used as an indicator to explain the standard of living.

## A. Self-Employed

According to PLFS Annual Report 2021-22, about 54 per cent of households in rural areas and 33 per cent of households in urban areas fall under the category of self-employed. In these households, the major source of income does not come from any job or employment outside of the family occupation or enterprise.

Self-employment can be both from agriculture and non-agriculture sector. In rural areas, a major share of self-employment comes from agriculture sector which is about 65 per cent. In urban areas, self-employment is mainly focused on the non-agriculture sector.

The average MCE of the rural households whose primary source of income comes

from self-employment in the agriculture sector is Rs. 9699 whereas households with primary source of income as self-employed in non-agriculture sector stands at Rs.10076 in 2021-22. The difference in MCE between the two groups is about Rs. 400 which is not significant looking at the large base of dependency of households on agriculture as primary occupation.

In the urban areas, the households with primary source of income from self-employed in the non-agriculture sector have a better standard of living than their rural counterparts. Their average MCE is Rs. 14286 in 2021-22. The urban households do not fall under the category of self-employment in agriculture as this is not a primary source of their total income.

## B. Regular Wage/Salaried

About 14 per cent of the rural households depend on regular or salaried jobs as their primary source of income whereas in urban areas, this ratio is about 43 per cent. The average MCE of the households in the rural areas who depend on regular jobs as their primary source of income is



Rs. 11240. However, the urban households that come under this employment category have a better standard of living with an average MCE of Rs.14886. One important point to be noticed here is that in the urban areas, the gap between the MCE of households under the category of self-employed in non-agriculture and the household under the regular job is about Rs. 600.

## C. Casual Labour

In rural areas, the households with major source of income from the activity of casual labour is Rs. 7096 which is relatively less than the activities such as self-employment in agriculture, non-agriculture, and regular jobs. These households are impacted by the seasonal nature of agriculture.

There is a shift of this labour force from this section to the non-agriculture sector by various government employment programs like MGNREGA. Another section of the rural labour force is casual but non-agriculture. Households that fall under this section have an average MCE of Rs. 7948 which is relatively better than the same under casual agriculture section. But, in the urban areas, the households under the section of casual non-agriculture occupation have a little higher MPCE of Rs. 8999.

## D. Others

Households whose primary source of income do not fall under any activities as discussed above are categorized as others. In rural areas, these households constitute about

7.1 per cent and in urban areas, this share is 12.6 per cent. Members of these households do not have a common source of income and frequently move from one occupation to the other. In the absence of a constant source of income, some of them resort to begging and other non-labour activities. These households have a sub-standard of living with an average MCE of Rs. 5570 in rural and Rs. 9439 in urban. However, it should not be misconstrued that the urban households with begging activities have a better standard of living than the households under the category of casual non-labour activities.

The above analysis used household MCE as an indicator of standard of living. It is true that information about household consumption expenditure from the PLFS is not a proper representation of the standard of living but, it helps provide an approximate estimation about the differences in standard of living along the line of employment across sectors.

It is evident from the analysis that the regular or salaried job provides a relatively better standard of living than the

self-employment in both agriculture and non-agriculture sector in rural areas though the difference in average MCE is not significantly large. In urban areas, this difference is just Rs. 600. If decency of job can be defined as a job which provides a better standard of living, salaried jobs are not the only options. Self-employment in agriculture and non-agriculture sectors which include value and dignity along with the standard of living are no less than the salaried jobs.

Therefore, the public policy must focus on two necessary elements to meet the target of SDG-8 by 2030. First, adequate efforts need to be made to recognize the casual labour force and bring them to the mainstream job market through training and skilling. Second, it is necessary to create an environment to acknowledge the importance of the self-employed labour force and provide necessary encouragement and support for their growth.

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



# Bernstein pegs RIL's stake in retail arm at \$111 billion

**MUMBAI:** Global investment management firm Bernstein has pegged the enterprise valuation of Reliance Industries (RIL)'s 85 per cent stake in Reliance Retail at \$111 billion, while valuing the Mukesh Ambani-led company's 66.5 per cent stake in telecom and digital platform arm Reliance Jio at \$88 billion.

Reliance Industries had earlier planned to list both its subsidiaries to unlock value for its shareholders but hadn't fixed any timeline. The report said that Reliance Retail had raised \$6 billion by diluting a 10.1 per cent stake, while Jio Platforms raised \$20 billion from investors by selling 33 per cent in 2020. Most of the investors in Reliance Retail, except Singapore-based sovereign wealth fund GIC, had also invested in Jio Platforms. Expecting a sharp rise in India's economic growth sto-



ry, the report said that since 2015, RIL had built a sprawling retail business with Reliance Retail setting up 18,000 store nationwide, with a gross merchandise value (GMV) of \$30 billion; a dominant 4G network in the form of Reliance Jio, which has 430 million subscribers; and a strong

digital media platform that now offers OTT, IPL, music streaming, and news through strategic acquisitions.

"This makes RIL the only Indian player to have an integrated (offline/online) offering, and the ability to compete with global tech giants (Amazon, Walmart).

"All the global giants are present in the Indian market, either through organic set-ups (Amazon, Google, Facebook, Netflix and Apple) or investments/acquisitions (Walmart). They have been successful in digital advertising (Google and Facebook)," it said.

However, the report said that the largest opportunity lied in e-commerce and entertainment where winners would be determined by the most compelling integrated-value proposition. Currently, only Reliance (Jio/Reliance Retail) and Amazon have such a platform and stand to benefit, the report said.

On the rise of e-commerce, the report said India was one of the few large and underpenetrated e-commerce markets expected to reach \$150 billion in GMV by 2025, with online penetration doubling in the next 5 years.

Flipkart (\$23 billion GMV) and Amazon (\$18-20 billion GMV) lead with over 60 per cent market share.

Reliance is number three (\$5.7 billion e-com sales), driven by "attractive" categories of fashion (Ajio) and JioMart (e-grocery).

E-tailer Meesho's GMV has been estimated at \$5 billion.

All three players, the report said, are focused on scale, customer loyalty, and profitability. "We believe Reliance Retail/Jio is the best positioned player in the largest and fastest growing e-commerce market.

"The advantages of its retail network, mobile network, digital ecosystem, and 'home-field advantage' in a famously complex regulatory and operating environment mean [that] in the long term, it will likely claim the lion's share of the \$150-billion e-commerce marketplace," the report said.

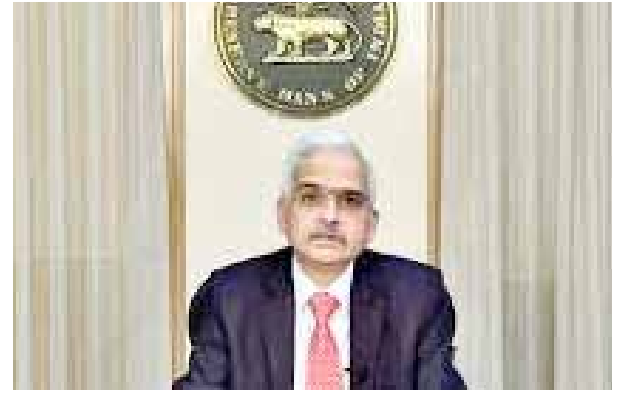
# India may grow beyond 7% GDP mark in FY23: RBI Governor

**NEW DELHI:** Reserve Bank of India's (RBI) Governor Shaktikanta Das said on Wednesday that India's gross domestic product (GDP) growth could be above 7 per cent for 2022-23.

Speaking at a CII event on Wednesday, he said there is also a possibility that GDP growth for the last financial year could be higher.

He noted that almost all high-frequency indicators monitored by the central bank showed that momentum was sustained in the final quarter of the last financial year and it would not be a surprise if India's economy grows at a rate higher than 7 per cent.

"The agricultural sector has done well and so has the services sector. Capex & infra spending by the government has picked up," Das said.



He noted that there is evidence of a revival of private investment as well, with signs visible in the steel & cement sectors. "Capacity utilisation in the manufacturing sector as per the RBI's latest survey, is around 75 per cent. But a CII survey shows it to be even higher," he added.

In the current fiscal year, India should log growth close to 6.5 per cent, however, there are downside risks, he said.

The RBI expects the next print of retail inflation to be lower than 4.7 per cent.

"The war on inflation is not over; we have to remain alert," Das said.

## Withdrawal of Rs 2,000 notes a blessing in disguise for banks

**NEW DELHI:** The Reserve Bank of India's (RBI) decision to gradually withdraw the Rs 2,000 denomination banknotes will not pose a problem as regards the ATMs, as they are not spewing out those notes for a long time, said a senior official of Financial Software and Systems (FSS).

However, the RBI's decision is a blessing in disguise for the banks and ATM players as the number of transactions will go up which in turn is good for them.

The city based FSS manages about 30,000 ATMs of different banks.

"The ATMs were not giving out Rs 2,000 denomination notes for the past one year. The machines have been configured accordingly. The RBI's decision will not pose any problem for players like us," V. Balasubramanian, CEO, CashTech, FSS, told to media. The RBI has asked the banks and others to reconfigure the ATMs/Cash Recyclers. Balasubramanian said there are about 2.5 lakh ATMs in India, adding that the need for high value Rs 2,000 notes is not there now as the lower denomination notes are available in adequate numbers.

The one impact of the RBI decision is that the number of transactions may go up in the ATMs as the high value currency will go out of circulation and when it exceeds the number of free transactions, the banks charge a fee for additional withdrawals, he said. Indians have a penchant for cash transactions.

## RITES signs pact with Power Finance Corporation



**NEW DELHI:** State-owned RITES Ltd on Friday signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with Power Finance Corporation (PFC) to explore avenues of mutual collaboration for consultancy works in various sectors. The two entities have signed the pact to explore avenues in areas, including transport and logistics, energy, water and sanitation, communication, social and commercial infrastructure. Transport infrastructure consultancy and engineering firm RITES will provide expertise for pre-feasibility reports, detailed project reports, transaction advisory, project management services, audits, and inspection, according to a statement.

## Rs 2,000 note withdrawal may not impact gold demand, rupee value



**NEW DELHI:** The decision of the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) to withdraw Rs 2,000 denomination banknotes from circulation will not have any major impact on gold demand and also on the rupee value, an expert said on Saturday.

According to the expert, the number of Rs 2,000 denomination notes in circulation (or stocked in lockers) is not huge. "The number of Rs 2,000 currency notes in circulation is not large. This is not like demonetisation of Rs 500 and Rs 1,000 currency notes that happened in 2016," Hareesh V., Head of Commodities Research, Geojit Financial Services told to media.

According to Hareesh, there are other investment avenues and further, there is a limit for using hard cash to purchase

gold.

"The RBI decision will also not have any bearing on the gold/silver futures," he said. The RBI on Friday said Rs 2,000 denomination notes to the value of Rs 3.62 lakh crore were in circulation on March 31, 2023. Hareesh said even if people decide to convert their Rs 2,000 into US dollars, there will not be any major impact on the value of the Indian rupee. "As witnessed during demonetisation, we expect the deposit accretion of banks could improve marginally in the near term. This will ease the pressure on deposit rate hikes and could also result in moderation in short-term interest rates," Karthik Srinivasan, Senior Vice President Financial Sector Ratings, ICRA said.

# Centre aims to cut logistics cost to 9% of GDP in 3 years says Nitin Gadkari

**NEW DELHI:** Union Minister of Road Transport and Highways, Nitin Gadkari said on Wednesday that the government is working to reduce the logistics cost to 9 per cent of GDP in the next 3 years.

Currently the logistics costs is in double digit at 14-16 % Speaking at an event organised by industry chamber CII, he stated India's exports will increase when its logistics cost will come down to single digit.

The government is going by certain estimates which suggest that logistics cost in India is in double digits. "The government



has rolled out a national logistics policy and PM Gati Shakti

initiative to boost competitiveness of industry and cut logistics

costs," he added. The Minister further said his ministry has proposals for 260 ropeways and funicular railway projects worth Rs 1.3 lakh crore. He also said the road ministry has identified land for 500 bus depots and sought investments from top industrialists for developing those bus depots. The Union Minister said that India needs 2 lakh electric buses and added that by leveraging economic viability, futuristic technology and public-private partnerships in infrastructure development, India will soon become a super economic power.

## Rs 2000 note exchange: some bank branches run out of cash for swap



**NEW DELHI:** Some bank branches ran out of cash and temporarily halted the exchange of withdrawn Rs 2000 currency notes as they awaited replenishment of supply from the currency chest on the second day of note swap on Wednesday. More than anticipated demand during the first half in some of the branches led to the shortage of Rs 500 and below denomination currency temporarily at some places, sources said. Customers had to wait for some time till replenishment came from the currency chest, sources added.

## Sensex surges 629 points; RIL jumps 2.79%

**MUMBAI:** Equity benchmark indices extended their previous day's rally on Friday, with the Sensex climbing 1 % amid buying in index major Reliance Industries, fresh foreign fund inflows and a largely positive trend in global markets.

The 30-share BSE Sensex jumped 629.07 points or 1.02 per cent to settle at 62,501.69. During the day, it rallied 657.21 points or 1.06 per cent to 62,529.83. The NSE Nifty climbed



178.20 points or 0.97 per cent to end at 18,499.35.

From the Sensex pack, Reliance Industries jumped 2.79 per cent.

Sun Pharma, Hindustan Unilever, HCL Technologies, Wipro, Tech Mahindra, Ultra-Tech Cement, Tata Steel and Titan were among the other major gainers.

Bharti Airtel, Power Grid and NTPC were the laggards. In Asian markets, Seoul, Tokyo and Shanghai ended in the green.

Equity markets in Europe were trading lower. The US market ended mostly with gains on Thursday.

The Sensex climbed 98.84 points or 0.16 per cent to settle at 61,872.62 on Thursday.

The Nifty gained 35.75 points or 0.20 per cent to end at 18,321.15.

Foreign Institutional Investors (FIIs) were net buyers on Thursday as they bought equities worth Rs 589.10 crore, according to exchange data.

Meanwhile, global oil benchmark Brent crude climbed 0.24 per cent to \$76.44 a barrel.

## China to help Pakistan meet debt repayments worth \$2.3 billion

**ISLAMABAD:** As Pakistan struggles to secure the critical pending loan from the International Monetary Fund (IMF), the cash-strapped nation looks towards China to rollover more than \$2 billion in debt due next month, media reports said on Thursday. Islamabad is still contemplating ways to meet other repayment deadlines as the country has about \$3.7 billion in overseas debt due this month and in June against its current foreign exchange reserves of just \$4.3 billion, The News reported. Beijing had committed to help the country meet two crucial debt repayments in June worth \$2.3 billion by providing fresh funds immediately after Pakistan makes the payments, Financial Times reported. "The refinancing of the commercial loans worth \$1.3 billion and a Chinese government loan of \$1 billion would help Pakistan avert immediate default," the officials said.

## Germany falls into recession

**BERLIN:** Germany has fallen into recession after high prices took a bigger toll on the country's economy than originally anticipated, official data revealed on Thursday. The data by Germany's federal statistical office showed gross domestic product (GDP) fell by 0.3 per cent in the first quarter compared with the previous three months, which also recorded a contraction, reports the Guardian. The revised numbers confirm that the German economy shrank for two straight quarters -- the technical definition of a recession -- following a 0.5 per cent drop in the three months to December 2022. Initial estimates released in April had suggested that Germany had narrowly avoided a recession, merely stagnating with 0 per cent growth. "It took a couple of statistical revisions, but at the end of the day, the German economy actually did this winter what we had feared already or investment and construction grew at the start of the year, this was offset in part by a drop-off in consumer spending as higher prices forced households to pinch their pennies, the Guardian reported.

# SEBI's Latest Initiatives Foster Competition & Growth in the Mutual Fund Industry : Ananta Barua

**FW DESK New Delhi**

"To accommodate passive investments, such as index funds and ETFs, SEBI is introducing Mutual Fund Light regulations," said Ananta Barua, Whole Time Member, Securities & Exchange Board of India (SEBI), who was the chief guest at the inaugural session of the 15th Mutual Fund Summit 2023 today.

Barua further explained that the Mutual Fund Light regulations seek to reduce compliance requirements for passive funds, which are tied to changes in the underlying index and operate on

a non-discretionary basis. He said, "These regulations will provide greater flexibility for index funds and ETFs, enabling them to offer transparency, diversification, and lower costs to investors. By easing the compliance burden, SEBI aims to foster the growth of passive investments in the Indian mutual fund industry", said at the event organised by the Associated Chamber of Commerce and Industry (AS-SOCHAM), an apex industry body, the theme of the summit was "Investment Opportunities for New India". Ananta Barua also highlighted other recent changes in the mutual fund industry

initiated by SEBI. He informed, "One significant change is the establishment of an exhibition only platform for direct plans, allowing fintech companies to offer access to a larger pool of investors. This move promotes competition and encourages the establishment of more mutual funds. Furthermore, SEBI has revised the requirements for sponsoring a mutual fund, enabling entities with sound financial conditions, including private equity funds, to become sponsors without a mandatory profit track record."

The Whole Time Member stated that transparency has



always been a cornerstone of the mutual fund industry. He stated, "Investors can easily access comprehensive information about the portfolio of a scheme, including its performance and holdings, on the fund's website. Additionally, SEBI

mandates regular disclosures of portfolio details for debt funds every 15 days. This transparency empowers investors to make informed decisions and helps ensure fair treatment."

Barua also stated that to further enhance liquidity in the debt market and address concentration risks, SEBI has implemented prudential regulations for open-ended mutual funds, especially debt funds. "These regulations include requirements for minimum liquidity buffers, restrictions on investments in a single company or sector, and self-testing to assess the impact of market movements on the Net Asset

Value (NAV) of the fund," he added.

Ananta Barua said, "SEBI is committed to promoting good governance practices in the mutual fund industry. Trustee supervision of Asset Management Companies (AMCs) has been strengthened, and they now have additional responsibilities for overseeing fairness of fees and expenses, AMC performance, prevention of market abuse, and avoidance of conflicts of interest. Moreover, mutual funds are encouraged to exercise their stewardship role by actively participating in voting and corporate governance matters of the companies they invest in."



This year again, the majority of the Indians are thinking of visiting Srinagar and Leh to enjoy the summer vacations. However, keeping the affordable packages in mind, foreign destinations like Bali, Thailand, and Singapore are also in demand.

Summer vacations of schools are about to begin from the first week of June. The parents of the children are busy planning to go out on vacations. This year again, most Indian families are thinking of visiting Srinagar and Leh to enjoy the summer vacations. However, keeping the affordable packages in mind, people are also opting to head for neighbouring foreign destinations like Bali, Thailand, Singapore, Cambodia, and South Asian countries. Dubai is an evergreen

destination, although it is no more the top priority for spending summer holidays. People now prefer to fly to Dubai on weekends.

If you consider a 3-day and 4-night vacation in Kashmir the cost is around Rs 30,000 per person, but for the same vacation in Thailand, it comes out to Rs 40,000 only per person. In the case of Bali, the package cost is something around Rs 60,000 per person. In such a case, people prefer to visit the foreign lands. Then air travel has also impacted

# Tourism industry braces for summer rush

the travel budget, as packages are costing 10 to 15 percent more than usual.

The air travel industry in India is in trouble again after the financial condition of Go-First deteriorated further. On the one hand, air passengers are increasing but the carriers are decreasing. Practically, only two companies are effectively handling 80% of the travel market. They are Indigo and the Tata Group. Vistara is about to merge with Air India and the condition of SpiceJet is not as good as earlier. This situation is making the prices of airlines to higher wildly. Although, DGCA, the aviation watchdog, has warned airlines to keep the prices under control.

Meanwhile, the tourism ministry participated in the Arabian Travel Market (ATM), where it showcased 'Incredible India' and also launched the 'Visit India Year 2023' campaign. The Arabian



Travel Market was held from 1 to 4 May in Dubai, UAE. ATM is one of the leading global events for the travel and tourism industry, attracting visitors and exhibitors from around the world. India's participation in the Arabian Travel Market 2023 was a significant step towards promoting India as a preferred travel destination among the Middle East and North Af-

rica (MENA) markets. With its diverse culture, heritage, cuisine, natural beauty, adventure, luxury, wildlife, and wellness, our country is a popular destination for travellers seeking unique and authentic experiences.

The 'Visit India Year 2023' campaign focused on India's diverse tourism offerings and the country's commitment to sustainable tourism practices.

India showcased India's rich cultural and natural heritage, including its UNESCO World Heritage Sites, wildlife sanctuaries, and spiritual destinations.

Safety and Security of the tourists being one of the prime concerns, the Ministry of Tourism has a 24x7 Toll-Free Multi-Lingual Tourist Helpline in a total of 12 languages in Hindi and English, 10 international languages namely, Arabic, French, German, Italian, Japanese, Korean, Chinese, Portuguese, Russian and Spanish. This helpline is available on the existing Toll-Free Number 1800111363 or on a short code 1363 for dialing in India and offers assistance to callers during times of distress while travelling in India and if need be alert the concerned authorities, the statement added.

The author is a senior journalist and columnist, views are personal. Twitter @narvijayyadav



# INTERNATIONAL

## India, Australia will keep working towards vibrant bilateral friendship: PM Modi

**SYDNEY:** Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Wednesday said the bilateral talks with "dear friend" Australian counterpart Anthony Albanese, along with various engagements such as a historic community program, meetings with business leaders held in Sydney on Wednesday have been crucial in strengthening the friendship between India and Australia.



In a tweet, PM Modi said, "From productive talks with Australian counterpart Anthony Albanese to a historic community programme, from meeting business leaders to eminent Australians from different walks of life, it's been an important visit which will boost the friendship between India and Australia," PM Modi said in a tweet.

their hospitality. We will keep working towards a vibrant India-Australia friendship, which is also in the interest of global good."

Prime Minister Modi extended his gratitude to the people and the Australian Government for the hospitality and said, "I thank the people of Australia, the Australian Government and my dear friend @AlboMP for

In his media statement, PM Modi highlighted the foundation of the bilateral relations, emphasising "mutual trust and respect" and describing the Indian community in Australia as a "living bridge" between the two nations.

During the meeting, PM Modi raised concerns regarding attacks on temples and the

activities of pro-Khalistani elements in Australia. "We will not accept any elements that harm the friendly and warm ties between India and Australia by their actions or thoughts. I thank the prime minister for the actions that have already been taken. Prime Minister Albanese has once again assured me today that he will take strict actions against such elements in the future also," Modi said.

Employing a cricket analogy, PM Modi depicted the rapidly expanding India-Australia ties as having entered the "T-20 mode." "In the language of cricket, our ties have reached the T20 mode," Modi said. "The India-Australia friendship is a special one." He extended an invitation to Prime Minister Albanese and Australian cricket fans to visit India for the upcoming Cricket World Cup tournament.

Describing the meeting as "constructive," PM Modi expressed the intention to elevate the Australia-India comprehensive strategic partnership

to greater heights in the coming decade. "Last year, the India-Australia economic cooperation and trade agreement came into effect. Today, we have decided to focus on a comprehensive economic cooperation agreement (CECA). This will further strengthen our economic partnership and open up new avenues for cooperation," he said.

Meanwhile, PM Albanese said the government aims to conclude the CECA by the end of the year.

Both leaders reaffirmed their commitment to an open, prosperous, and secure Indo-Pacific region. Discussions also encompassed strategic cooperation in mining, critical minerals, renewable energy, and other sectors.

PM Modi stressed on the potential for India-Australia cooperation to benefit the growth of the Global South and the central theme of India's G20 presidency, which embodies the idea of "Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam" (the world is one family).

## Quad in search of a peaceful & prosperous Indo-Pacific: Hiroshima Vision

**NEW DELHI:** The relevance of Quad could not be appreciated better than now when propelled by their overly selfish and disproportionate ambitions, some countries are fomenting mistrust and doubts weighing on regional cooperation for peace and prosperity and mutual coexistence.



It is not only apparent from their unscrupulous and irrational decision of not attending the G20 meeting focused on tourism in Jammu and Kashmir under India's presidency, but also their ever readiness to peddle untruth and use military power to impose and assert their perceptions and strategic interests with scant consideration of its implications on regional stability and sovereignty of other countries. They jeopardize the global efforts for peace and prosperity to appease their domestic constituencies who are disenchanted with their own governments due to corruption and throttling of democracy and human rights. It is nothing but shortsightedness and mischief.

While speaking in the Quad summit on the sidelines of the G7 in Hiroshima, Modi articulated very well what Quad stands for — "We are moving forward with a constructive agenda based on shared democratic values. Through our shared efforts, we are giving a practical dimension to our vision."

The Quad summit at Hiroshima issued a joint statement in which all the four member countries India, Japan, Australia and US expressed "deep concern over the war raging in Ukraine and mourn its terrible and tragic humanitarian consequences". The joint statement also underscored the "serious impacts of the war on the global economic system including on food, fuel and energy security and critical supply chains".

The Quad leaders reiterated the importance of upholding the principles of sovereignty, territorial integrity and peaceful resolution of disputes. The Australian Prime Minister emphatically highlighted the need for an open, stable, secure and prosperous Indo-Pacific following Modi's designation of the Indo-Pacific region as the engine for global trade, innovation and development. Despite avoiding direct naming, the Quad leaders' underlying reference in most of their utterances was China's over-activism in the Indo-Pacific region to assert its strategic dominance as a threat to peace and prosperity of the region.

The Quadrilateral dialogue (Quad) was created as a forum for strategic security dialogue between Australia, India, Japan and US in 2007 to contain such destabilising forces in the Indo-Pacific region. It offers a constructive alternative against military expansionism and bullying of developing countries of the region by emerging powers. On May 20, Quad member countries leaders including Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi and his Australian and Japanese counterparts Anthony Albanese and Fumio Kishida and US President Joe Biden met on the margins of the G7 in Hiroshima.

The mantra of Quad is cooperation rather than conflict, shared peace and prosperity rather than hegemony and ensuring mutual benefits not only among the Quad members, but also all the willing countries that come along to

achieve Quad's visions. While speaking in the Quad summit on the sidelines of the G7 in Hiroshima, Modi articulated very well what Quad stands for — "We are moving forward with a constructive agenda based on shared democratic values. Through our shared efforts, we are giving a practical dimension to our vision."

The Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) of China has evoked suspicion due to undertaking over-sized and economically unfeasible projects in Afro-Asian countries which finally land up these countries into Chinese debt trap and lead to financial instability. The recent examples of this are Sri Lanka and Pakistan. The Quad is trying to offer an alternative to BRI to the developing countries. The Quad has initiated Quad Infrastructure Fellowship Programme to support policy-makers and practitioners to design, build and manage sustainable and viable infrastructure in their countries.

The Quad members are also committed to protecting submarine cables from any possible Chinese aggression in view of China's growing assertiveness across the Indo-Pacific. To avert such a possibility, the Quad partnership for cable connectivity and Resilience aims at leveraging their collective expertise in design, manufacturing, laying and maintenance of undersea cables to secure and diversify these critical networks.

## California Governor names India-born attorney as superior court judge

An Indian-American attorney is among 27 new superior court judge appointees announced by California Governor Gavin Newsom.



Sweena Pannu, a Democrat, who will serve as a Judge in the Stanislaus County Superior Court, fills the vacancy created by the retirement of Judge Thomas D. Zeff. The compensation for each of these 27 positions is \$231,174, according to a press release from the Governor's office. Pannu has served as a Deputy County Counsel in the Stanislaus County Counsel's Office since 2020. From 2006-2020, she served as a Deputy Public Defender at the Stanislaus County Public Defender's Office.

## Modi, Albanese hold bilateral talks, discuss cooperation in various fields

Prime Minister Narendra Modi and his Australian counterpart Anthony Albanese on Wednesday held bilateral talks and discussed cooperation in the fields of defence and security; trade and investment; new and renewable energy, green hydrogen; critical minerals; education; migration and mobility; and people to people ties.



In a statement, the Prime Minister's Office (PMO) said that the bilateral meeting took place at the Admiralty House in Sydney and Modi was accorded a ceremonial welcome and Guard of Honour upon his arrival. The PMO said that both leaders recalled their productive first Annual Leaders' Summit held in March 2023 in New Delhi and reaffirmed their com-

mitment to further broadening and deepening of the multifaceted India-Australia Comprehensive Strategic Partnership. "The discussions focused on cooperation in defense and security, trade and investment, new and renewable energy, green

hydrogen, critical minerals, education, migration and mobility and people to people ties," the statement said. Modi and Albanese also welcomed the signing of the India-Australia Migration and Mobility Partnership Arrangement

(MMPA), which will facilitate mobility of students, professionals, researchers, academics and others, including through a new skilled pathway named MATES (Mobility Arrangement for Talented Early Professionals Scheme) specifically created for India. "They also welcomed the finalisation of Terms of Reference of the India-Australia Hydrogen Task Force, which will advise on opportunities to accelerate manufacture and deployment of clean hydrogen, focusing on hydrogen electrolyzers, fuel cells as well as supporting infrastructure and standards and regulations," it said. Prime Minister Modi also thanked Australia for its support in establishing a Consulate General of India in Brisbane.

## Matthews Asia Announces Beonca Yip as Head of Asia Pacific

**HONG KONG:** Matthews announces that Beonca Yip has joined the firm as Head of Asia Pacific. Beonca will be responsible for overseeing the firm's business in the Asia Pacific region as well as leading its distribution activities, with a particular focus on the firm's growing institutional business. In her role, Beonca will continue to expand the firm's growing client base in Asia Pacific and tailor investment solutions that meet the needs of investors in the region. Matthews provides investors with a broad range of investment solutions across Emerging Markets, Asia and China. These include global, regional, country and thematic strategies available in SMAs, Active ETFs, mutual funds and closed end Funds. The firm also provides more customized solutions to clients such as strategies that drive a sustainability focus as well as solutions for investors wanting to have more control over their China allocation in their portfolios.



## UK's Coventry gets its 1st Indian-origin turban-wearing Lord Mayor



An Indian-origin Sikh councillor has made history after being appointed as the new Lord Mayor of Coventry, a city in the West Midlands, England.

As a Lord Mayor, Punjab-born Jaswant Singh Birdi will be the Chairman of the City Council, and as Coventry's first citizen, he will be the non-political, ceremonial head of the city. "I am so proud to become Lord Mayor of my adopted home city. It has given so much to myself and my family over the years and I will be honoured to show why I love it so much and to promote the city and the wonderful people who live here," Birdi said in a statement. Birdi was presented with the Chains of Office, worn as an official regalia by the Mayor, at an annual general meeting of Coventry Cathedral last week.

"As a Sikh, it also means so much that I will be wearing the

Chains of Office and the turban. It will help show what a happy multi-cultural city we have and maybe inspire others as well," he said. Born in Punjab, Birdi moved to Coventry 60 years ago and has spent 17 years as a councillor in the city, representing Bablake Ward for the past nine years, following two terms of office in the 1990s in the Hillfields Ward. After having served as Deputy Lord Mayor for the past 12 months, he succeeds Councillor Kevin Maton in the role. He grew up in a village in the Indian part of Punjab and also spent time as a child in Lahore and West Bengal, as his family travelled for employment.

In the mid-1950s Birdi emigrated with his parents to Kenya in East Africa, where he had his primary and secondary education, and emigrated to the UK in the 60s to carry on with his further education.

## US lawmakers want Modi to address joint session of Congress

**NEW DELHI:** The bipartisan leadership of an India-focused group of US lawmakers of the House of Representatives have called for extending an invitation to Prime Minister Narendra Modi to address a joint session of Congress during his upcoming state visit in June at the invitation of President Joe Biden.

world's largest democracy and perhaps the most critical partner to countering China in the 21st century," Representatives Ro Khanna, a Democrat, and James Waltz, a Republican, wrote in a joint letter on Tuesday to House Speaker Kevin McCarthy.

"On June 22, 2023, President Biden is hosting Prime Minister Modi for an Official State Visit and a State Dinner. As State Dinners have come to signify the President's utmost respect for visiting heads of state, granting a joint address to Congress is a commensurate honour for the leader of the

"We firmly believe that inviting Prime Minister Narendra Modi to deliver a joint address to Congress would further strengthen the deep and enduring friendship between the US and India," they added in the letter. There were no indications if Speaker McCarthy, a Republican, will agree. If he does and Modi accepts the invitation, the latter will become



the first Indian Prime Minister to address a joint session of US Congress twice. The first was in June 2016, in which he sought to project a new energy for the bilateral relationship with

the two sides overcoming "the hesitations of history".

Biden has invited Modi for a state visit in June, the two sides announced earlier this month, with a state dinner at

the White House as well.

The last Indian Prime Minister who was given a state dinner was Manmohan Singh; he was hosted by President Barack Obama. Singh was also the first foreign leader given a state dinner in Obama's presidency. A state dinner is a rare gesture and signals a special relationship, which India and the US have to come to share over the last decade or so, going back several administrations and governments on both sides.

Khanna and Waltz, who are co-chairs of the India Caucus in the House of Representatives, invoke this special relationship to request the US Speaker to invite Modi.

## Taliban's persecution of women amounts to possible crime against humanity: New Report

**'Taliban's actions are international crimes and are organised, widespread, and systematic'**



**FW DESK Kabul**

The Taliban is waging a "war on women" and its actions in Afghanistan should be investigated as possible crimes against humanity of gender persecution, according to a new legal assessment by top international human rights bodies.

Prosecutors at the International Criminal Court (ICC) should include the crimes against humanity of gender persecution in the continuing investigation into the crisis in Afghanistan, the legal assessment by Amnesty International and the International Commission of Jurists (ICJ) showed.

"Let there be no doubt: this is a war against women — banned from public life; prevented from accessing education; prohibited from working; barred from moving freely; imprisoned, disappeared and tortured including for speaking against these policies and resisting the repression," said Agnès Callamard, Amnesty International's secretary general. Taliban's actions are "international crimes" and are "organised,

widespread and systematic", the official said. The 62-page report focusing on atrocities against women and girls in Afghanistan is a legal bridge to connect the Taliban's actions with international crimes and decode them as crimes carried out in gender apartheid, researchers who worked on the analysis told to media. "The Taliban has carried out a number of crimes against the female population such as the use of imprisonment, enforced disappearance, torture and other ill-treatment. All of these are crimes against humanity of gender persecution under Article 7(1)(h) of the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court (ICC)," said Dinushika Dissanayake, deputy South Asia director at Amnesty International.

time or linked to an armed conflict and can also occur in peacetime. The Taliban's actions are in direct contention with the rights granted to the girls and women in numerous international treaties to which Afghanistan is a party. These include the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, the International Convention on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, the Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination against Women, and the Convention on the Rights of the Child, the report by Amnesty International and ICJ said.

The Taliban should be tried for the crimes in international courts as they took charge as de facto authorities of the country and the atrocities against women have happened on their watch, Dissanayake said.

While the international fraternity has not recognised them as

the official federal administration after US and Nato-led forces left the country in August 2021, it does not stop Taliban from being accountable for the millions of girls and women barred from going to school and work, Dissanayake explained.

Afghan women and girls have been arbitrarily arrested by the Taliban for so-called "moral crimes" as a result of infringing the discriminatory mahram restrictions by the de facto authorities, and for their participation in peaceful demonstrations, said the report. Under the mahram restrictions, women in Afghanistan are not allowed to travel more than 75km without a male companion such as a husband or a father. If not accompanied, they are required to stay home, leaving several such women without any male "guardian" in a lurch.

Since its takeover, the Taliban has turned women into "second-class citizens", the legal assessment said. Women have been excluded from political positions and most public sector jobs.

The Taliban have also prevented women and girls from continuing their studies, pursuing education beyond primary school, and restricting their professional opportunities through a series of measures and announcements, rendering them as "second-class citizens".

## Twitter bug restoring deleted tweets for hundreds of clueless users



A bug in Twitter is apparently restoring deleted tweets and retweets for hundreds of users who have no clue about it and the micro-blogging platform was yet to admit the issue and issue a fix, the media reported on Monday. Users are reporting that tweets they mass-deleted are reappearing on their profiles, reports The Verge. James Vincent, a senior Verge reporter, wrote that earlier this month, he deleted all his tweets, just under 5,000 of them, but can now see Twitter has restored a handful of old re-tweets. "On May 8th, I deleted my tweets (I know the date because I tweeted about it), but when I checked my timeline this morning, twitter had restored some old re-tweets without warning. It's yet another illustration of twitter's unpredictable infrastructure," he said in a tweet. Richard Morrell, open-source developer and former CTO/Chairman of SmoothWall, shared the same problem on Mastodon. "Last November, I deleted all my Tweets. Every single one. I then ran Redact and deleted all my likes, my media, and retweets. 38k tweets gone. Woke up today to find 34k of them restored by Twitter, who presumably brought a server farm back up," he posted.



# SUNNY LEONE

## talked about how one call from 'Bigg Boss'



In a candid interview with 'Deadline' at Cannes, Sunny Leone talked about how one call from 'Bigg Boss' enabled her to transition from an adult film star of some 12 years standing (2001-13) to a mainstream film star with 30 projects behind her, walking the red carpet of the world's most prestigious film festival.

In Cannes for the world premiere of Anurag Kashyap's cop noir movie 'Kennedy' in the Midnight Section, Leone told 'Deadline' how 'Bigg Boss' executives relentlessly pursued her. They even sent the Canadian Indian actress a powerpoint presentation to convince her to come on board. She remembered telling her then boyfriend, now husband, who urged her to commit: "You're out of your mind -- I'm not going to India, they'll hate me." I've already gone through so much hate in that community." Sitting in Cannes, the actress recalled the hurdles she had to overcome to be on the show 'Bigg Boss 5, 2011-12, with Sanjay Dutta and Salman Khan). "There were death threats and bomb threats," Leone, who was the Penthouse Pet of the Month in 2003, said. On being able to transcend her previous image, Leone told 'Deadline' that 'Big Boss' enabled her to build a humanity with viewers.

"I think people related to me -- I was human, and not jumping on tables and doing all sorts of crazy stuff," Leone said. "They related with me as a person, cooking, cleaning ... that's what they connected with. People connected with that girl on 'Big Boss' and disconnected with Sunny Leone from the adult entertainment industry." 'Kennedy', Anurag Kashyap's fifth film in Cannes, stars Rahul Bhat (previously seen in Kashyap's 'Ugly' and 'Dobaaraa') as an insomniac ex-cop, who dwells in different circumstances looking for redemption. The ex-cop, who is presumed dead for a long time, operates secretly for the corrupt system. Leone plays a laughing femme fatale in his life, notes 'Deadline'.

### 'Princess Ariel is one of my absolute favourites,' says Janhvi Kapoor



Actress Janhvi Kapoor is a fan of Disney princesses and said Ariel from the 'The Little Mermaid' is one of her absolute favourites. Janhvi was seen celebrating 'The Little Mermaid' at a special theme inspired party with little girls. With lots of cakes, hugs and love, Janhvi relived her childhood and shared a sneak peek of the magical world of princess Ariel with her fans. She said: "My Friends, Khushi and I have grown up watching and reading about Disney princesses and princess Ariel is one of my absolute favourites!"

### Actor Saqib Saleem taking MMA training for his role of a RAW agent in the series

Actor Saqib Saleem, whose 'Crackdown 2' is on the horizon, shared that he underwent intense physical training for his part in the show. He did everything "From gun firing classes to rigorous MMA training" for his role of a RAW agent in the series. The streaming show returns for its second season with its stellar star cast of Shriya Pilgaonkar, Iqbal Khan, Waluscha De Sousa and Ankur Bhatia. Sharing his journey of bringing back the iconic character of Riyaz Pathan, Saqib said: "I am extremely grateful that I got to bring Riyaz Pathan to the digital screens! The second season was gruelling both in terms of training as well as the anticipation to ensure that I did justice to Riyaz Pathan's journey on the show." He further mentioned: "From



gun firing classes to rigorous MMA training - we went through it all to ensure the most authentic portrayal of our fearless RAW agents. A show this huge, needs a platform just as grand to bring alive the larger-than-life moments. I am excited for the movie's release on India's largest entertainment platform, JioCinema, and can't wait to see the audience's reactions to Riyaz's next moves." Created by Apoorva Lakhia, the series seamlessly combines elements of espionage, crime, and high-stakes drama to deliver an engaging narrative that will leave viewers wanting more. The second season will also feature Freddy Daruwala, Hemant Kher and Sachin Parikh. Actress Shriya Pilgaonkar said: "The super success of season

### Shahid Kapoor ON ACTORS BULKING UP FOR ACTION MOVIES: WE'VE CROSSED THOSE CLICHES



MUMBAI: An actor doesn't have to become "big and brawny" to play an action hero, says Shahid Kapoor, who believes even a regular-looking man can appear tough on screen. Shahid, who features in Ali Abbas Zafar's crime thriller "Bloody Daddy", said the film is the first out-and-out action movie of his career of over two decades. "I have done action in the past like 'R... Rajkumar', 'Kabir Singh' is a love story but it had its beats of action. 'Haider' had a little bit of action and 'Uda Punjab' was a very intense character, but this is the first time I'm getting into proper action," the 42-year-old actor told PTI in an interview.

## POTPOURRI

### Manoj Bajpayee has notched up with his upcoming film 'Sirf Ek Bandaa Kaafi Hai'



Acclaimed actor Manoj Bajpayee has notched up another triumph with his upcoming film 'Sirf Ek Bandaa Kaafi Hai', a courtroom drama based on the real-life case of a once-revered and powerful Indian religious leader who is currently serving a life sentence for the rape of an underage girl. Directed by the Apoorv Singh Karki film, Manoj plays a prosecuting lawyer who is pitted against a slew of celebrity lawyers, reports 'Variety'. "Usually what happens is that you spend some time with the real person. Somewhere, I realised it's a two-hour film, you have to have your own preparation away from the real guy, who is somebody who's not even known to the world. And he's achieved a feat in five years of continuous court hearings that is remarkable," Bajpayee told 'Variety'. "Instead of just creating or imitating a real person, let's have the essence of him - the relentlessness and the courage and somebody who is stubborn about what he's doing, completely focused, and he's a good son, good father. I wanted to take all of it and make a character of my own and take a little bit of his physicality when I got to meet him before the shoot - I think it worked." What Bajpayee found the most strenuous was understanding the legal jargon and then interpreting it in a way that a lay audience would understand. "To make the character work, he has to be consistent, it should not leave realism at all. It cannot at any cost, just because it's a two-hour drama film, it has to be real. And as a character, and even if he's arguing in the court, it should be very real and should have that kind of an edge when people are watching it," Bajpayee said. Another challenge was a seven-page monologue that the director wanted to shoot in a single take. Bajpayee says that after the 150th time he read the pages, he stopped counting and once he'd memorised it, he'd catch hold of anyone and begin practising the monologue on that person. "By God's grace, the first shot, first take, it was okay. You can achieve all of these things, if you really put your mind into it, put your focus into it." On the underlying themes of 'Bandaa', the actor said: "You can't trust your child even with your brother in a room where there is no monitoring happening, and there's no female member there." "So, we are talking about all of that, we are talking about child safety, we're talking about how a family is also responsible for all of this because in 95 per cent of cases, most of the predators were known to the family. So that means as parents we failed, we took it for granted." "It is an eye opener that way and our focus is mostly on the security and safety and protection of the child, which is an issue which is very close to my heart - always been," Bajpayee added. Bajpayee has won several acting awards, including best actor at the Asia Pacific Screen awards for 'Aligarh' and 'Bhonsle'. The latter film, for which he also won best actor at India's national film awards, is directed by Devashish Makhija, with whom he reunited on 'Joram', which bowed at Rotterdam that year and will next be at Sydney. "It's a world that people have not experienced before. It's a conflict that people don't talk about anymore, a socio-environmental conflict," Bajpayee said about 'Joram'. And he's (Makhija)weaved the story so well. Really proud of him. He's been remarkable with all the things that I have done with him." The busy actor is having a stellar year, having starred in Disney+ Hotstar film 'Gulmohar' earlier this year. He has Abhishek Chaubey's Netflix comedy-drama-thriller series 'Soup' that is due in September or October and 'Pahadon Mein', the sophomore feature from Raam Reddy, who debuted with Lucarno, Shanghai and Palm Springs winner 'Thithi'. Bajpayee is also the lead in journalism thriller "Despatch" by Kanu Behl who's previous film 'Agra' premieres at Cannes this year. 'Despatch' has been a great experience in many ways. Kanu is one of a kind - he's not for the weak-hearted. He's a taskmaster," Bajpayee said. "He doesn't get bothered by anything that is happening on the set. This is what I loved about him and the learnings that I've had from the workshops or through the shooting process. Yes, it was strenuous, excruciatingly hard. But, when I saw a few of the shots, I was completely dazed. He only warms up after 15 takes. So, you can imagine the grind that I've gone through. But in the end, when you respect and trust a director of that caliber, everything becomes easy. In the end, we managed to make a very good, fascinating, intriguing film. And this is going to be a totally different cinematic experience for the viewers."

### Chris Gayle love to dance with Deepika Padukone in a song

Former West Indies cricket captain and record-breaking batter Chris Gayle has said he would love to dance with Deepika Padukone in a song number. Releasing his music video with Arko, 'Oh Fatima', in the company of friends, notably the playback singer Shaan, the cricketer said if he ever gets a chance to dance with a Bollywood actress, it would be Deepika. "I have met her in person," Gayle said. "Deepika Padukone, a very nice lady. I would love to dance with Deepika Padukone in a song." When asked how his music career took off, Gayle answered: "It all started during the pandemic when we all



were locked in our houses. A friend of mine said let's do a song together. He turned up at my house and we did a song together. "I was so fascinated by it and the best part was people in Jamaica accepted it. Then I recorded another song and eventually set it up my own studio at my own home and started collaborating with people from the music field. At no point in

my cricket career I had imagined I would ever venture into singing." Gayle's first song was titled 'We Come Out To Party' and he later collaborated with Mumbai rapper Emiway Bantai and released a music video titled 'Jamaica to India' in April 2021, which was followed by 'Punjabi Daddy'. His latest, with music composer and singer-songwriter Arko, is titled 'Oh Fatima'. Talking about the song, Gayle said: "When I met Arko and he played the song, I said immediately that I want to be in it and here we are today at the launch of our song together. The energy and vibe of the song is very catchy. It will be stuck in your head."

### First song of Adipurush 'Jai Shri Ram' was released by duo Ajay and Atul

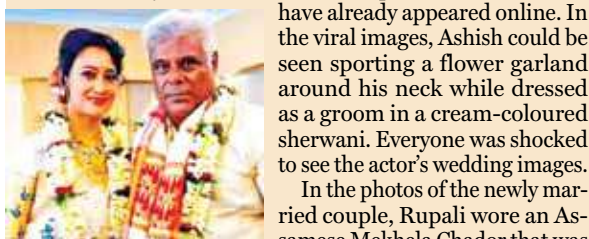


The first song of the Prabhas and Kriti Sanon-starrer Adipurush -- 'Jai Shri Ram' -- was released on Sunday by the award-winning music composer duo Ajay and Atul Gogavale, better known as Ajay-Atul, with a live orchestra. At the launch, the duo mentioned how a magical power was with them while they composed this anthemic number.

recently, Riteish Deshmukh's 'Ved'. Speaking at length about the journey of the song, Ajay said: "The inspiration of this song is the name of the song itself. This was the first song we composed for the film. "When the film was offered to us, we were told about its scale. As soon as we heard the name of Shri Ram, that power and devotion automatically came to us. This magical power was with us while we were composing the song," Ajay added: "This was the first time ever our song has been released on such a grand scale and we got to see live reactions. We are speechless because of the love the song is getting. We are grateful we got the opportunity to create an anthem that will resonate with people for years to come."

### Actor Ashish Vidyarthi gets married again at the age of 60

MUMBAI: Ashish Vidyarthi has tied the knot for a second time at the age of 60 with fashion entrepreneur Rupali Barua in Kolkata. Bollywood veteran actor Ashish Vidyarthi got married a second time at the age of 60. He married fashion entrepreneur Rupali Barua in Kolkata. According to reports, the pair wed intimately in a Kolkata club, and photos from the event have already appeared online. In the viral images, Ashish could be seen sporting a flower garland around his neck while dressed as a groom in a cream-coloured sherwani. Everyone was shocked to see the actor's wedding images. In the photos of the newly married couple, Rupali wore an Assamese Mekhela Chador that was white and golden. She accessorised her appearance with some gold jewellery that was modeled after South Indian temple art. According to reports, just their close family and friends attended their small wedding. The National Award-winning actor was earlier married to Rajoshi Barua, and they have a son, Arth. After their split, he found love in Rupali; they dated each other for several years before getting married. Rupali is younger than him.



Congress President Mallikarjun Kharge, Former Congress President Sonia Gandhi and Congress leaders Rahul Gandhi and Priyanka Gandhi paid tribute to Former Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi in New Delhi on May 21 his death anniversary. Photos : Congress office

### We are waiting for the right script: Abhishek Bachchan on teaming up with father Amitabh Bachchan



ABU DHABI: Actor Abhishek Bachchan says it is always a delight to collaborate with his father, megastar Amitabh Bachchan, and all they look for is a right script that helps them deliver a "memorable" experience for the audiences. The 80-year-old cinema icon and Abhishek have worked together on films "Bunty Aur Babli", "Ram Gopal Varma-directed "Sarkar" and "Sarkar Raj", Karan Johar's relationship drama "Kabhi Alvida Naa Kehna" and filmmaker R Balki's "Paa", which featured the veteran actor in the role of Abhishek's on screen son suffering from progeria. Abhishek said while they love working together, they want to be responsible with their choices.

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