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Court denies Sisodia bail in ED's excise policy case

NEW DELHI: A Delhi court on Friday denied bail to AAP leader and former Deputy Chief Minister Manish Sisodia in connection with the Delhi excise policy case being investigated by the Enforcement Directorate (ED), holding that the evidence, prima facie, "speaks volumes" of his involvement in commission of the offence.



Special Judge M. K. Nagpal denied the relief, noting the "serious nature of allegations made and role played by Sisodia in the criminal conspiracy, his connection with the activities relating to generation or acquisition and use etc of the proceeds of crime and the oral and documentary evidence collected in support of the same".

"Hence, this court is not inclined to grant bail to the applicant in this case of economic offences having serious repercussions upon the

general public and society at large as the evidence collected during investigation speaks volumes of his involvement in commission of the said offence." The judge also said that the purported medical condition of Sisodia's wife was not a reason to grant him bail in this case. Additionally, he stated that it was impossible to rule out the potential of Sisodia influencing key witnesses in the case.

The judge noted that the alleged offence against Sisodia was a "serious economic offence of money laundering" and that he has not been accused of committing the offence in his personal

capacity, but rather in his official capacity as a public servant overseeing the Excise Ministry and serving as Delhi's Deputy Chief Minister.

"The seriousness or gravity of the offence and its nature or category, the capacity of applicant in which it was committed, the manner of its commission and also certain other factors like impact of the offence as well as the possible impact of release of applicant on society etc. are the factors which go against the applicant and force this court to decide against his release on bail in the present case," the judge said.

India's forex kitty declines by USD 2.16 billion to USD 584.24 billion



MUMBAI: India's forex reserves dropped by USD 2.164 billion to USD 584.248 billion for the week ended April 21, the Reserve Bank said on Friday. In the previous reporting week, the overall kitty had risen by USD 1.657 billion to USD 586.412 billion. It can be noted that in October 2021, the country's forex kitty had reached an all-time high of USD 645 billion. The reserves have been declining as the central bank deployed the kitty to defend the rupee amid pressures caused majorly by global developments.

For the week ended April 21, the foreign currency assets, a major component of the reserves, decreased by USD 2.146 billion to USD

514.489 billion, according to the Weekly Statistical Supplement released by the RBI. 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 USD 24 million to USD 46.151 billion, the RBI said. The Special Drawing Rights (SDRs) were up by USD 19 million to USD 18.431 billion, the apex bank said.

The country's reserve position with the IMF was down by USD 14 million to USD 5.176 billion in the reporting week, the apex bank data showed.

PM Modi, Shah, Kharge condole demise of Parkash Singh Badal



NEW DELHI: Prime Minister Narendra Modi, Union Home Minister Amit Shah, Congress President Mallikarjun Kharge, Congress leader Rahul Gandhi and a host of other leaders condoned the demise of former Punjab Chief Minister and Shiromani Akali Dal chief Parkash Singh Badal on Tuesday.

Badal died late on Tuesday evening. He was 95. Condoling his death, Prime Minister Modi tweeted: "Extremely saddened by the passing away of Sri Parkash Singh Badal. He was a colossal figure of Indian politics, and a remarkable statesman who contributed greatly to our nation. He worked tirelessly for the progress of Punjab and anchored the state through critical times." The Prime Minister added that Badal's passing away was a personal loss for him.

"I have interacted closely with him for many decades and learnt so much from him. I recall our numerous conversations, in which his wisdom was always clearly seen. Condolences to his family and countless admirers," he said further.

Home Minister Amit Shah tweeted: "The passing away of veteran leader, Shri Parkash Singh Badal Sahab is deeply saddening. His career spanning several decades was dedicated to the welfare of the poor. His demise is an irreparable loss to Indian politics. My heartfelt condolences are with his family and followers."

Judges have no business giving interviews to channels on pending matters: CJ



NEW DELHI: Chief Justice of India (CJI) D.Y. Chandrachud said that judges have no business giving interviews to news channels on matters pending before them.

A bench comprising the CJI and Justice P.S. Narasimha took strong exception to sitting Calcutta High Court judge Justice Abhijit Gangopadhyay's interview to a news channel in connection with Trinamool Congress leader Abhishek Banerjee, even as a case concerning the latter was being heard by the judge.

The Chief Justice said: "Judges have no business to be granting interviews to television or whatever channels on matters which are pending before them." Justice Narasimha queried "how can they, given an interview?"

"The judge is speaking about the petitioner in these terms in the interview, he is clearly disabled from participating anymore," the CJI added.

Additional Solicitor General (ASG) S.V. Raju said it is a huge scam.

The bench clarified that it is not touching the investigation in the scam and the court will not pass any order which will preclude a proper investigation into the case.

Biocon Biologics' new monoclonal antibodies manufacturing facility receives EU GMP certification for cancer biosimilar

NEW DELHI: Biocon Biologics on Friday announced that its multi-product, monoclonal antibodies (mAbs) Drug Substance manufacturing facility (B3) at Biocon Park, Bengaluru, has received a Certificate of GMP Compliance for an additional product, biosimilar Bevacizumab, from the representative European inspection authority, Health Products Regulatory Authority (HPRA), Ireland. The biosimilar is a medication used to treat a number of types of cancers and specific eye diseases.

"This approval reflects Biocon Biologics' compliance with the highest international regulatory standards and enables the Company to continue addressing the needs of patients in the EU through its high-quality products. This (B3) facility, which is one of India's largest monoclonal antibodies (mAbs) manufacturing facilities, had received the EU GMP Certification for manufacturing biosimilar Trastuzumab last year. It was also awarded the 'Facility of the Year Award' (FOYA) with an 'Honourable Mention', by the International Society for Pharmaceutical Engineering (ISPE) in 2021," a Company Spokesperson said in a statement.

Nitish defends Kejriwal on renovation cost row

Bihar Chief Minister Nitish Kumar has come out in support of his Delhi counterpart Arvind Kejriwal -- facing criticism for allegedly spending Rs 45 crore on renovation of his official residence --, saying strong people who are emerging as "threats" to BJP bigwigs are being targeted.

"Criticism started the day a global won elections in Delhi and gradually made inroads into other states. These attacks reflect the insecurity of the ruling party. Is it right to attack a person just because he has the potential of winning elections?" Kumar said after participating in an event here on Friday evening. "I knew Arvind Kejriwal even when he hadn't stepped into politics. When he entered politics, he took the people with his huge success. Taking on people just because one is insecure is not ethical and I never indulge in it," the Bihar CM underlined. The BJP has been demanding Kejriwal's resignation ever since reports of him spending Rs 44.78 crore on repair works of his official residence at the civil lines, surfaced. The said was reportedly spent between September 2020 to June 2022 in six instalments.



potential of winning elections?" an event here on Friday evening. "I knew Arvind Kejriwal even

Delhi govt slams L-G for 'causing delay' in school takeover process

NEW DELHI: The Delhi government, which is looking forward to takeover the Modern International School here in Dwarka, on Thursday criticised the Lt. Governor, accusing him of not clearing the necessary files, thereby causing a delay to the government's takeover plans.

The Delhi government decided to takeover the school in December last year, after expressing dissatisfaction with some issues related to the overall functioning of the institute.

The Arvind Kejriwal-led AAP government said that the school was not providing free uniforms and stationary, and was also denying admission to EWS students.

The government said that teachers had been wrongly dismissed while fake and dummy registration were done in Class 11. The Delhi government took the decision to takeover the school for failing to comply with the Right to Education Act 2009, Delhi School Educa-

tion Act and Rules 1973. Chief Minister Kejriwal and then deputy CM Manish Sisodia had earlier said that Education does not come under the purview of the L-G, saying he/she can either give a nod to a proposal or send it to the President.

The Delhi government said "it is quite unfortunate that the file that was sent to the Lt. Governor in January this year is still pending with him, and he is causing a roadblock in the process of takeover".



India's vision for healthcare is universal, says PM Modi

NEW DELHI: Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Wednesday said that India's vision for health is universal even when there were no global pandemics.

While inaugurating virtually the 6th edition of Advantage Healthcare India (AHCI) 2023 (One Earth One Health) in the national capital, Modi said that India's goal is physical, mental and social well-being for all.

"True progress is people-centric. No matter how many advances are made in medical science, access must be assured to the last person at the last mile," he said.

The Prime Minister underlined the significance of Yoga and meditation, saying these are ancient India's gifts to the modern world that have now become global movements.

"India's traditional healthcare systems hold a lot of answers to stress and lifestyle diseases," the



Prime Minister said, adding that India's goal is to make healthcare accessible and affordable, not only for its own citizens but for the whole world.

He further elaborated that the world has witnessed the impact of Indian doctors, nurses and caregivers and they are widely respected for their competence and commitment and talent.

Modi stated that many healthcare systems across the world have benefited from the talent of Indian professionals.

The Prime Minister further said that India is proud to have been a partner to many nations

in the noble mission of saving lives through vaccines and medicines giving examples of Made-In-India vaccines, the world's largest and fastest Covid-19 vaccination drive, and shipping 300 million doses of Covid-19 vaccines to over 100 countries.

Modi reiterated that it showed a glimpse of India's capability and commitment and the nation will continue to be a trusted friend to every nation that seeks good health for its citizens.

The Health Ministry in association with the Federation of Indian Chambers of Commerce & Industry (FICCI) has co-branded the 6th edition of Advantage Healthcare India (AHCI) 2023 (One Earth One Health) with India's G20 Presidency and the event is being held on April 26 and 27 at Pragati Maidan, New Delhi.

Congress seeks FIR against Amit Shah for saying Karnataka would be 'afflicted by riots' if INC wins



BENGALURU: Congress leaders on Thursday complained to the police against Union Home Minister Amit Shah for his alleged statement that if their party won the upcoming elections, then Karnataka would be "afflicted with riots", and claimed he said it with the clear intent of disrupting the communal harmony in the state.

It also requested the police that an "urgent and immediate" FIR be lodged against the former BJP chief and others for the "offences".

The complaint was made by AICC General Secretary in-charge of Karnataka Randeep Singh Surjewala, state Congress president D K Shivakumar and former Deputy Chief Minister G Parameshwara to the Station House Officer, High Grounds police station here.

It alleged that on April 25, while addressing a gathering at Vijayapura, Shah made flagrantly false statements aimed at tarnishing the image of the Congress by levelling false and unfounded allegations, with

a clear objective of trying to create an atmosphere of communal disharmony amongst the gathered crowd and the individuals viewing it on other media platforms. Along with Shah, BJP leaders and the organisers of the rally have also been mentioned by Congress in their complaint.

The complaint alleged that Shah knowingly raised several false and communal allegations against the Congress and its senior leaders with the clear intent of disrupting the communal harmony maintained in the entire state. The complainants highlighted a few of his alleged "false, malicious and dangerous" claims. Among Shah's statements quoted by Congress leaders in their complaint as being false is: "Siddaramaiah, former Chief Minister, had released all PFI workers who had earlier been kept in custody, and it was the BJP government who later had to locate and jail them again. Congress has given an election promise that if it is elected to form the Government in Karnataka, then it shall lift the ban issued against PFI."

Congress party slams Modi on MGNREGA

KAVITA SHARMA

The Congress party today slammed the Central Government over the implementation of MGNREGA scheme launched under UPA led government. Modi government is "killing off" the scheme by cutting Budgets and delaying payments. The National Mobile Monitoring Schemes and Aadhar Linked Bank accounts are also not beneficial for rural workers.

Addressing the media persons today the Chairman All India Unorganized workers and Employees Congress, Udit Raj said that The Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act

,2005 was enacted by the Congress led UPA government to ensure 100 days employment to rural workers.

He alleged PM Modi has never liked this scheme and vilified on the floors in the parliament saying it was monument to the poverty of the congress.

"The central government was forced to rely on this great welfare scheme during the COVID 19 pandemic in 2021-2022. If MGNREGA scheme had not existed the condition of rural unorganized workers would have worsened, raj added.

He also blamed the Prime Minister Modi of making mistakes by cutting the budgets of this scheme. He said that



National Mobile Monitoring systems and (NMMS) app and Aadhar linked bank accounts will make it very difficult for rural workers to get benefit from it. The congress leader also said that according to the revised estimates 2020-21, during pandemic times Rs 1,11,500 Crores was allocated to the MGNREGA which saved lives of crores of people.

"However even this allocation was not enough to provide 100 days employment to the

workforce available in the country. Since then the Budget of MGNREGA has been reduced every year. This year it has been cut to Rs 60,000 Crores even lower than before the pandemic. Currently 15 Crores households are involved in this scheme, but now the budget has been cut even lower than five years ago, raj claimed.

Many states in India are not using 100 percent of the funds and corruption at the local level is very high. In the original scheme material cost was not to exceed 40 percent in any gram Panchayat. This was to ensure that the scheme is for workers not contractors. After 2016 the Modi government changed the unit where

60:40 ratio was compulsory to the district. After the base unit has been changed misuse is rampant in many places, he added.

Udit raj also accused govt for making smart phones mandatory. Every worker must have a smart phone but everyone cannot afford, especially the women, adivasis and dalits. They are also not tech savvy. He said that government should either give smart phones to workers or scraps NMMS app. It should also immediately compensate all workers who have lost their wages due to technical errors and strengthen transparency and accountability through the open muster rolls and social audits, raj added.

President Murmu addresses the convocation of CCS Haryana Agricultural University at Hisar

JAG MOHAN THAKEN
Hisar



The President of India, Droupadi Murmu graced and addressed the 25th convocation of Chaudhary Charan Singh Haryana Agricultural University at Hisar, Haryana today.

Speaking on this occasion the President Murmu said that Chaudhary Charan Singh Haryana Agricultural University has been making significant contributions in the education, research and extension of agriculture since its inception. If today Haryana is the second largest contributor to the food grain stocks under Central Pool, the credit goes to the farmer-friendly policies of the Central and State Governments, technological initiatives of HAU, and willingness of the farmers of this state to adopt the latest agricultural techniques.

The President said that today India has become a food grain exporting country from a food stressed country despite the huge population. But today there are many concerns in front of agriculture like increasing population, shrinking agricultural land, falling groundwater level, decreasing soil fertility, and climate change for which agricultural professionals have

to find solutions. They have to find ways to provide nutritious food to our huge population while causing minimum damage to the environment and biodiversity. It is a challenge as well as an opportunity before agricultural professionals.

The President said that technology has an important role in reducing the cost of farming, increasing productivity, making agriculture environment friendly and more profitable. She said that water is an important component of agriculture but it is available in limited quantities. Therefore, judicious use of water in agriculture is very important. There should be maximum use of technology in irrigation so that exploitation of water resources can be minimized. She said that the role of institutions like HAU is important in the

development and dissemination of such technology.

The President said that universities should act as laboratories from where knowledge spreads and benefits the entire society. She was happy to note that HAU is making concerted efforts for dissemination of crop production techniques among the farmers. She urged to intensify these efforts for the maximum benefit of people of the country, especially the residents of Haryana. The President said that agriculture is a huge sector. Apart from grain, fruit and milk production, animal husbandry and fisheries, there are many other industries which are directly linked to agriculture. India has emerged as a start-up hub. The world's third largest start-up ecosystem is in India. The agriculture sector supplies raw

materials to many industries. Therefore, this sector provides immense possibilities for start-ups. She was happy to note that HAU has established an Incubation Centre to promote entrepreneurship through innovation, technology upgradation and skill development. She expressed confidence that students would take advantage of this positive environment and contribute to the development of the country.

Earlier, Today, The President Droupadi Murmu while chairing the 19th convocation ceremony at National Dairy Research Institute (NDRI) Karnal conferred degrees on 544 students including gold medals. While congratulating the students receiving degrees, President, Droupadi Murmu said that with these degrees a new chapter has been started in their life and each one of them should continue the streak of learning new things along with making significant contributions to the welfare of the people.

The President urged the students to contribute significantly to the progress of the nation and become entrepreneurs along with getting employment in the dairy industry. There are immense possibilities for growth in this field and you should take advantage of these possibilities,

said Droupadi Murmu.

She said that India is the largest producer of milk in the world. India accounts for about 22 percent of the world's milk production. The dairy sector contributes about 5 percent to the country's GDP and provides livelihood to 8 crore families directly and indirectly from the dairy industry. With the participation of more than 70 percent, Women are playing a significant role in the dairy sector.

"Women empowerment is playing a significant role in the management of the dairy industry. More than 70 percent of participants in the dairy sector are women. It is a matter of happiness that today more than one-third of the degree awardees are girls and 50 percent of the gold medalists are also girls. The dairy sector holds special importance in making women self-reliant and in bringing changes in their social and economic status. To ensure that women have equal rights and equal opportunities to lead, we need to provide more opportunities for training and skill development of women. Along with this, there should also be a system of providing easy loans for women entrepreneurs in the dairy farming business," said Droupadi Murmu.

Excise remains a top revenue grosser in Uttar Pradesh 2022-23 financial year

LUCKNOW: Excise remains a top revenue grosser in Uttar Pradesh for the second consecutive year.

The revenue was higher by 14 per cent as compared to the previous fiscal year (2021-22) when the state registered a collection of Rs 36, 321 crore.

The Uttar Pradesh excise department has created a record by generating revenue of Rs 41, 250 crore during the 2022-23 financial year.

The excise revenue collection is not only the highest in the state so far but it has also surpassed all other states in the country. Another major achievement was that not a single death was reported in the state due to consumption of illicit liquor in the past one year.

According to officials, in 2017-18, the department started working to make the excise policy robust as well as flexible to allow more players to make the market competitive.

At that time, UP touched a revenue of Rs 17, 320 crore. Removal of unnecessary entry barriers brought an increased number of foreign liquor, beer, country-made liquor and alcoholic beverages brands, an official said.

Riding on positive sentiments, the department achieved



the highest compound annual growth rate over the past six years in the country (by notching 15.5 per cent of mean annual growth).

Additional chief secretary, excise, Sanjay Bhosreddy said, "While revenue is one part, strong enforcement drives helped us in curbing bootlegging. The Russia-Ukraine war disrupted the supply of soda ash due to which a shortage of glass bottles persisted for three months last year."

"Manufacturing and supply of UP liquor (premium country-made liquor sold in glass bottles) came to a standstill, otherwise our revenues would have been even higher," he said.

Excise commissioner, Senthil C Pandian, said that switching

to an end-to-end online regime for approvals and compliances brought in more transparency and helped in attracting new companies and players.

"Without the support from the top level in the government, bringing in reforms in the working of the department would not have been possible. All stakeholders can see the results now," he said. Six years ago, Karnataka occupied the top spot in the country with the revenue collection of Rs 17, 949 crore (2017-18).

In 2022-23, Karnataka could garner Rs 29, 790 crore through excise duty.

During the same period, Uttar Pradesh took a big leap from Rs 17, 320 crore to Rs 41, 250 crore.

PM Modi arrives at Kochi in traditional Kerala attire



Prime Minister Narendra Modi arrived at Kochi on Monday evening for his two-day trip to Kerala, dressed in traditional local attire. The Prime Minister is scheduled to hold a 1.8 km long road show, the first ever by Modi in Kochi.

The security has been beefed in Kochi since Sunday and there have been a steady flow of BJP workers from various parts of the state to Kochi since Monday morning, who are lining up on either side of the roads demarcated for the Prime Minister's roadshow. The roadshow will end at the S.H. College ground where Modi will address a large gathering. He will then return to the private resort where he is staying where he scheduled to meet church heads.

On Tuesday, he will go state capital Thiruvananthapuram to flag off Kerala's first Vande Bharat and launch a slew of projects before leaving for Surat in the afternoon.

'Some industrialists, Congress behind protests, not wrestlers': WFI chief Brij Bhushan amid sexual harassment allegations

A day after two FIRs were registered against him following sexual harassment allegations, Wrestling Federation of India (WFI) Chief Brij Bhushan Sharan Singh maintained that he was innocent and "ready to face an investigation". He further alleged that the Congress party and some industrialists were behind the recent protests held by top wrestlers at Jantar Mantar.

"Resignation is not a big deal but I am not a criminal. If I resign, it will mean that I have accepted their (wrestlers') allegations. My tenure is almost over," he said, according to news agency ANI. His statement comes a day after solicitor general Tushar Mehta told the Supreme Court that the Delhi Police will file an FIR against Singh amid renewed protests by the country's top wrestlers.

"I am ready to cooperate with the investigative agency. I have full faith in the judiciary and I respect the order of the Supreme Court," the BJP leader told reporters on Saturday. He added that a three-member committee



had already been formed to elect the next WFI chief and that the election would be held in 45 days. Claiming that he had the support of a majority of the wrestlers in Haryana, he added: "Every day they (wrestlers) are coming with new demands. They demanded an FIR, FIR was registered and now they are saying that I should be sent to jail and resign from all posts. I am MP because of people of my constituency and not because of Vinesh Phogat."

Following the hearing in the apex court, the Delhi Police Friday registered two FIRs against Brij Bhushan, one under the stringent POCSO Act and another related to outraging the modesty of a woman. The DCP said investigation into both the FIRs has been taken up "in right earnest".

Official neglect for 9 developmental projects at Ambala lying incomplete

SATISH HANDA

Majority of people residing at twin city Ambala blame officials of PWS (B&R) responsible for nine important developmental projects announced by the state government still lying hanging on fire since a long time incomplete causing lot of inconvenience to people in the area in spite of the fact state government has already spent amount worth crores of rupees on these projects. In most of the projects, between 50 to 60 percent construction work is yet pending and all sanctioned amount for these projects have already been used, Information also reveals that government officials have released payments to the contractor and suppliers of construction material without receipt of material on the basis of fake bills in many cases and in many cases work came to the halt due to legal cases between the government and the contractors. Moreover, the prices of raw material used in these projects are constantly rising since past couple of years and the cost of project sanctioned by the government in all projects have been drastically



increased now.

Among major nine projects left incomplete at Ambala include International level football stadium in War Heroes Memorial Sports Complex Ambala Cantt with project cost worth Rs 42.89 crore in which construction work was started on 17th March, 2017 to be completed by 10th March, 2019, but still 85% work in this project has been completed so far and this project have come to halt since steel of value worth lakhs of rupees to be used in this project was never supplied in spite of the fact the payment was released to the contractor on the basis of fake bills. As many as three officers of PWD (B&R) working in this project were also suspended by

the government and a case with the contractor is under trial in the court.

Similarly, in another project of value worth Rs 24.98 crore for the construction of flats for the doctors and para-medical staff of the Civil Hospital Ambala Cantt on Jagadhari in which construction work was started on 19th June 2019 with deadline for completion of this project by 18th June 2018 which was further revised to be completed by December 2022, but the work has been completed hardly 60% so far and construction work stopped due to large number of embezzlements in construction work and legal action against the contractor is presently under trial in the court.

86 candidates declared elected unopposed in UP municipal polls

NEW DELHI: With no contenders left by the last day allotted for withdrawal of names, 86 candidates have been elected unopposed to various civic posts, including one nagar palika and one nagar panchayat chairman.



The State Election Commission (SEC) made this announcement, well before the first phase of polling for the upcoming civic elections in 37 districts of Uttar Pradesh. According to a spokesman for the commission, one nagar panchayat chairman was elected unopposed in Agra district, and of the 12 corporators elected unopposed, two each were in Agra, Mathura, Gorakhpur, and Moradabad nagar nigams, and one each in Jhansi, Firozabad, and Saharanpur nagar nigams. Similarly, of the 37 nagar panchayat members elected unopposed, 13 were in Maharajganj, 10 in Gonda, three in Kushinagar, two each in Prayagraj, Fatehpur and Mainpuri and one each in Gonda and Shravasti. Also, 36 nagar palika members were elected unopposed in various districts, along with one nagar palika chairman in Jhansi district. State Election Commissioner Manoj Kumar said that the polling for the first phase of civic polls would be held in 37 districts on May 4.

One member of every family will be offered government job in case INLD comes to power after 2024 polls: O.P. Chautala

SATISH HANDA
Ambala



Former Chief Minister Haryana and Indian National Lok Dal (INLD) supreme Om Parkash Chautala while addressing a large gathering of party workers as well as media persons here announced that in case INLD forms government in Haryana state in 2024, one member of every family in the state will be offered government job. Chautala said that he was sentenced 10 years imprisonment and lodged in Tihar central jail Delhi by then ruling Congress government under a conspiracy since he had offered jobs to unemployment youths in Haryana state when he was chief minister.

Chautala expressed deep concern over Haryana state ranking first position in the country having maximum number of unemployed youths. Pointing at the present BJP government having alliance with JJP in the state former Chief Minister blamed ruling government only favoring financially rich people, whereas those belonging to poor families are being neglected and becoming more and more poor.

It is my duty to solve the problems of the people: Anil Vij

SATISH HANDA
Chandigarh

Haryana Home and Health Minister Anil Vij said that it is my duty to work, that is why I am sitting here and people have made me and the party has given me responsibility so that I can solve the problems of the people and will continue to do so. He said, Late Ashok Kumar Dahiya's wife Kavita Rani and her son Aksh Dahiya, who lost his life due to Corona at Ambala. Actually, under the ex-gratia policy, due to the efforts of Home Minister DSP Ashok Dahiya's son has been appointed as Sub Inspector in Haryana Police. For this, Kavita Rani and her son Aksh reached the residence of Home Minister to convey thank.

Kavita Rani said that after the death of her husband, she had come with an application to appoint her son to the job under the ex-gratia policy with great hope because before coming to him the relevant file was not moving forward and many objections were being raised, but as soon as she came to the Home Minister Anil Vij, her problems were solved. She said that this matter has become an example and now the police officers and staff will do their work definitely as Home Minister has offered full cooperation towards her families. Kavita Rani said that Home Minister Anil Vij has supported our family for which she is very grateful to him. DSP Ashok Dahiya died due to corona in April 2021 while during his duty at Badli, now under the ex-gratia policy his son Aksh has been appointed as Sub Inspector in Haryana Police at Gurgaon Police Line.

3532 old vehicles impounded, 1919 vehicle registrations cancelled at Gurugram and Faridabad

SATISH HANDA

On the orders of Supreme Court and direction by NGT about ban over 10-year-old diesel and 15-year-old petrol vehicles in NCR, both Gurugram and Faridabad transport and police administration has started the special campaign to impound operations in a massive way. According to information, Transport departments along with traffic police has



started a campaign and so far has already impounded 3532 vehicles and deposit at the special yards at Gurugram and Faridabad apart from cancellation of registration of 1919 vehicles in past about a month.

Information reveals that traffic police at Gurugram and Faridabad do not have the data from RTA offices of how many 10 and 15-year-old vehicles are in the districts since there are

a large number of vehicles registered from other states. Meanwhile, Chief Secretary Haryana Sanjiv Kaushal has also written a letter to Deputy Commissioners Gurugram and Faridabad giving instructions not to allow vehicles that are 10 and 15-years old and assist traffic police. He said that Automatic Testing Stations are being installed in these towns to control pollution.

SIT constituted in Haryana received 8 fresh 'Kabootarbaji' cases, besides 365 pending cases will not be spared: Anil Vij

SATISH HANDA
Ambala

Haryana Home Minister Anil Vij said that 'Kabootarbaji' will be completely eliminated from the state and strict action will be taken against whoever is small or big in this matter. While interacting with media persons at his Ambala camp office Vij said that people sell their land, jewellery, houses and give money to these 'Kabootarbaji' for going abroad but they cheat people and loot their hard earned money. He assured, all these cheats will be crushed, eliminated in Haryana state soon.

Home Minister said that cases of 'kabootarbaaji' are increasing in the state and earlier also he had formed SIT, which was headed by the then IG Bharti Arora. On that time, the SIT arrested 589 people and curbed it. Now the cases are coming again, so SIT has

been formed under the IG Sibas Kabiraj of Ambala Range, which includes SP of Ambala Jashnadeep Singh Randhawa and SP of Kaithal Abhishek Jorwal.

Vij said that the SIT has started functioning and has issued a toll free number 8053003400 on which people can register their complaints, since the toll free number has been issued, eight fresh complaints have also come so far. He said, the SIT has also taken the old 365 pending cases under its supervision. It has also decided that DSP Headquarters will be the nodal officer in every district along with the SIT and the SIT will take action keeping in touch with them. He told to further improve the law and order meetings will now be held at the range level in the state. Home Minister said that he holds meeting the police department at the headquarters, but now he has decided to hold



every range-wise meeting and today he is holding a meeting to take stock of the law-order situation in Gurugram in which necessary directions will be given.

Reacting strongly to the allegations made by the Congress and the Aam Aadmi Party on the BJP government of misusing the CBI and other agencies, Home Minister Vij said that now they have started seeing even a 'Rassi ka saanp'. Vij said that be it the Chief Minister of the Congress,

be it Rahul Gandhi or any other leader, the fear of the agencies has started troubling all of them and the fear of the agencies is only on those who have done wrong things. Those who have not done wrong things, they sleep by pulling the blanket. He said that they are speaking again and again every day and he has taken turns that one day a leader will speak and some day Rahul Gandhi himself will speak.

Home Minister said that ED and CBI are the apex agencies of the country which have earned name through their hard work and opposition parties want to malign its image. He continued that Agencies do not work under any pressure and they work independently, and raised a question if they haven't done anything wrong then why they are worried about it and if the agencies are doing any investigation then the opposition

parties should be allowed to do the investigation

In reply to a media question Vij said that former chief minister B.S. Hooda has demanded white paper from ruling state government over economic condition in the state and should know that state government works on the guideline of central government and it seems Hooda lacks political knowledge as well as status required by a former chief minister and making baseless statements and questions. Home Minister Anil Vij said that ever since Prime Minister Narendra Modi's government came, maximum attention has been paid to farmers and farms. The Modi government is constantly working for the farmers to be prosperous, the crops flourishing in the fields. The job of the opposition is to speak and the opposition did nothing for the farmers during their rule, he added.

Ambala police arrested three persons, seized 2.6 kg opium

SATISH HANDA
Ambala



CIA Staff-1 Ambala police on a information that drug smugglers are there to sell opium smuggled from Bihar, police team led by Inspector Harjinder Singh started search on Panchkula-Yamunanagar road and stopped a Maruti car bearing registration no. HR27-K0393 on the river bridge in Mulana police station area and arrested a youth identified as Suresh Kumar alias Raju a resident of Vijay Nagar Colony in Model Town area Ambala City carrying a 'Pithu' bag on his back along with two others including a female. When opened the bag police team recovered 2.6 kg opium in it.

Addressing media persons today, SP Ambala Randhawa told that among three arrested

included a female identified as Kiran a resident of village Madhubani in Bihar and a youth identified a Nathuri Sahni also resident of village Madhubani in Bihar and told police that they used to bring opium from Bihar for supply to Suresh Kumar regularly and were given a lump sum money for delivery of drugs. The arrested were produced in the court today and remanded to police custody after a case under NDPS Act was registered against three by Mulana police station.

Madhya Pradesh Congress retorts to PM's 'step-motherly' treatment to rural India remark

BHOPAL: Hours after Prime Minister Narendra Modi accused the previous governments of meting out step-motherly treatment to rural India, the Congress hit back at the BJP and dubbed the claims a "bunch of lies."

While addressing the people on the occasion of "Panchayati Raj" day in Rewa district of poll-bound Madhya Pradesh on Monday, the Prime Minister hailed Chief Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan for executing development schemes at ground level.

Retaliating to the statements made by both PM Modi and CM Chouhan, the state Congress led by former Chief Minister Kamal Nath also raised questions on "double engine" government. To the Prime Minister's allegation that the rural part of the country faced discrimination during the previous governments, the Congress claimed that during



the last financial year, the Centre has allocated insufficient funds for implementing schemes under the Panchayati Raj system in Madhya Pradesh. "Under the Panchayati Raj system, the Centre gives 60 per cent funds while the remaining 40 per cent is spent by the state. But, during the last financial year (from April

2022 to March 2023), the Centre was liable to give a total Rs 21,800 lakhs, out of which, the MP government was allocated only 19.39 per cent of the total expected amount," the Madhya Pradesh Congress said in a statement. Further, the Congress accused Shivraj Singh Chouhan of making false statements re-

garding the economic growth of farmers in the state.

Notably, on Monday, CM Chouhan had claimed that the economy of farmers in the state has witnessed a tremendous growth in the last few years and it has "doubled" due to efforts and the schemes of the BJP's "double engine" government.

"It is highly unfortunate that CM Chouhan made a false statement regarding the economic growth of farmers in Madhya Pradesh. In its reports presented in Parliament, the Centre has itself claimed that the annual economic growth of farmers in 2022 have decreased to Rs. 8,339 from Rs. 9,740 in the year 2015-2016. According to the Centre's data, farmers' daily income is estimated at Rs. 27, while the debt of each farmer in the country is at an average of Rs 7,40,00," it said.

Modi a bluffer, speaks like an ordinary RSS/BJP worker: CPI-M

Hours after Kerala Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan on Tuesday thanked visiting Prime Minister Narendra Modi for the help to the state in sanctioning the Vande Bharat train and other developments, the ruling CPI-M's state Secretary M.V. Govindan termed the PM a "bluffer".

"There is nothing new in what Modi said and he has bluffed when he said development is lacking in Kerala because in the NITI Aayog ratings Kerala is number one. He spoke like an ordinary BJP/RSS worker, which is devoid of facts. The long-promised railway coach factory (Palakkad) and an AI-IMS is still not happened in Kerala," Govindan told the media here.

His statements came an hour after Modi left Kerala, concluding his two day visit to the state.

At Kochi on Monday, Modi, addressing a public meeting of mostly youth, had slammed the



state's traditional rival fronts for not addressing developmental issues and came down heavily on the CPI-M-led government, claiming that it is only interested in seeing the party grow at the expense of the growth of the state.

As Modi also referred to gold smuggling case, Govindan said that figures clearly show that the maximum gold smuggling takes place in Gujarat.

"With regards to the gold smuggling case, despite the

Centre having all the agencies under its hand, why is that they are still unable to trace the origin from where the gold comes and who all are the recipients here. Also, on one hand, they are attaching properties of those who engage in such acts, the central agencies, in an affidavit, allowed release of the property of (prime accused) Swapna Suresh," he said.

Another "bluff" of Modi that Govindan tagged was on the giant strides that the BJP has made in the Northeast and Goa, especially in states having a considerable Christian population.

"In the Northeast, the BJP is just only a small player and is riding piggy-back riding on parties there. In Goa they purchased Congress legislators. If you look this is the case in Maharashtra when they split the Shiv Sena. In Madhya Pradesh also Congress legislators were purchased.

Transparent framework required for public audit to support privacy in India says Suresh Chandra at the ASSOCHAM Virtual Conference

NEW DELHI: Efforts to establish a comprehensive legal framework for data protection, as well as robust oversight and accountability mechanisms for surveillance and other privacy-related issues, will be critical in promoting the right to privacy in India said Suresh Chandra Information Commissioner, Central Information Commission, Govt. of India & Former Secretary, Ministry of Law and Justice, Govt. of India while speaking at the ASSOCHAM National Virtual Conference on Policies, Rights and Reforms Information, Privacy & Official Secrets.

"The RTI Act is a practical design and available to citizens with public authority. More power to Central and State Information Commissions for robust mechanism aligned with public interest" he further added. As India continues to grapple with issues of corruption and governance, the RTI Act will likely remain a critical tool for promoting transparency and accountability.

Talking about the digital freedom and helping a common man, Yashvardhan Azad, IPS (Retd.) Former Special Director, Intelligence Bureau; Former Information Commissioner, Central Information Commission, Govt. of India said, "Policies and reforms like Data Protection and RTI Act aims to strike a balance between the need for public access to information and the need to protect sensitive information. Governments and other organizations often enact laws and regulations that limit the disclosure of certain types of information, such as national security or personal information"

At the same time, individuals and organizations have the right to access information that is of public interest. In recent years, there has been a growing focus on protecting individual privacy in the digital age, with many countries enacting data protection laws to safeguard personal information. Overall, policies, rights, and reforms related to information, privacy, and official secrets are crucial for maintaining a healthy democracy and protecting individual rights, he said.

Rajinder Kumar, Managing Partner, Kumar Law Associates, Corporate Advisors & Legal Consultants in his vote of thanks highlighted that provisions outline the specific details of how such policies and reforms should be applied in practice, while appeals mechanisms provide a way for individuals or organizations to challenge decisions made by authorities in relation to these policies. He added, data protection laws may include provisions that require organizations to obtain consent from individuals before collecting and using their personal data, and to implement appropriate security measures to protect this data. The right to privacy is a fundamental human right recognized by international law and many national constitutions said Basudev Mukherjee Assistant Secretary General, ASSOCHAM in his opening remarks.

Cong condoles loss of lives in 'cowardly Naxalite attack' in Dantewada



NEW DELHI: The Congress on Wednesday condoled the killing of 10 police personnel and a driver in a naxal attack in Chhattisgarh's Dantewada, with party president Mallikarjun Kharge and senior leader Rahul Gandhi calling it a cowardly act. Ten policemen, returning from an anti-Maoist operation, were killed when their vehicle was blown up by an Improvised Explosive Device (IED) on Wednesday, officials said. Kharge termed the attack "cowardly" and said the Congress government in the state is fighting Naxalism and will win this battle.

Badrinath temple opens, first prayers held on PM Modi's behalf



CHAMOLI: The gates of the Badrinath temple in Uttarakhand were opened at 7.10 a.m. on Thursday and the first prayers to Lord Badri Vishal were performed on behalf of Prime Minister Narendra Modi. The temple was decorated with 20 quintals of flowers. Thousands of devotees gathered at the temple to witness the grand opening and waited to enter the shrine. Light rain is continuing in Badrinath since the morning, while snow is being seen in the nearby peaks. The doors of Kedarnath Dham were opened on April 25 after rituals and worship. At the same time, the valleys of the world famous Gangotri and Yamunotri Dham were opened on April 22. Till now 95,000 devotees have visited the Char Dham. And lakhs of devotees have already registered for the Chardham Yatra.

BSF Shot down drone carrying narcotics near Indo-Pak border in Amritsar Seized Heroin & Opium

JAGMOHAN SINGH Amritsar

Border Security Force (BSF) have shot down a drone carrying narcotics which was brought from Pakistan to Indian territory.

In a statement issued here today, official stated that on April 27, at about 0220 hours, BSF troops deployed at Indo-Pak border, heard buzzing sound of a drone entering from Pakistan to Indian territory, in the area near Village - Dhanoe Kalan, Distt - Amritsar.

As per the laid down drill, troops immediately reacted to intercept the drone by firing. The troops deployed in the depth area also heard the sound of drone and dropping of consignment in the farm fields on the outskirts of Village - Dhanoe Kalan in the Amritsar district, said official. During initial search of the



area, BSF troops recovered a black coloured Drone (Quadcopter, DJI Matrice 300 RTK) in partially broken condition and a big packet wrapped with yellow adhesive tape containing 02 packets of suspected heroin and 02 small packets

of Opium. One iron ring was also found attached with the consignment.

Official further informed that the Gross weight of the two packets of heroin was 2 Kgs and that of Opium was -170 Gms.

K'taka Lokayukta raids at govt officials' residences across state

BENGALURU: The Lokayukta sleuths on Monday are conducting raid and search operations at residences of government officials across Karnataka for allegedly amassing wealth disproportionate to their known sources of income.

In Bengaluru, raids are being carried out at the residence of the ADGP attached to Bruhat Bengaluru Mahanagara Palike (BBMP) at Yelahanka locality.

According to Lokayukta sources, simultaneous raids are on in Davanagere, Bellary, Bidar, Kolar and other districts.

Gangadharaih is the ADGP



of BBMP whose residences are being searched. A team of 15 officers are conducting raids at his residences in Yelahanka and Mahalakshmi layout. The team is headed by a SP, one DySP ranking officer and an inspector.

The sleuths led by Lokayukta SP Umesh are searching Taluk Panchayat CEO N. Venkateshappa's residences and prop-

erties at multiple locations in Kolar district. Houses of JESCOM AEE Hussain Saab in Bellary and Bengaluru are being raided.

Searches are also underway on the premises of Deputy Tahsildar Vijaykumar Swamy's residences and properties at six locations simultaneously in Anandnagar of Bidar, Mudubi in Basavakalyan town.

Executive Engineer Suresh Meda's residence in Gurnagar of Bidar and office in Noubad are also being raided.

The Lokayukta officials are present in DCF Nagaraj and Tehsildar Nagaraj's residences in Davanagere.

Converting Gurdwara of Sri Guru Nanak Dev in Arunachal Pradesh to Buddhist shrine an attack on Sikhs : Dhami

CONVERTING GURDWARA OF SRI GURU NANAK DEV IN ARUNACHAL PRADESH TO BUDDHIST SHRINE AN ATTACK ON SIKHS - HARJINDER SINGH DHAMI

ABOLISHING EXISTENCE OF SIKH SHRINE AGAINST CONSTITUTION, PRESIDENT AND PRIME MINISTER SHOULD INTERVENE

JAGMOHAN SINGH Amritsar

The Shiromani Gurdwara Parbandhak Committee (SGPC) has taken strong notice of the conversion of the historical shrine associated with Sri Guru Nanak Dev Ji, the first Sikh Guru, into a Buddhist shrine at Mechuka in Arunachal Pradesh. Gurdwara Guru Nanak Tapasthan is located at Mechuka in memory of Sri Guru Nanak Dev Ji, which has recently been converted into a Buddhist shrine. On April 8, the Chief Minister of Arunachal Pradesh Pema Khandu shared some photos of his visit on social media, from which it is clear that this Sikh shrine at Mechuka has now been converted into a Buddhist shrine.

In a statement issued here today, the SGPC President Harjinder Singh Dhami termed this act as an attack on Sikhs and said that converting any religious place of one community to that of another religion is a direct violation of Article 25 of the Constitution of India. He said that Sri Guru Nanak Dev Ji had made religious journeys to different countries for the welfare of humanity, which is known as Udasis in Sikh history.



Accordingly, there is a reference to Guru Nanak Dev's visit to Mechuka as well.

The SGPC President said that Gurdwara Guru Nanak Tapasthan was established at Mechuka in memory of the Guru. Historian Colonel Dalvinder Singh Grewal had made an important contribution to the development of this Gurdwara in Mechuka and with the support of the Indian Army, this Gurdwara Sahib was handed over to the Sangat in March 1987.

"But it is highly unfortunate that now a mischievous attempt has been made to destroy this memorial shrine of the first Sikh Guru. It is unfortunate that the Chief Minister of Arunachal Pradesh after visiting this historical Sikh shrine is showing it as a Buddhist shrine. This act is

going to hurt Sikh sentiments, which will be strongly opposed at all levels," said Dhami.

The SGPC President said that this is a very serious matter, in which the President of India, the Prime Minister, the Home Minister and the National Commission for Minorities should intervene immediately. He said that many cases related to Sikh shrines located in different parts of the country are already pending and now another case has been created. This is another example of discrimination against Sikhs, on which the Indian government should take cognizance and move towards a solution. He said that in this regard, the SGPC will write letters to the President and the representatives of the Government of India and ask for action.

Amritpal Singh interrogated by IB officers in Assam's Dibrugarh jail



GUWAHATI: Pro-Khalistani leader Amritpal Singh, who is lodged in Assam's Dibrugarh jail, was interrogated by Intelligence Bureau (IB) officers on Tuesday, police sources said here.

The Waris Punjab De (WPD) chief has been kept in a separate cell. As per jail sources, he was not allowed to meet other members of the outfit, including his close aide Papalpreet Singh.

Nine associates of Amritpal were lodged at Dibrugarh Central Jail before he was brought there on Sunday.

A source in Dibrugarh jail revealed that IB officers went inside the prison this morning and that the interrogation of Waris Punjab De chief is underway. Assam police is tight-lipped on the development.

Prasant Kumar Bhuyan, the Inspector General (Law and Order) of the Assam Police, told media, "All central investigation agencies, including IB and RAW, have officers posted in the state. Hence, it is not necessary that somebody from the national capital has to come to interrogate an inmate."

Sea offers a cool alternative to people as summer fires continue to spread havoc in Goa

CABINET RESHUFFLE SOON TO INCLUDE CONGRESS DEFECTORS: GOA CM SAWANT

DOMINICK RODRIGUES Panjim (Goa)

While wildfires continue to ravage many areas of Goa in this ongoing summer, the administrative office areas of bureaucracy are not being spared. The Mamlatdar's office in Canacona, South Goa is a case in instance.

Firefighters carried out 40-minute water spraying on the fire that engulfed the "Mutation" section of the Mamlatdar's office. However, official files containing numerous land and other documents, besides fans, tables, electrical fixtures and office equipment were gutted in the blaze, according to a local daily.

While electrical short-circuit is being suspected to be the cause of the fire, the fire department, electricity department and police are conducting their own

investigations.

A huge crowd that had gathered around the fire site expressed dismay at the loss of their precious and irreplaceable - land title ownership and other -- documents in the blaze.

Meanwhile, Goa Chief Minister Dr Pramod Sawant recently stated that there would be a Cabinet reshuffle - before the Karnataka Assembly elections - to induct some of the eight Congress MLAs who had defected to the BJP in Goa.

"Pooh poohing" criticism over his role in the River Mhadei issue, he declared that +he is the first Chief Minister to challenge Karnataka's attempts in the Supreme Court. "I reiterate that my Government will not allow diversion of the Mhadei water at any cost," he said while adding "The establishment of the Mhadei Pravah (Mhadei



Water Authority) is 50% victory for Goa."

Appreciating the signing of the Tillari Irrigation Project between Goa and Maharashtra governments, Sawant said he wanted to "streamline" it so that

its irrigation water is provided to both left and right riverbanks' canals in the State.

The Goa Government has spent Rs 3.22 crore on a "Save Soil" event that highlighted public interaction with a spiritual

leader Sadguru Jaggi Vasudev on August 23, 2022 at the Dr Shyama Prasad Mukherjee Stadium in Taleigao, Goa, according to RTI information provided to lawyer/activist Aires Rodrigues by the Directorate of Information & Publicity.

The event, which was organized by the Goa Department of Agriculture, included expenditure on advertisements, printing invitations, seating for VVIPs and VIPS, snacks and "high tea," venue branding, cultural show and green rooms for the artists.

Meanwhile, the Netherlands has offered to support the "Startups" industry in Goa, following a meeting with the Goa Chamber of Commerce and Industry (GCCCI) recently.

Querying about the IT and Startups scenario in Goa, Deputy Consul General of the Netherlands Thierry Van Helden said

his Government is interested in providing technical expertise and innovation in waste management, climate change etc.

GCCI President Ralph de Souza highlighted the GCCCI's business activities and noted that it will be signing an MOU with HAS University of Netherlands for promotion of agriculture in both countries.

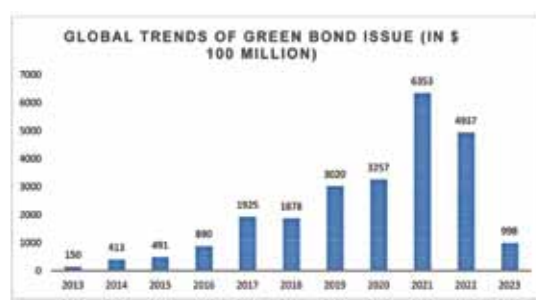
Meanwhile, in a strange incident, a water supply tanker - which carries fresh water to areas of Goa was caught by village Sancoale residents while it was discharging "sewage" at site.

On receiving this complaint, Goa Directorate of Food and Drugs Administration said that the sewage tanker was not a government tanker, but assured of carrying out a robust inspection and sampling drive on commercial eateries to assess their water quality.



DR TRILOCHAN TRIPATHY EXPLAINS HOW GEOGRAPHICAL DISPARITIES IMPACT GREEN BOND DISTRIBUTION

Green bonds foster climate resilience



Source: CBI "Climate Bonds Partner Zone" database on March 17, 2023

Energy is the lifeblood of any economy, stimulating economic prosperity and quality of life, ensuring national security and technological advancement. Fossil fuels, the major source of energy, are not only limited but also unevenly distributed in politically unstable economies, resulting in price instability and global energy security issues. Further, the burning of fossil fuels emits greenhouse gases (GHGs) that contribute to climate change and global warming. Thus, it is increasingly important to divert financial resources from fossil-based sources to green energy-based systems for the transition to a climate-resilient global economy. This is a critical component of global efforts to address climate change, as the scale of the challenge requires significant investment and innovative financing mechanisms. One of the key climate finance innovations is green bonds. These bonds are fixed-income, long-term financial securities that are used to raise funds to finance or refinance investments, projects, expenditures, or assets helping to address climate and environmental issues. These environmental issues include renewable energy, pollution prevention and control, climate change adaptation, terrestrial and aquatic biodiversity conservation, sustainable agriculture, clean energy transportation, green building and construction, and eco-efficient production technologies, among others.

The rights of green bond holders and obligations of the issuer are captured in the green bond indenture. This indenture includes standard provisions along with a robust green bond framework and its public disclosure and verification. The provisions are prepared following either the Green Bond Principles of the International Capital Market Association or the Climate Bond Standard of the Climate Bonds Initiative (CBI). The former dominates the market due to its liberal approach compared to the latter. Although CBI has set the oldest standard for green bonds, it is not universally recognized as a global standard for determining the environmental friendliness of a bond. Specialized institutions such as Bloomberg, Deloitte, KPMG, and Moody's, among others, expose unethical practices of green bond issuers like "greenwashing." Greenwashing, an act of deceiving the public by showing that the company is environmentally friendly, has attracted the attention of regulators, governments, and industry experts. The green bonds are issued in three structural formats: green revenue bonds, green

project bonds, and green securitized bonds. Green bond prices fluctuate inversely with interest rates, and investors are expected to be informed about the credit rating of the entity issuing the said bond to understand the default risk. Anecdotal evidence largely suggests that, in the primary market, green bonds offer the issuer pricing that is comparable to that of a non-green equivalent bond. However, green bonds' superior return and liquidity performance are amply evidenced in the secondary markets.

A diverse pool of issuers has entered the green bond market, including governments, banks, financial institutions, and corporations, as well as multilateral (supranational) organizations like the World Bank, International Finance Corporation, Asian Development Bank, and African Development Bank. The growing interest in ESG investing has fuelled the demand for green bonds. Institutional investors, such as pension funds and insurance companies, are the largest investors in the green bond market. The green bond market has also attracted a wide array of globally reputed underwriters, such as JP Morgan Chase, Bank of America, Citi Group, BNP Paribas, Morgan Stanley, Credit Agricole, Barclays, HSBC, ING, and many others. The first multilateral agency green bond was issued in 2008 by the European Investment Bank and World Bank, under the label Climate Awareness Bond, as a structured bond with proceeds dedicated to supporting lending for eligible climate-focused renewable energy projects. However, the first corporate green bond was issued by a Swedish property company, Vasakronan, in 2013. Since then, the green bond market has grown rapidly over the years, further propelled by renewed investor interest in environmental, social, and governance (ESG) issues. The green bond market experienced a record \$635.3 billion issued in 2021, up from \$15 billion in 2013. According to the Climate Bonds Initiative (CBI), annual green bond issuance could reach \$1 trillion by 2023, which is a frac-

tion of the \$119 trillion global bond market worldwide. The growth of the green bond market is driven by a combination of factors, including investor demand for sustainable investments and government policies that incentivize green investment. However, geographical disparities affect green bond market distribution. Europe is the largest green bond issuance hub, accounting for more than half of all issuances, followed by the USA and Asia. As a country, the US is the largest issuer of green bonds, followed by France, Germany, and the Netherlands. The EU issues green bonds to provide financial support for green transition, while multilateral development banks primarily issue green bonds to fund renewable energy projects. As of December 31, 2021, France issued the highest value of sovereign green bonds worldwide, amounting to approximately \$43.6 billion. In 2021, green bond issuance in the United States totalled \$81.9 billion, while China came in second with \$68.1 billion worth of green bonds. The Government of India announced in the Union Budget 2022-23 its plan to issue Sovereign Green Bonds as part of its overall market borrowings, aiming to mobilize resources for green infrastructure. As of 2021, the Industrial and Commercial Bank of China (ICBC) emerged as a leading green bond issuer, with \$9.83 billion worldwide. Corporate green bond issuance has reached its peak worldwide. MNCs like Tesla, Apple, Micron Technology, Walmart, Amazon, Equinix, Siemens Energy, China Development Bank, Lyxor, Tata Capital, and many others have issued corporate green bonds. To fund investments in renewable energy, the world's largest aluminium recycler, Novelis, has also listed green bonds on the International Exchange.

Considering future potential in the green bond market, many stock exchanges have introduced dedicated environmentally sensitive bond indices across the globe. An issuer can achieve greater visibility for its bond by listing it in one of the dedicated green bond sections of a stock exchange.

Visibility and liquidity can also be enhanced through a bond's inclusion in a Green Bond Index, such as the S&P Green Bond Index or the Barclays MSCI Green Bond Indices. In 2021, a total of 475 green bonds were issued to finance projects in the energy sector, followed by the construction sector. In 2021, JP Morgan Chase was the leading green bonds underwriter and lead manager worldwide for the issuance of green bonds worth over \$35 billion.

The green bond market is still tiny compared to the global bond market. The growth of the green bonds market is hindered by diverse factors. A recent European Commission research report revealed that the unavailability of standardized terms related to green projects and green bonds, complex review procedures for the bonds, and a lack of investable projects and assets hinder the market's growth. Investors, acting as a segment of market operators, find that green bonds are costly and face difficulties in identifying high-quality green bonds. Issuers bear the additional costs of issuing a green bond due to market fragmentation, uncertainty around green assets, and potential reputational risks. In the external review market, heterogeneity, lack of transparency, and conflicts of interest are some of the major obstacles. Thus, these challenges could lead to consequences such as potential future market disruption from greenwashing, a persistent significant gap between high-quality green bond supply and market demand, and the risk that insufficient investment may be channelled towards projects with a substantial impact. Considering the expected growth of the green bond market, these vulnerabilities are also likely to grow and may increase the risk of high-impact/visible greenwashing incidents, creating serious reputational problems.

However, initiatives such as the Sustainable Finance Disclosure Regulation (SFDR), a pragmatic outlook for sovereign green bond issuance, growth of green bond ETFs, and the inclusion of green bonds into broad market indices may strengthen the market presence of green bonds. Further, wider use of green bonds as a hedging tool at the equity portfolio investors' level, interest rate discounts at the policy level, and long-term sustainability mandates at supranational, national, and local government levels would support green bond market development.

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A DAMODARAN ON HOW DIGITAL PUBLIC INFRA AND IOT IN RURAL PROJECTS OPEN POSSIBILITIES FOR WEB 3

The third-gen web is about public good

There is a pervasive notion that the third-generation web is biased towards the gaming and cryptocurrency industry. However, a 2021 report by the U.S.-India Strategic Partnership Forum states that the third-gen web will be crucial for India to realise its \$1.1 trillion digital asset opportunity by 2032.

From a policy perspective, the next-gen web is complex. Part of the problem lies with the diverse descriptors employed by experts. Also, the web's immense social relevance is hard to comprehend. Some experts term the third-gen web as 'Web3', while others use the descriptor 'Web 3.0'. For web-tech buffs, Web3 is decentralised, privacy-oriented, blockchain-driven and crypto-asset friendly; while Web 3.0 upholds the property of the 'semantic web', which is powered by Artificial Intelligence (AI). The real point about the semantic web is its ability to recombine information available on different websites to generate new content and knowledge resources that are more authentic and creative. Followers of Web 3.0 claim that their version is endowed with robust capability on the data analytics front. This way, it is argued that Web 3.0 will create far better search engines.

Of the two variants, Web3 seeks to radically transform the manner in which data is generated, monetised, shared and circulated. Further, it advocates decentralised data storage systems with the objective of unshackling the oligopolistic grip of technology behemoths over data. Web3 has file-sharing systems such as the Inter-Planetary



File System which are cryptographically protected, more secure and capable of functioning off Internet and off blockchains. In this manner, Web3 seeks to overcome the data storage barriers of blockchains. Web3's boldest element is the strategic role it assigns to non-custodial wallets that function as digital passports for users to access blockchain-enabled transaction platforms. These wallets aid the creation of a 'ownership economy', whereby creators themselves control their content. Fundamentally, they work as the digital proof of identity. Web3 seeks to replace micro-economic organisations with decentralised autonomous organisations (DAOs). At a more macro level, it seeks to create a distributed economic system, where special classes of native digital tokens and cryptocurrencies would form the media of monetary circulation. In general, Web3 platforms would serve to raise the efficiency of peer-to-peer transactions. Apart from utility tokens that enable users

to access life support services, Web3 systems also seek to generate fungible digital assets to reward local providers of data storage capacity for their services. Asset tokens that are native to the new-gen web have the potential to function as capital mobilisation tools for Web3 projects. Likewise, stakeholders of DAOs can utilise tokens to exercise their voting rights. The NFTs of Web3 are more dynamic as they seek to incorporate improvements brought in by incremental innovations. India's handicraft industry is renowned for design-related innovations, many of which are not protected by Intellectual Property rights. The digital tokens minted by Web3 platforms would enable our handicraft enterprises to secure their innovations. Web 3-based instruction tools enable the rapid dissemination of grassroots innovations from master artisans to fellow members, which would improve the economic fortunes of craftsmen and artisan communities in north-east, western and peninsular India.

India's major digital public infrastructure push and the large-scale deployment of Internet of Things (IoT) in rural development projects offer major possibilities for deploying Web 3 in rural areas. One of the understated facts of India's transformation story in recent times has been the rapid rise of community data. The Atal Bhujal Yojana is an important source of data on groundwater utilisation practices and aquifer contamination, although this resource remains largely untapped for want of data analytics capabilities at the community level. This limitation can

be overcome by Web3's (decentralised) analytics systems. Web 3.0 can also yield insights from large volumes of community data, generated by IoT-enabled development programmes such as the Jal Jeevan Mission. Web 3.0's natural advantage of facilitating 'analytics at the edge' provides considerable scope for mapping the water use habits of communities. Similarly, early warning systems for floods will improve with Web 3.0 due to data analytics facilities being obtained at the sub-basin level. Thus Web 3.0 will have a transformative role in regionally disadvantaged areas.

One constraint today is the inability of data analytics capabilities to catch up with the pace of data generation in rural areas. India has a rapidly expanding pool of data analytics and web design talent. By providing incentives for decentralised analytics and tokenising them (as envisaged in Web 3), it is possible to draw upon the talent pool for the benefit of rural communities. Indeed, India's National Blockchain Strategy 2021 proposes to explore tokenisation and apply blockchain solutions for development programmes. It will be a natural progression for India to craft a third-gen web strategy that optimises public interest. Such a strategy should seek to combine the welcome features of Web3 and Web 3.0.

A Damodaran is Distinguished Professor, Indian Council for Research on International Economic Relations, New Delhi. Views are personal

BOOKS: REVIEW

Indian farmers explore way forward in Era of market-oriented policies

Distress in the Fields: Indian Agriculture after Liberalization, edited by Professor R. Ramakumar of the Tata Institute of Social Sciences, is a comprehensive volume that delves into the current state of Indian agriculture. The book consists of 16 essays covering six themes in 500 pages: Land and Agrarian Relations, Investment and Expenditure, Agricultural Trade, Costs, Profits and Incomes, Credit and Insurance, and Agricultural Marketing and Food Security. The essays are heavily data-driven, making the book a valuable resource for scholars and students interested in Indian agriculture.

In his chapter, Ramakumar brings together the major concerns facing India's agriculture sector. Most of the essays in the book focus on the problems and prospects of India's agriculture. For instance, Madhura Swaminathan writes with insight about inequality in agriculture, while S.L. Shetye traces the history of agricultural investment, highlighting the increasing role of the private sector

and the decreasing significance of the public sector. A chapter by Sachin Sharma et al examines the debates around WTO and agricultural support in India, and Awanish Kumar traces the history and recent performance of agricultural insurance. Sukhpal Singh carefully assesses the regulatory aspects of agricultural marketing reforms with reference to contract farming.

While the book is an excellent compilation of essays on Indian agriculture, it does not address some crucial issues. For example, employment in agriculture has supported nearly half of India's workforce in recent years, which is a shocking reversal of the trend that started in 2004, where the total number of workers dependent on agriculture began to reduce. Despite non-farm job growth slowing, workers continued to leave agriculture, leading to an increase in rural distress. Additionally, the real price of food in the economy has been increasing, reducing consumer spending on non-farm products, which has long been a constraint

Ramakumar brings together the major concerns facing India's agriculture sector. Most of the essays in the book focus on the problems and prospects of India's agriculture

for India's manufacturing sector. Despite these gaps, Distress in the Fields remains a valuable addition to the literature on Indian agriculture. It raises pertinent issues and provides a comprehensive overview of the current state of Indian agriculture. Scholars and students of Indian agriculture will undoubtedly find the book useful for its detailed analyses and insights.

In addition to the aforementioned gaps in the book's coverage, there are other pressing issues in Indian agriculture that could have been



Distress in the Fields: Indian Agriculture after Liberalization
Edited by R. Ramakumar;
Tulika Books;
480 pages;
Rs 1,500

addressed. One such concern is the growing impact of climate change on agricultural productivity. Rising temperatures, changing rainfall patterns, and increased frequency of extreme weather events pose significant challenges to farmers and food security. Understanding the strategies and policies needed to mitigate and adapt to climate change in the agricultural sector is crucial for sustainable and resilient farming practices.

Another crucial aspect that could have been explored is the role of technology and innovation in Indian agriculture. With advancements in areas such as precision farming, genetic engineering, and agricultural machinery, there is immense potential for improving productivity, reducing post-harvest losses, and promoting sustainable practices. Examining the policies and initiatives that foster innovation and technology

adoption in agriculture would have provided valuable insights into the sector's future trajectory.

Furthermore, the book could have delved into the issue of water scarcity and its impact on agricultural practices. India faces significant challenges in managing its water resources, especially in regions dependent on monsoon rains. Exploring strategies for efficient water management, irrigation systems, and water-saving techniques would have contributed to a more holistic understanding of the challenges and opportunities in Indian agriculture.

Despite these omissions, Distress in the Fields: Indian Agriculture after Liberalization remains a commendable compilation of essays, offering a comprehensive examination of key themes and issues. Its data-driven approach, combined with the perspectives of eminent scholars, makes it an invaluable resource for those seeking to understand the complexities and dynamics of Indian agriculture. By shedding light on the present crisis and highlighting the consequences of market-oriented policies, the book prompts critical thinking and serves as a catalyst for further research and policy discussions.



Limit industrial exploitation of the nature

India's Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) appears to have displayed excessive enthusiasm in filing a case against environmental lawyer Ritwick Dutta and his organization, Legal Initiative for Forest and Environment, for alleged violations of the Foreign Contribution (Regulation) Act (FCRA). The crux of the allegations revolves around the utilization of foreign funds to support legal actions aimed at stalling existing and potential coal-fired plants in India. While it is important to monitor the sourcing and use of foreign funds, it is absurd for the government to criminalize opposition to coal plants when pursued through legal means. India, as a signatory to the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change and various key agreements, has committed to gradually reduce its dependence on fossil fuel sources and achieve a state of "net zero" or primarily non-fossil fuel-based power generation by 2070. India has consistently endorsed reports by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) that emphasize the urgent need to prevent global temperatures from exceeding 1.5°C above pre-industrial levels. This necessitates a 45% decline in global net anthropogenic CO2 emissions from 2010 levels by 2030. However, based on the principles of "Common and Differentiated Responsibility," India maintains its right to rely on coal plants as it is still a developing economy. While renewable energy sources such as solar, wind, and nuclear power are desirable, their cost remains higher than that of fossil fuel power. Coal, a necessary evil, faces delays due to environmental clearances, land acquisition, and rehabilitation issues. Securing funds for new plants is challenging, with multilateral agencies refusing support. Existing coal plants operate inefficiently under lenient environmental regulations to meet power needs. Legal efforts to limit industrial exploitation and ensure fair compensation are vital for democracy. Undermining this bodes ill for India's progress.

LETTERBOX

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"Great things never came from comfort zones."



THE FINANCIAL WORLD

RNI NO. DELENG/2011/38860
PRINTED & PUBLISHED BY SWINDER BAJWA
ON BEHALF OF FW MEDIA
PRINTED AT JAGJIT PUBLISHING CO. PVT LTD
D-12, INDUSTRIAL AREA, PHASE-1, MOHALI,
PUNJAB 160059
PRINTER & PUBLISHER SWINDER BAJWA
OWNER: FW MEDIA
PUBLISHED AT: BUILDING NO-23, NEHRU PLACE
NEW DELHI 110019; PHONE: 9888040061
EDITOR* ABDUL WASEY
(*RESPONSIBLE FOR SELECTION OF NEWS UNDER THE PRB ACT)



Luminous Power Technologies launches Icon and High Capacity Inverter Range

ARUN KUMAR RAO
Bengaluru

Luminous Power Technologies, a trusted brand in power backup and residential solar space launched an all-new range of futuristic products for the coming summers. During the press conference here, Preeti Bajaj, Chief Executive Officer and Managing Director Luminous Pwr Technologies said, This comes in the wake of company's concerted efforts to delight customers with smart, safe, energy-efficient and sustainable products.

Bajaj said, "Luminous has been at the forefront of offering power backup solutions for last 35 years. We have been pioneering, illuminating and delighting over 100 millions happy homes with our products that are tech-savvy, aesthetically designed and sustainable. Raising our bar this season too, we are happy to showcase our latest range of Power backup Products - The Icon Range and High Capacity Inverter Range strategically positioned to cater to residen-

tial and commercial segments respectively," She added.

Icon is perhaps India's first inverter with premium ultra-modern looks that come with unprecedented safety and convenience features. Portable, silent and aesthetically designed, can flaunt it in living room too! With a strong battery backup it is equipped to run the load of a 3 BHK home and showroom which constitutes the biggest market segment. The High Capacity Inverter is truly a technological marvel for the commercial users. A zero noise strong inverter, it will cater to offices, showrooms, banks, dental clinics, educational institutions, restaurants, salons, ice cream parlors etc., where higher capacity loads over 2KVA is needed. High Capacity Inverter can comfortably run heavy loads like air-conditioners, all kitchen appliances etc. A highly energy efficient inverter, the user gets 2-5 hrs of back up time. Being a strong system, it comes with the warranty period of 24 months.

Bajaj stated, "India is a high



priority market for Schneider thanks to its huge growth potential viz. USD 20 billion market growing at 6% CAGR according to Niti Ayog. Luminous will play a pivotal role in boosting this significantly. We have an ambitious plan in

Lithium ion battery, solar acceleration, high power inverters, etc. We will be setting up new greenfield plants, expand our geographic footprint, boost people and business partners development. We intend investing substantially on brand building, digitization and consumer engagement programs." She said.

Delighted on the recent Rajasthan Royals (RR) association as their Title Sponsor in the current T20 Series 2023, «Neelima Burra, Senior VP and Chief Strategy, said, IPL and RR collaboration is very valuable as it will help us strengthen our brand in every household in India. This association between a brand that has transformed into a household name that aims to provide happier homes through technology innovations and a cricket team whose mission is to transform society through cricket, and cricket through innovation», goes a long way in establishing a mutually beneficial partner ecosystem that can drive the ambitions of both the entities.

Samsung SDI net profit up 28 pc on robust EV battery demand

Samsung SDI said its first-quarter net profit rose 28 per cent from a year earlier as surging demand for electric vehicle (EV) batteries gave a boost to the bottom line.

Net income reached 464.5 billion won (US\$347 million) in the January-March period, compared with 362.6 billion won the previous year, the South Korean battery maker said in a regulatory filing. Operating profit came to 375.4 billion won for the three-month period, a 16.5 per cent on-year increase from 322.3 billion won a year ago. Revenue jumped 32.2 per cent on-year to 5.35 trillion won.

The earnings beat market expectations. The average estimate of net profit by analysts stood at 396.4 billion won, according to a survey by Yonhap Infomax, the financial data firm of Yonhap News Agency. The stronger bottom line came with the continued upward momentum in the automotive and energy storage system batteries segment, propelled by the releases of new EV models equipped with



its signature P5 batteries, the battery maker said.

Samsung SDI mainly produces prismatic batteries in the higher end of the EV battery market. It supplies BMW A.G., Volkswagen A.G. and Ford Motor Co. Samsung SDI said it is working on cobalt-free and lithium iron phosphate (LFP) batteries to target the low-to-mid-end EV market and the utility energy storage system (ESS) market to diversify its product lineups. "The EV market has centred on the premium market so far, but we expect the volume and entry markets where more consumers can buy EVs, will grow rapidly due to the electrification trend led by global automakers," Son Michael, senior vice president for the

strategic marketing team said in an earnings call.

"We're preparing the volume segment platform, such as cobalt-free based NMX (nickel manganese) and LFP, and they are under development using our proprietary technologies, with a goal for mass production," Son said. It will continue efforts to advance its premium lineup, with the next generation platform P6 aiming to be mass produced starting 2024, the company said. Samsung SDI said it expects to continue solid growth in the second quarter, driven by burgeoning EV and ESS battery demand. Samsung SDI announced earlier this week it is forming a joint venture with General Motors to build an EV battery factory in the US.

Amit Shah launches IFFCO's nano DAP fertiliser



NEW DELHI: Cooperation Minister Amit Shah on Wednesday launched IFFCO's nano (liquid) DAP fertiliser for commercial sale at Rs 600 per 500 ml bottle, less than half of the current price of conventional DAP, to help India cut its import dependence.

One 50 kg bag of conventional DAP (di-ammonium phosphate) is currently being sold to farmers at Rs 1,350.

A bottle (500 ml) of nano liquid DAP, the world's first, will be equivalent to one bag (50kg) of conventional DAP.

ED searches B'luru-based online edu company controlled by Chinese nationals for FEMA violations



NEW DELHI: The Enforcement Directorate on Thursday said it carried out searches against a Bengaluru-based online education company, fully owned and controlled by Chinese nationals, for allegedly violating the foreign exchange law and remitting Rs 82 crore to China 'illegally'.

ED sleuths searched two locations of Pigeon Education Technology India Pvt Ltd, which provides online education under the name 'Oda Class', under the provisions of the Foreign Exchange Management Act (FEMA).

"The company is 100 per cent owned by Chinese nationals and is part of a group consisting complex web of entities having ultimate controlling company in Cayman Islands," the ED said in a statement.

Mitsubishi Electric India CNC Announced Partnership with SolidCAM to Revolutionize the Manufacturing Industry

FW DESK
Bengaluru

Mitsubishi Electric India CNC has announced partnership with SolidCAM, a global leader in innovative CAM software for CNC machining and distribution of related digital manufacturing solutions. The partnership agreement was signed between the two entities on 21st April 2023 at the CNC eXperience Park, the Technology Centre of Mitsubishi Electric India located in Peenya to establish the brand as a one-stop solution for the Machine Tool End-users.

Mitsubishi Electric India offers advanced CNC control



system to take the machining needs of customers to a higher performance level. The company supplies CNC package and technologies to various market segments and industries. SolidCAM found in 1984, provides the most powerful CAM

solution to obtain maximum productivity from the CNC machines.

The collaboration between the two entities was endorsed by Masaru Tashiro, Group Vice President, Industrial Automation Machinery Marketing

Division, Factory Automation Systems Group of the Mitsubishi Electric Corporation and Mr. Masaya Takeda, General Manager, CNC Systems, Mitsubishi Electric India Pvt. Ltd. jointly with Dr. Emil Somekh, Founder & CEO, SolidCAM Limited, Mr. Amod Onkar, Country Manager, SolidCAM Software India Pvt. Ltd., in the presence of other dignitaries and well wishers.

Masaya Takeda, General Manager, CNC Systems, Mitsubishi Electric India Pvt. Ltd. said, "Our collaboration with SolidCAM is a step-ahead towards growth and innovation of the CNC technologies which

gives a competitive advantage to the Mitsubishi Electric CNC solutions and make it a preferable choice for the end-users. The partnership will not only offer cutting edge solutions but will also give the machine tool industry a chance of enhanced training methods for appropriate usage of the technology. Joining hands with SolidCAM will enhance the technical capabilities of Mitsubishi Electric CNC and provide its customers with state-of-the-art technology and software, which will help save time, boost their productivity and efficiency, streamline their operations, and reduce their cost of operations."

Amazon shuts down health-focused Halo division, lays off employees



NEW DELHI: Amazon has shuttered its health-focused Halo division and discontinued Halo Band, Halo View, and Halo Rise devices which are no longer available on its website. The company has also laid off employees from the Halo team.

The company said in a blog post late on Wednesday that beginning on August 1, Amazon Halo devices, and the Amazon Halo app, will no longer function.

"We recently made the very difficult decision to stop supporting Amazon Halo effective July 31, 2023. We notified impacted employees in the US and Canada today. In other regions, we are following local processes, which may include time for consultation with employee representative bodies and possibly result in longer timelines

to communicate with impacted employees," said Amazon. For employees who are impacted by this decision, Amazon is providing packages that include a separation payment, transitional health insurance benefits, and external job placement support.

In the coming weeks, Amazon will fully refund purchases made in the preceding 12 months of Amazon Halo Band, Amazon Halo Rise, and Amazon Halo accessory bands.

"In addition, any unused prepaid Halo subscriptions fees will be refunded to your original payment method. If you have a paid subscription, as of today you will no longer be charged the monthly subscription fee. You do not need to take any additional steps," said the e-commerce giant.

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The school's modern, hi-tech-enabled campus and smart classes are equipped with smart boards that enable teachers to use appropriate educational multimedia content. Additionally, the school provides STEM Kits for kids to bridge the theoretical and practical gaps in a tech-ruled world. This helps children in becoming better leaders and innovators of tomorrow.

Justdial to digitize Maharashtra's Small Scale Industries & Handicraft Artisans through strategic partnership with MSSIDC

MUMBAI: Justdial, India's No. 1 hyperlocal search engine, announces a strategic partnership with Maharashtra Small Scale Industries Development Corporation Limited (MSSIDC) under the aegis of the State Government of Maharashtra. This partnership aims to provide a digital presence to businesses registered under MSSIDC, including small scale industries (SSIs) and handicraft artisans. Justdial will enable these businesses to have an online presence and exposure, not only in Maharashtra, but all over India, creating a more inclusive and sustainable business ecosystem.

As part of the partnership agreement, MSSIDC-accredited businesses will receive verified tags and have their licenses showcased on Justdial's platforms, boosting their credibility and visibility. This will help these businesses reach out to a wider audience, including potential customers and investors, and enable them to tap into new markets

In reference to the collaboration, Shwetank Dixit, Vice President, Justdial, expressed his enthusiasm and stated, "Justdial has consistently strived to empower SSIs throughout India. Through this collaboration, we further strengthen our mission by working with MSSIDC to support their goal of promoting and nurturing a flourishing business ecosystem. Our objective is to assist MSSIDC-certified enterprises in establishing a digital presence, enabling them to expand their operations and reach a wider audience."

Maharashtra Small Scale Industries Development Corporation, India's leading corporation, is continuously responding to the expanding and diversified needs of small-scale industries. It provides support services such as market linkage to Small Scale Industries & Artisans and Skill development training to Handicraft Artisans.

Commenting on the partnership, Rajendra Nimbalkar, Managing Director, Maharashtra

Small Scale Industries Development Corporation, said, "We are happy to partner with Justdial in order to enhance the digital presence of SSIs & Handicraft Artisans registered under MSSIDC. This collaboration will enable these businesses to expand their online reach and improve their overall growth prospects."

Justdial's deep reach and penetration in the market will also provide eligible SSI access to JD Mart, India's fastest growing B2B platform.

The partnership between Justdial and MSSIDC will address the challenge of information asymmetry, providing eligible SSIs & Handicraft Artisans with access to pan-India markets, and helping them expand and grow sustainably. By creating a public-private partnership, the Maharashtra government aims to improve the ease of doing business in the state, promote entrepreneurship, and create a sustainable business ecosystem.

AIM Kolkata registers 100% placement for its 2-year MBA program; the highest CTC stands at Rs 15 Lakhs

KOLKATA: Army Institute of Management, Kolkata (AIMK), has registered 100% placement for its 2 year MBA program with dual specialisation in Marketing, Finance, HR, Operations and Business Analytics for a total of 110 students. 2023 being a landmark year for the institute as it is celebrating 25 years of excellence in Management Education. Commemorated as the Silver Jubilee Year for its flagship program, the business school which was founded under the aegis of the Indian Army continues to achieve 100% placement mark year after a year.

Placements 2023 witnessed a paradigm shift in terms of the multiple offers in hand, highest ever CTC, increased median salary and improved job assignments for the graduating students. 47 students (out of 110) have more than one offer-in-hand, some even have four. The highest CTC stands at INR 15 Lakhs per annum, average median salary being

INR 8.00 Lakhs per annum, which is 28% over the previous year. 200+ offers were made by 76 companies during the final recruitment process 2023 to absorb the complete batch of 110 students graduating in July.

The recruitment drive witnessed several elite organisations joining the list of esteemed recruiters, such as Citi India, Adidas, Mondelez International, Reckitt & Benckiser, ITC, Federal Bank, etc. The FMCG and banking sectors were the major recruiters, with 42% students getting placed in these sectors. The highlight of the 2023 recruitment has been the campus visit by retail stores like Croma, H&M, Adidas, etc., with an offer to lead the project management team for their new stores opening across the Tier II cities.

In totality, 40% of the new recruiters were added to the list of recruiters for 2023 and the remaining have been conducting campus processes for the last several years. Thanks to the



unique system of grooming students to become Corporate Officers. Imbibed from the military academy where Army Officers are being groomed, a similar training pedagogy and methodology is being used on the campus for training the students to transform into Corporate Officers. 100 hours of dedicated skill development training is imparted to the students to become business leaders, the content and the approach is based on the Army way of training.

The stellar placement per-

formance is the testimony to the quality of AIMK grooming procedure. The institute is proud to be honoured as 'Best Skill Development Institute in India' by the World HRD Congress in 2023.

"We are extremely proud of our students for setting new records. Our regular recruiters have once again demonstrated their faith in AIMK. The new corporate partnerships provided cutting-edge profiles, resulting in the most successful final placements season. These

exceptional placements result from our cutting-edge curriculum, known for its Army Background & Learning Ecosystem, which bridges the gap between academia and industry while also nurturing thought leaders and practitioners through inventive education," said Maj Gen VS Ranade (Retd), Director of AIMK. AIMK has an impeccable placement record driven by the characteristics of its students, who are multicultural and diverse, millennial. The institute has over 2000+ alumni, who have made a name for themselves worldwide and are placed in various roles in corporate organisations.

The institution's multi-disciplinary approach combines entrepreneurship, innovation, and dynamism - keeping the Josh high! The institution where managerial brasses are trained in Army class aims to develop Corporate Officers having an uncanny ability to respond to the VUCA World - the Army Way.

Finance Ministry's economic review cautions against low Agri-output & elevated global prices

NEW DELHI: In the March edition of the Finance Ministry's Monthly Economic Review, it is noted that India needs to be vigilant against potential risks of lower agriculture output, elevated prices and geopolitical developments. There are factors which could affect the favourable combination of growth and inflation outcomes currently estimated despite the 6.5 per cent growth projection for the current fiscal is in line with the estimates of the World Bank and the Asian Development Bank (ADB).

"It is important... to be vigilant against potential risks such as El Nino conditions creating drought conditions and lowering agricultural output and elevating prices, geopolitical developments and global financial stability,"



the review said.

All these three could affect the favourable combination of growth and inflation outcomes currently anticipated, it said.

India's economy has been strong in FY23 in spite of the tailwind of the pandemic and the headwind of the geopolitical conflict intertwining to escalate global economic

uncertainty, the report said.

"The strength is seen in the economy, estimated to grow at 7 per cent, higher than the trend rate and the growth of the other major economies. Growing macroeconomic stability as seen in the improved current account deficit, easing inflation pressure, and a banking system strong enough to survive the increase in policy

“It is important... to be vigilant against potential risks such as El Nino conditions creating drought conditions and lowering agricultural output and elevating prices, geopolitical developments and global financial stability”

rates, has made the growth rate further sustainable," it said.

Reliance Capital lenders to meet to resolve concerns of bidders

MUMBAI: The lenders of Reliance Capital (RCap) will meet on Monday to resolve concerns raised by bidders ahead of the second round of auction on April 26.

Torrent Investment and IndusInd International Holdings Ltd (IIHL) of Hinduja Group have expressed many reservations on the scheduled auction and its terms.

Both the bidders reportedly have conveyed to the Committee of Creditors (CoC) that unless the issues raised by them are resolved, they are unlikely to participate in the auction.

Both the bidders want finality, and no negotiation in value or on terms and conditions after the second round of auction is over.

On the other hand, the two largest lenders of Reliance Capital -- the Employees' Provident Fund Organisa-



tion (EPFO) and the LIC are against giving any such undertaking.

Both lenders want to room for further negotiations in case the final bid value in the second round of auction is below the liquidation value of Rs 13, 000 crore. The EPFO and the LIC collectively hold over 30 per cent voting rights in the COC.

The IIHL has said that the bidders who are participating in the auction should give an undertaking that they will not give a bid outside the

Challenge Mechanism process. Similarly, bidders also want an undertaking from the CoC that no bid outside the Challenge Mechanism will be considered by them.

Torrent has requested to declare after every round how many bidders are participating in the next round and the value of their bids.

The Mumbai-bench of National Company Law Tribunal (NCLT) has extended the deadline for completing the resolution process of RCap by three months to July 16.

Gold declines Rs 420; silver tumbles Rs 570



NEW DELHI: Gold price declined Rs 420 to Rs 59,980 per 10 grams in the national capital on Friday amid weak global cues, according to HDFC Securities. The precious metal had settled at Rs 60,400 per 10 grams in the previous trade. Silver also tumbled Rs 570 to Rs 74,600 per kg. "Domestic gold prices were trading lower on Friday, tracking overseas prices," Sriram Iyer, Senior Research Analyst at Reliance Securities, said. In the overseas markets, both gold and silver were trading lower at USD 1,982 per ounce and USD 24.82 per ounce, respectively. "Gold price traded lower in Asian trading hour on Friday as recovery continued in dollar after US PCE data rose more than estimated," Saumil Gandhi, Senior Analyst - Commodities at HDFC Securities, said.

Sri Lanka's Parliament approves IMF bailout package



COLOMBO: Sri Lanka's Parliament on Friday approved the much-needed USD 3 billion IMF bailout package to revive the island's economy which was hit hard by a catastrophic economic and humanitarian crisis sparked by years of mismanagement and the raging pandemic. Last month, the International Monetary Fund (IMF) approved the bailout programme to help Sri Lanka overcome its economic crisis and catalyse financial support from other development partners, a move welcomed by Colombo as a "historic milestone" in the critical period. On Friday, at the end of a 3-day debate, 120 Members of Parliament in the 225-member assembly voted in its favour of the deal while 25 of them opposed it.

Significant irregularities in reporting to investors led to Zilingo's failure, says Investor Burda

Burda Principal Investments, one of the leading investors in Singapore-based fashion startup Zilingo, has backed the action against its founder and CEO Ankiti Bose, hinting that legal action against the ousted founder may be on the anvil.

Burda Principal Investments (BPI), a division of Europe-based Hubert Media Group, said in a statement that "significant irregularities in reporting to investors" led to Zilingo's failure.

"Kroll Inc was jointly hired by the main investors to examine this case and the investigations on financial irregularities have been completed," said the investment firm.

Hinting at impending legal action, Burda added: "As the investors are still considering options for legal action, please consider we cannot comment on any details from the report or share any further information at the moment."

The statement came in the wake of a report by leading



startup coverage portal Inc42 last week, revealing fresh explosive revelations around the financial wrongdoings undertaken by Bose including \$10 million (Rs 80 crore) dubious and unexplained payments, submitting conflicting revenue figures to shareholders and a 10x increase in her salary without Board approval.

Bose has also filed a \$100 million defamation suit in Bombay High Court against prominent investor and co-founder of Seedfind, Mahesh

Murthy, for an article he wrote in a leading business magazine.

Bose was quoted as saying that the \$100 million lawsuit was filed taking into account her balance of equity in Zilingo and "the losses that statements like this can affect future endeavours."

The lawsuit is currently in the pre-admission stage, according to reports.

Earlier, Singapore's state-owned investment fund Temasek had backed the

action against the founder, saying "We expect our portfolio companies to abide by the sound corporate governance and codes of conduct and ethics. We are, therefore, in support of the board's investigation into the complaint as a part of good governance to safeguard the interests of the company."

During the period of investigation, the Board of Zilingo had issued a statement stating, "Contrary to claims that have been circulating in the media, this decision (suspension) was taken jointly by the Board and the relevant shareholders pursuant to pre-agreed shareholder voting rights, and does not reflect the decision of a single shareholder."

In March last year, Zilingo suspended 30-year-old CEO Bose over complaints about alleged financial irregularities. Following an investigation led by an independent forensic firm, the startup had decided to terminate Bose's employment.

Sundar Pichai took home \$226 mn in 2022 amid layoffs at Google

On January 20, Google CEO confirmed in a letter to employees that about 12, 000 people will be laid off globally, accounting for more than 6 per cent of the total workforce

NEW DELHI: Amid job cuts at Google's parent company Alphabet, its CEO Sundar Pichai took home a whopping compensation of nearly \$226 million in 2022.

According to the tech giant's filing with the US Securities and Exchange Commission (SEC), Pichai's compensation included stock awards of about \$218 million. Pichai's salary, however, has remained steady at \$2 million for the past three years, according to reports.

On January 20, Google CEO confirmed in a letter to employees that about 12, 000 people will be laid off globally, accounting for more than 6 per cent of the total workforce.

Amid layoffs, tech giant



Google is also creating several cost-cutting measures such as cutting down on free snacks and workout classes for its existing employees, the media reported.

The company's micro kitchen that provides free snacks like cereal, espresso, and seltzer water have been closed on days that typically have a significantly lower volume.

The company also discontinued spending on personal

equipment like laptops, according to an internal memo.

Tech giant Google also informed its employees via an email that fewer of them will be promoted to more senior levels this year as compared to the past.

Google India terminated more than 400 employees and some of the impacted workers took to LinkedIn to share their plight.

Retail sales in March witness 6% growth against last year: RAI Survey

NEW DELHI: In March 2023 the retail sales showed growth of 6 per cent as compared to the sales levels during the same period in March 2022, as per the 38th edition of the Retail Business Survey by the Retailers Association of India (RAI).

The Survey released on Thursday indicates a spike in furniture & furnishings and CDTI sales.

Speaking about the findings, Kumar Rajagopalan, CEO, RAI said, "Retailers are witnessing modest growth.



RAI is already in touch with the Government bodies to enable ease of doing business in

the country." Retail businesses across regions have indicated growth in sales as compared

to March 2022 sales level.

East India signalling growth of 8 per cent, while South India and West India indicate a growth of 7 per cent and 5 per cent respectively followed by North India at 4 per cent. In categories, Furniture & furnishings reported a growth of 13 per cent followed by Consumer Durables & Electronics (12 per cent).

While Food & Grocery and Sports goods showed a growth of 11 per cent each as compared to sales levels in March 2022.

Tata Metaliks March quarter net up 6% to Rs 55cr

KOLKATA: Tata Metaliks Limited (TML) on Friday announced a nearly six per cent rise in net profit to Rs 55.56 crore for the fourth quarter period ended March 2023 on the back of higher revenues.

The net profit for the corresponding Q4FY22 was Rs 52.46 crore.

The revenue from operations for Q4FY23 was Rs 926 crore, as compared to Rs 808 crore in the corresponding period of the previous year, representing a growth of 14



per cent.

Total expenses for the period were Rs 863 crore, as compared to Rs 772 crore in the corresponding period of the last fiscal.

"The Ductile Iron (DI) pipe plant-2 (new plant) production had a vertical ramp-up and its production of finished pipes touched 35 kilotonnes (KT) in the quarter (25 KT in Q3 FY23)," the company said in a statement.

The company said its product portfolio now covers the larger size range from 900 mm to 1200 mm diameter pipes which constituted almost 30 per cent of sales from the new plant.

"The company's DI Pipe business has a healthy or-

der book for FY'24 execution because of robust demand for government's water infrastructure projects. The company is geared up and well positioned to meet this high demand in the upcoming quarters through additional volumes from the new DI Pipe plant," Tata Metaliks managing director Alok Krishna said.

Besides, he said, the pig iron business was adversely affected by weak market sentiments of commodity prices.

Enrolments under Atal Pension Yojana cross 5 cr mark, up 20% in 2022-23

The scheme enrolled more than 1.19 crore new subscribers in 2022-23 as compared to 99 lakh in the corresponding fiscal, registering a growth of 20 per cent

Total enrolment under the Atal Pension Yojana (APY) crossed the 5.20 crore mark as on March 31, 2023.

According to Finance Ministry sources, the scheme enrolled more than 1.19 crore new subscribers in 2022-23 as compared to 99 lakh in the corresponding fiscal, registering a growth of 20 per cent

As on date, the total assets under management (AUM) in APY is more than Rs 27, 200 crore and the scheme has generated investment return of 8.69 per cent since its inception.

In the public sector banks (PSBs) category, nine banks achieved the annual target while Bank of India, State Bank of India, and Indian Bank sourced



more than 100 APY accounts per branch.

Under the regional rural banks (RRBs) category, 32 banks achieved the annual target while Jharkhand Rajya Gramin Bank, Vidharbha Konkan Gramin Bank, Tripura Gramin Bank and Baroda Uttar Pradesh Gramin Bank sourced more than 160 APY accounts per branch, sources informed further.

Also, Tamilnad Mercantile Bank, Dhanlaxmi Bank and Airtel Payments Bank achieved the annual target allocated by the Finance Ministry.

Bihar, Jharkhand, Assam, Uttar Pradesh, West Bengal, Madhya Pradesh, Tripura, Rajasthan, Andhra Pradesh, Chhattisgarh, Odisha and Ut-

tarakhand have also achieved their annual targets with the help and support of their respective State Level Banker's Committee (SLBCs).

Under APY, a subscriber would receive a lifelong minimum guaranteed pension of Rs 1, 000 to Rs 5, 000 per month from the age of 60 years, depending on their contributions, which itself would vary based on the age of joining the scheme.

Daimler India sold 29,470 trucks, buses in 2022



Daimler India Commercial Vehicles (DICV) on Monday said that it closed calendar year (CY) 2022 selling 29, 470 trucks and buses (domestic and exports).

The DICV, a 100 per cent subsidiary of Daimler Truck AG, Germany, said that it had logged 25 per cent sales volume growth in 2022 over 2021.

The company also said that in 2022 it crossed the production milestone of 200, 000 vehicles (including domestic and exports) and 200, 000 transmissions at its Oragadam manufacturing facility near

here. The company recorded its best ever annual vehicle exports with 11, 000 units, best-ever annual part sales (over 245 million parts) and best-ever annual domestic vehicle sales in 2022, DICV added.

Commenting on DICV's 2022 annual performance, Satyakam Arya, Managing Director and CEO said: "CY2022 was one of our strongest performing years with 37 per cent growth in revenue and 25 per cent growth in sales. We crossed remarkable production milestones as well."

Paytm UPI LITE crosses 2 mn users with over half million daily transactions

Homegrown Paytm Payments Bank on Wednesday announced it now has over 2 million users on Paytm UPI LITE.

The Bank recorded over half a million daily transactions for Paytm UPI LITE through the Paytm app, it said in a statement.

"We have seen great adoption of Paytm UPI LITE, having crossed the milestone mark of over 2 million users within a short span of time," said a Paytm Payments Bank spokesperson. "With Paytm UPI, we bring lightning-fast payments that never fail, powered by the latest UPI LITE technology and the security of Paytm Payments Bank," the spokesperson added.

Paytm UPI LITE brings single-click payments that never fail even when banks have success rate issues during peak transaction hours.

Once loaded, UPI LITE allows a user to do instant payments of up to Rs 200, making the entire experience seamless. A maximum of Rs 2,000 can be added twice in a day to UPI LITE, making



the cumulative daily usage up to Rs 4,000.

Paytm UPI is powered by the latest UPI LITE Technology for successful payments, and offers three-level bank-grade security.

Additionally, payments made using UPI LITE will not be shown in the passbook, offering an uncluttered bank

statement for the user. It records only a single entry when adding money to UPI LITE balance.

"As the first payments bank to launch UPI LITE, the Bank continues in its tradition of building technology-led innovative solutions for its users, revolutionising everyday transactions," it said.

Brazilian President calls for peace in Ukraine

BRAZILIAN PRESIDENT LULA DA SILVA HAS HIGHLIGHTED THE IMPORTANCE OF PEACE FOR ECONOMIC GROWTH, CITING CHINA AS AN EXAMPLE, AND CALLING FOR PEACE IN UKRAINE.

"China is the second biggest economy in the world and I think it will be the first in the world," he said on Wednesday, noting that the Asian giant has taken advantage of the globalisation of the past 40 years.

"China hasn't had a war in many years and that shows you can take advantage of investment that is carried out for social good," Lula told the press after meeting with Spanish Prime Minister Pedro Sanchez at the La Moncloa Palace in Madrid.

Lula said China's example shows the need to end the ongoing conflict in Ukraine. However, one block to establishing peace is that the key nations in the UN Security Council "sell weapons," and could have an economic incentive for the continuation of the conflict.

The Brazilian leader said it was down to other countries, such as Egypt, South Africa and Brazil, to take part in "constructing new working methods that make us stronger". "We need to build a G20 for peace, with other nations taking part," he stressed. Lula's meeting with Sanchez comes on the second day of his visit to Spain, Xinhua



news agency reported.

"We are opening a new era in strategic relations between Spain and Brazil. We have a lot to contribute to the prosperity and well-being of our citizens, to bring our regions together and to construct a safer and more sustainable world," Sanchez said on social media.

"I have a strong relationship with Spain, from when I was a union leader and was able to form strong relations," said Lula, stressing that Brazil had

reopened to international relations after Jair Bolsonaro's term in office.

"I can say that Brazil is back, because it was strange for us to be almost isolated for six years, as we didn't have relations with Europe, Africa or South America," he said, expressing his desire to end hunger by promoting sustainability, economic growth and education.

Brazilian President calls for peace in Ukraine

Silva has highlighted the importance of peace for economic growth, citing China as an example, and calling for peace in Ukraine.

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Mahatma Gandhi Portrait installed JCP Attari dedicates to 75th Azadi Ka Amrit Mahotsav



JAGMOHAN SINGH Attari

Mahatma Gandhi, Guiding Spirit of Indian Freedom Movement, who played a vital role in Independence of our Nation, a digitised version of Mahatma Gandhi's Portrait has been dedicated to 75th Azadi Ka Amrit Mahotsav and installed at the significant location at JCP (Joint Check Post) Attari border here today.

The Portrait has been prepared and digitised by Author, Heritage Promoter & Nature Artist Harpreet Sandhu (Former Additional Advocate General Punjab), Sanjay Gaur, Deputy Inspector General, Border

Security Force acknowledged the innovative and dedicated efforts of Nature Artist Harpreet Sandhu to have digitised the Portrait of Mahatma Gandhi for JCP Attari.

The portrait was today installed at Attari open stadium was released jointly by Member Parliament Amritsar Gurjit Singh Aujla, Member Parliament Khadoor Sahib Jasbir Singh Gill, Deputy Commissioner Amritsar Harpreet Singh Sudan, DIG Border Range Dr. Narinder Bhargava, Nature Artist Harpreet Sandhu, Deputy Commissioner Customs ICP Attari, Navneet Kaushal and Sher Jung Singh DPRO.

India launches Operation Kaveri to evacuate its nationals from Sudan



NEWDELHI: India on Monday launched 'Operation Kaveri' to evacuate its nationals from violence-hit Sudan.

External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar said India's ships and aircraft are set to bring the Indians back home.

"Operation Kaveri gets underway to bring back our citizens stranded in Sudan. About 500 Indians have reached Port Sudan. More on their way," Jaishankar tweeted.

"Our ships and aircraft are set to bring them back home. Committed to assist all our brethren in Sudan," he said.

India on Sunday said it has positioned two transport aircraft of the IAF in the Saudi Arabian city of Jeddah and a naval ship at a key port in Sudan as part of its contingency plans to evacuate the stranded Indians.

The government had on Friday said it was focusing on the safety of over 3,000 Indian citizens presently located throughout Sudan.

Sudan has been witnessing deadly fighting between the country's army and a paramilitary group for the last 11 days that has reportedly left around 400 people dead.

Jaishankar discusses situation in Indo-Pacific with his Colombian counterpart Duran



BOGOTA: External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar met his Colombian counterpart Alvaro Leyva Duran and discussed ways to boost bilateral cooperation and exchanged views on global issues, including the situation in the Indo-Pacific region.

Jaishankar arrived here in Colombia's capital from Panama on Wednesday. He is the first external affairs minister to have visited Colombia.

"Met Foreign Minister @ AlvaroLeyva of Colombia this morning. Exchanged views on expanding our bilateral cooperation, especially in health, agriculture and digital domains," he tweeted about his meeting on Wednesday.

In rare show of unanimity, Security Council slams Taliban ban on UN women workers

Ahead of an international meeting convened by UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres on dealing with the Taliban, the Security Council in a rare show of unanimity has voted unanimously to condemn the regime's ban on women working for the world organisation in Afghanistan.

The Council resolution adopted on Thursday also expressed "deep concern at the increasing erosion of respect for the human rights and fundamental freedoms of women and girls" and demanded that the Taliban "swiftly reverse" the restrictions placed on them.

Special representatives for Afghanistan from several countries are scheduled to convene on May 1-2 in Doha for the meeting to be chaired by Guterres to work out a united approach to deal with the Taliban.

India was one of about 20



countries from Europe, Asia, the Middle East and North America invited to the meeting.

The unanimous adoption of the Council resolution proposed by the United Arab Emirates (UAE) and Japan and co-sponsored by about 90 countries underlines the Taliban regime's isolation and signals international unity before the Doha meeting.

The UAE's Permanent Representative Lana Zaki

Nusseibeh said: "This cross-regional support makes our fundamental message today even more significant: the world will not sit by silently as women in Afghanistan are erased from society.

"The resolution also makes it clear that stability, economic recovery, and political reconciliation is not possible in Afghanistan without the inclusion of Afghan women and girls."

The US Alternate Repre-

sentative for Special Political Affairs Robert Wood called the Taliban's edicts on women "indefensible" and said, "Muslim-majority countries have spoken out against the Taliban's rationale for these decisions".

The Taliban invokes the Islamic Sharia law to justify its actions.

"In January, the Organization of Islamic Cooperation emphasized that Islamic law calls for women's education, work, and participation in public life," Wood said.

The Taliban extended its ban to about 600 Afghan women working for the UN earlier this month.

In protest, the UN asked all its employees -- about 2,700 Afghan men and 600 international workers, including 200 women who were exempt from the ban -- to stay home, disrupting the humanitarian work in the country.

Biden announces 2024 re-election bid, with Harris as running mate



US President Joe Biden announced on Tuesday he is seeking a second term, with Vice-President Kamala Harris as his running mate once again. "The question we are facing is whether in the years ahead we have more freedom or less freedom, more rights or fewer," Biden said in a video announcement. "I know what I want the answer to be. This is not a time to be complacent. That's why I'm running for re-election."

Biden, at 80, is already the old-

est President in US history and he will be 86 at the end of his second term. His age has raised questions about his suitability for President even among Democratic voters. But they have been rallying to his side since he has decided to seek a second term. The 2024 run will be his fourth campaign for the White House. He first ran in 1988 and then in 2008, which was won by President Barack Obama, who picked him for his Vice President. Biden was widely expected to run

in 2016, at the end of Obama's second term, but gave it a miss. Former Secretary of State Hillary Clinton won the Democratic nomination that cycle but went on to lose to Republican nominee Donald Trump. Biden succeeded on his third, in 2020, and now is mounting his fourth, and last. He has been running for office since 1970, which was a city council. In 1972, he ran for the first time for the Senate and won and went on to hold that seat for decades, till he became Vice President. As sitting President, the Democratic party nomination is his, even though two people have announced so far their desire to seek it as well -- self-help author Marianne Williamson and Robert F. Kennedy, a nephew of late President John F. Kennedy and son of Attorney General Robert F. Kennedy, whose run for the White House was ended by his assassination. Neither of them is capable of mounting a credible challenge to the President.

First batch of stranded Indians leaves Sudan in naval ship



NEW DELHI: The first batch of Indians stranded in violence-hit Sudan left the country onboard India's naval ship INS Sumedha as part of the evacuation mission 'Operation Kaveri'.

External Affairs Ministry Spokesperson Arindam Bagchi said 278 people onboard the ship departed Port Sudan

for the Saudi Arabian city of Jeddah.

"First batch of stranded Indians leave Sudan under #OperationKaveri. INS Sumedha with 278 people onboard departs Port Sudan for Jeddah," Bagchi tweeted.

India on Monday launched 'Operation Kaveri' to bring back its nationals from Su-

dan that has been witnessing fierce fighting following a power struggle between the regular army and a paramilitary force.

On Sunday, India said it has positioned two transport aircraft of the IAF in Jeddah and naval ship INS Sumedha at Port Sudan as part of its contingency plans to evacuate

the stranded Indians.

The government had on Friday said it was focusing on the safety of over 3,000 Indian citizens currently located throughout Sudan.

The deadly fighting between Sudan's army and a paramilitary group for the past 12 days has reportedly left around 400 people dead.

China's massive approval for coal power



Local governments in China approved more new coal power in the first three months of 2023 than in the whole of 2021, according to official documents.

The approvals, analysed by Greenpeace, reveal that between January and March this year, at least 20.45 gigawatts of coal power was approved, up from 8.63GW in the same period in 2022. In the whole of 2021, 18GW of coal was approved, the Guardian reported. A Chinese Communist Party (CCP) five-year plan from 2016 had placed a heavy emphasis on reducing the use of coal and developing clean energy sources.

In 2020, President Xi Jinping, pledged that the country would become carbon neutral by 2060, the Guardian reported. This prompted an era of reduced coal power approvals as local governments sought to keep their local economies in check with Beijing's priorities. A rise in coal power approvals came in 2020 when the five-year plan came to an end, as local governments anticipated even tighter restrictions on coal expansion in the next round. But in 2021, China suffered huge power outages, leading to a dramatic shift in the CCP's energy priorities.

In September, the price of electricity soared as factories reopened to service global demand as the rest of the world emerged from the Covid-19 pandemic.

But the government had capped prices, so many power plants reduced output rather than operated at a loss, the Guardian reported.

Badal's classmate in Lahore recalls their hostel days

Washington-based Shamsher Singh, who was a classmate of the late Shiromani Akali Dal (Badal) patriarch and five-time Punjab Chief Minister Parkash Singh Badal in a Lahore college in the early 1940s, says he is saddened by the passing of his college friend.

"Badal and I were classmates at Lahore's Sikh National College for two years -- from 1943 to 1945. He was one of the many students from Punjab's Malwa region who studied at that college," says the 95-year-old who in 1954 was one of the first Indians to land in Washington D.C.

"Badal was a tall handsome young man who came from a wealthy zamindar family. Though we were not fast friends, I knew him very well. "Out of about 560 students in the college, nearly 500 used to stay in three college hostels. Badal and his friends from the Malwa region stayed together and we used to call them Firozepurias," he added. Singh says Badal and Malwa students used to get non-stop supplies of desi ghee from their villages. "Unha de gharan toh desi ghee de pipay bhar bhar ke aunde ate Badal aur uhde dost sare takde jawan se (Badal and his friends used to get endless supplies of cans of desi ghee from their villages and they were all very strong)," he says in Punjabi.

But Badal was very average in his studies and he passed his exams thanks to tuition, he says. "Badal used to receive tuition from Prof Arjun Singh, who taught us chemistry in our college." He says Badal left Sikh National College to join Lahore's Forman Christian College in 1945. "Once he left our college, I had little contact with him because Badal was not active in Lahore's Sikh student politics," says Singh, who moved to Delhi after 1947. He adds that Badal

Japan to downgrade legal status of Covid on May 8

Japan on Thursday decided to officially downgrade the legal status of Covid-19 to the same category of seasonal influenza, with the new status coming into effect on May 8.

The move comes as the Health Ministry endorsed the government's plan to recategorise Covid-19 and downgrade its legal status to the same group as seasonal influenza, reports Xinhua news agency.

Ahead of the upcoming string of Golden Week holidays here, the schedule for downgrading the status comes as the government is also considering lifting Covid-19-related border controls that are still in place, a week earlier than initial plans.

With Japan expecting increasing inbound and outbound travellers during the holiday period starting Sat-



urday, the remaining border controls may be lifted at midnight on Friday.

At the moment, those entering Japan must show official evidence of having received three Covid-19 vaccinations or present a negative test result taken within 72 hours of departure.

When the downgrading of

Covid-19 comes into effect on May 8, the virus will no longer be in a special category equivalent to or stricter than Class 2, but will be categorised among Class 5 diseases like seasonal influenza. If there is a future spike in cases of Covid-19 infections, under the lowered categorization, a state of emergency will not be

declared. "Special measures that the government has been taking in response to the novel coronavirus will end on May 7," Minister of Health, Labour and Welfare Katsunobu Kato told a press conference.

Kato also said that while efforts have been made towards the resumption of normal social and economic activities, Covid-19 has not disappeared and as such medical institutions, along with facilities for the elderly, will be asked to take necessary measures. Under the auspices of the health ministry's advisory panel, a group of experts warned earlier in April that a ninth wave of infections could hit Japan.

Kato himself on Thursday highlighted an uptick in cases in Japan of a new subvariant of the virus.



68th Filmfare Awards 2023:

'Gangubai Kathiawadi', 'Badhaai Do', 'Brahmastra' win big



THE FILM WAS ADAPTED FROM ONE OF THE CHAPTERS OF NOTED AUTHOR HUSSAIN ZAIDI'S BOOK "MAFIA QUEENS OF MUMBAI"

MUMBAI: Stories and characters that challenged stereotypes were honoured at the 68th Filmfare Awards, with Alia Bhatt-starrer "Gangubai Kathiawadi" and LGBTQ comedy drama "Badhaai Do" emerging as top winners.

"Gangubai Kathiawadi", directed by Sanjay Leela Bhansali, won 10 awards, including Best Film, Best Director, Best Actor in a Leading Role (Female) for Bhatt, Best Dialogue, Best Costume,

Best Choreography, Best Cinematography and Best Production Design. The film was adapted from one of the chapters of noted author Hussain Zaidi's book "Mafia Queens of Mumbai".

POTPOURRI

Film industry male dominated but there's change: Raveena Tandon

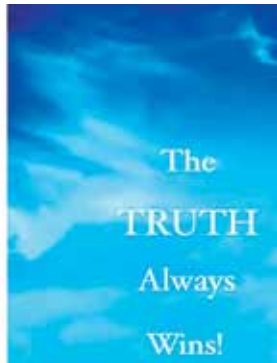


NEW DELHI: Women in the Hindi film industry, both in front of and behind the camera, have broken the "glass ceiling" and have entered every male bastion, actor Raveena Tandon said on Wednesday during a panel of the National Conclave on Mann Ki Baat @100.

Tandon, the star of the 1990 and early 2000s Hindi cinema, said the film industry should learn from sister mediums TV and OTT (over-the-top) platforms,

who are the leaders in paying women better and producing shows with female protagonists, respectively, she said. "We also talk about pay disparity but in the TV industry today, women are paid much higher than their male counterparts, which is a great thing because of the kind of work they do and I think in our TV industry, women rule. In OTT platforms too, the protagonists are mostly women, women issues are discussed."

After being acquitted Sooraj Pancholi reacts on Instagram story- "The truth always wins!"



MUMBAI: After being acquitted in the Jiah Khan case, actor Sooraj Pancholi reacted on Instagram. The actor put up a status. He wrote on his Instagram Stories, "The truth always wins!" and added folded hands

and red heart emojis with the hashtag "God is Great". Almost a decade after actor Jiah Khan's death by suicide a special CBI court in Mumbai today acquitted her boyfriend Sooraj Pancholi of abetment

charges. Special Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) court judge AS Sayyad pronounced- "Due to paucity of evidence, Sooraj Pancholi is acquitted". Sooraj Pancholi was arrested in the case in June 2013 and released on bail in July 2013.

Reacting to the verdict Jiah's mother Rabia Khan, a key prosecution witness in the case had said, "her daughter was killed. The charges of abetment to suicide has gone. But how did my child die? This is a case of murder...will approach the high court". In this case the judge AS Sayyad last week heard the final argument of both sides and reserved his judgment in the case.

Anushka Sharma and Virat Kohli dance on Punjabi singer Shubh's song 'ELEVATED'



Power couple Anushka Sharma and Virat Kohli shook a leg on Punjabi singer Shubh's song "Elevated" in a new video. Anushka took to Instagram,

where she shared a video of herself dancing along with her husband Virat in coordinated steps in the gym. Virat is seen dressed in

a black T-shirt paired with grey pants and a baseball cap. Anushka is seen in a printed shirt paired with ripped jeans. The end is with a blooper, where the actress bumps into the cricketer and he's heard saying: "Aah."

The 'Rab Ne Bana Di Jodi' actress captions the video with "Dance Pe Chance," a song which featured in her debut film with Shah Rukh Khan.

On the work front, Anushka will next be seen playing the role of Indian bowler Jhulan Goswami in the film "Chakda Xpress". The film will be releasing on Netflix. The release date of the movie is not out yet.

Asha Bhosle, Vidya Balan remember Lata Mangeshkar at award ceremony



MUMBAI: The sister wished she was there in person and the fan wore a sari she had gifted her. For playback singer Asha Bhosle and actor Vidya Balan, being honoured at the Mangeshkar family awards was bittersweet, a moment to be treasured but also remember late melody queen Lata

Mangeshkar. Bhosle received the second Lata Deenanath Mangeshkar Puraskar and Balan was given the Vishesh Puraskar for her contribution to cinema at the awards ceremony Monday night. "This is my most prestigious award, but I wish Lata Didi were here in person," Bhosle, 89, said in a statement.

Ajay Devgn's upcoming film 'Singham Again' has shifted to Diwali 2024

Bollywood superstar Ajay Devgn's upcoming film 'Singham Again' has shifted its release to an early date.



The film, the third installment of the 'Singham' franchise, was earlier supposed to release on Diwali 2024. But as per the new development, the film will now arrive in cinemas on August 15, 2024. The film will be directed by Rohit Shetty who has earlier

helmed the two films from the franchise. 'Singham Again' will go to floors in August 2023.

Film trade analyst Taran Adarsh shared the update on his Twitter recently. He tweeted: "#Xclusiv... Ajay Devgn - Rohit Shetty: 'Singham Again' ON Independence Day 2024 - #SinghamAgain - the third part in #RohitShetty's super-successful #Singham franchise - to release on August 15, 2024 #IndependenceDay. #AjayDevgn returns as #BajiraoSingham... starts August 2023."

Refuse to be part of unethical, anti-cinema Filmfare awards: 'The Kashmir Files' dir Vivek Agnihotri

MUMBAI: Filmmaker Vivek Agnihotri on Thursday announced that he will not accept any award from Filmfare, where his film "The Kashmir Files" is nominated in various categories including the best director.



The filmmaker is upset that the poster for best director nominees of the 68th edition of Filmfare Awards, shared by

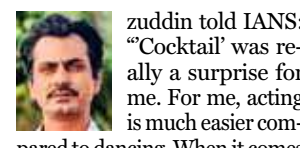
the publication on social media, features the stills of lead actors

of the nominated films, instead of the directors.

Agnihotri is vying for the best director trophy alongside the likes of Sanjay Leela Bhansali ("Gangubai Kathiawadi"), Anees Bazmee ("Bhool Bhulaiyaa 2"), Ayan Mukerji ("Brahmastra: Part One Shiva"), Sooraj Barjatya ("Unchai") and Harshvardhan Kulkarni ("Badhaai Do").

Nawazuddin Siddiqui on the horizon for the release, 'Jogira Sara Ra Ra' and 'Afwaah'

Actor Nawazuddin Siddiqui, who has two films on the horizon for the release, 'Jogira Sara Ra Ra' and 'Afwaah', will be seen shaking his leg in the 'Cocktail' song from 'Jogira Sara Ra Ra'.



While the actor will be seen performing out-and-out commercial dance for the first time, he spoke about his experience of shooting for Cocktail. Sharing the experience of trying his hands on dancing in the song, Nawa-

uddin told IANS: "Cocktail" was really a surprise for me. For me, acting is much easier compared to dancing. When it comes to dancing, it's a nightmare for me. But I had a blast shooting for 'Cocktail'. The actor further mentioned that it's his first "out and out commercial song" and that he was quite nervous before the shoot of the track.

Bhumi Pednekar The New Darling of Fashion in India



KULBIR SINGH KALSI Chandigarh

Bollywood actor Bhumi Pednekar has been making headlines for her stunning fashion choices, justifiably, she has never failed to serve ground-breaking statements credited to a style evolution that is noteworthy. If her fashion trajectory is any proof, you will know that she's got a propensity for unique and bold sartorial fashion. The talented actress has established a reputation for remaining true to her creative fashion sense, carrying off every look with elegance and transcending trends. At present Bhumi Pednekar is in her internet-breaking fashionista era, a glance at her recent appearances in the past few months proves the same. The star has been serving one incredible look after another in gorgeous designer fits. Bhumi Pednekar's fashion

journey has been an interesting one, and she has succeeded in creating her own distinct style over time which is nothing short of creative brilliance. Her fashion sense has evolved over the years, and she is now considered a style and fashion savant. She is often seen wearing outfits from some of the biggest names in the fashion industry and has graced the covers of fashion magazines. From red carpets to fashion shows, Bhumi knows how to make a statement with her fashion choices.

One thing that sets Bhumi Pednekar apart is her love for sustainable fashion. Being the first National Advocate for United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) for the SDGs and Goodwill Ambassador for Healing Himalayas, she champions for urgency to take sustainable and environmentally conscious fashion decisions. She often opts for outfits made from eco-friendly fabrics and promotes sustainable fashion.

Historical films need to be close to reality, cannot fantasise things: Mani Ratnam



MUMBAI: Filmmaker Mani Ratnam on Tuesday said the objective with historical films should be to stay honest to the events and yet make the story contemporary for the audience.

The critically-acclaimed director, who is awaiting the release of "Ponniyin Selvan II", said one cannot add elements to a period story which are not real.

"Whatever film you make, you try to make it as well as you can. But when it is a period drama and when it is historical, you try to go as close as you cannot fantasise it and add elements which are not real. (You) try to bring it as close to reality as possible."

Anupam Kher shared a clip of Anil inside a hyperbaric oxygen therapy chamber



MUMBAI: Ditching gyms, actor Anil Kapoor has now turned to oxygen therapy for keeping himself fit. Taking to Twitter on Monday, veteran actor Anupam Kher shared a clip of Anil inside a hyperbaric oxygen therapy chamber. It shows Anil inside the chamber with an oxygen mask on.

Anil shows thumbs-up sign and waved as Anupam recorded him. Sharing the video, Anupam captioned the post in Hindi: "Aare Kapoor saab! Aapne bataya nahi aap chand pe ja rahe ho? Unless this machine has something to do with your jawani ka raaz @AnilKapoor."

This is not the first times Anil has done something for fitness. He had earlier shared his workout video in which he was seen shirtless at -110 degree Celsius. On the work front, Anupam is gearing up for the release of 'IB 71' starring Vidyut Jammwal. He also has 'The Vaccine War', 'Emergency', 'The Signature' and 'Metro In Dino'. Anil is gearing up for his upcoming action thriller film 'Fighter' in which he will be seen alongside Hrithik Roshan and Deepika Padukone. He will also be seen in director Sandeep Reddy Vanga's upcoming gangster drama film 'Animal'.

A complete **KNOWLEDGE CAPSULE**

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