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## CM bats for optimum utilisation of MGNREGA scheme for development of rural areas

**CHANDIGARH:** Punjab Chief Minister Bhagwant Mann on Friday batted for optimum utilisation of The Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA) scheme to give boost to development in rural areas on one hand and provide livelihood opportunities on the other hand.

Chairing a meeting here to review the functioning of scheme here today, the Chief Minister said that this scheme is important as it provides enhancement of livelihood security, giving at least 100 days of guaranteed wage employment in every financial year to every household, whose adult members volunteer to do unskilled manual work. He said that the scheme has been implemented in all districts across the state



from April 2008 adding that state government will enhance the budget of this ambitious scheme upto Rs 2000 crore. Bhagwant Mann said that it is heartening to learn that 11.53 lakh active job cards are there in state with 14.86 lakh active workers.

The Chief Minister be-  
moaned that wage rate notified under MGNREGA for State Rs 303/- is less in comparison to neighbouring State Haryana where it is Rs 357 adding that the state government will vehemently raise this issue with the Union government. He

also said that state government will also make concerted efforts for Inclusion of "Laying of Underground Pipeline" activities in Permissible List for accelerating works relating irrigation, water supply and sanitation can be undertaken. Bhagwant Mann also said that the state Government will also request government of India to provide Corpus funds under the scheme.

The Chief Minister also said that the state government will also seek enhancement of Mandays Budget given by GOI as only 250 lakh mandays target for the State has been assigned which is too less than previous year achievement of 321 lakh mandays. He also underscored the need to further popularise the scheme for giving benefits to the com-

## Indian economy rose by 87 per cent in 9 years: FinMin



**NEW DELHI:** The economic growth of India has increased by over 87 per cent in the nine years to 2023, said the Finance Ministry on Monday.

Union Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman's office said in a tweet, "India's GDP has reached USD 3.75 trillion in 2023, from around USD 2 trillion in 2014; moving from 10th largest to 5th largest economy in the world. India is now being called a Bright

Spot in the global economy." The Chief Economic Advisor (CEA) V Anantha Nageswaran at an event in Kerala on Monday said India is set to become the third-largest economy by 2027. "India is becoming consequential for the world economy because of our progress from number 10 position to number five," Nageswaran said. He said India's average contribution to world GDP rose from 1.1% in 1998-2007 to 5% in 2010-2019 and is estimated to be 6% in 2021-2028. "India's contribution will only become better if we continue to deliver on our potential and promise."

Last week the CEA had said that both the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) and the Ministry of Finance believe 6.5% is the estimated growth for FY24 and the risks to this growth rate are evenly balanced

## PM Modi reviews situation related to Cyclone Biparjyo



**NEW DELHI:** Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Monday reviewed the situation related to Cyclone Biparjyo which is likely to hit the Kutch region of Gujarat on Thursday. The meeting was attended by Union Home Minister Amit Shah, Principal Secretary to Prime Minister P K Mishra, Cabinet Secretary Rajiv Gauba, Earth Sciences Secretary M Ravichandran, Kamal Kishore, Member National Disaster Management Authority, India, Meteorological Department Director General Mruyujay Mohapatra, among others. According to a presentation made during the meeting, Kutch, Devbhumi Dwarka, Porbandar, Jamnagar, Rajkot, Junagarh and Morbi could experience stormy weather with a wind speed of 125-135 kmph gusting to 145 kmph on June 15 morning to evening. Fishing activities along Gujarat's south and north coasts have been suspended and authorities were evacuating people in districts by the sea in view of Cyclone Biparjyo that is likely to make landfall along the Saurashtra-Kutch coasts as a very severe cyclonic storm, officials said on Monday. Officials in coastal Devbhumi Dwarka said around 1,300 people have been shifted to safer places so far. In its latest bulletin, the India Meteorological Department (IMD) said the 'extremely severe cyclonic storm' was very likely to move north-northeast and cross Saurashtra and Kutch and adjoining Pakistan coasts between Mandvi (Gujarat) and Karachi (Pakistan) by the June 15 noon as a 'very severe cyclonic storm' with maximum sustained wind speed of 125-135 kilometres per hours (kmph) gusting to 150 kmph.

## Sikh pilgrims gets visas to visit Pakistan on occasion of Maharaja Ranjit Singh's death anniversary: SGPC

**AMRITSAR:** The Shiromani Gurdwara Parbandhak Committee (SGPC) has received visas for 205 pilgrims for Sikh jatha going to Pakistan on the occasion of Maharaja Ranjit Singh's death anniversary. This jatha is scheduled to leave for Pakistan on June 21. SGPC secretary Partap Singh has informed that the passports of 276 pilgrims were sent for obtaining visas for their participation in Maharaja Ranjit Singh's death anniversary congregation to be held at Gurdwara Dehra Sahib, Lahore, and for visiting other Gurdhams (Sikh shrines) situated in Pakistan, out of which,



205 pilgrims received the visas. He said that 71 pilgrims have been denied visas by Pakistan Embassy in Delhi. As per Partap Singh, the Sikh Jatha will be dispatched from the SGPC office on June 21, and after visiting various Gurdwara Sahibs will participate in the congregation to be held at Gurdwara Dehra Sahib Lahore on June 29. This jatha will return to the country on June 30. He said that the pilgrims going with the jatha should get their passports from the SGPC office on June 20.

## Giani Raghbir Singh appointed as Akal Takht Jathedar; replaces Giani Harpreet Singh

**JAGMOHAN SINGH**  
Amritsar

The Shiromani Gurdwara Parbandhak Committee (SGPC) on Friday in an emergency meeting of Executive members of SGPC appointed Giani Raghbir Singh as the new (regular) Jathedar of the Akal Takht the highest Sikh temporal seat.

Giani Raghbir Singh replaces acting Jathedar Giani Harpreet Singh who was appointed in 2018 by the SGPC. He remained as acting Jathedar for the past four and a half years.

Now Giani Sultan Singh would be the next Jathedar Takht Kesgarh Sahib replacing Giani Raghbir Singh, said Dhami adding that now Giani



Raghbir Singh besides Jathedar Akal Takht would also hold additional charge of Head Granthi (priest) of Golden Temple Amritsar.

Addressing the press conference here, SGPC president Harjinder Singh Dhami informed that Giani Harpreet has resigned voluntarily from his additional charge as Jathedar Akal Takht and at the same time he will continue to serve as the Jathedar of Takht Damdama Sahib at Talwandi Sabo in Bathinda.

On being asked about the resignation of acting jathedar

Harpreet Singh as he had submitted resignation in writing, Dhami replied, "No, "I have talked to him over the phone and he gave his consent for the appointment of regular Jathedar Akal Takht", he quipped.

Adding further Dhami said, "It is not easy to leave such a significant post, but Giani Harpreet Singh has set an example. SGPC respects him for this act".

Talking to media after his appointment as Jathedar Akal Takht, Giani Raghbir Singh said, "I am thankful to Guru Ramdas Ji (Fourth Sikh master) who gave me privilege to serve as a Sewadar of Akal Takht Amritsar which Shiromani (supreme) Takht among five Takhts.

## 'Open US consulate in Chandigarh', Punjab Gov writes to EAM

**CHANDIGARH:** Punjab Governor Banwari Lal Purohit has written to the External Affairs Ministry (EAM) urging it to open a US Consulate in Chandigarh. The Governor said the Punjabis are adventurous who travel all over the world. They also form a sizeable segment of the Indian diaspora in the US. "The specialty of this segment is that its members are conscious of their roots and are in constant touch with their people back home in India. This makes a good case for a US consulate in Chandigarh, which is the nerve centre of Punjabi culture," Purohit wrote.

## 5 terrorists killed in JK's Kupwara



**FW DESK**

Security forces killed five foreign terrorists in Jammu and Kashmir's Kupwara district on Friday, according to the additional director general of police (ADGP) Kashmir, Vijay Kumar.

This encounter marks the first major attempt of infiltration in the region this year from the Kupwara sector.

The operation was initiated based on specific intelligence input leading to a joint operation by the Army and Police forces. The encounter took place in the Jumagund area along the Line of Control (LoC) in Kupwara district.

The Kashmir Zone Police had earlier shared this information through a tweet, stating that an encounter had commenced and that further details would be shared subsequently.

"An encounter has started between terrorists and joint parties of Army & Police on a specific input of Kupwara Police in Jumagund area of LoC of Kupwara district. Further details shall follow," Kashmir Zone Police had earlier tweeted. On June 13, two terrorists were neutralized during this operation in the Dobanar Machhal area along the LoC. The search operation is still ongoing in that region.

## WPI inflation in May drops to -3.48%; remains in negative territory second-month in a row

**NEW DELHI:** Wholesale Price Index (WPI)-based inflation of India in May declined to -3.48 per cent, said government data on Wednesday making it the second month in a row when WPI has been in negative territory. In April, the wholesale inflation was -0.92 per cent and the drop in May is also the lowest level since November 2015. The food wholesale inflation has fallen to -1.59 per cent in May as compared to 0.17 per cent in April, said the Ministry of Commerce & Industry. The inflation in fuel and power category was recorded at -9.17 per cent as compared to 0.93 per cent in April. For manufactured products the inflation fell from -2.42 per cent to -2.97 per cent in May. "Decline in the rate of inflation in May, 2023, is primarily contributed by fall in prices of mineral oils, basic metals, food products, textiles, non-food articles, crude petroleum and natural gas, and chemical and chemical products," the Ministry said.

## Congress demands answer from govt on Jack Dorsey's claim on facing pressures

**KAVITA SHARMA**  
New Delhi

Congress party today slammed BJP government over remarks made by Former Twitter CEO Jack Dorsey. The party chairperson of Social Media and digital platforms Supriya Srinate today attacked the Narendra Modi Government over the claims made by Former Twitter CEO Jack Dorsey that they had pressures from India on several issues including the major farmer's protest. This is "Murder of Democracy"... Govt should stop suppressing the social media she said. The Congress now demand answers from the Modi govt over these claims.

At a press conference in Delhi Surpiya said "Opposition voices are also suppressed by the government." Now truth has come out from Dorsey's statement and we need answers. There



cannot be any bigger proof of the weakening of democracy in the country. Senior Congress leaders Jairam Ramesh and Surjewala have also tweeted against BJP calling it a cowardly act, and have demand answers from the Prime Minister over these allegations.

When farmers were protesting in Delhi and adjacent borders in chilling cold, scorching heat and heavy rain last year, they were called terrorist and Mawalis. And platforms like Twitter were not allowed to show the farmer's concerns in India. If they did so they would be shut down" These are the allegations made by Jack Dorsey



in an interview to a Youtube show "Breaking Points with Krystal and Saagar". "India had many requests of us around the farmers protest, around journalists who were critical of the Govt and manifested in ways such as we were shut down in India, which is a very large market for us, homes of our employees will be raided, our offices will be shut if we don't follow this is India" Dorsey said.

Citing an example of how recently a Union Minister threatened a journalist in Amethi who lost his job after it. Surpiya said Intimidation of media, journalists and social media platforms should stop immediately.

## Govt cuts import duty on refined soybean & sunflower oils to 12.5%



**NEW DELHI:** The government has reduced the import duty on refined soybean and sunflower oils to 12.5 per cent from 17.5 per cent with effect from Thursday to boost the domestic availability and check prices, a finance ministry notification said. Usually, India imports 'crude' soybean and sunflower oils and not their 'refined' form. Yet, the government has reduced the duty on refined soybean and sunflower oils. With this reduction, the effective duty on refined edible oils stands at 13.7 per cent, including cess on social welfare.

## India asks EU to consider exemptions for MSMEs from carbon tax

**NEW DELHI:** The central government has spoken to European Union (EU) officials regarding exemption for Indian MSMEs from the bloc's carbon tax, which will be implemented from October this year, said Commerce Secretary Sunil Barthwal on Thursday. Understanding the impact the levy would have on domestic industry sectors, India held a stakeholders' consultations meeting on the issue last month and discussed the preparedness of the industry for the Carbon Border Adjustment Mechanism (CBAM) compliance. The compliance is in two parts - a requirement of filing data from October and later imposition of the tax. The secretary also flagged the matter with the EU authorities during the Trade and Technology Council (TTC) meeting in Brussels last month.

## BJP-RSS maligned UPA by promoting Anna Hazare, Kejriwal: Ashok Gehlot

**JAIPUR:** Rajasthan Chief Minister Ashok Gehlot accused the BJP-RSS of maligning the atmosphere against the erstwhile UPA government.

"By promoting Anna Hazare and Arvind Kejriwal, the BJP-RSS created an environment against the UPA government. It also defamed the UPA by raising the issues of 2G spectrum, Coalgate etc. Today, no one takes the names of these 'scams'. Did anyone go to jail? There was so much hue and cry over Lokpal, but it is hardly discussed in the country today. However, government changes in the name of religion," Gehlot



said while addressing the Gandhi Darshan Sammelan here on Wednesday.

Targeting the Central government, Gehlot said that 'critics' are being treated as 'traitors'. "I like when me or my govern-

ment is criticised. It may be that there are some areas where there is scope for improvement. What's the problem with that? If I don't like criticism, how will the truth come out? The allegations levelled by the Twitter co-founder (Jack Dorsey) are serious, the situation is not good," said Gehlot. To recall, during an interview on a YouTube channel on Monday, Dorsey was asked if he had faced any pressure from foreign governments.

Dorsey had replied: "India, for example, India is one of the countries which had many requests around farmers protests, around particular journalists

which were critical of the government, and it manifested in ways such as 'we will shut Twitter down in India'... 'we would raid the homes of your employees', which they did; 'we will shut down your offices if you don't follow suit'. And this is India, a democratic country."

Gehlot further alleged that the Constitution is being torn to pieces in the country.

"Those in power at the Centre do not like criticism, and want to eliminate the opposition. If there is no opposition in a democracy, what is the point of having a government," Gehlot asked.

## BJP afraid of holding Assembly polls in J&K: Omer Abdullah

**FW DESK**

The NC leader and former Jammu and Kashmir Chief Minister Omer Abdullah once again said on Wednesday that the BJP is not interested in holding elections in the union territory and dared it to conduct the exercise.

"Let them hold the Parliament and assembly elections here together, we will see who stands where," Omer said. The former chief minister said that the delayed elections in the region was indicative of the existing crises and criticized the government for being afraid to hold elections due to widespread discontent among the people. Responding to a question on films being made to



"defame" Islam, Omer Abdullah said, "Islam is not so weak that a film made by someone would impact our religion."

"We know there are some people who have so much hatred for our religion that they cannot tolerate us and they often make these kinds of movies in between. We have been negotiating them and will continue to do so," he added.

Talking about the upcoming union meeting of opposition parties in Bihar on June 23, Omer Abdullah stated that the National Conference has a limited role to play in the gathering. He, however, highlighted that parties with a significant number of seats in Parliament should demonstrate unity.



# Sukhbir Badal condemns AAP government for putting unprecedented burden on the common man and farmers by increasing VAT on fuel

**TARN TARAN:** Shiromani Akali Dal (SAD) president Sukhbir Singh Badal today condemned the Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) government for putting an unprecedented burden on the common man and farmers by repeatedly increasing VAT on petrol and diesel, including the latest hike which has made petrol and diesel amongst the costliest in the region.

In a statement issued today, he demanded an immediate withdrawal of the arbitrary increase, the SAD president said instead of causing misery to the common man the government should save money by putting the brakes on its multi hundred crore advertising spend.



"There won't be any need to raise additional resources as is being asserted by the AAP government if it ends its reckless advertisements as well as publicity gimmicks".

Sukhbir Badal who was here to attend the bhog ceremony of senior leader Harmeet Singh Sandhu's father Surjit Singh Sandhu, said on the one hand the government was claiming

that it was giving 300 units free power but on the other it had severely pruned several social welfare benefits including old age pension scheme, aata - daal scheme, Shagun scheme and SC Scholarship scheme. It has also put an end to free cycles for girls scheme, Teerath Yatra scheme, free utensils scheme, gyms as well as Suvudha Kendras and Sewa Kendras. Now it has increased VAT on petrol and diesel. This only shows the duplicitous nature of this government which is taxing the people above and beyond the benefits extended to them. It is a true case of giving with one hand and taking back with two", he asserted.

Badal also congratulated the

10 students of the Maharaja Ranjit Singh Armed Forces Preparatory Institute, Mohali who have been commissioned into the armed forces yesterday. He said he was proud that the academy, which had been established by former chief minister Parkash Singh Badal, was making Punjab and Punjabis proud. "As many as 136 students of this Institute have been commissioned into the armed forces which has re-ignited Punjab's contribution to the forces, especially in the officer's category". He offered his heartiest congratulations to the Maharaja Ranjit Singh Preparatory Institute on the occasion.

# Several retired employees in Haryana getting pension wrongfully on CBI radar

SATISH HANDA

Large number of old-age pensioners, including senior officers of IAS and IPS ranks retired from Haryana government services have been found getting monthly amount of pension wrongfully since past several years, according to investigation by Anti Corruption Bureau (ACB) in Haryana state. Punjab and Haryana Court has taken a serious view of the same and handed over investigation to CBI to register FIRs against those involved in cheating government since a long time in spite of the fact many of them were already died since past many years ago.

According to the status report submitted by ACB to Punjab and Haryana High Court in September 2022 as many as 13479 retired government employees including many senior officers even of the IAS and IPS ranks were found receiving amount of pension worth crores of rupees after their retirement wrongfully, whereas large number of them have already been found receiving pension amount every month in spite of the fact they were expired long ago as observed during investigation by ACB and they were receiving pension amount every month illegally.

Information also reveals that amount worth about Rs



7.57 crore has to be recovered from 6722 pensioners in Haryana state obtained amount wrongfully. Amount worth Rs 4.58 crore was recovered by the government, but after the year 2018 no amount has been recovered from the pensioners cheating state government in spite of the fact 18420 persons were detected in September 2022 as many as 13479 retired government employees including many senior officers even of the IAS and IPS ranks were found receiving amount of pension worth crores of rupees after their retirement wrongfully, whereas large number of them have already been found receiving pension amount every month in spite of the fact they were expired long ago as observed during investigation by ACB and they were receiving pension amount every month illegally.

Punjab and Haryana High Court took a serious view over the status report submitted by the ACB, blaming officers of Social Welfare Department in the state allegedly neglected their duties and taken no action on such a large number of embezzlements, and conducted verification of the pensioners getting amount from time to

time wrongfully. Court directed stern action against those pensioners getting pension amount amounts wrongfully as well as government officers responsible for irregularities in their duty for such a long time. Court directed Anti Corruption Bureau to register FIRs against those involved in frauds and also take action against irresponsible government staff as well as village Sarpanches and Municipal Councillors made fake verifications as regard pensioners getting pension amount in spite of the fact they died long ago.

According to information, during ACB investigation it was observed that nearly 14000 pensioners are getting pension every month wrongfully in Kurukshetra district alone in Haryana state and most of them have already been died long ago list of those have been forwarded to CBI for further action and recoveries of the amount.

# For peace in Haryana both Tikait & Chanduni should be arrested and locked behind bars: BKU (Maan)

SATISH HANDA Chandigarh

Talking to media persons Bhartiya Kisan Union (Maan) president Thakur Guni Parkash said that repeated farmers protest for the welfare of farmers, players or any other reason are disturbing life of people in general due to frequent highway blocks by the a handful of farmers on the direction of BKU leaders Rakesh Tikait and Gurnam Chanduni for their self-vested interest as a result not only people travelling on the highway are getting inconvenience as well as harm but also entire farmers community is being adversely blamed and cursed. Guni said, in case the Haryana state government arrests both leaders and push them behind bars at Dibrugarh jail there will be total peaceful life for everyone. Guni said, Haryana state government has increased special incentive on Sunflower crop as such MSP on this crop have reached about Rs 5800 per quintal. He appreciated the Haryana state government providing Minimum Support Prices (MSP) on 14 types of crops in the state. Guni said, majority of farmers are not interested to participate in such protests harming public.

# Five arrested in Ludhiana cash van robbery case

**CHANDIGARH:** In a major breakthrough, Ludhiana Police, supported by counter intelligence, have solved the cash van robbery case involving Rs 8.49 crore of cash management service company CMS -- Connecting Commerce -- in less than 60 hours, Punjab Director General of Police Gaurav Yadav said on Wednesday.

He said out of 10 accused involved in planning, five main apprehended and major recovery effected. Investigations are ongoing, he added.



Armed masked robbers had decamped with Rs 8.49 crore from the office of a cash management services company after holding five employees, including two security guards,

captured in the New Rajguru Nagar locality in Ludhiana on June 10. The robbers barged into the premises at 1.30 a.m. and fled within an hour. Commissioner of Police Mandeep Singh Sidhu told the media the security system of the CMS company's office in Aman Nagar of New Rajguru Nagar was outdated and the company had put the lives of its employees at risk. The commissioner of police said during investigation the police found that the security system of the company was not working and the company officials were aware about it but they did not take it seriously as the money was insured. Special teams had been formed to track the criminals.

# Cash Rs. 10 lac looted in Amritsar

**AMRITSAR:** In a daylight incident unidentified accused looted Rs. 10 lac from the employee of a cash management company here today.

Confirming the incident here today, Police said that some unidentified accused looted Rs. 10 lac from Sharanjeet Singh an employee of private Cash Management Company when he was moving back to his office after collecting cash from different locations of the city.

Police said that as per the statement given by the victim Sharnjeet Singh who stated that unidentified youth who intercepted him in the middle of the Road near the Guru Nanak Dev



University area, sprinkled red chillies in his eyes and attacked with sharp edged weapon on his arm and snatched a bag containing Rs. 10 lac cash and fled away. Police said that an investigation was underway, CCTV cameras of nearby areas were being checked to find out the clue. Presently the victim was hospitalized for his eye treatment as red chilly was thrown in his eyes by the looters.



BJP National President JP Nadda meets party leader and former Punjab chief minister Amarinder Singh, in Mohali on Thursday. PHOTO: PRABHJOT GILL

# SGPC President Harjinder Singh Dhani comes in support of farmers protesting in Kurukshetra

**Says governments should ensure to procure crops of farmers, the backbone of country, at minimum support price**

JAGMOHAN SINGH Amritsar

The Shiromani Gurdwara Parbandhak Committee (SGPC) has supported the protest started by the farmers at Pipli, Kurukshetra in Haryana over the issue of minimum support price (MSP) for crops.

In a statement here today, SGPC President Harjinder Singh Dhani said that he strongly supports the farmers' protest. He said that farmers are the backbone of the country, on whose heads the economy of the country and the life of the people depend. Suppressing the farmers and ignoring their rightful demands is unfair to this important section of the country.

Dhani said that it is the responsibility of the government to ensure the purchase of farmers' crops at the MSP, but it is sad that the farmers of Haryana have to struggle for this. He said that the demand of farmers to bring the MSP and the procurement of crops under the ambit of law is absolutely legitimate and the government should not ignore it.

The SGPC President said that injustice to the farmers of the country is not right. He expressed regret that the ad-hoc Haryana Sikh Gurd-



wara Management Committee (HSGMC) nominated by the Haryana Government is not providing langar (free food from the community kitchen) from the Gurudwara Sahibs under its management. He said that when the management of Gurdwaras in Haryana was under the SGPC, at that time the langar service for the farmers' protest at Delhi was ensured continuously for a year. He said that the principle of the Guru house is to support the needy and the people struggling for their rightful demands. This is as per the teachings of the Gurus, but when the government-nominated committees start favoring the government instead of standing with humanity, it is directly against Sikh principles.

Harjinder Singh Dhani also strongly condemned the Punjab government's action of forcible removal of protest by farm leader Jagjit Singh Dallewal at Patiala. He said that the Punjab government was not doing good by standing against the farmers. He advised Punjab Chief Minister Bhagwant Singh Mann that he should value people's sentiments to take decisions in favor of the people.

# HVPN collected nearly Rs 13 cr fine in 3955 raids in two days in Haryana



SATISH HANDA Chandigarh

551 teams of Haryana Vidyut Prasaran Nigam (HVPN) in a special campaign against those involved in power thefts collected amount worth Rs 13 crore towards fine from domestic as well as industrial consumers all over in Haryana state conducting raids continuously for two days on Wednesday and Thursday in which 3955 power consumers were found involved in electricity theft and in most of the cases the consumers were found having Kundi connections direct from electricity poles. Power Minister Chautala said that FIRs are being registered against those involved in thefts and their electricity connections are being disconnected with immediate effect.

According to information, maximum number of power theft cases were detected in Gurugram Zone, followed by Faridabad, Palwal, Rewari and Narnaul in which 1805.72 KW electricity worth Rs 3.5 crore was detected in circle in which fine amount worth over Rs 3.5 Cr on defaulters. According to information, Panipat district in the state worst affected where every 13th consumer was caught involved in electricity theft, vigilance team kept an eye over those feeders having maximum line losses. The team observed nearly 408.57 KW electricity theft here. Similarly, 38 teams checked 1089 electricity connections at Karnal and detected power theft at 95 places at Karnal. Vigilance team observed that

several consumers at Bhiwani were found having controlled electricity meters with the help of remote system and most of the air conditioners running with electric connection collected direct from electricity poles in rural areas. Information reveals that 264 teams were deployed for checking on Thursday caught as many as 1300 consumers involved in electricity theft which caught as many as 995 cases of electricity theft of 1864 KW load at Panchkula, Ambala, Karnal, Kaithal, Kurukshetra and Sonapat.

Districtwise cases of electricity theft and amount of fine imposed on consumers was identified as fine worth Rs 77.02 lakh was recovered from 180 electricity theft cases at Panipat, Rs 35 lakh fine recovered from 178 consumers in Hisar, Rs 20 lakh fine recovered from 63 consumers in Ambala, Rs 20.50 lakh fine recovered from 95 consumers in Karnal, Rs 38 lakh fine recovered from 117 consumers in Kaithal Rs 22 lakh fine recovered from 68 consumers in Sirsa, Rs 38 lakh fine recovered from 198 consumers in Rohtak, Rs 15 lakh fine recovered from 68 consumers in Yamunanagar, Rs 21.60 lakh fine recovered from 89 consumers in Kurukshetra, Rs 26.92 lakh fine recovered from 29 consumers in Jind, Rs 27.66 lakh fine recovered from 24 consumers in Jhajjar, Rs 23 lakh fine recovered from consumers in Fatehabad, Rs 15 lakh fine recovered from 63 consumers in Charkhi Dadri and Rs 35 lakh fine was recovered from 195 consumers in Bhiwani.

# Amity University spreads awareness on 'Environment Conservation'

The University is now 'Single Use Plastic Free'

KULBIR SINGH KALSI Mohali

Amity School of Earth and Environmental Sciences of Amity University here under the initiative of Environment Information, Awareness, Capacity Building & Livelihood Program (EIACP), Punjab State Council for Science & Technology, held an event to spread awareness on the need to safeguard the environment.

A rally was held on the theme 'Solution to Plastic Pol-



lution' where students and faculty members spread the message of sustainable habits with slogans such as 'say no to single use plastic', 'save environment', 'save world, save life, save future' and more.

Speaking on the occasion,

the Vice-Chancellor of Amity University, Prof. R K Kohli, emphasized on the importance of saving mother earth and how every individual can contribute to creating a sustainable future. Prof. Kohli also made a significant declaration

# The Shaheed Smarak not only belongs to Ambala its heritage of the whole world Ashwini Choubey

**AMBALA:** Minister of State for Environment, Forest and Climate Change and Consumer Affairs, Food and Public Distribution Ashwini Kumar Choubey met the Home and Health Minister Anil Vij at his residence today at Ambala. Home and Health Minister Anil Vij welcomed the Minister of State by giving a bouquet.

After this, Minister of State for Food and Public Distribution Ashwini Kumar Choubey along with Home and Health Minister Anil Vij visited the Shaheed Smarak related to the revolution of 1857 being built on 22 acres on the Ambala-Delhi National Highway. Union Minister of State Ashwini Kumar Choubey, after visiting the Shaheed Smarak, congratulated Haryana's Home and Health Minister Anil Vij for making this Shaheed Smarak and praised Anil Vij. This Smarak world's captivating image is about to be established. In the coming days, the Prime Minister of the country will inaugurate it on the invitation of Home and Health Minister Anil Vij. He said that the Shaheed Smarak to be built here is a message to the world and the complete depiction of the revolution of



1857 will be shown here. The construction of this Shaheed Smarak here will send a strong message across the world, he added.

He said that it is a matter of happiness for everyone to have this Shaheed Smarak in the Amrit times of independence. He said that the history related to the revolution of 1857 would be seen in this Shaheed Smarak. Praising Home and Health Minister Anil Vij on the occasion, he said that this Shaheed Smarak is being built according to his vision. This heritage will not only be for Ambala but for the whole country and the world. He also said that this Shaheed

Smarak, built with the special efforts of Home and Health Minister Anil Vij, will be an immortal impression. People from all over the world will come here for tourism. He also said that bread and lotus were sent during the 1857 revolution (at that time of independence), after the construction of this memorial, such a beautiful sight will be seen.

Earlier, Home and Health Minister Anil Vij gave detailed information about the Shaheed Smarak to the Union Minister of State. He said that the first spark of 1857 revolution had arisen from Ambala. In the memory of the unsung heroes of the freedom struggle,

tion that 'Amity University is now a Single Use Plastic Free Campus'.

The event saw enlightening lectures by Dr. Ranjit Kaur, Program Officer, Environment Information, Awareness, Capacity Building & Livelihood Program (EIACP), and Dr. Jatinder Arora, Executive Director of the Punjab State Council for Science and Technology.

The students and other attendees took a pledge to inculcate the habit of carrying reusable bottles and bags, avoiding single-use plastic, and promoting sustainable alternatives.

# Cong needs to look dirt at their own clothes before imposing allegations on others

SATISH HANDA Ambala

Addressing media persons here at his camp office, Haryana Home & Health Minister Anil Vij advised Congress leaders in the state first to clean their own clothes before imposing allegations on ruling BJP-JJP alliance government in the state. He said large number of serious scams including 2G, Commonwealth Games, embezzlements in allotment of houses to war widows and there is a long list of embezzlements reported when Congress was ruling in the country as well as in Haryana state for 10 years. While referring to the statement made by HPCC president, Vij advised senior Congress leaders in the state as well as country they should first clean their own dirty clothes before commenting



on others. Vij said, investigation in the case against former Haryana Chief Minister

Bhupinder Singh Hooda, also leader of opposition in Haryana Vidhan Sabha, is presently under trial in the court. Haryana Home Minister said that the ruling BJP-JJP government in the state has brought all data on line at a platform to bring transparency in government works. He said, Randeep Surjewala has no right to speak about the farmers in Haryana state since the ruling government is serious on the issues related to the welfare of farmers and solve their problems asking Congress leaders in the state not to worry since the ruling government is competent to solve such issues.



# Cong slams Centre after Law Commission seeks public opinion on Uniform Civil Code

**NEW DELHI:** A day after the Law Commission sought suggestions of public and recognised religious organisations on the Uniform Civil Code (UCC), Congress on Thursday termed it Modi Government's "desperation for a legitimate justification of polarization and diversion from its glaring failures".

In a statement, Congress general secretary Jairam Ramesh said that the 22nd Law Commission of India notified its intention to examine the UCC. This was being done, on a reference sent by the Ministry of Law & Justice.

"It is strange that the Law Commission is seeking a fresh reference when in its press release it acknowledges that its predecessor, the 21st Law Commission had published a consultation paper on the subject in August 2018," Ramesh said. He also said that no reasons



are given for why the subject is being revisited except for vague references to "the relevance and the importance of the subject and also the various court orders". The real reason is that the 21st Law Commission, after carrying out a detailed and comprehensive review of the subject, observed that it is "neither necessary nor desirable at this stage" to have a Uniform Civil Code.

"This latest attempt repre-

sents the Modi Government's desperation for a legitimate justification of its continuing agenda of polarization and diversion from its glaring failures," Ramesh said hitting back at the government. He highlighted that the 21st Law Commission in para 1.15 of its 182-page Consultation Paper on Reform of Family Law submitted on August 31, 2018 said,

"While diversity of Indian culture can and should be

"This latest attempt represents the Modi Government's desperation for a legitimate justification of its continuing agenda of polarization and diversion from its glaring failures"

celebrated, specific groups, or weaker sections of society must not be disprivileged in the process. Resolution of this conflict does not mean abolition of all

differences. "This Commission has therefore dealt with laws that are discriminatory rather than providing a uniform civil code which is neither necessary nor desirable at this stage. Most countries are now moving towards recognition of difference and the mere existence of difference does not imply discrimination, but is indicative of a robust democracy."

Ramesh said that the Law Commission has produced an enviable body of work over the decades on numerous issues of national importance.

"It should be mindful of that legacy and remember that the interests of the nation are distinct from the political ambitions of the BJP," he added.

His remarks come a day after the Law Commission published a notice soliciting views and ideas of the public at large and recognised religious organisations about the UCC.

## Names of CBI, ED should be changed to 'BJP Sena': Kejriwal



**NEW DELHI:** Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal on Wednesday accused the Bharatiya Janata Party-led Central government of misusing the Enforcement Directorate (ED) and the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) by targeting the opposition leaders.

During a meeting with CPI general secretary D Raja and others, Kejriwal sought their support against the Central government's ordinance and accused it of using the CBI and the ED as tools for political purposes. Kejriwal tweeted, "The names of CBI and ED should be changed to 'BJP Sena.' There was a time when these investigative agencies were respected. Whenever they conducted raids or made arrests, it appeared that the person must have done something wrong. Today, these agencies have become mere political weap-

ons of the BJP."

Kejriwal also criticized a provision in the Union government's ordinance that allows them to establish commissions and boards for the Delhi government. "If that's the case, then why hold elections? The people of Delhi have decisively defeated BJP three times. They were only given 3 out of 70 seats once, and 8 seats in another election. The BJP was even defeated in the MCD. If they can't win, they want to control Delhi through backdoor tactics," Kejriwal said.

During the event, D Raja referred to Kejriwal as his great friend and expressed support for Kejriwal's stance on how the rights of Delhi are being undermined by the ordinance. "Our party stands with Arvind Kejriwal on this issue, opposing the Union government's ordinance," said Raja.

## Charge sheet filed against WFI chief, Delhi Police seeks cancellation of POCSO case



**NEW DELHI:** Delhi Police on Thursday recommended dropping of POCSO charges against BJP MP and outgoing WFI chief Brij Bhushan Sharan Singh but charged him with sexual harassment and stalking six women wrestlers.

The government had assured the agitating wrestlers including Olympic medallists Bajrang Punia and Sakshi Malik and fellow Olympian Vinesh Phogat that the charge sheet would be filed by June 15, following which they had suspended their stir. They were demanding Singh's arrest on allegations of sexual harassment against seven wrestlers, including the minor. Singh has denied all the charges.

The police recommended the cancellation of the complaint filed by the minor wrestler against Singh, citing "no corroborative evidence".

## Gold worth Rs. 47.45 lakhs seized at Airport



**JAGMOHAN SINGH**  
Amritsar

Gold worth Rs 47.45 lakh seized at Shri Guru Ramdas ji International Airport from the passenger who arrived here from Sharjah. In a statement issued here today, Customs official said that Customs staff of SGRD JI International Airport, Amritsar intercepted one passenger coming from Sharjah by Indigo 6E1428 flight in the evening of 15<sup>th</sup> June. He further stated that on personal search of the passenger, three white capsules were found hidden inside his rectum weighing 1072 grams. The recovered gold from the said 3 white capsules is 778 grams and market value of the said gold is Rs. 47.45 lakhs. The same was seized under section 110 of Custom Act, 1962. Further investigation is under process.

## Negative trend in wholesale prices should reflect in retail inflation after a lag; Monsoon a key factor to watch: ASSOCHAM

**NEW DELHI:** Drop in wholesale prices by 3.48 per cent for May 2023 is a pointer towards decline in the retail inflation in the coming months, once the bulk or mandi rates start reflecting in the CPI after a lag, ASSOCHAM Secretary General Deepak Sood said. "There is no doubt, prices are softening for most of the items even though there is a gap between the WPI measured inflation and CPI-gauged retail inflation. Negative trajectory in wholesale prices should help the overall input cost in the value chain. While we expect the trend to continue, we need to watch out how Monsoon plays out as food prices are influenced a lot more by rains than manufactured goods," Deepak Sood said.

## Pakistani drone seized at Tarn Taran

**JAGMOHAN SINGH**  
Amritsar

Punjab Police and BSF (Border Security Force) have jointly seized a Chinese made drone at the bordering village of Tarn Taran. In an official information here today, Police confirming the seizure of the drone said that the drone was seized near village Dall during a search operation of Punjab Police and BSF. Police said that the agriculture field where the drone was seized belonged to Kulwinder Singh resident of village Dall falling in the Khrala police station. FIR number 58 dated 14/06/23 u/s 10,11,12 aircraft act 1934 was registered in the Khrala police Station. Earlier today a joint search operation by Punjab Police and BSF was initiated on the basis of information about the arrival of drone of Dji Matrice Company made in China from Pakistan to Indian Territory.

## Karnataka CM Siddaramaiah Launch 'Shakti scheme' free bus travel for women across K'taka

**ARUNKUMAR RAO**  
Bengaluru

The Karnataka government on Sunday launched "Shakti Yojane", the scheme that provides free bus travel for women across Karnataka. Chief Minister Siddaramaiah and Deputy CM DK Shivakumar along with other ministers inaugurated the scheme at Bengaluru's Vidhan soudha and called it a move for women empowerment in the southern state. It was Congress's one of the five poll guarantee promises before the assembly elections. CM Siddaramaiah said during the launch that beneficiaries can also travel upto 20km inside neighbouring states.

The travel in ordinary buses will be free for all women in Karnataka, starting from 1 pm on Sunday. Speaking to the reporters, Karnataka transport minister Ramalinga Reddy said, "Our priority is to make travel convenient for women across Karnataka. We will also increase bus services in



those routes where shortage is observed. All women across Karnataka can travel for free from 1pm today."

The minister also asked the women to apply for Shakti smart cards in next three months. Answering about the privacy breach, "We have designed these smart cards in a way that the data privacy will not be breached. The portal will be open for next three month and I request women to apply for Shakti smart cards." Meanwhile, until the cards are issued, women who would like to avail

the free travel benefit must carry a government photo ID card with their residential address on it. It is compulsory for women to carry the Shakti smart card, after three months from June 11. The scheme applies for all women in Karnataka, including the transgender community.

The Shakti scheme applies only on the ordinary state run bus services of Karnataka. Airavat, Airavat Club Class, Airavat Gold Class, Ambari, Ambari Dream Class, Ambari Utsav, Fly Bus, Vayu Vajra, Vajra, Non-AC Sleeper, Ra-

"Our priority is to make travel convenient for women across Karnataka. We will also increase bus services in those routes where shortage is observed. All women across Karnataka can travel for free from 1pm today"

jahamsa and EV Power Plus AC buses are excluded in this scheme. The scheme doesn't also apply to those buses which travel outside the state. 50 per cent seats on KSRTC, NWKRTC and KKRTC's ordinary and express buses will be reserved for men.

## President Murmu to review Combined Graduation Parade at IAF Academy Dundigal



**NEW DELHI:** President of India Droupadi Murmu will review the Combined Graduation Parade of the 211th Course at Air Force Academy Dundigal, Hyderabad on June 17.

The Combined Graduation Parade (CGP) will be held with full military splendour. This will mark the successful completion of the demanding and challenging Pre-Commissioning Training of Flight Cadets of various branches of the Indian Air Force, said an official statement.

The President would be the chief guest and Reviewing Officer (RO) of the CGP. During the parade, ranks on the shoulders of the Flight Cadets are unveiled, representing the award of the President's Commission. The President will also pin the 'Wings' and 'Brevets' on

the chest of cadets, depending on the branch they are being commissioned into.

The ceremony also includes the presentation of 'Wings' and 'Brevets' to officers of the Indian Navy, Indian Coast Guard and cadets from Friendly Foreign Countries, who have been trained by the Air Force.

The President will also award the 'Sword of Honour' and the President's Plaque to meritorious Cadets in recognition of their performance.

The Parade will be followed by an aerobatic display by Pilatus PC-7 trainer aircraft, Flypast by the formation of PC-7, aerobatic show by Su-30 and synchronous aerobatic displays by the helicopter display team 'Sarang' and the Surya Kiran Aerobatic Team.

## NCP appoints Supriya Sule and Praful Patel as new working president of NCP

**KAVITA SHARMA**

Praful Patel and Supriya Sule will be the new working Presidents of the party, Nationalist Congress Party (NCP) declared today. The party President Sharad Pawar announced it in the 25th anniversary function of the party in New Delhi. The announcement was made in the presence of Ajit Pawar, a key player in NCP.

Supriya Sule who was overwhelmed by this announcement has been given responsibility of Maharashtra, Haryana, Punjab, women youth and Lok Sabha coordination. "I am grateful to NCP president Sharad Pawar and all senior leader and my well wishers for giving me this responsibility" Supriya tweeted. Member of Parliament, Praful Patel who is also grateful to the party has been given responsibilities of Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan and Goa. "I have been working with Pawar saheb since 1999. So this is not new for me. I am happy to be elevated as working President I will continue to work for the betterment of the party, Praful said. NCP chief also said that



"I have been working with Pawar saheb since 1999. So this is not new for me. I am happy to be elevated as working President I will continue to work for the betterment of the party"

"Lok Sabha Elections are very important for us. All opposition parties are meeting on 23 June in Bihar to discuss and plan a strategy for the upcoming Elections". Its's high time opposition should unite against BJP,

he said. NCP leader Chagan Bhujbal said "they have been made the working presidents so that the Election work and Rajya Sabha and Lok Sabha work can be divided. Keeping in mind the upcoming Lok Sabha elections in 2024, Surpiya sule and Praful patel have been allotted more responsibilities, Chagan added.

The Nationalist Congress party was formed by Sharad Pawar and P. A Sangma on 10 June, 1999, had completed its 25 years today. Following which the party organized a function in New Delhi where all senior leaders were present. Many party workers and women workers also gathered to greet their favorite leader Sharad Pawar. The party also felicitated seven leaders of Nagaland that have made it in vidhan sabha this time.

## KHARGE ON GALWAN VALLEY CLASH ANNIVERSARY

# PM Modi's clean chit to China a body blow to national security

**NEW DELHI:** Congress on Thursday paid tributes to 20 soldiers, who died in Galwan Valley clash in 2020, and slammed the BJP-led Centre for not maintaining the status quo ante at the Line of Actual Control (LAC) and also said that Prime Minister Narendra Modi's "clean chit" to China was a body blow to national security.

In a tweet, Congress President Mallikarjun Kharge said, "A grateful nation pays heartfelt tributes to the supreme sacrifice made by 20 bravehearts in the Galwan valley, three years ago. Modi government is responsible for not maintaining the status quo ante at the LAC. We have lost possession of 26 Patrolling Points (PP) out of 65."

Lashing out at the Centre, Kharge, who is also the Leader of Opposition in the Rajya Sabha, said, "We have attempted to raise this issue several times in the Parliament, but the Modi govern-



ment wants to keep fellow Indians in the dark. Modi ji's 'clean chit' to China on Galwan is responsible for China achieving its nefarious designs. This is a body blow to our National Security and Territorial Integrity.

"Modi government's 'Laal Aankh' (red eye) has become blurred, on which it is wearing tinted Chinese glasses! As a responsible opposition, our job is to keep the country united against the Chinese expansionist policy and to show the mirror of truth to the Modi government," the Congress leader added.

At least 20 Indian soldiers died in the Galwan Valley clash in 2020.

## NIA attaches immovable property of Zahoor Watali in J&K

**FW DESK**

The immovable properties of Zahoor Watali who was arrested by the National Investigation Agency (NIA) in 2017 in connection with a terror funding case were attached by the agency.

The properties were registered in Watali's name in Handwara tehsil of Kupwara district in north Kashmir.

The attached properties include land measure 13.3 Marlas, 8.6 Marlas, and 10.3 Marlas. Notices of attachment



were erected near the land to inform the public about the action taken.

Prior to this, the NIA had already attached Watali's house in the Baghat area of Srinagar last month. The attachment of the properties was carried out

in accordance with the orders of the special NIA court located at Pataila House Courts in New Delhi.

Watali's arrest and subsequent attachment of his properties are part of the ongoing investigation into the terror funding case. The NIA has been conducting an extensive probe to uncover and prosecute individuals involved in funding terrorist activities in the region.

## ED summons Tamil Nadu Minister Senthil Balaji's brother, others for questioning next week

**CHENNAI:** The Enforcement Directorate (ED) has summoned arrested Tamil Nadu Minister Senthil Balaji's brother R V Ashok Kumar, personal assistant B Shanmugam and others for questioning next week in an alleged cash-for-jobs linked money laundering case, officials said.

The two, along with some other accused and a woman who is suspected to be linked to an alleged 'benami' land deal

related to the minister, have been called for recording their statements under the Prevention of Money Laundering Act (PMLA), they said.

They have been asked to depose before the agency at its office here on different dates next week. The agency had earlier claimed that Balaji allegedly "misused" his

office for illegal gratification and "engineered" a job racket scam in the state's transport undertakings during 2014-15 with purported kickbacks paid by candidates through his associates who included Kumar and Shanmugam.

Balaji, 47, was arrested by the ED on Wednesday and is

currently in hospital. Calling the minister the "prime suspect" in the cash-for-jobs case, the federal probe agency also stated in its custody papers that alleged unaccounted cash deposits worth about Rs 1.60 crore were made in the bank accounts of Balaji and his wife. The case against Balaji and his aides pertains to his tenure as the state transport minister in the AIADMK government during 2011-15.



# Inflation mustn't affect buying power of poor

The recent data on retail inflation in India reveals a mix of positive and concerning trends. In May, headline inflation reached a 25-month low of 4.25%, largely driven by the high price gains recorded in May 2022, where inflation had exceeded 7%. This deceleration aligns with the Reserve Bank of India's decision to pause monetary tightening as it evaluates the impact of past interest rate increases. However, month-on-month, the provisional Consumer Price Index (CPI) showed a consistent inflation rate of 0.51% in May, unchanged from April's six-month high reading. One of the notable contributors to the decline in year-on-year price gains was the deceleration in food item inflation, which dropped by 93 basis points to 2.91%. Oils and fats were particularly influential in driving down food prices, experiencing a 16% deflation. Additionally, the cereals and products category continued to deflate, with cereal inflation easing by over 100 basis points to 12.7%. However, caution must be exercised when interpreting the year-on-year moderation in inflation, especially within the food and beverages group, which accounts for 46% of the CPI. Nine out of its 12 sub-groups witnessed sequential increases in price levels. Vegetable prices, in particular, experienced 3.35% sequential inflation, nearly double the gains seen in April. Milk and dairy products also saw inflation rise to a three-month high of 0.67%, while pulses reached a 31-month high of 6.56% year-on-year. Policy-makers face the challenge of convincing consumers that inflation will be effectively managed to safeguard their purchasing power and savings. It is crucial to address the fluctuations in prices, particularly in essential food items, and create a favorable environment that instills confidence in the stability of prices. While the deceleration in overall retail inflation is a positive sign, sustained efforts are necessary to tame inflationary pressures, ensure long-term fiscal sustainability, and protect the welfare of Indian households.

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TO BE SUCCESSFUL, YOU HAVE TO HAVE YOUR HEART IN YOUR BUSINESS, AND YOUR BUSINESS IN YOUR HEART

THE FINANCIAL WORLD

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**DUVVURI SUBBARAO** SEEKS TOUGH DECISIONS TO ENSURE LONG-TERM FISCAL SUSTAINABILITY AND GUIDELINES FOR FREEBIE SPENDING

# Job for Finance Commission



The government will appoint a Finance Commission in the next few months to determine how much of the Centre's tax revenue should be given away to States (the vertical share) and how to distribute that among States (the horizontal sharing formula). In the pre-reform period, the Finance Commission recommendations were not that critical because the Centre had other ways to compensate States, or indeed to play favourites, through plan financing and public sector undertaking (PSU) investments. Post-reforms, fresh PSU investments have thinned out and the Planning Commission was abolished in 2014 with the result that the Finance Commission remains virtually the sole architect of India's fiscal federalism. Its responsibility and influence are, therefore, much larger. Currently, the Centre gives away 41% of its tax pool to the States. For sure, States will demand that this proportion be raised, but I do not see much room for stretching this further given the Centre's expenditure needs and the constraints on its borrowing limit. Therefore, much of the debate will centre on the horizontal distribution formula. When the previous Finance Commission was appointed in 2017, its terms of reference became quite contentious because it was asked to take into account the 2011 population figures in determining the expenditure needs of a State. This was a departure from the standard practice until then of mandating Finance Commissions to use the 1971 population numbers so as not to give a perverse incentive to States to neglect family planning with an eye on a higher share of devolution. States which had done well in stabilising population growth rates, typically the southern States, protested against this change in the base year, calling it a 'penalty for good performance'. A similar conflict arises with regard to revenue deficit grants that the Finance Commission awards to States which remain in deficit on

the current account even after tax devolution. In theory, revenue deficit grants have a neat rationale — that every State in a country should be able to provide a minimum level of service to its residents even if it involves an element of cross-subsidisation. The worry is that this too has become a perverse incentive. Why bother raising revenues on your own when the Finance Commission will compensate you? Historically, Finance Commissions have struggled to determine how much a State's deficit is due to its fiscal incapacity and how much is due to fiscal irresponsibility. They have tried to tweak the distribution formula to support deficit States without penalising responsible States, a mathematically impossible task since you cannot give more to a State without giving less to another. The net result is that every horizontal distribution formula has been criticised as being inefficient or unfair or both. These faultlines across States have in fact deepened in recent years along political, economic and fiscal dimensions. When the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) lost the Karnataka election last month, many political commentators read that as a north-south divide, with the BJP being confined to the northern States while the Opposition parties rule the southern States. Similarly, many headline numbers suggest that the southern States of the country are doing better in terms of infra-

structure, private investment, social indicators and the rule of law, which has put them on a virtuous cycle of growth and prosperity and widened the north-south gap. The bottom-line though is that it is in the very nature of horizontal distribution that richer States compensate poorer States. How to ensure that this happens without deepening the divide will challenge the government in defining the terms of reference of the Finance Commission, and of the Finance Commission itself in delivering on those terms of reference. **Cesses and surcharges** The terms of reference of the Finance Commission enjoin it to take into account the expenditure needs and revenue earning capacity of the Centre and States. I believe the forthcoming Finance Commission should use this leverage to focus on two issues in particular. The first is the egregious practice by the Centre of increasingly resorting to a levy of cesses and surcharges rather than raising taxes. A white paper released by the Tamil Nadu government a couple of years ago pointed out that the proportion of cesses and surcharges in the Centre's total tax revenue had nearly doubled from 10.4% in 2011-12 to 20.2% in 2019-20. There is a perverse incentive in operation here. The straightforward option for raising revenues is to raise taxes, but if the Centre does that, it has to part with 41 paise to States. On the other hand, if it raises the additional rupee by way of a surcharge, it gets to keep all of it. When the Constitution was amended in the year 2000 giving States a share in the Centre's total tax pool, the implicit understanding was that the Centre will resort only sparingly to cesses and surcharges, and not as a matter of routine as has become the practice. As a result of this breach of understanding, States have felt cheated out of their legitimate share of national tax revenue. The next Finance Commission should lay down guidelines for when cesses and surcharges might be levied,

and also suggest a formula to cap the amount that can be raised. **Restraint on freebies** The second issue of focus for the Finance Commission should be government spending on what has come to be called freebies. All political parties are guilty on this count, some more than others, but trying to apportion blame will be a wrong start. In a poor country, where millions of households struggle for basic human needs, it sounds cruel to argue against safety-nets for the poor. But it is precisely because India is a poor country, that we need to be more circumspect about freebies. In theory, the restraints imposed by the Fiscal Responsibility and Budget Management (FRBM) Act should have acted as a check on such populist spending, but governments have found ingenious ways of raising debt without it appearing in the budget books. It is not easy to unambiguously define a freebie, and any check on this will be contested as infringing on the sovereignty of elected governments. Nevertheless, the next Finance Commission should bite the bullet in the interest of long-term fiscal sustainability and lay down guidelines on the spending on freebies. After the BJP lost the Karnataka election, the Prime Minister said that the guarantees offered by the Congress in Karnataka were impossible to implement, and if taken forward, 'the country and the State concerned will become bankrupt.' Strong words indeed. In the State Assembly elections to be held later this year, the Prime Minister should walk the talk and invest his political capital to show that the promise of good governance can trump the lure of freebies. That will embolden the Finance Commission to formalise a mechanism for a restraint on freebies. *Duvvuri Subbarao is a former Governor of the Reserve Bank of India. Views are personal*



**P.J. NARAYANAN** CALLS FOR SYSTEMATIC EVALUATION OF AI'S EFFICACY IN INDIA, DISMISSING DOOMSDAY PREDICTIONS

# Reflections on Artificial Intelligence, as friend or foe

Artificial Intelligence (AI) has been dominating the headlines for its triumphs, and also fears being expressed by many including some of the best minds in AI. The Association for Computing Machinery released a statement in October 2022 on 'Principles for Responsible Algorithmic Systems', a broader class of systems that include AI systems. Several leading AI experts and thinkers have been part of different cautionary messages about AI, issued by the Future of Life Institute, the Association for the Advancement of Artificial Intelligence and the Center for AI Safety. There is deep concern about AI among many who know it. What is behind this? AI systems are capable of exhibiting super-human performance on specific or "narrow" tasks, which has made it to the news in the field of chess. Go (a game several orders harder than chess) and also in biochemistry for protein folding. The performance and utility of AI systems improve as the task is narrowed, making them valuable assistants to humans. Speech recognition, translation, and even identifying common objects such as photographs, are just a few tasks that AI systems tackle today, even exceeding human performance in some instances. Their performance and utility degrade on more "general" or ill-defined tasks. They are weak in integrating inferences across situations based on the common sense humans have. Artificial General Intelligence (AGI) refers to intelligence that is not limited or narrow. Think of it as human "common sense" but absent in AI systems. Common sense will make a human save his life in a life-threatening situation while a robot may remain unmoved. There are no credible efforts towards building AGI



yet. Many experts believe AGI will never be achieved by a machine; others believe it could be in the far future. A big moment for AI was the release of ChatGPT, in November 2022. ChatGPT is a generative AI tool that uses a Large Language Model (LLM) to generate text. LLMs are large artificial neural networks that ingest large amounts of digital text to build a statistical "model". Several LLMs have been built by Google, Meta, Amazon, and others. ChatGPT's stunning success in generating flawless paragraphs caught the world's attention. Writing could now be outsourced to it. Some experts even saw "sparks of AGI" in GPT-4; AGI could emerge from a bigger LLM in the near future. Other experts refute this vociferously, based on how LLMs work. At the basic level, LLMs merely predict the most probable or relevant word to follow a given sequence of words, based on the learned statistical model. They are just "stochastic parrots," with no sense of meaning. They famously "hallucinate" facts, confidently (and wrongly) — awarding Nobel prizes generously and conjuring credible citations to non-existent academic papers. True AGI will be a big deal if and when it arrives. Machines outperform humans in

every physical task today and AGI may lead to AI "machines" bettering humans in many intellectual or mental tasks. Bleak scenarios of super-intelligent machines enslaving humans have been imagined. AGI systems could be a superior species created by humans outside of evolution. AGI will indeed be a momentous development that the world must prepare for seriously. I believe current LLMs and their successors are not even close to AGI. But will AGI arrive some day? I reserve my judgement. However, the hype and panic about LLMs or AI leading directly to human extinction are baseless. The odds of the successors of the current tools "taking over the world" are zero. **Where the dangers lie** Does that mean we can live happily without worrying about the impact of AI? I see three possible types of dangers arising from AI. Superhuman AI: The danger of a super intelligent AI converting humans to slaves. I do not worry about such a highly unlikely scenario. Malicious humans with powerful AI: AI tools are relatively easy to build. Even narrow AI tools can cause serious harm when matched with malicious intent. LLMs can generate believable untruths as fake news and create deep mental anguish leading to self-harm. Public opinion can be manipulated to affect democratic elections. AI tools work globally, taking little cognisance of boundaries and barriers. Individual malice can instantly impact the globe. Governments may approve or support such actions against "enemies". We have no effective defence against malicious human behaviour. Well-meaning people have expressed concern about AI-powered "smart" weapons in the military. Unfortunately, calls for a ban are

not effective in such situations. I do not see any easy defence against the malicious use of AI. Highly capable and inscrutable AI: AI systems will continue to improve and will be employed to assist humans. They may end up harming some sections more than others unintentionally, despite the best intentions of their creators. These systems are created using Machine Learning from data from the world and can perpetuate the shortcomings of the data. They may introduce asymmetric behaviours that go against certain groups. Camera-based face recognition systems have been shown to be more accurate on fair-skinned men than on dark-skinned women. Such unintended and unknown bias can be catastrophic in AI systems that steer autonomous cars and diagnose medical conditions. Privacy is a critical concern as algorithmic systems watch the world constantly. Every person can be tracked always, violating the fundamental right to privacy. Another worry is about who develops these technologies and how. Most recent advances took place in companies with huge computational, data, and human resources. ChatGPT was developed by OpenAI which began as a non-profit and transformed into a for-profit entity. Other players in the AI game are Google, Meta, Microsoft, and Apple. Commercial entities with no effective public oversight are the centres of action. Do they have the incentive to keep AI systems just? *P.J. Narayanan is a researcher in computer vision and Professor and (ex-officio) Director of the International Institute of Information Technology (IIIT) Hyderabad. He was the President of the Association for Computing Machinery (ACM) India, and currently serves on the global Technology Policy Council of the ACM. Views are personal*

## BOOKS: REVIEW

# A thrilling exploration of history and identity

In Guy Gunaratne's "Mister Mister," readers embark on a thrilling exploration of recent history, specifically the pre and post-9/11 era. The narrative brims with an electric energy, its words igniting like selectively burnt magnesium wire. At times, it almost seems to present jihad as a career choice, challenging conventional perspectives. Gunaratne's first-person narrative, delivered through the voice of Yahya Bas, an orphaned Iraqi born in London to a troubled family, captivates and interrogates. Within the confessional framework, Yahya unveils his life's fragmented compartments to an unnamed special investigator, known as Mister Mister, while confined in a UK detention center. The novel unfolds in two distinct periods, from 1990 to 2005 and from 2010 to 2015. Yahya, often referring to himself as the goat boy,

witnesses the brutal episodes of global terrorist attacks. Throughout the story, Yahya grapples with the elusive meaning behind his experiences, comparing himself to an octopus—a translucent, spineless being navigating the world. One of the book's remarkable aspects lies in Yahya's ability to attract a following through his captivating poetic power. Gunaratne skillfully deconstructs language, using the melodic nature of Islamic verse peppered with English to forge connections between people based on sound and ideas. Readers are simultaneously entranced by Yahya's transformational journey and unsettled by the unsettling sense of inevitability in his choices. In this regard, Robert Verkaik's "Jihadi John: The Making of a Terrorist" provides a more candid account, examining the life and fetishization of a militant perpetrating acts of brutality on camera. Gunaratne, known for his debut novel "In Our Mad and Furious City" (2019), delivers a piercing portrayal of London's hidden immigrant pockets, shaking them to their core. He tackles the anguish experienced by disenfranchised migrants seeking absolution or, in more recent times, revenge, as a consequence of the

colonial legacy's deception and the subsequent search for identity and redemption. Gunaratne's annotated chapters read like a performance, with the author assuming the role of a master puppeteer, manipulating characters and teasingly pointing at the audience, exposing the hypocrisy of a corrupt and decadent society. His talent lies in captivating readers, much like the great Charles Dickens, by throwing minted chocolates amidst the haunted urchins and Jihadi Johns lurking in the shadows. "Mister Mister" is a tragic exploration of displacement on a global scale, its reverberations felt within our own communities. The "other," historically defined through the



**Mister, Mister**  
By Guy Gunaratne,  
Tinder Press;  
384 pages;  
Rs 899

colonial gaze, emerges as our doppelgänger, revealing the monster within ourselves. Gunaratne's work challenges readers to confront the complexities of identity, history, and extremism, leaving an indelible impact long after the final page is turned. Gunaratne's "Mister Mister" delves into the profound tragedy of not belonging, resonating on a global scale with deep repercussions in our own backyards. The novel deftly examines the grandchildren of the colonial agenda, individuals who find themselves lost and adrift, seeking redemption and identity in the midst of societal complexities. The author masterfully exposes the underlying tensions and struggles faced by those caught in the web of historical legacies. With meticulously annotated chapters, Gunaratne performs a literary tightrope act, weaving together narratives that challenge readers to confront their own biases and preconceptions. He skillfully highlights the hypocrisy and decadence of society, urging the reader to recognize their own complicity in the prevailing systems of power and oppression.



# Global leader Rakon Opens Hi-Tech Research and Manufacturing facility in Bengaluru

ARUNKUMA RAO  
Bengaluru

Global high-tech manufacturer Rakon inaugurated its cutting edge research and manufacturing facility, located in the SEZ Aerospace Park, Bengaluru on Wednesday. The facility is one of the world's and most sophisticated manufacturing sites for advanced frequency control and timing solutions and a symbol of Rakon's commitment to growing, and investing in, its operations. Rakon representatives were joined for the inauguration by Sankaran, Director, URSC, and Ms. Gunjan Krishna, Commis-

sioner for Industrial Development & Director of Industries and Commerce, Govt. of Karnataka.

Rakon is a world leader in the design and manufacture of advanced frequency control and timing products, which enable connectivity for thousands of electronic systems worldwide—from 5G networks and satellites to Autonomous vehicles and emergency beacons. Rakon CEO Dr Sinan Altug said during the inauguration that "The new facility represents an important milestone for our company and will future-proof our India operations. It is one of the world's largest and most sophisticated



manufacturing sites for advanced frequency control and timing solutions and a symbol of Rakon's long-term commitment to growing and investing in our operations here in India. Dr Altug expressed that "Make

in India is at the heart of our operations and we value our position as a trusted and strategic supplier to key agencies and leading companies across India's telecom, aerospace and defence industries. This can be seen in the fast-accelerating rollout of 5G network infrastructure, in which India is a world leader, that has further increased the demand for Rakon's industry-leading products among India's largest telecom companies and the Tier 1 telecom base station manufacturers. Also, in the space and new space sector, Rakon is proud to be working alongside ISRO to develop new products for their missions and deep space

programmes, including Mars Mission, Chandrayan and Gaganyaan". He added, Rakon's India operation, Founded and Based in New Zealand, Rakon began its India manufacturing operations more than 15 years ago. It has grown to become the largest designer, manufacturer and exporter of advanced frequency control and timing solutions in India. To date, Rakon has invested over USD\$10 million in land, building and equipment for the hi-tech manufacturing and research facility, and the company intends to invest a further USD\$35 million in its India operations over the next 3-5 years.

## Oracle lays off 100s of employees in its Cerner health unit

Cloud major Oracle has laid off hundreds of employees and rescinded job offers in its \$28 billion Cerner health unit, the media reported on Friday.

According to a report in Insider, citing sources, the company has also cut back open positions within its health unit "after troubles with a massive government contract". Oracle was yet to comment on the report. The news about layoffs at Cerner surfaced last month.

Oracle had acquired health-care records firm Cerner for \$28.4 billion. According to Insider, Oracle paused raises and promotions and "laid off thousands of employees in the unit" as recently as May after the acquisition closed in June last year.

The Cerner acquisition had brought in about 28,000 employees. Oracle has "not issued raises or granted promotions, and, earlier this year, announced that workers shouldn't expect any through 2023". Layoffs "affected workers across teams, including marketing, engineering, ac-

counting, legal, and product", said the report, citing a former employee.

The Cloud major is developing a national health records database. According to Oracle's Chairman and Chief Technology Officer Larry Ellison, the patient data would be anonymous until individuals give consent to share their information. Ellison has assured that Oracle's database will anonymise all patient data.

Cerner is a leading provider of digital information systems used within hospitals and health systems to enable medical professionals to deliver better healthcare to individual patients and communities. Oracle's new health records database will also involve the patient engagement system the company has been developing throughout the pandemic.

The Cloud major is also working on the patient engagement system's ability to collect information from wearables and home diagnostic devices.

## Salesforce to invest \$500 mn in generative AI startups, unveils AI Cloud



Enterprise software major Salesforce has committed \$500 million to invest in generative artificial intelligence (AI) startups.

The investment, an expansion from earlier \$250 million to \$500 million now, is part of its Generative AI Fund to support startups developing "responsible generative AI".

According to Salesforce Ventures managing partner Paul Drews, it will help the company to "work with even more entrepreneurs, accelerating the development of transformative AI solutions for the enterprise".

"We're already seeing AI change the way the world works, and we're excited to build on the momentum of our Generative AI fund," Drews added.

Salesforce also announced AI Cloud, a suite of capabilities optimised for delivering trusted, open, and real-time generative experiences across all applications and workflows.

AI Cloud's new Einstein GPT Trust Layer resolves concerns of risks associated with adopting generative AI by enabling customers to meet their enterprise data security and compliance demands, while offering customers the benefits of generative AI.

At the heart of AI Cloud is Einstein, the world's first AI for CRM, which now powers over one trillion predictions per week across Salesforce's applications.

"AI is reshaping our world and transforming business in ways we never imagined, and every company needs to become AI-first," said Marc Benioff, Chair and CEO, Salesforce.

"AI Cloud is the fastest and easiest way for our customers to unleash the incredible power of AI, with trust at the centre driven by our new Einstein GPT Trust Layer. AI Cloud will unlock incredible innovation, productivity, and efficiency for every company," he said at the company's event here.

## IHCL, Tata Trust to jointly set up skill centre in Rajasthan

JAIPUR: Indian Hotels Company (IHCL) has entered into a partnership with Tata Trust to set up a hospitality-focused skill centre at Umaid Bhawan Palace in Jodhpur, Rajasthan.

IHCL Executive Vice President-Human Resources Gaurav Pokhariyal said, "Rajasthan has a very strong growth potential in the tourism sector." "We are delighted

to partner with Tata Trust for the skill centre in Jodhpur, which will offer skill-building programmes to youth and also contribute to the overall growth of the industry," he said. As per reports, the first batch of 20 students is being trained in a 4-month food and beverage course, whose module is designed by IHCL as a knowledge partner and is

aligned to National Skill Development Corporation with Tata Trust as an implementation partner.



An official statement by IHCL said that the collaboration represents a significant step in IHCL's mission to contribute to the skill development and upliftment of individuals from economically weaker backgrounds.

able medical professionals to deliver better healthcare to individual patients and communities. Oracle's new health records database will also involve the patient engagement system the company has been developing throughout the pandemic.

The Cloud major is also working on the patient engagement system's ability to collect information from wearables and home diagnostic devices.

## NTPC Vidyut Vyapar Nigam commissions first solar rooftop project at IIT Jodhpur

NEW DELHI: NTPC Vidyut Vyapar Nigam Ltd (NVVN) has commissioned its first rooftop solar PV project at IIT Jodhpur, Rajasthan on June 14, 2023, according to a statement.

The 1 MW Grid connected solar project has been implemented by the NVVN under the RESCO model with Power Purchase Agreement duration of 25 years,



the statement said. NVVN is an arm of state-run power

producer NTPC. The project is set up on the roofs of 14 buildings inside the campus of the IIT. The project will generate around 14.9 lakhs units per annum and will meet 15 per cent of the electricity requirement of IIT Jodhpur.

## MONIN launches its second Indian flagship 'Experience Studio' in Bengaluru

ARUNKUMAR RAO  
Bengaluru

MONIN, a premium French brand and trusted partner for Hospitality professionals all over the world, has announced the launch of its exclusive "Experience Studio" in Bengaluru. The Studio is the latest among many such centres that MONIN has across the globe. This studio in Bengaluru is the second one in India, after New Delhi that was launched in 2021. The centre will serve as an innovation hub for HO-RECA professionals and educational institutes located in South India.

Germain Araud, Managing Director, MONIN India, sharing his views addressing press conference on new launch said, "With our new



Bengaluru Studio, we want to bring the exclusive MONIN experience to the connoisseurs in Southern India. We already have a center in Delhi and this is our next offering for the Indian audience whose taste changes every 100 Kms. As part of our 'Make in India' commitment, the company has a robust expansion plan for India and has a factory planned to be commissioned

in 2025". He said.

"With this Experience Studio, we continue with our mission of curating gourmet beverages for the people of India. MONIN has a rich legacy of being a sustainable brand and is looking at building a community here of like-minded creative people and entrepreneurs who believe in creating magic with flavours", he added.

Spread across a luxurious 2,000-square-foot, this Experience Studio located in prime location of Indiranagar, will act as a platform to conduct beverage innovation and personalized menu curation sessions for bartenders, mixologists, baristas, Chefs along with curating educational modules for Students of Bar Schools and Hospitality Institutes. This 'House of Innovation'

will offer its guests an opportunity to witness the world of artistic beverage and culinary creations at its best and act as a catalyst to exchange creative ideas and discover new applications catering to the Indian palette and bring together stakeholders of the beverage industry. In terms of the design of the space, an overlay of minimal neoclassical aesthetics enhances the mood making it warm and inviting. The space is a fine amalgamation of the history and heritage of the place, and the essence and exclusivity of the French brand. Sustainability is the key when it comes to the use of every design element here; right from the use of refurbished furniture to plants that makes the place an abode of tranquillity.

## China lacks behind Panipat in export of powerloom, carpet and textile machinery

SATISH HANDA  
Panipat

Textile and handloom manufacturing industry at Panipat now gaining popularity popularity in manufacturing and export of powerloom, carpet and other textile machinery all over in the world, especially in USA and European countries because of lower prices and superior quality as compared to machinery manufactured in China in past years. About five years ago, the manufacturers of textile and handloom products at Panipat used to import such machinery from China, but now the scenario have changed and equipment manufactured by the manufacturers in Panipat are in much demand in USA, all European and Asian countries and industry at Panipat already receiving export orders for value worth over Rs 100 crore annually, it was disclosed by Sukhbir Malik, President of Panipat Small Engineering Workshop Association while talking to The Financial World. Malik said, Panipat manufacturers are getting orders for the machinery required for manufacturing textile home



furnishing products including electronic powerloom of capacity ranging between 32 to 250 inch, carpet weaving machinery and other textile and handloom manufacturing equipment and recently supplied huge quantity of machinery to Nepal and Bangladesh also with satisfactory feedback that equipment manufactured in Panipat have much lesser wear and tear as compared to textile equipment manufactured in China. Malik told that small scale manual textile machinery was developed by Panipat machinery manufacturers years ago but textile manufacturers were having requirement for hitech textile machinery to compete textile industry in China, which have successfully been developed by Panipat entrepreneurs and 250 inch powerloom plus electrically operated machine

manufactured in Panipat is available at 10 nearly percent lesser price as well as better in quality as compared to machines manufactured in China. Malik told that textile machinery is also being manufactured at Amritsar in Punjab as well as Ahmedabad and Surat in Gujarat state, but these are not superior in quality than machinery developed at Panipat, besides are also higher in prices as compared to machinery manufactured at Panipat as well as machinery produced at Amritsar in Punjab, Surat and Ahmedabad in Gujarat state. Malik told that about 10 years ago government had assured to develop a common facility centre (CFC) at Panipat to boost manufacturing textile machinery for which 2218 meter land was also identified at Panipat and a budget was also approved by the government in which amount worth Rs 1.5 crore was to be spent by the state government and the remaining amount towards cost of equipment for Rs 12 crore was to be spent by government in centre but the project announced by the government years ago yet hanging on fire since then without any further action.

## Tata Consumer Products strengthens its Ready-to-Drink portfolio with Tata Coffee Gold- Cold Brew

NEW DELHI: Tata Consumer Products (TCP), the consumer products company uniting the principal food and beverage interests of the Tata Group under one umbrella, announced its entry into the Ready to Drink Cold Coffee category with the launch of Tata Coffee Gold-Cold Brew. This latest offering aims to redefine the coffee experience by delivering a unique blend of cold brew maintaining a rounded taste profile without any bitterness.

Tata Coffee Gold is brewed with cold water to retain its smoothness, using only the finest ingredients and is available in three variants - Classic, Mocha, and Hazelnut. Free from any artificial flavorings, it offers an authentic and genuine

coffee experience that is both refreshing and satisfying.

Speaking about the new launch, Vikram Grover, MD NourishCo Beverages Limited, Tata Consumer Products (the Ready-to-Drink business of Tata Consumer Products) said, "Our aim with Tata Coffee Gold-Cold Brew Ready-to-Drink Coffee is to provide an unparalleled coffee experience to our discerning customers. We have meticulously crafted this beverage to cater to the needs of coffee enthusiasts who appreciate a perfect blend of taste, quality, and convenience. With Tata Coffee Gold-Cold Brew, we are offering a product that delivers a

rich, rounded taste without any bitterness, while still providing a cold brewed coffee hit."

Carefully crafted for those who appreciate the finer things in life, this new beverage steeped for more than 12 hours offers a strong, rich, velvety taste that will captivate coffee connoisseurs. This well-crafted recipe ensures that each sip provides a perfect balance between indulgence and mindful consumption, making it an ideal lifestyle choice for coffee lovers. One of the key highlights of Tata Coffee Gold-Cold Brew Ready-to-Drink Coffee is its low sugar content, catering to health-conscious individuals without compromising on taste.

## Infinix launches 'Note 30 5G' with host of tech feature



ARUNKUMAR RAO  
Bangalore

Infinix, a renowned Smartphone brand, has unveiled its latest offering in the tech space, the Note 30 5G Smartphone, following the tremendous success of its previous 5G Smartphone model, Note 12 Pro 5G. This new Smartphone is set to be available on Flipkart starting from June 14th and is being hailed as the ultimate 5G device in its category. It boasts an impressive array of features, including a cutting-edge high-resolution camera, an immersive entertainment experience, generous storage capacity, rapid and safe charging capabilities, and a premium design that sets it apart from others in its segment. The Note 30 5G supports a total of 14 5G bands and is competitively priced at 13,999\* and 14,999\* for 8\*+128 GB and 16\* GB+256GB memory variants respectively.

Anish Kapoor, CEO of Infinix India, during launch said, "At Infinix, we are committed to meet the discerning demands of the consumers through constant innovation in technology and products. Infinix Note series has proven to be a success in bringing great product experience for our users and scaling the brand to newer heights. With Note 30 5G, we aim to fill the gaps in the industry driven by the lack of differentiated offerings in a 15K-20K segment. As we unveil the Note 30 5G, we are set to redefine the tech landscape through revolutionary features such as bypass and AI smart charging mechanism that will definitely solve the low-battery anxiety in people's everyday routines especially the gamers. The series will also offer our users a seamless fusion of premium aesthetics, unmatched performance, and immersive entertainment, all encompassed within one extraordinary device. We are confident that this Smartphone will give the consumers an optimal blend of 5G connectivity and exceptional value, empowering them to stay connected, entertained and enjoy an unparalleled user experience", He added.

## Talking Points

Narvijay Yadav



While artificial intelligence (AI) is expected to automate and change some jobs, it is also likely to create new job opportunities and require new skill sets from workers to stay relevant in future job markets.

In a constantly evolving world, one question is often asked: what is the future of work? With the arrival of artificial intelligence (AI), machine learning, social media, a variety of apps and ChatGPT-type technologies, the future of work is full of uncertainties. It is likely to be affected by a number of factors, including advancements in technologies and changes in the global economy. As artificial intelligence and robotics continue to improve, some jobs may

become automated, leading to fewer jobs in certain industries.

Artificial intelligence is expected to impact jobs in various ways in the future. Some jobs may become obsolete or completely automated, while others may require a different set of skills. AI is expected to automate many jobs that are repetitive and predictable, such as manual labour jobs, data entry work, and some customer service roles. It will also create new jobs in areas

## Tech will shape the future of work

such as software development, research, and cyber-security. It is also likely to impact industries such as healthcare, retail, finance, and transportation, and create new roles in these areas.

The pandemic accelerated the trend of remote work and it is likely to continue to be a popular option for many people. Working from home is a good trend, which saves a lot of travelling time and expenses for the workers, while it saves the cost of setting up offices for the employers as well. It has enhanced flexibility. As work becomes more digital and remote, workers may expect more flexibility in their work schedules and arrangements. With remote work becoming common, collaboration tools and virtual communication platforms will become increasingly important.



Some jobs may require new skills to work collaboratively with artificial intelligence, such as data scientists and engineers will be in high demand to build and maintain systems.

The gig economy or on-demand work, such as Uber, Ola, Zomato and Swiggy, may continue to grow. Upskilling and reskilling will definitely help workers to adapt to the changing scenario. As technol-

ogy evolves, workers may need to continually update their skills to remain relevant and fit for future roles. According to the World Economic Forum, 83 million jobs are projected to be lost and 69 million jobs are set to be created. Plus, 23% of the global labour market will witness a churn over the next five years.

The trend towards prioritizing work-life balance is likely to continue, with more

companies offering flexible working hours to promote employee well-being. Some jobs will likely require a blend of human and AI capabilities, like customer service roles may require skills in using AI-powered tools to assist customers. AI is likely to create new job opportunities and require new skill sets from workers to stay relevant in the future job market. Instead of being replaced by AI, most workers will likely work alongside fast-evolving machines. The future of work will see a shift in demand away from office support positions and other low-skill jobs, and towards tech professionals such as computer engineers and IT specialists.

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# Banks seek policy, guidelines for silver loans from RBI

The growth in silver exports in the last one year, jewellery manufacturers in India have been asking banks to extend credit for the procurement of silver, silver articles, and jewellery manufacturing



**NEWDELHI:** The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) has been reached out by banks to provide a policy framework for silver metal loans on the lines of the existing gold metal loans for borrowers.

exports have gone up around 16 per cent.

The growth in silver exports in the last one year, jewellery manufacturers in India have been asking banks to extend credit for the procurement of silver, silver articles, and jewel-

lery manufacturing, reported in media.

The silver exports had touched around Rs 25,000 crore and there was a huge demand for credit from this sector.

Silver is a precious metal

that has the most usage in the industrial sector and hence it gets affected by trends in both gold and industrial metals.

Under existing RBI rules for gold, nominated banks are authorised to import gold. The designated banks, who are a part of the Gold Monetisation Scheme, 2015, can extend gold (metal) loans (GML) to jewellery exporters or domestic manufacturers of gold jewellery.

Herein, the loans are repaid in rupees, which is equivalent to the value of the gold borrowed. Banks can provide the borrower with the option to repay a part of the loan in the form of physical gold in lots of one kg or more.

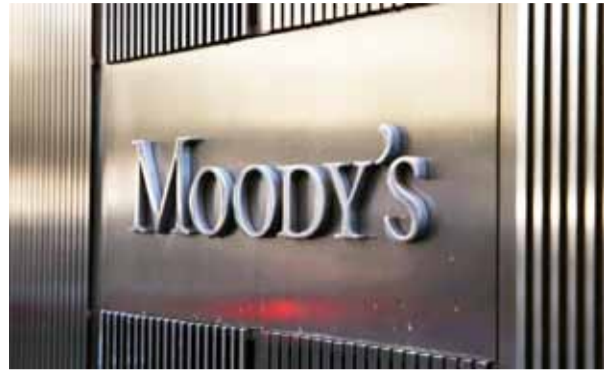
# Moody projects India's economy to grow at 6 to 6.3 pc in June quarter

**NEW DELHI:** The Indian economy is likely to witness a 6 to 6.3 per cent growth in the June quarter, said Moody's.

The Credit Ratings agency flagged risks of fiscal slippage arising from weaker-than-expected government revenues in the current fiscal.

In comparison to the Reserve Bank of India's (RBI) projection for the first quarter, Moody's growth estimate is 8 per cent lower than that.

In an interview with PTI, Moody's Investors Service Associate Managing Director Gene Fang said India has a relatively high level of general government debt at around 81.8 per cent of GDP for 2022-23, and low debt affordability. India, he said, has a high



growth potential and its credit strengths include a stable domestic financing base for government debt, as well as a sound external position.

"We expect India's growth to come in around 6-6.3 per cent in the first quarter of the

current fiscal year, which remains relatively flat from the 6.1 per cent recorded in the final quarter of fiscal 2022-23," Fang said.

While household demand is likely to see an improvement given the moderation in

both headline and core inflation readings, lagged effects of higher interest rates pose some risks on gross fixed capital formation, in particular, Fang added.

Fang said as a 'Baa3' rated sovereign, India's strengths lie in its large and diversified economy with a high growth potential, which is evident in the relatively strong growth forecast this year despite the weaker global economic outlook. For the full 2023-24 and 2024-25 fiscals, Moody's projects economic growth at 6.1 per cent and 6.3 per cent, respectively. On a calendar year basis, Moody's expects growth to be 5.5 per cent in 2023, which could improve to 6.5 per cent in 2024

## Gold jumps Rs 510; silver rises by Rs 450



**NEWDELHI:** Gold price jumped Rs 510 to Rs 60,210 per 10 gram in the national capital on Friday amid strong cues in international markets, according to HDFC Securities.

In the previous trade, the yellow metal had settled at Rs 59,700 per 10 gram.

Silver also climbed Rs 450 to Rs 73,050 per kg.

## Settle with Binance over asset freeze, judge urges US SEC



A US judge has urged the Securities and Exchange Commission (SEC) to reach a settlement with crypto exchange Binance to let it continue operating in the US.

The New York Times reported that Judge Amy Berman Jackson of the US District Court for the District of Columbia asked the two sides to reach a compromise over the asset freeze.

She ordered both the parties to continue negotiating and submit a status update by Thursday.

The judge also expressed skepticism about the SEC's use of its enforcement powers to regulate the crypto industry, calling it "inefficient and cumbersome".

At the end of the hearing, she suggested both sides come to an agreement on the SEC's request to freeze assets as soon as possible.

Last week, the US regulator sued leading crypto exchange Binance, its CEO Changpeng Zhao and BAM Trading and BAM Management over allegedly mishandling funds and lying to regulators.

In a federal lawsuit, the regulator filed 13 charges against the defendants. "Defendants unlawfully solicited US investors to buy, sell, and trade crypto asset securities through unregistered trading platforms available online at binance.com and Binance.US," the lawsuit read.

In court filings, Binance lawyers argued that the SEC's proposed asset freeze would prevent the crypto exchange from paying vendors, employees and suppliers, causing its operations to "quickly grind to a halt."

"We're not willing to accept a death penalty eight days into the case," a lawyer for Binance.US said at the hearing. The SEC has also charged another crypto exchange Coinbase with operating its crypto asset trading platform as an unregistered national securities exchange, broker, and clearing agency.

## W20 Communique recommends minimum 15% tax break for women-led tech start-ups



**CHENNAI:** G20's official engagement group, Women 20 Communique 2023 has recommended the government to provide a minimum 15 per cent tax break or other equivalent incentives for women-led technology and tech-enabled startups.

It has been suggested apart from incentives and subsidies for women entrepreneurs.

The group focussed on five major areas including climate change, entrepreneurship, the gender digital divide, grassroots leadership and education, skill development and labour force participation.

The document, released in

the inaugural session of the W20 Summit on Thursday, will be given to the G20 leadership.

After the release of the communique, Union Minister Smriti Irani announced that in collaboration with the W20 India group, the Ministry of Women and Child Development will put together a research paper to collate gender-related data across the nation.

Amitabh Kant praised the document and said that the world needs to bring in radical changes to achieve gender equality in 15 years as a recent study by the World Economic Forum has stated that it would take 132 years.

# India ready for a move from banking to neobanking, riding on UPI & ONDC: ASSOCHAM

FW DESK New Delhi

A pre-approved BNPL (Buy Now Pay Later) instrument, travel insurance at a boarding pass printing kiosk, auto-routing of cashbacks for micro-investment and seamless credit to pay for hospital expenses are amongst a host of embedded financial services that may be rolled out by neobanking business models, riding on a robust infrastructure like UPI and open networks, an ASSOCHAM-PwC study has pointed out.

A comprehensive knowledge paper 'Embedded financial services in India', brought out by ASSOCHAM-PwC stated that digital transformation built on the foundational blocks like Unified Payments Interface (UPI), secure data and open networks including Open Credit Enablement



Network (OCEN) and Open Network for Digital Commerce (ONDC), is opening a minefield of opportunities for taking the country's banking and financial architecture to the next level of technology and user experience.

"Compared to traditional banks or money transfer companies, neobanks are considered as a more convenient alternative. Moreover, they use innovative technologies to solve existing challenges in

cross-border payments," ASSOCHAM Secretary General Deepak Sood said, adding customer services and experience would be defining characteristics of neobanking.

The paper emphasised that the financial service providers will need to embed offerings deeply within curated customer journeys around specific needs. India's digital transformation, coupled with improved consumer access, reach and technology proliferation, has opened doors for innovation across the industry.

"With multiple organisations across industries having tapped into the same to enhance customer engagement, the next wave of innovation in the financial services industry will come in the form of curated customer journeys being seamlessly embedded with financial offerings", said Vivek Patil Partner - Financial

Services Advisory, PwC.

Giving an insight to the service providers, the paper said it would be helpful to contextualise the offering based on the type of customer it will cater to. While embedded FS offerings could apply to both retail customers as well as small businesses - both having their unique needs - it could be helpful to segment customers into value-conscious, savings-conscious, or service-conscious in order to determine and design the type of product and experience.

For instance, a value-conscious customer could be more inclined to look at FS products that facilitate consumption/experiences with a focus on quality and value (lending, investments), while a savings-conscious customer could be more focussed on risk management and associated products (e.g. insurance, savings).

## Punjab National Bank launches IVR Based UPI Solution - UPI 123PAY



KULBIR SINGH KALSI New Delhi

Punjab National Bank (PNB), nation's leading public sector Bank, becomes the first mega Public Sector Bank to introduce IVR-based UPI solution - UPI 123PAY, aligning with the Digital Payment Vision 2025 towards a cashless and cardless society.

Unified Payments Interface (UPI) is a 24\*7 payment channel enabling customers to perform fast, encrypted and real-time payments. Till now, the solution was accessible only through smartphones or through Unstructured Supplementary Service data (USSD) service and was dependent on good internet connectivity. The UPI 123PAY solution would extend the functionality and facilitate the feature to any phone users and those in low internet connectivity zones to perform UPI transactions.

Sharing his thoughts on the functionality, MD & CEO, PNB, said, "India's large population resides in rural and semi-urban areas. Such population still relies on cash for their daily needs. With approximately 63% of our branches being located in the rural and semi-urban areas, PNB, has a huge customer base in the remote regions of the nation. To facilitate such people, who do not have access to smartphones or internet connectivity, we are delighted to introduce the functionality of UPI 123PAY. It will enable EVERYONE with ANY phone to make PAYMENTS through UPI from ANYWHERE in INDIA. The functionality is also available for non-PNB customers."

## Paytm UPI SDK brings India's fastest UPI payments for merchant apps

**NEW DELHI:** One97 Communications Limited (OCL) that owns leading payments and financial services company Paytm, on Thursday brought Paytm UPI software development kit (SDK) for its merchants, a game-changing product that enables quick, one step UPI payments that never fail.

With UPI Lite and now Paytm UPI SDK, the company is now offering its two-sided ecosystem of consumers and merchants fail-proof UPI payments. An industry-first solution designed for apps, Paytm UPI SDK ensures fail-proof, superfast UPI payments directly from the merchant's app.

"As a full-stack payments solution provider, Paytm has been at the forefront of driving innovation in mobile payments. With Paytm UPI SDK, we have enabled fail-proof, superfast payments which ensures merchants do not have to worry about payment failures," said a Paytm



Payments Services spokesperson. Being the lightest SDK in the market, it ensures that the merchant's app size remains small for a smoother experience. "Through our innovative payments solutions, we are empowering our existing merchant partners to grow their business," the spokesperson added. Being almost half the size of its competitors, Paytm UPI SDK is the smallest in the industry, ensuring that the merchant's app remains lightweight yet packed with all the powerful features of UPI.

Additionally, Paytm UPI SDK offers easy, low-code integration with fully customisable UI themes and priority customer support.

## United States SEC actions against crypto exchanges send out clear message: 'Buyers Beware'

Cryptocurrency-related enforcement actions taken by the United States securities regulator significantly increased in the six months since the bankruptcy of cryptocurrency exchange FTX, the crypto industry news provider Cointelegraph has reported.

An analysis of press releases from the U.S. Securities and Exchange Commission (SEC), and news reports on its actions, found that in the six months preceding FTX's collapse, the SEC undertook approximately six enforcement actions.

In the six months after FTX's bankruptcy on November 11, 2022, SEC crypto-related enforcement actions jumped to at least 17, an estimated increase of 183 per cent from the preceding period, Coin Telegraph reported.

The increased actions, including the recent ones taken against the two exchanges, led to some observers suggesting the SEC is attempting to redeem itself for failing to police FTX, Coin Telegraph reported. MarketWatch reported that

U.S. Representative French Hill said the recent crackdown was a "cover your ass" move from the regulator and SEC chair Gary Gensler, while speaking at an event in Washington, D.C. on June 7. The U.S. Securities and Exchange Commission sued both crypto exchanges Binance and Coinbase earlier this week, but analysts said they don't expect such regulatory actions to pose "existential risks" to crypto prices, MarketWatch reported.

Coinbase and Binance together account for 70% of crypto trade volumes, according to data from Kaiko. "Most capital that had to leave crypto is already out," analysts at Alliance Bernstein wrote in a note. "Shallow liquid crypto markets in the U.S. may continue in view of the U.S. regulatory environment, but we don't see this as an existential risk to crypto given the global presence of the industry," according to the analysts, MarketWatch reported.

Roughly 90% of crypto trading volume happens outside of the U.S., and "regulation seems



to be evolving more favourably in U.K, Europe, and Asia," the analysts added. Bitcoin dipped about 1% to about \$26,415 on Thursday, according to CoinDesk data, MarketWatch reported. The Securities and Exchange Commission's back to back lawsuits this week against the cryptocurrency exchanges Binance and Coinbase mark a new phase in long-running government efforts to rein in the industry. But the crackdown won't change much for crypto investors in the near term, analysts say, NBC News reported.

By targeting Binance, the world's largest crypto exchange, and Coinbase, the second largest, the agency is taking its biggest step yet to tighten controls on an industry that has largely

operated outside the traditional financial system.

The commission's moves are the latest in a multiyear effort to erect new guardrails; crypto exchanges such as Binance and Coinbase are likely to continue to operate relatively uninterrupted while the civil litigation moves through the court system, PitchBook crypto analyst Robert Le said, NBC News reported.

"In the short term, I don't see any changes," Le said, referring to the next three to five years. He cited XRP, a digital coin that continues to trade despite the SEC's ongoing lawsuit against the blockchain company Ripple Labs, announced in late 2020.

The lawsuits don't appear to have spooked crypto investors much. Bitcoin, the most-traded cryptocurrency, dropped sharply Monday but jumped back up Tuesday to trade at around \$27,000 - significantly higher than where it traded late last year in a broader industry decline that has come to be known as "crypto winter", NBC News reported.

# Manufacturing sector has seen a huge drop in GDP

**DR. P.S. VOHRA**

The GDP numbers for the last financial year, 2022-23, announced last week, have granted the Modi government an extension of its nine-year achievements. According to the data, the Indian economy has achieved a growth rate of 7.2 per cent during this period, which surpasses the forecasts of many prominent global institutions such as the IMF, World Bank, etc. Additionally, it has exceeded the Modi government's own expectations. With this figure, India appears to be on track to become the world's third-largest economy in the next decade. Since GDP is defined by data, there are diverse opinions and analyses on this matter. Criticism also arises regarding the fact that the economic growth rate in 2021-22 was over 9 per cent, which has now decreased to 7 per cent. This reality should be viewed in a broader context since the annual growth rate was negative for the first time

in 40 years due to the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020-21, and the subsequent increase was unexpected and justified

If the GDP data is divided into different parts and analyzed, five facts are worth mentioning. Firstly, the agriculture sector has achieved a growth rate of 4 per cent, which is higher than the previous financial year. It has seen an increase in four consecutive quarters, with the highest growth rate of 5.5 per cent occurring in the January to March quarter. This also indicates that the yield of both Rabi and Kharif crops was very good last year. Of course, this is good news for a country with a large population like India.

The second fact is that the services sector has once again retained its reins in the economy and achieved a growth rate of 28.3 per cent. The positive aspect here is that the financial and real estate sectors have now strengthened their hold in society. There has been an increase of about 3 per cent compared to last year, which will bring a new outlook to many dimensions in



the coming years.

The third positive aspect is that the 'core sector' of the economy, which comprises eight segments - coal, crude oil, natural gas, refinery, fertilisers, steel, cement, and electricity - has achieved a staggering growth rate of 7.6 per cent. The highest increase has been observed in the coal sector, with a growth of about 15 per cent. Apart from coal, electricity, steel, and cement play important roles in the development of society's infrastructure. The available data shows that, along with coal, the remaining three sectors have also achieved growth rates

of more than 8 per cent. This serves as direct proof that the Indian economy is rapidly advancing in terms of infrastructure development. However, crude oil alone has registered negative growth rates, which can be largely attributed to the prolonged rise in global crude oil prices during the previous year due to the war between Russia and Ukraine.

The fourth fact raises a cause for concern for the manufacturing sector as the sector has only been able to achieve a growth rate of 1.3 per cent, compared to 11 per cent in FY21-22. The sur-

prising aspect is that while all other sectors of the core sector are experiencing growth, why is the manufacturing sector underperforming? In the second and third quarters, there were negative growth rates of 3.8 and 1.4 per cent respectively, despite the constant announcements of new schemes for the manufacturing sector by the Modi government. One such scheme includes an investment of approximately Rs. 2 trillion under the PLI scheme. This indicates that the budgetary promotion of the manufacturing sector by cutting the social welfare scheme MGNREGA does not appear to be as effective on the ground.

Fifth, the economy has shown a positive attitude towards investment, which indicates that both the government's capital expenditure and private financial investment in various development schemes have increased. According to the data, the government's capital expenditure in the fourth quarter was approximately 2.46 trillion rupees.

It has also been observed that currently, government and private financial investment accounts for 34 per cent of GDP, the highest level in the last nine years of the Modi government. As a result, various private projects in India are experiencing greater recovery compared to the past decade, which is very positive for the economy.

An analysis of GDP data for 22-23 also reveals that the positive increase in per capita purchasing power is not very encouraging. India, the world's most populous country, is putting in great efforts to continuously boost its economic growth rate. However, is it not too little to increase the per capita purchasing power by just 2.8 per cent? This situation presents a contradiction with the economic growth figures: the wealthy are spending more in the economy, while the consumption capacity of the poor remains stagnant. The reason behind this is that the purchase of luxury goods and high lifestyle-related ex-

penses only contributes to a single aspect of the increase in per capita purchasing capacity, which exclusively benefits the economically affluent class. Furthermore, it has also been observed that tractor sales have increased, but two-wheeler sales have not, indicating that lower-income individuals are still managing their purchasing capacity, with their primary goal being an increase in their financial income. This situation underscores the clear imbalance in the distribution of economic income within society, as evidenced by the data on ever-growing economic inequality. In summary, it can be concluded that in the future, there will undoubtedly be an increase in economic expenditure on social welfare schemes, enabling the lower class to become part of the mainstream economic growth.

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



# INTERNATIONAL

## Modi to visit US, Egypt from June 20-25

**NEW DELHI:** Prime Minister Narendra Modi will embark on a visit to the US and Egypt from June 20 to 25.

Modi's state visit to the US is at the invitation of President Joseph Biden and First Lady Jill Biden.

The visit will commence in New York, where Modi will lead the celebrations of the International Day of Yoga at the UN headquarters on June 21.

In December 2014, the UN General Assembly had adopted a resolution proclaiming June 21 as the International Day of Yoga.

Modi will thereafter travel to Washington D.C., where he will receive a ceremonial welcome at the White House on June 22, and meet President Biden to continue their high-level dialogue, according to a statement issued by the



external affairs ministry said.

Minister the same evening.

The Bidens will host a state dinner in honour of the Prime Minister the same evening. At the invitation of Congressional leaders, including the

Republican House of Representatives Kevin McCarthy and Democratic Senate Speaker Charles Schumer, Modi will address a joint sitting of the US Congress on June 22.

The next day, the Prime Minister will be hosted at a luncheon jointly by Vice President Kamala Harris and Secretary of State Antony Blinken.

In addition to the official engagements, Modi is scheduled to have several curated interactions with leading CEOs, professionals, and other stakeholders.

He will also meet members of the Indian diaspora.

After wrapping up the US trip, the Prime Minister will then head to Egypt for a state visit from June 24-25.

The visit is at invitation of Egyptian President Abdel Fattah El-Sisi, which he extended

to Modi in January 2023 when he had graced the Republic Day celebrations as the chief guest.

This will be Modi's first visit to Egypt.

Apart from his talks with President Sisi, the Prime Minister is likely to interact with senior dignitaries from the Egyptian government, some prominent personalities, as well as the Indian community in the African nation.

Relations between India and Egypt are based on ancient trade and economic linkages as well as cultural and deep-rooted people-to-people ties, according to the External Affairs Ministry statement.

During the state visit of President Sisi in January, it was agreed to elevate the relationship to a 'strategic partnership'.

## Blinken to travel to China this weekend



After he cancelled his initial visit to Beijing earlier this year due to a Chinese spy balloon transiting the US, Secretary of State Antony Blinken will embark on a fresh visit to the Asian giant this weekend amid thawed bilateral ties.

Blinken will be the first Biden administration official to travel to China and also the first since 2019, reports CNN.

Confirming the visit, Assistant Secretary of State for East Asian and Pacific Affairs Daniel Kritenbrink said on Wednesday that the two nations came "to the shared conclusion that now is the right time to engage at this level".

Kritenbrink said he would not expect "a long list of deliverables" to come out of the visit, but described it as "a really critical series of engagements that we'll have in Beijing at a crucial time in the relationship that we again hope will, at a minimum, reduce the risk of miscalculation so that we do not veer into potential conflict".

He said the agenda would focus on three main goals: establishing communication channels "that are open and empowered to discuss important

challenges, address misperceptions and prevent miscalculation"; discussing US concerns "on a range of issues" as well as on "a host of regional and global security matters"; and "exploring potential cooperation on transnational challenges when it is in our interest in areas such as climate and global macroeconomic stability".

In recent months, there have been a number of engagements between US and Chinese officials, including National Security Adviser Jake Sullivan and Kritenbrink himself.

"I think there's a realisation on both sides that it is important to have these channels of communication," CNN quoted the Assistant Secretary as saying.

In a statement also on Wednesday, State Department spokesperson Matthew Miller said that Blinken would meet "senior PRC officials" while in Beijing, adding that "we expect a series of visits in both directions in the period ahead" following the Secretary of State's visit.

But neither Kritenbrink or Miller did not say if Blinken would meet Chinese President Xi Jinping.

## Canadian police probe China meddling claims



Police in Canada have launched a probe into claims that China sought to intimidate MP Michael Chong and his family, the media reported.

Addressing a parliamentary committee here on Tuesday, Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP) interim commissioner Michael Duheme said that the force was only made aware of the allegation connected to Chong via Canadian media, reports the BBC. A series of media reports, many based on leaked intelligence briefings and information accusing China of attempting to interfere in Canadian elections, have been published in recent months. "When we were made aware of it, we approached Chong and began the investigation," Duheme told federal lawmakers.

The investigation is one of more than 100 current RCMP probes looking into foreign interference within Canada, he added. Canada's intelligence agency believes Beijing sought details about Chong and his relatives in Hong Kong in an effort to deter "anti-China positions", the BBC reported. It came after the politician put forward a motion in Parliament in 2021 that declared China's treatment of its ethnic Uyghur minority population a genocide.

## India appreciates UN resolution on setting up memorial wall for fallen peacekeepers



**NEW DELHI:** Prime minister Narendra Modi on Thursday expressed delight over the UN General Assembly's resolution to set up a new Memorial Wall for fallen peacekeepers.

"Delighted that the Resolution to establish a new Memorial Wall for fallen Peacekeepers, piloted by India, has been adopted in the UN General Assembly. The Resolution received a record 190 co-sponsorships. Grateful for everyone's support," he tweeted.

On Wednesday, the UN General Assembly passed a resolution, "By the resolution, which was adopted without a vote, the Assembly welcomed Member States' initiative to establish - within three years of the text's adoption - a memorial wall at United Nations Headquarters in New York honouring the memory of fallen peacekeepers".

"In deciding that its planning, construction, upkeep and maintenance will be funded entirely from voluntary contributions, the Assembly invited interested Member States to provide voluntary contributions to that end.

"It also decided to give prominence to the memorial wall by including it in the solemn ceremonies conducted on the International Day of United Nations Peacekeepers and other United Nations peacekeeping-related events," the resolution said.

## U.S. Chamber Advances U.S.-India Economic & Trade Relationship at 2023 India Ideas Summit

**WASHINGTON D.C.:** The U.S. Chamber of Commerce's U.S.-India Business Council hosted the 2023 India Ideas Summit, the premier convention of government and industry across the U.S.-India corridor. The Summit explored ways to deepen the U.S.-India economic and trade relationship, with speakers and participants including U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken, U.S. Secretary of Commerce Gina Raimondo, U.S. Chamber President and CEO Suzanne P. Clark, and Ambassador Taranjit Singh Sandhu, Ambassador of the India to the United States.



free trade have a proven track record for good in the world, and that global engagement is how we protect our national security, promote our values,

and unlock economic growth. "When it comes to the U.S. and India, that means remaining united in our commitment to de-risk and diversify global

supply chains and preserve a global economy underpinned by free enterprise, competitive markets, and rules-based trade and investment. Our trade relationship will help us deliver on these commitments."

Themed around, "Trust, Resilience, and Growth," the 2023 India Ideas Summit expands upon U.S. Chamber efforts to advance the critical U.S.-India relationship, following the Chamber's supporting role in the January launch of the U.S.-India initiative on Critical and Emerging Technology (iCET), and the Chamber's participation in deliberations around the Indo-Pacific Economic Framework for Prosperity.

## Modi to lead yoga session at UN HQ in New York to mark Int'l Yoga Day



**NEW YORK:** Prime minister Narendra Modi will lead a yoga session at the UN headquarters in New York on June 21 to mark the 9th International Day of Yoga.

An advisory issued by the UN said: "The Permanent Mission of India to the UN invites you to a celebration of the 9th annual International Yoga Day on June 21, 2023, from 8-9 a.m. EST at the North Lawn of UN Headquarters in New York."

The headline of the advisory said that the session will be led by Modi. The International Day of Yoga was proposed by India and endorsed by a record 175 member states. The proposal was first introduced by Prime Minister Narendra Modi in his address during the opening of the 69th session of the General Assembly, "it added.



the UN proclaimed 21 June as the International Day of Yoga through a resolution. The International Day of Yoga aims to raise awareness worldwide of the many benefits of practicing yoga, "the UN advisory said.

"The draft resolution establishing the International Day of Yoga was proposed by India and endorsed by a record 175 member states. The proposal was first introduced by Prime Minister Narendra Modi in his address during the opening of the 69th session of the General Assembly, "it added.

## Indiaspora Welcomes PM Modi to United States

**Prime Minister Narendra Modi's trip to the United States presents a historic opportunity for critical dialogue on issues pertaining to U.S. India relations**

**WASHINGTON:** Indiaspora, a nonprofit organization of global Indian diaspora leaders, expressed enthusiasm for India's Prime Minister Narendra Modi's visit to the United States. Prime Minister Modi is scheduled to visit the United States from June 21 to June 23, 2023. This is a historic trip as Prime Minister Modi is only the third Indian leader after President S Radhakrishnan in 1963 and Prime Minister Manmohan Singh in 2009 to be invited to the U.S. for a State visit.

"We are excited to welcome Prime Minister Modi to the United States," said MR Rangaswami, Founder of Indiaspora. "The U.S.-India relationship has grown substantially over time and is poised to be the consequential partnership of the century. I expect several key issues to be discussed between Prime Minister Modi and President Biden including the U.S.-India initiative on Critical and Emerging Technology (iCET) and defense ties. I believe that the two countries also



This historic visit comes at a pivotal moment for U.S.-India relations. Indians and the Indian diaspora are center stage. Cross-border investments and diaspora engagements are growing exponentially"

need to continue their dialogue on climate change." Indiaspora, as a diaspora leadership group that has convened track two diplomatic dialogues, is deeply invested in the U.S.-India relationship and its impact on the Indian diaspora. To further bolster the two countries' relationship and to engage the global diaspora in envisioning India after 100 years of its independence, Indiaspora will be hosting a G20 Summit in New Delhi in August of 2023. This summit will bring together Indian-origin leaders from around the world to discuss geopolitics, trade and commerce, entrepreneurship and innovation, healthcare, philanthropy, education, arts and culture, and sports.

"This historic visit comes at a pivotal moment for U.S.-India relations. Indians and the Indian diaspora are center stage. Cross-border investments and diaspora engagements are growing exponentially. This aligns with our organizational goal to inspire the Indian diaspora to be a force for good" said Sanjeev Joshipura, Executive Director of Indiaspora.

## OpenAI CEO Sam Altman says ready to invest in S.Korean startups

The head of US artificial intelligence company OpenAI, Sam Altman, said he is ready to invest in promising startups in South Korea, where its global sensation chatbot ChatGPT has been rapidly and widely used.

"We love to support people building on our platform. Some of our teams here today are happy to help with that," Sam Altman, CEO of OpenAI, said during a meeting with Korean businesspeople in Seoul. "We're exploring investing more in Korean startups. And we'd be very excited to explore the joint chip collaborations to develop AI accelerators."

Before working with the Microsoft-backed OpenAI, Altman said he had run a firm that invests in startups and had success in funding deep tech firms, reports Yonhap news agency.

"It was my great passion in investing. I really want to see a lot more of that in the world," he added.

The 38-year-old American businessman is on a world tour, meeting political and business leaders in several countries, including the United Arab Emirates, India and South Korea.

He said he was impressed by Korean people's reception of up-to-date AI technology led by ChatGPT and interested in their innovative products, both software and hardware.

"Korea is one of the places in the world that has adopted OpenAI most the earliest, use it the most creatively. It's amazing to see what people are doing here," he said. "Those two combined with the culture of innovation and what's happening with the use of AI, particularly OpenAI, make us very excited to collaborate more deeply with the country."

Since OpenAI launched ChatGPT 3.5 late last year, people were amazed by the content-creating generative AI technology. At the same time, talks about its future and threat to humans have also come into the spotlight across the world.

Some countries led by the European Union have been moving to regulate generative AI technologies and services, while South Korea has been working on a rule to foster AI products and place liability on service providers in a less restrictive way.

Altman said he had talks with many leaders on the issue during his trip, and South Korea can play a role in the global conversation to shape a new global framework.

## Khalistani separatist and mastermind of attack on Indian High Commission dies in UK

Avtar Singh Khanda, a Punjab-origin Khalistani separatist and mastermind of the attack on the Indian High Commission in London, died in a hospital in the UK on Thursday due to blood cancer.

He was the head of Khalistan Liberation Force.

A bomb expert, Khanda, who was the principal orchestrator of the March 19 violence at the Indian High Commission in London, was handler of arrested 'Waris Punjab De' Chief Amritpal Singh.

Confirming the death, UK-based Khalsa Aid founder Ravi Singh has put a post on Instagram.

Khanda, who belongs to Punjab's Moga town, was arrested by British authorities in March in connection with vandalism with his supporters to protest crackdown on Amritpal.



On Wednesday, the National Investigation Agency (NIA) had put out a series of photos on Twitter a "request for identification/information" of individuals who were "involved" in the attack on the High Commission.

One of the individuals in the NIA photos were Khanda. "They caused grievous injuries to an official and disrespected the Indian National Flag," the NIA post said.

## Over 600 migrants cross English Channel in a day: UK govt

The UK Home Office said that more than 600 migrants crossed the English Channel on June 11 -- the highest number so far this year on a single day.

In a statement on Monday, the Office said a total of 616 people were detected making the journey from France in 12 small boats, reports the BBC. The previous single-day high for this year was 497 people on April 22. According to the Home Office, the total number of migrants who have crossed the English Channel in 2023 has increased to over 8,000 -- about 2,000 less than at the same point last year.

At this time last year, the cumulative figure had just passed 10,000 and the total number of crossings in 2022 was 45,755.

Responding to the Home Office's announcement, a No 10 spokesperson said: "There is a great deal of work going on which is stopping these criminal gangs in their tracks. "But, clearly, crossings are



continuing and that is because we have not been able to put in place our full plans; and obviously there is a great deal of work across government to that end." The latest development came after Prime Minister Rishi Sunak said last week that his plan to reduce the number of migrants crossing the Channel in boats was working and numbers were down for the first time. Sunak told the BBC that crossings to the UK were down by a fifth, and figures for Albanians heading to Britain

were down by 90 per cent.

The Prime Minister has made reducing the number of Channel crossings a key part of his premiership, including via the Illegal Migration Bill.

The plans would mean anyone reaching the UK without permission would be detained and promptly deported, either to their home country or a third country such as Rwanda.

The bill would create broad new detention and search powers, and migrants would be barred from claiming asylum.

## VCI Global Marks Debut into Artificial Intelligence & Big Data Industries through Partnership with Fusionex

**KUALA LUMPUR:** VCI Global Limited announced that it has entered into discussions with the Fusionex Group ("Fusionex") to establish a mutually beneficial exclusive collaboration between both parties.

This partnership envisages VCI Global providing AI and big data consulting services to its clients. With a primary focus on Southeast Asia, while keeping opportunities open worldwide, VCI Global has selected Fusionex as its technology partner. The global AI market, estimated to be valued between USD110 billion and USD120 billion in 2022, presents immense potential for growth. Furthermore, industry projections indicate that the Asia Pacific market is poised to grow at a compound average rate of 35% to 40%

from 2022 to 2030.

Leveraging Fusionex's Analytics GIANT solution, VCI Global aims to deliver value and strategic guidance to its clientele. With its expertise in analytics, Big Data, machine learning, and AI, the multi-award-winning data technology market leader, Fusionex, empowers its clients in managing invaluable insights from the vast amounts of data available.

"Economies are frantically bridging gaps between businesses and the fast-evolving technologies such as artificial intelligence, that are made available to markets. This collaboration is thus ideal as whilst tapping on Fusionex's expertise, we subsequently are able to offer our consulting expertise to

our vast network of members," said Dato' Victor Hoo, Group Executive Chairman and Chief Executive Officer of VCI Global.

"AI represents the most revolutionary and promising field of technology, playing a vital role in the development of all sectors and industries. The transformative power of AI promises to usher in a new era of efficiency, automation, productivity, strategic planning, and decision-making, unlocking unprecedented opportunities for growth and innovation in these areas. The partnership with VCI Global serves as an impetus to augment their offerings with our technology solutions and expertise," said Jacob Isaac, Managing Director (New Technologies) of Fusionex.



# British rap artist Stefflon Don visits Sidhu Moosewala's village, pays tributes

**MANSA:** Acclaimed British rap artist Stephanie Allen, aka Stefflon Don, on Sunday paid tributes to famed Punjabi singer late Sidhu Moosewala on his birthday by visiting his family home in a village in Punjab's Mansa. Hundreds of fans and followers of Shubdeep Singh Sidhu, widely known by his stage name Sidhu Moosewala with a huge fan base running into millions, who was shot dead in Mansa district on May 29, 2022, had started gathering at the late singer's palatial house in Moosa village since morning.



Accompanying the late rapper's father Balkaur Singh Sidhu and mother Charan Kaur Singh, Stefflon Don mingled freely with the crowd of Moosewala's followers. In a set of videos surfacing online, Stefflon Don was seen moving through streets of the Moosa

village along with Punjabi producer Sandy Joia. Besides "Invisible", Stefflon Don has worked with Moosewala on "47". Moosewala's mother Charan Kaur penned an emotional note on his birthday in which she said her son was born to guide the world to follow the path of truth.

who did not know that these small steps had travelled the whole world while sitting in the village, and thick eyes with which you would see and recognize the truth. They did not know that you were giving the generation of Punjab a different view of the world." On May 29 this year, the world mourned Moosewala's first death anniversary. Ahead of that day, Tion Wayne and MIST remembered him on hard-hitting UK rap records "Healing" and "Double Duppy", respectively. Moosewala's song 'The Last Ride' was reportedly a tribute to rapper Tupac Shakur, who was shot dead in his car at the age of 25 in 1996. Sadly, Moosewala, 28, was also shot dead while driving his vehicle, a day after his security cover was withdrawn. Moosewala was taken to hospital where he was declared dead.

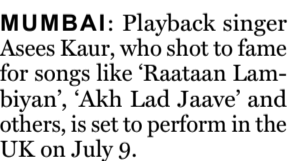
## Popular Punjabi actor Mangal Dhillon loses battle with cancer at 48

Just a week before his birthday, famous Punjabi cine star, director and producer Mangal Dhillon, who was battling cancer, passed away in a hospital in Ludhiana on Sunday. He was 48. Hailing from Faridkot in Punjab, Dhillon had made a mark in the world of films and serials. He worked in Door-darshan and radio plays, besides doing commercial voicing in New Delhi and Mumbai for couple of years. In 1987 he got the role of Lubhaya Ram in Ramesh Sippy's TV Serial 'Buniyaad', which laid his foundation in the Mumbai film and television industry. After 'Buniyaad' he worked in almost 25-30 Hindi feature films and television serials, prominent amongst them were 'Yugandhar', 'Lakshman Rekha', 'Nishana', 'Vishvaatma', 'Khoon Bhari Mang' and 'Azad Desh Ke Ghulam', besides serials like 'Junoon', 'Panther', 'Ghutan', 'Kismat' and 'Noorjahaan'.



## Asees Kaur of 'Raataan Lambiyaa' fame set to perform in UK before 3,000 fans

**MUMBAI:** Playback singer Asees Kaur, who shot to fame for songs like 'Raataan Lambiyaa', 'Akh Lad Jaave' and others, is set to perform in the UK on July 9. The singer will perform for three hours with the setlist comprising 'Akh Lad Jaavea', 'Raataan Lambiyaa', 'Makhna', 'Pachtaoge' and 'Ve Maahi'. The singer will perform at Indigo at the O2 venue. The event will be presented and produced by Rock On Music and the event is expected to witness a footfall of 3,000 fans. The singer said that she will also be creating and presenting unique renditions of other compositions such as late Sidhu Moosewala's '295', Abida Parveen's 'Tu Jhoom' and Diljit Dosanjh's 'Ikki Kudi'. "This is my first ever UK concert and I'm super excited. I have created a bespoke performance that comprises some well-choreographed desi dance renditions, coupled with some peppy Punjabi numbers and for the very first time, I will perform a Sufi set as well," the singer said. "I'm already getting so many requests from my UK fans for the songs that they want me to perform live and 'Raataan Lambiyaa' tops the list. All my fans in London you guys are in for a real treat and I can't wait to meet you all up close and personal," she said.



# No Indian film will be exhibited if 'Adipurush' doesn't correct mistake: Kathmandu Mayor

**KATHMANDU:** After placing a map of "Greater Nepal" at his office in retaliation at the "Akhand Bharat" mural in the new Indian Parliament building, Kathmandu Metropolitan City Mayor Balen Shah on Thursday announced that no Indian movie will be allowed to be exhibited within the capital territory if South Indian movie "Adipurush" does not correct the "mistake" about the birthplace of Sita. Nepal's Censor Board also decided to hold back permission to the upcoming Indian epic mythological film, based on the Hindu epic "Ramayana", for the same reason. In "Adipurush", it is mentioned that "Sita is the daughter of India", Shah said in a tweet on Thursday, adding that until this mistake will not be corrected in India and



placed the map of "Greater Nepal" in his chamber to counter the "Akhand Bharat" map placed in India's new parliament building. Some other local elected representatives followed his example. The main opposition, CPN-UML has demanded to send a diplomatic note to India to protest the "Akhand" map. The government should immediately send a diplomatic note to India protesting against the Indian mural that has allegedly depicted some places of Nepal in it, Raghuj Pant, an UML lawmaker said in Parliament on Thursday. The new Indian map has incorporated some of the Nepali territories like Lumbini and Kapilvastu, the birthplace of Gautam Buddha. Nepal and India are already facing the boundary row over Kalapani, Lipu Lekh, and Limpiydhura. At one time, the territory of Nepal spread from Teesta in the east to Sutlej in the west. However, after a war with the British, it lost a large part of its land. After the war, the territories from Mechi to Teesta and from Mahakali to Sutlej were permanently annexed to India.

# Indian-origin Priti Patel, Kulveer Ranger in Boris Johnson's honours list

British Indians Priti Patel and Kulveer Singh Ranger have been rewarded in former UK Prime Minister Boris Johnson's honours list, which came hours before he stepped down as an MP. The honours list, a tradition granted to outgoing Prime Ministers, included 38 honours and seven peerages, and was approved by Prime Minister Rishi Sunak nine months after Johnson stepped down as premier. Former Home Secretary Priti Patel was named Dames Commander of the Order of the British Empire, while Ranger, former director of transport, was elevated to the Lords. Patel, 51, served as Home Secretary under Boris Johnson beginning July 2019, and tendered her resignation from

will stand the test of time," Patel tweeted. Ranger was chosen as the Director for Transport Policy after Johnson won the Mayoral election in May 2008. "It is with great pride I can confirm that I have been elevated to the House of Lords. This recognition is not just mine but I share with my family and friends, the Sikh community, and many industry colleagues and Conservative friends -- all of whom I've had the pleasure to be supported by and stand shoulder to shoulder with over the last 25 years," Ranger wrote in a tweet, thanking Johnson. "I am proud of what we achieved but now look forward to continuing to champion and improve the things that I am passionate about in the years ahead," Ranger wrote. The post in September 2022, just before the appointment of Liz Truss as Prime Minister. A day after Johnson's resignation last week, Patel praised the leader calling him as the UK's "most electorally successful Prime Minister since Margaret Thatcher". "Boris Johnson has served our country and his constituency with distinction. He led the world in supporting Ukraine, got Brexit done, and was our most electorally successful Prime Minister since Margaret Thatcher. Boris is a political titan whose legacy



# Indian Junior Women's Hockey Team receives Champion's welcome in Bengaluru

**ARUNKUMAR RAO Bengaluru** The team led by Preeti arrived at KIA after clinching India's first ever Junior Women's Asia Cup title receives Champion's welcome at Kempegowda International Airport Bengaluru early hours of Tuesday. The mood at the Kempegowda International Airport (KIA) here in Bengaluru was jubilant as the victorious Indian Junior Women's Hockey Team arrived to a champion's welcome following their historic feat at the Junior Women's Asia Cup that concluded in Kakamigahara, Japan. The Indian Junior Women's Team players were welcomed by officials from SAI, Bengaluru while several onlookers beeline to click selfies with the young stars. Elated by the warm welcome, Captain Preeti said, "We are really overwhelmed with all the love and support we have received throughout the tournament. We didn't expect such a warm welcome and ever since we stepped out of the flight, we have been received with so much appreciation from everyone right from the airport officials, to fellow travellers and officials from SAI and hockey fraternity. It was so nice of them to come all the way to the airport, post-midnight only to welcome us." She



said. Preeti also added that this incredible feat could not have been possible without the continued support of Hockey India, SAI, TOPS NCOE and Odisha State Government. "I believe we have chosen the right sport at the right time. We have a very well-backed program in TOPS NCOE here in SAI, Bengaluru where all our requirements are taken care of Hockey India has ensured we have the best coaching staff and all the players in the group are selected from National Championships and Khelo India Games - giving talented players a huge opportunity to make a career in the sport. Odisha Govt's backing has also added to this mega support system we have. With everyone putting in so much effort, the onus was on us to do well," stated Preeti expressing gratitude. All the 18 members in this triumphant Indian Junior Women's Team are part of the Target Olympic Podium Scheme (TOPS) National Centres of Excellence (NCOE). The group is selected into the program basis their performance in Khelo India Youth Games as well as the Hockey India Junior National Championships. Vice Captain Deepika said, "Most of us in the team come from difficult backgrounds and truly what we get in SAI, Bengaluru as trainees of TOPS NCOE is better than what we could have got back home - be it nutrition, state-of-the-art infrastructure, world class coaching and a great atmosphere to train and compete with our peers for a place in the team. We believe our result in Junior Asia Cup would not have been possible if not for this kind of scientific support system to train."

# Makers of Jaswant Singh Khalra biopic move Bombay HC for censor clearance



The biopic based on the life of prominent human rights activist, Jaswant Singh Khalra has been subjected to delays owing to the clearance for the censor certificate. The makers of the film moved the Bombay High Court and asked for legal intervention. The yet-to-be-titled film, which is directed by Honey Trehan, and headlined by actor-

# POTPOURRI

and burning thousands of dead bodies to cover up the murders. Jaswant Singh Khalra was the director of a bank in Amritsar during the militancy period in Punjab. He found the evidence of abduction, elimination and cremation of thousands of unidentified bodies by the police. They reportedly even killed 2,000 of their own officers who refused to collaborate in these extra-judicial operations. It was Khalra's investigation that sparked worldwide protests and led to the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) concluding that the Punjab police had unlawfully cremated 2,097 people in the Tarn Taran district of Punjab alone. The Supreme Court of India and the National Human Rights Commission certified the validity of his data. On September 6, 1995, Khalra disappeared and a case of murder, abduction and criminal conspiracy was registered on the complaint of his wife, Paramjit Kaur. Taking strong note of the "heinous crime" committed by four police officers in "eliminating" human rights activist Jaswant Singh Khalra, active in bringing to light extrajudicial killings in the districts of Tarn Taran and Amritsar, the Punjab and Haryana Court, on October 16, 2007, changed the sentences of the four accused, former head constable Prithpal Singh and former sub-inspectors Satnam Singh, Surinder Pal Singh and Jasbir Singh from seven years to life imprisonment. An industry source shared that the makers - RSVP Movies, Abhishek Chaubey and Honey Trehan, have been waiting for censor clearance for the last six months.

# Akshay and Parineeti starrer 'The Great Indian Rescue' has blocked its release date



Bollywood superstar Akshay Kumar and Parineeti Chopra starrer 'The Great Indian Rescue' has blocked its release date. The movie will bow in theatres on October 5, 2023. The film is based on a true life event of late Jaswant Singh Gill who led India's first coal mine rescue mission. Gill was born in Sathiala, Amritsar, on November 22, 1939. He studied at Khalsa College, and was posted in Raniganj in 1989 when he engineered a special rescue capsule to save the lives of several miners trapped inside a flooded coal mine. He received several awards for his brave feat and was recipient of the "Sarvottam Jeevan Raksha Padak" by President Ramaswamy Venkataraman in 1991.

# 'Physically fit at the age of 88, can do boxing': Dalai Lama

**DHARAMSALA:** The Dalai Lama, the elderly globetrotting Buddhist monk known for his simplicity and jovial style, on Thursday said he is physically fit at the age of 88 years and can do combat sports like boxing. When asked about his physical well-being by one of the participants of 27th Annual Gurukul Programme, the 14th Dalai Lama replied: "I always take the advice of a Tibetan doctor and an allopathic doctor. They say my physical health is very good. So in another 15-20 years there is no question, I can live. "And my physical condition is quite strong. So if necessary, boxing at the age of 88 years... I can do," he replied jokingly with the formation of the fist whilst punching after removing his trademark maroon robes from shoulders.

# India's ICC Trophy dream shattered

**SUNIL THAPLIYAL New Delhi** Another day of disappointment unfolded for Indian cricket fans as Rohit Sharma and his team suffered a disheartening defeat against Australia in the final of the World Test Championship. The loss in this high-stakes encounter further extends India's unfortunate streak in ICC tournaments since their glorious triumph in the 2013 Champions Trophy. Despite consistently reaching the knockout stages in subsequent tournaments, India has been unable to replicate their earlier success. Hopes were high that the bitter memories of the 2021 World Test Championship final loss would be forgotten as the Indian team embarked on a new journey in 2022 under the leadership of Rohit Sharma and the guidance of coach Rahul Dravid. Rohit Sharma assumed the captaincy across all three formats, taking over from Virat Kohli, while the appointment of Rahul Dravid as the head coach was expected to bring a winning mentality and a sense of calmness to the



squad. The stage was set for India to showcase their mettle in the upcoming tournaments, including the Asia Cup 2022 and the T20 World Cup in Australia, with the aim of overcoming past disappointments and returning with silverware. However, the Asia Cup campaign started on a positive note with a thrilling victory over Pakistan, followed by another win against Hong Kong, securing India's position at the top of the group. Regrettably, the Super 4 stages saw a reversal of fortunes as Pakistan avenged their earlier defeat, and Sri Lanka further dashed India's hopes by defeating them, denying their entry into the final. These results exposed the persistent issues of finding the right combination and lacking specialists for the T20 format, which had plagued the Indian team throughout the Asia Cup. The same challenges persisted as India entered the T20 World Cup. While they began their campaign with an exhilarating victory over Pakistan, the subsequent match against South Africa served as a wake-up call, highlighting the vulnerabilities in the team.

# Richa Chadha calls 'Fukrey' special as it introduced her to 'the love of her life'



**MUMBAI:** Actress Richa Chadha, who is celebrating the tenth anniversary of her comedy film 'Fukrey', has shared that the film holds a special place in her heart because it gave her one of the most loved characters and also introduced her to her life partner, Ali Fazal. What started off as a friendship in 2013, grew into love story and the couple tied the knot in a grand ceremony last year. Expressing excitement about the anniversary of comedy flick 'Fukrey', Richa Chadha said: "It's incredible that it has already been 10 years since 'Fukrey' was released. This film has been a game-changer for me in so many ways." She further mentioned: "Not only did it give me the opportunity to portray a character like Bholi Punjaban, which has become an iconic role in my career, but it also introduced me to the love of my life, Ali. 'Fukrey' will forever hold a special place in my heart." The third part of the franchise is set to bow in theatres on December 1, 2023.

*A complete* **KNOWLEDGE CAPSULE**

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