

REGION 2 CORPORATES & INDUSTRY 5 POTPOURRI 8



**CASE OF ADMINISTRATIVE IRREGULARITIES AT LANGAR SRI GURU RAMDAS: SGPC PRESIDENT SUSPENDED 51 EMPLOYEES**



**HERO MOTOCORP & HARLEY-DAVIDSON CO-DEVELOPED PREMIUM MOTORCYCLE 'HARLEY-DAVIDSON X440' DEBUTS IN INDIA**



**TEASER OF THE UPCOMING VARUN AND JANHVI STARRER FILM 'BAWAAL' UNVEILED SOON**

## Punjab CM demands upscaling of wage rate notified under MGNREGA to Rs 381.06

**CHANDIGARH:** Punjab Chief Minister Bhagwant Mann on Friday batted for increase in wage rate notified under Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA) in the state to Rs 381.06, at par with rate notified by Punjab for unskilled Agriculture worker.

In a letter to Union Rural Development and Panchayati Raj Minister Giriraj Singh, the Chief Minister sought upward revision in the rates notified for labour under the scheme as the existing rates were too minuscule. He said that less wage rate of Rs 303/- has been being notified for Punjab State in comparison to Rs 357/- for the neighbouring State Haryana. Bhagwant Mann said that he has come to know that this difference is existing since the inception of the scheme despite the fact that both States share similar geographic and



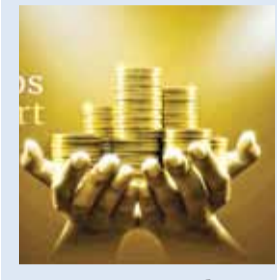
economic conditions. The Chief Minister be-moaned that Punjab State Labour Department's notified unskilled agricultural labour wage rate of Rs. 381.06 is also higher than the MGNREGA wage rate. He said that it reflects that the beneficiaries of this scheme are being denied their rightful dues which is not at all acceptable. Bhagwant Mann said that it is unfortunate that unskilled

workers in Haryana get more payment for the same work done in compared to Punjab, which is a grave injustice with them.

Therefore, the Chief Minister sought the kind intervention of the Union Minister to get the matter examined again and increase the Punjab's wage rate at par with that of Haryana or with Punjab State Labour Department's wage rates. He said that Increase in

wage rate will help in improving livelihood base of beneficiaries besides motivating them to work zealously under the Scheme. Bhagwant Mann expressed hope that the Union Minister will sympathetically consider the legitimate claim of Punjab and pass on the necessary directions to the officers.

**India's startup funding trend mirrors global decline, witnesses 72% drop in H1 2023: Report**



**NEW DELHI:** The Indian startup ecosystem witnessed a 72 per cent decline in funding in H1 2023 compared to H1 2022, according to a report by Tracxn. The report titled India Tech semi-annual report 2023 showed that a total funding in January to June period (H1 2023) was about USD 5.5 billion, much lower than the USD 19.7 billion in the first half of 2022. In the first half of the 2023, the early-stage round funding also witnessed a decline of 44 per cent compared to previous half-year. When compared to the USD 7.3 billion funding in H2 2022, the funding value saw a 24 per cent decline in the last six months. It is not just the funding value, but the funding rounds have also declined from about 1,586 in H1 2022 to just 536 in the first half of this year, according to the report. The SaaS-based market intelligence platform found out that the top sectors that attracted the most funding included environment tech, fintech, and retail. "The retail sector enjoyed the boom of e-commerce in tier two and tier three cities, making it one of the top achievers. This boom has provided a national and international market to the MSMEs. Similarly, the adoption of digital payments has strengthened the fintech sector," it said. Bengaluru was the preferred area receiving the highest amount of funding, followed by Delhi-NCR and Mumbai. 100X.VC was the top seed investor during this period, while Peak XV Partners, Accel, and Athera were the active late-stage investors.

## Monsoon Session begins from 20 July expected to be a stormy one

KAVITA SHARMA  
New Delhi

Congress is all set to question BJP Govt. on Manipur Violence, Uniform Civil Code, Price hikes, Orissa Train accident etc in the forthcoming monsoon session. This will be the first time that the govt will face the Parliament after Manipur Violence and Orissa train accident.

The Parliamentary Affairs Minister Prahlad Joshi announced on July 1, that the Monsoon session would begin from 20 July and would end on 11 August. The opposition parties have questioned Prime Minister Narendra Modi many times on Manipur issue but his silence still continues. The Congress spokesperson Jairam Ramesh said " We hope the Govt will allow opposition to discuss All issues of concern to the people including Manipur



on which PM have still maintained Silence." The opposition will also demand a debate on Uniform Civil Code (UCC) on which the stand of many political parties is still not clear. During the session BJP-govt is likely to bring a bill to replace the Government of National Capital Territory of Delhi (Amendment) ordinance. The National Research Foundation Bill cleared by cabinet is also likely to be introduced.

The proposed Foundation will be a new funding agency to bolster the country's research competence in areas of Science and technology. Meanwhile Parliamentary Affairs Minister Prahlad Joshi has urged all parties to contribute towards productive discussions on legislative business and other items regarding the session. There will be 17 sittings in this session lasting 23 days, Joshi said.

### SAD forms sub-committee to take views on UCC

**CHANDIGARH:** The Shiromani Akali Dal (SAD) today formed a sub-committee to take all views on the proposed Uniform Civil Code (UCC) into consideration and prepare a case for submission to the Law Commission.

A decision regarding this was taken at a meeting of the party's constituency incharges and district presidents which was presided over by SAD President Sukhbir Singh Badal. The four

## Punjab govt plans to start door-step delivery of services being provided in Sewa Kendras

**CHANDIGARH:** In a bid to ensure seamless services to the state's citizens in a transparent manner as committed by Chief Minister S. Bhagwant Mann, Punjab Government has planned to start door-step delivery of services being provided at Sewa Kendras in the state, revealed Mr. Aman Arora, Minister of Governance Reforms and Public Grievances.

Chairing the 16th meeting of the Board of Governors (BoG) of Punjab State e-Governance Society at MGSIPA here, Mr Aman Arora directed the department officials to expedite the process to start the door-step delivery of service scheme. "Currently, over 400 services are being provided to the citizens via Sewa Kendras and the door-step delivery of all these services will be started in coming months," said the Cabinet Minister, while adding that with the start of this flagship scheme of the Punjab Government, people of the state will



be able to avail government services sitting at their homes. He said that an applicant will be able to avail door-step delivery of the state government services included in the list by booking a home visit by just calling a toll-free number and a person will visit the home of the applicant and collect as well as upload all requisite documents and then will submit it to the department concerned. Aman Arora said that this

## Jammu & Kashmir government to provide land to landless families

FW DESK

Jammu and Kashmir approves a proposal to provide land to landless people residing in the union territory. Under the Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana-Gramin (PMAY-G), each landless family will be allocated 5 marlas of land.

The Lieutenant Governor, Manoj Sinha, expressed his enthusiasm, stating that this decision marks a historic day for Jammu and Kashmir and a new beginning for thousands of landless families. "It is a historic day for Jammu and Kashmir and a new beginning for thousands of landless families," L-G Manoj Sinha said. "This historic decision will prove to be a golden chapter in the administration's effort for social justice, equality, respect, and equal opportunities to all citizens." He emphasized that this initiative will not only grant land ownership and housing to the landless poor but also contribute to improving their livelihoods, raising their living standards, and fulfilling their dreams and



aspirations. The allotted land will be provided to families who are landless and those who reside in state and forest areas or any other prohibited construction zones. Initially, the allotment will be limited to the remaining cases from the Permanent Waiting List (PWL) of 2018-19. However, in the future, during the launch of the next phase of the PMAY-G scheme in 2024-25, the same categories of landless beneficiaries who become eligible under the PMAY-G Phase-III may also be considered for land allotment. To proceed with the allotment process, Deputy Commissioners have been instructed to review and assess the cases based on revenue laws. The Ministry of Rural Development has allocated an additional target of 1,99,550 houses for the union territory of Jammu and Kashmir for the fiscal year 2023-24. To facilitate the allotment process, block-level camps were conducted from June 4 to 10 to collect the necessary documents from households. These documents include bank details, Aadhaar cards, MGNREGA job cards, ration cards, revenue documents, contact numbers, and a declaration stating that the beneficiaries have not already constructed a house and meet the scheme's guidelines.

## 'Public-private partnership can expedite process of achieving green hydrogen economy'

**NEW DELHI :** Petroleum Minister Hardeep Singh Puri on Friday said that the Centre has put up an eco-system for the development of green hydrogen and government sectors with support from private companies can expedite the process of achieving a green hydrogen economy.

In his valedictory address at an international conference, Puri said that green hydrogen is an idea whose time has come. He informed the gathering on the last day of the three-day long conference on green hydrogen that public sector entities have been earmarked to produce more than 1 MMT of green hydrogen by 2030. The global demand for hydrogen is expected to reach 200 million tonnes by 2030, Puri said.



Bank (EIB) will be our hydrogen ally and would support developing a large scale industry hub with a funding of 1 billion Euros. The Asian Development Bank (ADB) has recently conveyed their intent to provide \$20-\$25 billion over five years to aid India's aspirations for green growth. That's not all, the World Bank has approved \$1.5 billion in financing to support India's low-carbon transition journey," he informed the gathering. Talking about the importance of public and private players coming together to bring the future fuel on the global platform, the petroleum minister informed that several review meetings at industry level are regularly being undertaken to find out ways to boost the hydrogen production capacity in India. "We will ensure uptake of green hydrogen in refineries and city gas distribution (CGD) through both public sector entities and the private sector and try to design new projects with maximum chances of hydrogen deployment to strategically phase out fossil fuels and aid de-carbonisation goals," he noted.

## Top Kashmir police officer calls for new mechanisms to neutralize remaining militants in Kashmir

FW DESK

The Additional Director General of Police (ADGP) Kashmir, Vijay Kumar on Wednesday directed officers to adopt new mechanisms to ensure the neutralization of remaining militants during his visit to the South Kashmir districts of Shopian and Pulwama.

The ADGP Kashmir instructed the officers to focus on gathering human intelligence

(Humint) and to collaborate with security forces in launching anti-terrorist operations. He emphasized the importance of taking preventive legal measures to curb recruitment into terrorist ranks. Each police officer in the district was assigned to work on different terror modules under the close supervision of the district SSP.

The district police chief of Shopian briefed the ADGP on the modified joint area domina-



and zero terror plan. At Pulwama, the ADGP held a meeting with the DIG Police, Commanding Officers of 182 and 183 Battalions of the Central Reserve Police Force

(CRPF), and the district police chief Pulwama. He commended the officers for their efforts in eradicating the remnants of terrorism and urged them to continue working together to conduct precision-based operations.

The ADGP stressed the need for special teams and innovative mechanisms to ensure the neutralization of terrorists.

The SSP Pulwama received specific directions to identify

and take strict action against Over Ground Workers (OGWs) involved in the recent recruitment of two individuals into terror ranks in the district. During the meetings, an overview of the districts was provided, and specific guidelines were issued to the officers to achieve targeted outcomes. In addition to the security measures already in place, the ADGP directed additional measures to prevent terror incidents.

## Current Manipur govt weakest ever in political history: Manipur Cong Chief

ARIBAM BISHWAJIT

Manipur Pradesh Congress Committee President Keisham Meghachandra has expressed his doubts regarding the ability of the state government to effectively address the ongoing unrest in Manipur. In a press conference held at Congress Bhavan in Imphal on Thursday evening, Meghachandra strongly criticized Chief Minister N Biren Singh led incumbent government, labeling them as the weakest in the political history of Manipur. During the press conference held at Congress Bhavan in Imphal, Meghachandra highlighted the Bharatiya Janata Party's (BJP) recent meeting in Guwahati, which aimed to strategize for the upcoming 2024 Lok Sabha polls. He deemed the meeting irrelevant and accused the BJP of sidestepping discussions about



the critical situation in Manipur. Meghachandra emphasized that organizing such a meeting was inappropriate given the crisis gripping the state. One of the major points of contention raised by Meghachandra was the silence of Prime Minister Narendra Modi on the violence unfolding in Manipur. The state has experienced significant loss of life, widespread destruction of homes, and the displacement of over 50,000 people. Expressing deep concern, Meghachandra lamented the Prime Minister's silence, questioning his priorities, citing instances of engaging in cabinet meetings and election campaigning in other states instead of addressing the plight of the people in Manipur.

## Excise Policy Case: ED attaches assets worth Rs 52 crore of Sisodia, his wife, others

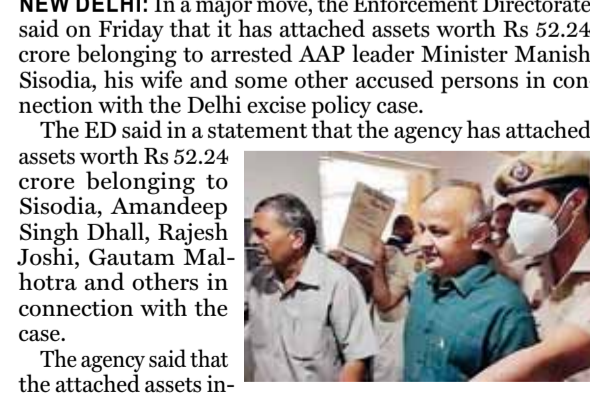
**NEW DELHI:** In a major move, the Enforcement Directorate said on Friday that it has attached assets worth Rs 52.24 crore belonging to arrested AAP leader Minister Manish Sisodia, his wife and some other accused persons in connection with the Delhi excise policy case.

The ED said in a statement that the agency has attached assets worth Rs 52.24 crore belonging to Sisodia, Amandeep Singh Dhall, Rajesh Joshi, Gautam Malhotra and others in connection with the case.

The agency said that the attached assets include immovable properties worth Rs 7.29 crore -- including two immovable properties of Sisodia and his wife Seema Sisodia, land/flat of Joshi or Chariot Productions Media Pvt Ltd and land/flat of Malhotra.

The probe agency said that the attachments also include movable assets worth Rs 44.29 crore, including bank balances of Sisodia worth Rs 11.49 lakh, Brindco Sales Pvt Ltd worth Rs 16.45 crore, and others.

This was the second attachment in the case by the agency. The ED had earlier attached properties worth Rs 76.54 crore of AAP communication in-charge Vijay Nair, Sameer Mahandru, Amit Arora, Arun Pillai and others.



Expressing his frustration over Mr. Modi's perceived indifference to Manipur and prioritization of other states, Meghachandra, who is also an MLA of the Wangkhem assembly constituency, raised the question of the significance of Indian citizenship, saying, "What is the meaning of citizens of India? Here, our children are displaced, and thousands of houses have been torched. At this crucial juncture, if they are discussing political strategy for the election, what's the need for Manipur to be a part of India? This is the question people are raising. Our political party, the Congress, is asking."

Expressing grave concerns about the government's inability to restore normalcy, Meghachandra stated, "Under this government, we are all going to die. This is the weakest government I have ever seen in my life and in the political history of Manipur."

**MP Sahney urges Punjab MPs to unitedly demand release of Rural Development Fund**



**CHANDIGARH:** Rajya Sabha MP Vikramjit Singh Sahney on Friday appealed to all Members of Parliament from Punjab to call upon the Prime Minister for requesting his intervention to release the pending Rural Development Fund (RDF) of Rs 4, 200 crore to Punjab.

The AAP MP said that this issue is relating to Punjab's food grain procurement, farmers and development of rural areas and should not be viewed from a political angle. He clarified that since several decades, Punjab has been getting three per cent Rural Development Fund and three per cent market fee as Punjab is a non-decentralized procurement state which contributes 100 per cent of the food grains procurement in the central pool.

A delegation of MPs both from Lok Sabha and Rajya Sabha irrespective of the party should call on the Prime Minister to appeal to him for his intervention and release of pending Rural Development Fund of Rs 4, 200 crore to Punjab, he stated. Last year, he took up the issue with the Union Ministry of Food and Public Distribution and he was told that Punjab must pass an Act in the Assembly for RDF to be utilized specifically for rural development and the respective Act was passed by the state Assembly on July 28, 2022.

**Punjab BJP president pays obeisance at Sri Harmandir Sahib**



**JAGMOHAN SINGH Amritsar**  
Newly appointed BJP Punjab president Sunil Jankar with other party leaders pay obeisance at Sri Harmandir Sahib here today.

After paying obeisance, he addressed the media for a while, said, "My purpose is to visit here to thank the Waheguru (Almighty) and to have blessings as whatever today I have due to the grace of God. I prayed before the Almighty for His grace and sought strength to take up the Punjab issues courageously. I pray here for the brotherhood in all the Punjabis and the wellbeing of Punjab. I sought courage to work tirelessly for the overall development of Punjab without any prejudice.

On being asked about the political alliance between SAD (Badal) and BJP, he said that he was standing on Guru Ghar (Religious and pious place) and would never prefer to speak on politics since the people who indulged religious places in politics were diminished.

**Case of administrative irregularities at Langar Sri Guru Ramdas: SGPC President suspended 51 employees**

**JAGMOHAN SINGH Amritsar**

The Shiromani Gurdwara Parbandhak Committee (SGPC) President Harjinder Singh Dhama has suspended 51 employees in the case of administrative irregularities found in Langar (community kitchen) Sri Guru Ramdas at Sri Darbar Sahib.

Sharing information in this regard, SGPC secretary Partap Singh said that an investigation was ordered through SGPC's flying department after this matter came to the notice, and this action has been taken as per the investigation report. He said that the suspended employees include managers, supervisors, storekeepers deputed at Langar Sri Guru Ramdas, and gurdwara inspectors who performed the duties at that time. He said that out of these 51 suspended employees, 2 storekeepers were suspended during the preliminary investigation.

Meanwhile, SGPC President Harjinder Singh Dhama has



said that any negligence and irregularity in the Gurdwara management will not be tolerated. He said that the religious sentiments of the Sangat (community + devotees) are associated with the Gurdwaras, and representing these sentiments is the primary responsibility of the managers and employees of the Gurdwaras. Whoever harms the Gurdwara management will not be spared, he added.

Meanwhile, Bhagwant Singh Dhamera has been appointed as the General Manager of Sachkhand Sri Darbar Sahib, who was posted as in-charge at the SGPC's sub-office in Chandigarh. SGPC secretary Partap Singh said that apart from the

appointment of Bhagwant Singh Dhamera as the new General Manager, additional manager Nishan Singh has been entrusted with the responsibility of managing Sarais (inns). Manager Narinder Singh has been posted at Gurdwara Shaheed Ganj Baba Deep Singh Ji. Satinder Singh, who was working as a supervisor in the SGPC's purchase department has now been appointed as an additional manager at Sri Darbar Sahib and given the charge of management of Langar Sri Guru Ramdas.

Earlier, last week the Shiromani Gurdwara Parbandhak Committee has suspended two employees for alleged embezze-

ment of funds worth Rs 1 crore and ordered a high-level probe, officials said on Saturday. The accounts division of the Shiromani Gurdwara Parbandhak Committee (SGPC) detected the alleged financial irregularity. Taking swift action, the apex gurdwara body had suspended two employees for the alleged embezzlement and ordered a high-level inquiry, he said.

Satbir Singh, an officer on special duty to SGPC chief Harjinder Singh Dhama, had said two storekeepers in the community kitchen were suspended for the alleged irregularity. They were held responsible for not depositing the money in the gurdwara body's account after selling stale food. The storekeepers were accountable for disposing of waste — stale chapatis, rice and other materials — to industrial units that make food products (cattle feed) for cattle.

The money collected from selling stale food between 2019 and 2022 should have been deposited in the SGPC account.

**Punjab VB books Amritsar improvement trust advocate for accepting bribe of Rs.8 lakh**

**Accused Advocate demanded Rs. 20 Lakh to get compensation released of acquired land**

**JAGMOHAN SINGH Amritsar**

Punjab Vigilance Bureau (VB) on Thursday booked Gautam Majithia, Government Advocate of Improvement Trust, Amritsar for allegedly accepting a bribe of Rs. 8 Lakh in lieu of getting the compensation released for acquiring 20 Bigha land.

Revealing the details here today in an official statement issued, an official spokesperson of the VB said the accused Advocate has been booked on the complaint of Jatinder Singh, a resident of Pratap Avenue, Amritsar.

He informed that Jatinder Singh had lodged a complaint on an Anti-corruption Portal on May 18, 2023 citing that Advocate Gautam Majithia had



demand a bribe of Rs. 20 Lakh to get released the additional compensation of the 20 Bigha land acquired by the Improvement Trust, Amritsar on March 25, 2022. A Court ordered to release a 20 per cent additional compensation for the said 20 Bigha land to the complainant Jatinder Singh, when the complainant approached the accused Advocate for the additional compensation. He demanded a bribe of Rs. 20 Lakh to get the compensation

released, of which, he already took the amount of Rs 8 Lakh as a bribe. The spokesperson informed that after preliminary investigation of this complaint, a FIR no. 19 dated 04-07-2023 under various sections of Prevention of Corruption Act has been registered at Police Station VB, Amritsar Range and a manhunt has been launched to arrest the accused Advocate Gautam Majithia. Further investigations in this case are under progress, he added.

**Nearly a dozen gangsters in northern jails to be shifted to Andaman, STF arrested a shooter demanded Rs 1 cr ransom**

**SATISH HANDA Ambala**

Special Task Force (STF) Ambala on an information arrested a sharp shooter from Shahabad in Kurukshetra district identified as Robin Singh a resident of Kaithal district belongs to Ankush Kamalpur gang who had demanded Rs 1 crore ransom amount from Sanjay Bura the owner of a Bura Overseas immigration Centre at Sector 10 Kurukshetra on 30th June 2023 evening when he was returning home along with his family and threatened to kill him as well as his family in case ransom amount was not made. Bura lodged a complaint with the police which arrested Robin Singh and also recovered from him a Desi pistol along with cartridges, STF DSP Aman Kumar said on getting information a team led by Daljit Singh and Satnam Singh ASI was immediately rushed to Shahabad which arrested him and a case was registered by Shahabad police station and Robin was remanded to police custody for five days.

In another case of ransom demand registered on the complaint of Balram a resident of Shadipur running a sweets shop in the name of Krishna Sweets near Old Bus Stand Julana in Jind district when five to six persons arrived at his residence on July 5 late evening introducing themselves as members of



from inside the jails in northern states. Sources reveal, in a letter to the Ministry of Home Affairs NIA had sought the transfer of at least 25 gangsters from jails in North India to the southern states.

Rajesh Sarkari gang at Rohtak and demanded to arrange Rs 2 crore amount immediately, failing which threatened him to kill him along with his family. A case was registered by Julana police station on the complaint of Balraj the owner of Krishna Sweets shop and started investigation.

According to sources, the National Investigation Agency (NIA) has proposed shifting for the hard core gangsters locked in Haryana, Punjab and Delhi jails who are actively operating criminal activities through their gang members in the area operating from inside the jails. Sometime ago hard core criminal from Punjab Amritpal Singh and his associates were shifted to Dibrugarh jail in Assam. Information reveals, the National Investigation Agency in a letter to the Ministry of Home Affairs has written for shifting nearly a dozen terrorists to Andaman and Nicobar islands from North India jails in order to stop activities by the gangsters operating

Lawrence Bishnoi, a prime accused in the murder of Punjab singer Sidhu Moosewala. The National Investigation Agency is learnt to have held discussions with the Ministry of Home Affairs for shifting 10-12 gangsters currently lodged in jails in Delhi, Punjab and Haryana, who are suspected to be operating their crime syndicates from behind bars, to the Andaman and Nicobar Islands. Information also reveals that NIA had sought the transfer of at least 25 gangsters from jails in North India to the southern states.

Sources said the initial proposal was to shift the gangsters to jails in South India, it would be a long procedure as permission would have to be sought from the state governments, since the Andaman and Nicobar Islands is a Union territory, and its administration comes under the Ministry, the procedure will take much lesser time. For which legal opinion is being sought, an NIA spokes persons said.

**Rift amid senior Congress leaders continues, 'Tigdi' of 3 leaders unite against Hooda**

**SATISH HANDA**

Continuing internal rift between Haryana state Congress party senior leaders sees three of its stalwarts, Randeep Surjewala AICC General Secretary, Kumari Selja a former HPC president and Kiran Choudhary MLA from Tosham going on since a long time although they claim no rift exists between them but it is an open fact that they have joined hands against former Chief Minister and leader of opposition in Haryana Vidhan Sabha Bhupinder Singh Hooda. Despite the efforts by recent appointment of new party president Deepak Babria the internal conflict still seems to persist because three leaders feel themselves sidelined, have decided to unify their efforts to try and assert dominance in the race to the forthcoming 2024 polls in Haryana making a public display of their unity before the high command but it cannot be denied that faction in senior party leaders may prove harmful and weaken the party.

Needless to say that Hooda possesses strong influence in the state politics and it was only due to him Congress was able to get reasonable number of seats in Haryana during previous 2019 Vidhan Sabha polls and in case had alliance with would have been in power in the state today in spite of 'Modi wave' all over in the country. The trio:



Randeep Surjewala, Kumari Selja, and Kiran Choudhary were having their differences in the past also, but the dominance of Hooda's faction has prompted them to join hand together to secure their appearance and political futures in the state, thus united against Hooda leaving aside previous differences in order to remain in power if the Congress return to power in Haryana after about a decade. Sources reveal that of the 30 Congress MLAs in Haryana, Hooda have the support of at least 25 or above MLAs. No doubt, Randeep Surjewala possesses significant influence at the party's high command, Sonia Gandhi's favorite Selja and Kiran Choudhary also enjoy the favour of the party's high command, which also give high importance on Hooda and his MP son Deepender Singh Hooda. Congress high command is also aware that sidelining the Hooda faction could potentially weaken the party in Haryana and cannot be ignored at any cost at this stage.

**Ambala political leader arrested in rape case**

**SATISH HANDA Ambala**

A woman made a complaint with Mahila police station Ambala against a BJP leader Anshul Agarwal allegedly raped by him on the pretext of offering her a job, as such he hwas booked under various sections of the IPC 376 and 420 for rape and cheating. The woman in her complaint alleged that she was raped on the pretext of providing her a job in OLX which was advertised. Surinder Kaur in-charge Mahila police station told that police arrested alleged accuse on woman's complaint and sent Anshul Agarwal to



jail. He had had also contested Vidhan Sabha polls in 2019 on behalf of Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) but badly defeated was able to get only 868 votes. Agarwal later left AAP and joined BJP in the presence of Aseem Goel MLA Ambala City constituency.

In her complaint, the victim woman alleged that she had come in the contact of the alleged accuse when she approached him for job which was offered to her as billing clerk. Surinder Kaur In-charge Mahila police station said the victim also alleged that she

was raped by alleged accuse Anshul Agarwal number of times including in hotel and also became pregnant twice and was got terminated by alleged accuse who had assured her to marry but lingering on this matter. She told that Anshul had even applied 'Sindoor' on her head assuring to marry. The doctor involved in termination of pregnancy of the complainant Vinod was also booked for illegal termination of the complainant woman. However, when contacted BJP's District president about this matter who refused that Anshul Agarwal was not linked with their party just was a follower..

**India has become the fifth economy of the world due to Modi: Vij**

**There should be one law for everyone in the country, favours Uniform Civil Code**

**SATISH HANDA Ambala**

Haryana Home and Health Minister Anil Vij said that there should be one law for all in the country and there should not be separate laws for people. He was interacting with media persons at PWD Rest House Ambala cant during Public Durbar regarding the Uniform Civil Code during the Janata Darbar in Ambala listening to public grievances which continued



till late Saturday night. While responding, Vij said that it is a matter of discussion in the whole country at this time and almost everyone is agreeing that there should be one law for everyone in the country. Discussion is going on and only after the discussion some step will be taken on it.

Expressed proud over today India has become the fifth economy of the world due to Prime Minister Narendra Modi Home Minister said that the President of Russia praised 'Make in India' initiative, on which Anil Vij praised Prime Minister Narendra Modi and said that due to the thinking and efforts of Modi today we have become the fifth economy in the world and in this 'Make In India' has made a huge contribution and many projects have been started and employment opportunities have also increased. Apart from this, he said that the youths have also set up new industries under 'Make in India' initiative.

**Woman drugs smuggler arrested with 1656 intoxicated capsules**

**SATISH HANDA Ambala**

A woman drugs smuggler identified as Geeta was arrested by a police patrolling party during night on a clue that a female carrying intoxicated capsules is the area near bus stand Ambala Cantt, as such police held a barrier opposite Shiv temple near the old fish market when after some-time saw a woman carrying hand bag was coming. Police stopped suspected woman and started checking when found 80 strips containing 1656 in-

toxicated capsules in her bag. She was arrested by the police and taken to Sadar police station where a case under NDPS act was registered against her since she failed to produce any bill for the drugs.

Information reveals that much increased number of cases have been registered at Ambala during year 2022 as compared to previous year 2021 under NDPS Act, recording 116 cases registeredn as against 91 cases were registered during previous year 2021 in which police arrested 116 drug smugglers and re-



covered 11 kg 457 gm opium, 1 quintal 6 kg poppy husk, 23 kg 454 gm ganja, 1 kg 213 gm heroine, 213 intoxicated injections and 45000 intoxicated tablets and capsules.

Jashandeep Singh Randhawa told that during year 2022 Ambala police had arrested 182 drugs smugglers in 147 cases registered under NDPS Act recovering 18 kg 374 gm opium, 17 quintal 42 kg poppy husk, 30 kg ganja, 5kg 475 gm heroine, 950 intoxicated injections and 65000 intoxicated tablets. Randhawa told that action was taken by the state government to demolish properties of drugs smugglers built with money earned through drugs smuggling for value worth Rs 5.22 crore.

**Crawfed submits memorandum regarding maintenance of parks to Mayor and Commissioner**

**KULBIR SINGH KALSI Chandigarh**

Today a delegation led by Hitesh Puri, Chairman CRAWFED, Vice Chairman Umesh Ghai and General Secretary Dr. Anish Garg submitted a memorandum to Municipal Corporation Commissioner Anandita Mitra and Mayor Anoop Gupta. Dr. Anish Garg said that according to the letter issued to RWA giving short notice it is absolutely wrong to right to continue or cancel the contract with the Resident Welfare Association for the maintenance of green belts



and parks. In the current situation, many RWAs have been maintaining the parks well for the past many years, many of

which have received the best awards from the Municipal Corporation. The biggest problem is that these RWAs have

bought a lot of grass cutting machinery and other equipment. The most serious issue is that by snatching from one RWA and giving it to another, mutual differences will increase. Hitesh Puri Added that it will disturbed all the atmosphere of Chandigarh & RWA which are doing so much work day & night it's dishearten for the most senior people of the city. Umesh Ghai Nominate councillor had already objected this decision in the house. Mayor Anoop Gupta assured that old RWA s who are doing satisfactory work will always be appreciated.

# NATION

## Congress slams Modi govt over price hike of Essential Commodities

**KAVITA SHARMA**  
New Delhi

The Congress party slams Modi govt. over the skyrocketed prices of the essential commodities in the country, addresses the Prime Minister Narendra Modi as "Meanghai Man". The party also asks the government to reduce the excise duty on fuel immediately. Displaying a basket full of vegetables like Tomatoes, Ginger, Green Chillies, Garlic and some groceries items, Congress Spokesperson Supriya Srinate attacked BJP govt over increasing price rise. The prices of the food items are so high that it has become unaffordable for a common man, it is very difficult for anybody to survive in such situations. Addressing a press conference in New Delhi, Con-



gress spokesperson Supriya Srinate said the prices of tomatoes which were around Rs 20-30 last month have now gone up to Rs 100-150. Showing the Basket full of vegetables costing around Rs 1070, Supriya suggested everyone to gift such expensive baskets to people in the functions instead of sweets.



According to her the ruthless taxation leads to additional cost of transportation that eventually leads to price hike on vegetables and fruits. The govt. should reverse the prices of the essential commodities soon. The common man on one side has to face inflation and on the other unemployment. Even those who

are employed were not having enough income, she said. "We expect the govt to stop profiteering through taxes. Prices of Biscuits, tea leaves, and other snacks have also gone up, she added. The All India Mahila Congress also held a protest outside BJP office in New Delhi, demanding relief for people from rising inflation of essential commodities. The women wing also accused the Delhi Police of manhandling and violating protocols." Delhi Police under Home Minister Amit Shah does not miss any opportunity to break rules, conventions and procedures laid out in the Police manual to intimidate and harass protesters raising their voices against the Modi Government. They have broken all protocols by sending male officers to manhandle Mahila Congress workers protesting against rise in prices of essential commodities." Congress leader Jairam Ramesh tweeted. Meanwhile Congress is all set to ask questions of price hike of essential commodities in the forthcoming Monsoon session of the parliament.

## Chandrayaan-3 integrated with launch vehicle: ISRO

**ARUN KUMAR RAO**  
Bangalore



In a major milestone, ISRO announced it has integrated the Chandrayaan-3 spacecraft with launch vehicle—GSLV-MKE or LVM3. ISRO is looking at a mid-July launch window for India's third lunar mission and a second attempt at soft-landing equipment on the Moon. While Chandrayaan-3 is a follow on mission to Chandrayaan-2, unlike its predecessor, which carried an orbiter along with a lander and rover, this spacecraft is composite of three modules: Propulsion, lander and rover. ISRO carried out several changes on the lander for Chandrayaan-3. After its failed landing attempt in September 2019. This time around, Vikram, the lander will have stronger legs than its previous avatar to enable landing at greater velocities than earlier. The lander legs,

for instance, have seen major changes. Their velocity tolerance has been enhanced to 3m/sec from the earlier 1m/sec. That means even at 3m/sec, the lander will not crash or break its legs. ISRO has made several other changes, learning from the failures of predecessor Chandrayaan-2. ISRO has also added more fuel to handle more disruptions, with the "ability to come back", allowing more cushion to handle the mission. A new sensor called the laser Doppler velocity metre, will look at the lunar terrain.

S.Somanath, ISRO Chairman, told media a lot of improvements have been made on the lander. ISRO has also improved the software to have more tolerance to failures, such as engine disruptions, thrust disruptions, sensor failures, etc, While also removing the central or fifth engine, which was a last-minute addition to Chandrayaan-2, he added.

## BJP appoints new state presidents in AP, Telangana, Punjab and Jharkhand



**NEW DELHI:** In view of the Lok Sabha elections to be held in 2024 and the upcoming Assembly elections, the BJP in an organisational reshuffle on Tuesday, appointed new state presidents in Andhra Pradesh, Telangana, Punjab and Jharkhand. BJP President J.P. Nadda has appointed former Union Minister D Purandeshwari as the new state President of Andhra Pradesh. Purandeshwari, who had joined the BJP in 2014, is daughter of former Andhra Pradesh Chief Minister and Telugu Desam Party (TDP) founder N.T. Rama Rao. She replaced Somu Veeraj. Union Minister G. Kishan Reddy has been made the President of Telangana. Kishan Reddy, currently Union minister for tourism and culture, replaced Bandi Sanjay, who is also an MP. Assembly elections in Telangana are due to be held later this year while Assembly polls in Andhra Pradesh are scheduled along with Lok Sabha elections next year. In view of the assembly elections to be held this year in Telangana, former state minister Etela Rajendra has also been appointed as the chairman of the Election Management Committee.

## Shinde a 'temporary guest', Maha to get new CM soon, claims Sanjay Raut



A day after the dust of the Maharashtra political quake hovers in the air, the Opposition Maha Vikas Aghadi got into a war-mode with Shiv Sena (UBT) MP and Chief Spokesperson Sanjay Raut predicting that the state will soon get a new Chief Minister, here on Monday. Speaking to mediapersons, Raut said that the Shiv Sena CM Eknath Shinde's days are numbered and even its ally BJP has perceived this. "At best, he is a 'temporary guest' (kuchh dinon ka mehmaan)". The Speaker's verdict on the disqualification of 16 MLAs including Shinde has to come soon. The BJP has realised that Shinde has outlived his utility and the NCP split is to safeguard their position later," said Raut.

CM soon, "Raut reiterated. He added how the BJP has been rattled by its May rout in Karnataka and all recent surveys indicating an even worse debacle for it in Maharashtra whenever the elections are held here. "All this is being done to salvage their position in the state. First they broke the Shiv Sena and now they have split the NCP, but the people of the state are watching all this and will not spare them," he declared. Pulling the government's ears, Raut lamented that Sunday (July 2), the bodies of the 25 (out of 26) victims of the Buldhana bus tragedy on early Saturday, who hailed from different parts of the state, were being given a mass cremation in Buldhana. "As their pyres burnt, in Mumbai there was rejoicing, handshakes and hugs in Raj Bhavan where the new Deputy CM and Ministers were sworn-in... This was improper, they should have at least waited for the cremation fires to extinguish before their celebrations," said Raut.

The Sena (UBT) leader added that Ajit Pawar has become Deputy CM for a record 5th time, "but his target is higher, the post of CM". "After the Speaker's verdict, there will be a change of guard in the state and Ajit Pawar's deal is for the top post. The state will get a new

## Mumbai operation has strengthened opposition's resolve: Cong

**NEW DELHI:** Congress General Secretary Jairam Ramesh on Monday said that BJP's operation in Mumbai has strengthened the opposition resolve. "Yesterday, when the BJP washing Machine restarted in Mumbai with its Income Tax, CBI, ED (ICE) detergent, BJP-inspired obituaries on Opposition unity were being planted. The obit writers will be disappointed," Ramesh said. He said that the next meeting of the opposition parties -- which met in Patna on June 23 -- will be held in Bengaluru on July 17 and 18. "If anything the Mumbai opera-



tions have strengthened opposition's resolve," Ramesh said. His remarks came after Congress General Secretary (organisation) KC Venugopal announced that second meeting of opposition parties will be held in Bengaluru on July 17 and 18. The second meeting of the opposition parties comes

two days prior to crucial Parliament's Monsoon Session that will begin on July 20 and will continue till August 11. The Opposition meeting was initially supposed to take place in Shimla. However, on Thursday (June 29), NCP Supremo Sharad Pawar said that the venue has been shifted to Bengaluru. The fresh dates of the second meeting of the Opposition parties come a day after a split in the Nationalist Congress Party (NCP) following Sharad Pawar's nephew Ajit Pawar's rebellion and alliance with the BJP-Eknath Shinde government in Maharashtra.

## BSF personnel acquitted of charges in Kargil war killing of 3 soldiers

**FW DESK**

The Jammu and Kashmir and Ladakh High Court has upheld the acquittal of Border Security Force (BSF) personnel who were charged in the case of an Army patrol firing incident during the Kargil War, LiveLaw reported. A bench of Justices Sanjay Dhar and Rajesh Sekhri noted that there was no evidence to establish that the accused had deliberately fired upon the Army patrol party. The defendants had been acquitted by the Sessions Court of charges under Sections 302/307/34 of the Ranbir Penal Code (RPC). The incident in question occurred on the night of July 16 and July 17, 1999, when a BSF bunker allegedly fired upon an Army patrol party led by Lieutenant Sanjiv Dahiya.



Three soldiers were killed, and another was severely injured. Initially considered an accidental death, the situation changed when the injured soldier, Sepoy Keshav Singh, revealed that the BSF personnel had opened fire after the patrol party attempted to signal them using a flashlight. Based on Sepoy Singh's statement, a First Information Report

(FIR) was filed, and an investigation ensued. The prosecution presented its case, highlighting the alleged deliberate actions of the BSF personnel and the absence of evidence suggesting a threat to the BSF bunker. They also presented reports indicating that the bullets recovered from the deceased soldiers matched the weapons issued to the accused.

## Viral video of gruesome murder prompts thousands of women stage protest at Sekmaiin Bazar

**ARIBAM BISHWAJIT**  
Imphal (Manipur)

In a powerful display of unity and determination, thousands of women gathered at the Sekmaiin Bazar bridge to stage a sit-in protest, effectively blocking the road. The demonstration was prompted by the shocking disappearance of two young individuals from the area, whose brutal killings were captured in videos circulating on Facebook, allegedly at the hands of Kuki militants. The missing youths, Sagolsem Ngaliba and Irengbam Chinkheingamba, both from Sekmaiin Khunou in Kakching district were last seen on July 4, and their whereabouts remained unknown. Thounaojam Ayangleima Chanu, one of the women pro-



testers, expressed her outrage at the viral videos, stating, "We have been deeply concerned about the safety of these two youths since July 4, given the ongoing situation in the state. To our dismay and horror, we witnessed on Facebook two viral videos showing our children

being tortured and mercilessly slain by Kuki militants, shot in the head and dumped into a pit. We have witnessed this brutality, and it is unbearable." Ms. Chanu stressed the significance of the sit-in protest, emphasizing that they could not allow their youth to perish in such a manner.

## Improved compliance leading to continual increase in GST revenues and registrations through the year: Shashank Priya

**FW DESK**  
New Delhi

We are clocking an average monthly revenue of Rs. 1.69 lakh crore in FY 2023-24 because of improved compliance and greater formalisation of the economy. Revenues are growing without having to increase tax rates to match revenue neutral rate. The number of registered taxpayers now stands at around 1.40 crore from 67.83 lakhs when GST started, said Shashank Priya, Member (GST), CBIC, Ministry of Finance, at the National Conclave on 6 Years of GST organised by ASSOCHAM. "The GST law which is completely home grown has now stabilised. The GST law which appeared complex at the begin-

ning is now understood well by both trade and officials. A pilot is in the works for biometric authentication of Aadhaar of high-risk applicants with OTP verification on e-mail and mobile number linked to PAN. Risk score will be determined on the basis of detailed risk parameters and sophisticated data analytics which will be further made robust by using Artificial intelligence and Machine Learning" he said. "Special attention has been paid to MSMEs under GST and they now have easier access to a unified market through a more facilitate interstate movement of goods. The burden of record keeping, multiple audit and return scrutiny have been eased and the provision of online payment has saved them labour. To



facilitate easier compliance, the benefit of composition schemes for annual turnover up to Rs. 1.5 crore QRMP for annual turnover up to Rs. 5 crore, optional annual return, waiver of annual reconcil-

ation statement and filing NIL returns through SMS have been extended to MSMEs." he added. Speaking at the conclave, Manish Kumar Sinha, CEO, Goods and Services Tax Network

(GSTN), said "Circumstances and overall direction of GST would indicate that we are moving towards vendor ratings which may include providing all relevant data points to the industry to arrive at the same. On one hand there is the issue of fake dealers and on the other there is a large segment of industry that is compliant. The GST law has a section dedicated to compliance rating and this will in one form or the other come into play. From an industry usage perspective, a committee is deliberating on placing more data in the public domain which will provide more insight on geography and industry specific information based on GST data. We are also in the process of integrating GSTRI data as a financial information

provider on account aggregator platform. More such platforms with linkages to GST will be set-up. For MSME credits becoming available based on their GST activity will be a reality very soon." He added. Setting the context at the conclave, Pratik Jain, Chairman, National Council on Indirect Taxes ASSOCHAM said, "With the implementation of GST the number of taxpayers has increased across the country and the improvement in the efficiency of the supply chain. The new taxation process has resulted in a reduction in product prices, benefitting the consumers. The government has collected around 1.5 lakh crore through GST and the next phase of GST is set for consumer empowerment."

## NCBS Launches 'Rohini Nilekani Centre for Brain & Mind' for Research on Severe Mental Illnesses

**An outcome of the INR 100 Crores grant given to NCBS and NIMHANS to further long-term research and build capacity for both research and practice in the mental health field.**

**ARUN KUMAR RAO**  
Bangalore

The National Centre for Biological Sciences (NCBS) announces the launch of the 'Rohini Nilekani Centre for Brain and Mind', a centre dedicated to advancing Indian research and practice pertaining to neurodevelopment disorders and mental health. The centre will focus on the long-term examination of environmental and genetic factors involved in brain development which underlie severe mental illnesses. Rohini Nilekani, Chairperson - Rohini Nilekani Philanthropies, unveiled the plaque to mark the inauguration of 'the Center for Brain and Mind' today in the NCBS campus in Bengaluru. The guests present included Prof. K. VijayRaghavan - DAE Homi Bhabha Chair, NCBS-TIFR, Prof. Sanjeev Jain - Emeritus Professor, NIMHANS, Prof. Mahendra Rao - Former Collaborative Science Chair, inStem & CEO, Implants Therapeutics, and Prof. Maneesha Inamdar - Director inStem.



The centre will support research through its partnership with the National Institute of Mental Health and Neurosciences (NIMHANS) and NCBS' therapeutic practices pertaining to five mental disorders: schizophrenia, bipolar disorder, addiction, obsessive-compulsive disorder, and dementia - conditions considered neurodevelopment in origin. The research work of the centre will combine the molecular biological research capabilities and technologies at NCBS with the stem cell capabilities established at the Institute for Stem Cell Science and Regenerative Medicine (inStem-DBT), an autonomous institution under the Department of Biotechnology, Govt. of India. inStem has been and will continue to partner with NCBS on research activities, including that of the Accelerator program for Discovery in Brain disorders using Stem cells (ADBS).

Speaking about the centre, Rohini Nilekani, Chairperson of Rohini Nilekani Philanthropies, said, "India has a significant number of people, around 193 million, dealing with mental illness. The proportional contribution of mental disorders to the total disease burden in India had almost doubled since 1990, and this calls for urgent attention. The Centre for Brain and Mind' will attempt to address this challenge by driving interdisciplinary research to understand the complexities of brain and mind conditions. More Research originating from India is critical at this juncture. The collaboration between NCBS and NIMHANS will provide globally relevant insights, evidence and pathways for better treatment for millions of people in India and the world.

## Talking Points

### Narvijay Yadav

**Nonveg food is also responsible for the increase in global warming. Raising an animal requires more water than farming, and the animals emit harmful gases. That is why it is prudent to switch to vegetarian food.**

A consumer court imposed a heavy fine on Thai Airways after a passenger from Delhi NCR was served non-veg food on a flight to Melbourne even after he had stated his choice of food at the time of booking the ticket. When the food served between Delhi and Bangkok seemed odd and the passenger inquired, it was found that he was given nonveg food. When the airline did not respond to the complaint over email, the

passenger filed a case in the consumer court. For those who do not eat non-veg food, such a situation becomes very troublesome. By the way, let me tell you that nonveg food is also responsible for increasing global warming. Raising an animal requires more water than farming, and the animals emit harmful gases. One should have compassion towards animals and birds and given the damage caused to the environment, it is prudent

## Nonveg food impacts the environment

to eat vegetarian food. From individuals to companies, governments, and nations, efforts have to be made at every level to save the environment. For this, the Sustainable Development Goals have been issued by the United Nations. Information about this has been given in the report of Hurun India. According to the report, 29 of India's top 50 companies that have taken measures in this direction include ITC, Infosys, Cipla, Adani Port, Mahindra & Mahindra, UltraTech Cement, Hindustan Zinc and Tech Mahindra. Inspired by this list, other companies can step up their efforts. Many companies are constantly turning to such energy sources, which cause the least harm to the environment. For this, water recycling plants and solar energy plants



are being set up. By doing this, not only will the environment be safe, but the operational cost will also be reduced. Sadviguru Jagdish Jaggi Vasudev considers soil not as inert matter, but as the source of life. He did a 100-day global bike tour to create awareness around soil and environment conservation. Sadviguru says that regenerating the soil will

help in tackling the current environmental challenges. Management consulting firm McKinsey and Company conducted a survey in 13 countries in which most air travelers expressed concern about air pollution caused by airplanes. About 5,500 people were consulted in the survey, of which 40 percent agreed to pay two percent additional

money if the carbon emissions are reduced. In Spain, 60 percent of air passengers expressed their desire to opt for carbon-neutral flights. Not only aircraft, but some trains also add to the air pollution, primarily diesel engine-driven trains. In India, 37 percent of trains are still dependent on diesel engines. They cause a lot of pollution, and to reduce this the railway is working towards using biodiesel in the fossil fuel-based engines. The Ministry of Railways plans to completely electrify the railways by the end of this year, that is, the above 37 percent of diesel locomotives should also be replaced by electric locomotives. Diesel engines of freight trains may need a little longer time.

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

## Food security plan execution requires focus

The recent National Conference of Food Ministers came to a disappointing conclusion as it failed to address the discontinuation of rice and wheat sales to States under the Open Market Sale Scheme (OMSS), a decision directly tied to the Centre's restrictions. The gathering's primary agenda was to deliberate over actions plans for procuring coarse grains and enhancing focus on food and nutritional security. However, the Centre showed little inclination to appease the states, including Karnataka, Tamil Nadu, and Rajasthan, which heavily rely on OMSS to meet their food grain requirements. Union Food Minister Piyush Goyal stood firm on the Centre's stance, emphasizing the necessity to protect the interests of those beyond the purview of the National Food Security Act (NFSA). Although it is undeniable that the non-NFSA beneficiaries must be cared for, the States' plea for the removal of restrictions also considers the needs of non-NFSA populations. The individuals covered under the Act receive their allocations from the Centre's monthly food grain distribution. It is crucial to understand that if States are compelled to resort to the open market, the prices of rice and wheat could surge, counteracting the Centre's intent to stabilize prices through OMSS restrictions. Striking a balanced agreement could have mitigated everyone's concerns to an extent. The current OMSS dispute should serve as a wakeup call for States, highlighting the risk in depending solely on the Centre for implementing food schemes. Each state must find cost-effective sources and become self-reliant. States should question the feasibility of doubling entitlements and replicating Union government schemes without matching resources. As Food Minister Goyal warns of the potential impacts of El Niño on food grain production and procurement, the Centre and States should prioritize strengthening the Public Distribution System over expanding existing schemes. In such uncertain times, improving implementation, efficiency, and security of food distribution must take precedence over mere expansion.

### LETTERBOX

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## THE FINANCIAL WORLD

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SRINIVAS CHOKKAKULA EXPLAINS WHY INDIA MUST RETHINK SPATIAL PLANNING BEYOND MASTER PLANS TO TACKLE URBANISATION CHALLENGES

## Are master plans a panacea?



Amitabh Kant, India's G20 Sherpa, stressed at a recent Urban-20 City Sherpas' meet that a master plan is crucial for any city to manage urbanisation. There have been similar calls in the past. Are master plans really a panacea?

A master plan is an instrument of governance for urban local bodies (ULBs). It has recently received extensive attention in national policy discussions, and rightly so. The Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs has recommended that master plans in cities should be revisited for the improved governance of cities. The National Mission for Clean Ganga has been advocating such a step to protect urban water bodies; yet, the idea has not advanced beyond exhortations. Why? Much needs to be understood, for the scholarship on master plans is puzzlingly shallow.

### Statutory and spatial

The renewed focus on the concept of a master plan is to be welcomed. But few acknowledge its distinct status as the sole statutory instrument of governance. Many plans to improve sanitation, infrastructure and social inclusion are dependent on particular programmes, but these are at best ephemeral and incremental as they are centrally funded. The discourse tends to blur this distinction and, as a result, obscures the significance of the master plan as the instrument of governance. A further complication is that the master plan is an archaic concept whose sales-pitch is more spectacular than its performance. There are at least four reasons for this.

First, the master plan instrument is dated. The concept, configuration and rationalities of this instrument as well as the institutional structures surrounding it are conceived by template legislations drafted in the 1950s. These were then replicated by States as laws of town planning.

These conceptions do not accommodate later sensibilities, such as the imperatives of environmental protection that can be linked to 1974 when the Water Act was enacted. While this is a central legislation focused on industrial pollution, the legal and institutional frame of the master plan remained unchanged with its archaic conceptions of land development for urban service rationalities.

Second, a master plan is simply a spatial plan of land-use allocation supported by bye-laws and development control regulations. Thus, it essentially embodies a spatial vision for cities.

Third, this spatial vision is at the core of institutional structures, cultures and practices of ULBs. The edifice of urban governance is built around this spatial vision and provision of urban services. The ULBs are cultivated and shaped by the agenda of regulating spatial growth and remain slaves to these ideas and conceptions. As a result, the demands imposed on them by the new visions (of programmatic plans) suffer. These incapacities and tensions often manifest in a multitude of specialist

institutional responses – the most recent being outsourced project management units. These responses are often driven by short-term goals and political expediencies. Ideally, these arrangements should lead, but do not necessarily, to the transformation of urban institutional cultures.

Fourth, the statutory and spatial nature of the master plan can pose constraints on the programmatic plans, especially the spatially associated ones such as the plans for protection of water bodies. Most water-body related projects negotiate the challenges of encroachment of floodplains as encroachments in ex-post. So, should the instrument of master plan be reimagined to accommodate these emerging demands and sensibilities of urban governance?

Close to 65% of India's urban settlements do not have master plans, according to NITI Aayog. A quick perusal of related laws reveals that there is no set criteria for mandating a spatial plan to regulate urban growth. The approach is ad-hoc, to be notified by State governments. For a variety of reasons – primarily lack of human and financial resources – such

notifications of mandatory spatial plans are delayed. Town planners end up dealing with most urban governance challenges as fait accompli. The encroachments on floodplains are an example.

### Reimagine spatial planning

Therefore, urban planning in India must be reimagined urgently. How? First, we must acknowledge that the master plan instrument may be limited by its archaic conceptions and entrenched institutional cultures. To assume that it would serve the expanded scope of urban governance is far-fetched and can be self-defeating. Second, there is no need to go far for lessons to do this. Indian cities offer enough experiences to learn from. For instance, many States have tried supplementing the inadequacies of the master plan with innovative bye-laws. Much of this experimental and experiential understanding is, however, dispersed, and is restricted to the domain of praxis. The scholarship has not done well to translate it to inform policy-thinking. Third, the incapacities in urban planning and governance highlighted by the 2021 report of the NITI Aayog must receive priority. And it should begin with an elevated attention to the spatial (town) planning profession and education.

The era of planetary urbanisation brings spatial planning into sharp focus, and calls for reimagining the spatial planning framework in India. Recent moves such as Gati Shakti and Model Rural Transformation Acts are a reflection of this growing demand. But these are too feeble, remote and limited. The Centre must work with the States to reconsider the spatial planning framework in India.

*Srinivas Chokkakula is the MoJS Research Chair at Centre for Policy Research, New Delhi. Views are personal*



DR. ABDUL GHAFUR EXPLAINS HOW EMERGENCY USE AUTHORISATION FOR VITAL ANTIBIOTICS CAN BE LIFE-SAVING

## Antibiotics with promise — a lifeline India awaits

In the relentless battle against highly drug-resistant infections, a team of doctors recently witnessed a glimmer of hope amid the challenges they faced. Their extraordinary efforts and the life they saved highlight the critical need for action. This is not just a story; it is an earnest plea for Emergency Use Authorisation (EUA) for essential antibiotics that can make a profound difference between life and death.

In an intensive care room of a leading hospital in Hyderabad, an 18-year-old patient bravely fought not only his aggressive T-cell leukemia but also a formidable and resistant adversary — Extensively Drug Resistant *Pseudomonas aeruginosa*. This strain, known for its high resistance to multiple antibiotics, left the medical team with limited and often ineffective treatment options. Despite the administration of last-resort antibiotics, the patient's condition deteriorated rapidly. Persisting fever spikes, and the infection's assault on his lungs signalled a grave situation. The bacteria were literally eating up the patient's face. Time was running out, and his life hung in the balance.

### An Indian innovation

In their quest for a lifeline, the doctors turned to a promising antibiotic, cefepime/zidebactam. Developed by Indian researchers, this antibiotic combines two active components to combat drug-resistant gram-negative pathogens, including *Pseudomonas aeruginosa*. While still undergoing phase 3 trials internationally, this Indian innovation has shown remarkable potential. Under a compassionate use protocol, the necessary approvals were obtained, and the patient received cefepime/zidebactam. Miraculously, signs of clinical improvement began to



surface. The patient's fever subsided, blood cultures turned negative, and the need for oxygen diminished. Slowly but steadily, his strength returned, reigniting hope.

This extraordinary case underscores the urgent importance of granting EUA for antibiotics currently in phase 3 trials or licensed from other countries. The survival of this young patient serves as a poignant reminder of the need for timely access to effective antibiotics for those most in need.

### A dire situation

Infection specialists, intensivists, oncologists, and doctors treating severe infections in critically ill and immunocompromised patients are confronted with a grave reality. The scarcity of potent antibiotics to combat drug-resistant infections poses a direct threat to countless lives. It is distressing to witness patients succumb to infections just because the available antibiotics have lost their effectiveness due to rising resistance. The dire situation faced by doctors as they grapple with drug-resistant infections is a devastating reality that cannot be ignored. Each year, millions of lives are lost due to the inadequacy of available antibiotics in

the face of these formidable pathogens. The relentless march of drug resistance has rendered once-effective treatments ineffective.

The challenges faced by doctors in combating drug-resistant infections are multifaceted. They must navigate through a shrinking arsenal of effective antibiotics, leaving them with limited choices and often resorting to suboptimal treatments that may have significant side-effects or offer little hope of a cure. The constant race against time, trying to stay one step ahead of the mutating bacteria, adds to the immense pressure and helplessness experienced by doctors on the front lines.

India, a nation that has demonstrated remarkable progress in granting EUA for COVID-19 vaccines, now stands at a critical juncture. We must extend the same level of urgency and commitment to saving the lives of patients who may otherwise succumb to infections resistant to all currently available antibiotics. While it is true that several antibiotics are licensed within our country based on small clinical studies and of questionable benefit, we must recognise that what we truly need are powerful weapons to fight against drug-resistant infections. Antibiotics that have been thoroughly evaluated or proven to be effective are essential in the battle against superbugs.

Cefepime/zidebactam is a shining example of India's scientific prowess. Currently undergoing international phase 3 trials, this antibiotic has demonstrated its potential to save lives. By recognising the importance of cefepime/zidebactam and expediting its EUA, we not only save lives within our borders but also extend a helping hand around the globe to countless individuals in desperate need of effective treatment options.

### Made by Japan

Cefiderocol, a licensed antibiotic in several countries, developed by a Japanese company, has demonstrated excellent efficacy against drug-resistant infections. It is disheartening that it remains unavailable within our country. The gravity of the cases faced by patients in India demands access to this life-saving antibiotic, and we firmly believe it should be made accessible without delay. However, we must emphasise the importance of responsible and appropriate utilisation of these medications. A collective decision by a team of experienced doctors, including infectious diseases experts should be made mandatory before initiating their use. This will ensure that these powerful antibiotics are administered to patients who will benefit the most while minimising the risk of misuse or overuse.

We implore the authorities to recognise the urgent need for action and acknowledge the immense potential of these life-saving antibiotics. By granting EUA for cefepime/zidebactam, an Indian innovation, and cefiderocol, a globally recognised antibiotic, we can strengthen our arsenal against drug-resistant infections. Their inclusion in the EUA list would not only empower doctors but also instil a renewed sense of hope and confidence among patients and their families. As a nation known for its scientific achievements, we have the opportunity to make a substantial impact on the world stage.

*Dr. Abdul Ghafur is Coordinator of the Chennai Declaration on Antimicrobial Resistance (AMR), and Consultant in Infectious Diseases, Apollo Hospital, Chennai. Views are personal*

### BOOKS: REVIEW

## From fame to fatality: The Sidhu Moosewala's story

“Who Killed Moosewala?” is a thrilling narrative

penned by journalist-author Jupinderjit Singh that explores the gruesome murder of Punjabi singer-rapper Shubhdeep Singh Sidhu, famously known as Sidhu Moosewala. Set for release on Monday by Westland Books, this work delves into the chilling events of May 29, 2022, when Sidhu, a Punjabi hip-hop star, was shot by six armed men while driving to his aunt's house in a village in Punjab.

Jupinderjit Singh decided to write this book when he realized that news reports could not adequately capture the intricacies of Moosewala's death and the subsequent investigation. Undertaking this project with a sense of heavy responsibility, he insisted

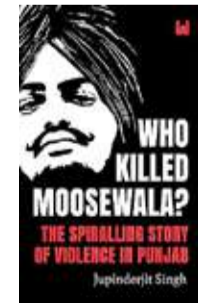
on adhering strictly to facts, especially since the investigation was ongoing. His unwavering persistence was fuelled by a desire to illuminate the murder, a stark reminder of life's fragility.

Moosewala was a paradoxical figure, a beacon for many and yet controversial. Accusations of promoting a gun culture and violence, and alleged affiliations with certain gangs, often clouded his public image. His violent demise amplified the mysteries around his life and death, leading to the inevitable question, “Who killed Moosewala?”

The author skillfully maintains a gripping pace, shadowing the investigation into Moosewala's death while providing the readers a glimpse of the man behind the celebrity facade. But Singh's book extends beyond the murder investigation; it also considers the

**Moosewala was a paradoxical figure, a beacon for many and yet controversial. Accusations of promoting a gun culture and violence, and alleged affiliations with certain gangs, often clouded his public image**

increasing turbulence in Punjab. Singh explores Moosewala's connection with the region, offering a panoramic view of Punjab's socio-cultural landscape. Sanghamitra Biswas, executive editor at Westland Books,



Who Killed Moosewala? The Spiralling Story of Violence in Punjab  
By Jupinderjit Singh  
Westland Books  
195 pages; Rs499

praises Singh's comprehensive understanding of the case and his extensive research that fuels this riveting book. “In this riveting book, backed by meticulous research, Jupinderjit offers up a fascinating portrait of the singer and the Punjab he inhabited,” she stated.

“Who Killed Moosewala?” isn't just about the life and death of a renowned figure in Punjabi music; it's a fascinating study of Punjab's contemporary society as seen through the lens of one of its most enigmatic figures. Singh provides a multidimensional account, combining the mystery of a crime thriller with social commentary, making it an enticing read.

The author's determination to present an accurate depiction of the events leading to Moosewala's death and the ongoing investigation is commendable. His writing is crisp, vivid, and engaging, balancing the rigors of investigative journalism with the eloquence of narrative non-fiction.

However, Singh's masterpiece lies in the way he weaves the broader narrative of Punjab's current unrest into the personal story of Moosewala. In doing so, he presents a book that is at once a microcosm of a societal issue and a personal tale of fame and infamy.

Singh meticulously combs through the details of Moosewala's life, piecing together the circumstances that led to his untimely demise. In the process, the reader gets to know the singer-rapper, the icon, and the man, exposing the chasm between the public persona and the private individual. Singh's portrayal of Moosewala is neither hagiographic nor judgmental; it's a complex rendering of a person who, in life and death, remained a fascinating character.

## Hero motocorp & harley-davidson co-developed premium motorcycle 'harley-davidson x440' debuts in India

**Commanding Road Presence, Fresh looks, American styling with Unmistakable signature Elements from Harley-Davidson**

ARUN KUMAR RAO  
Bengaluru

Taking a significant step forward in their journey together, Hero MotoCorp, the largest manufacturer of motorcycles and scooters, and iconic American motorcycle-maker Harley-Davidson launched their co-developed premium motorcycle - the Harley-Davidson X440 in India. The Harley-Davidson X440 becomes the first premium motorcycle to be introduced under the licensing agreement between the two brands.

The Harley-Davidson X440 was unveiled at a ceremony at the world-class and state-of-the-art Hero Center for Innovation and Technology (CIT) today by Dr. Pawan Munjal - Executive Chairman of Hero MotoCorp and Mr. Jochen Zeitz - Chairman, President & Chief Executive Officer (CEO) of Harley-Davidson



in the presence of investors, media, dealers and partners.

The Harley-Davidson X440 marks Hero MotoCorp and Harley-Davidson's foray into the 440cc segment for the first time in India. Co-developed by Hero MotoCorp and Harley-Davidson at the Hero CIT, the Harley-Davidson X440 will be manufactured at the company's Garden Factory at Neemrana, in the northern Indian state of Rajasthan.

Dr. Pawan Munjal, Execu-

utive Chairman, Hero MotoCorp, said, "The launch of the Harley-Davidson X440 is a significant milestone in our premium journey and lays a strong foundation for our future growth. The motorcycle brings the best of the iconic Harley-Davidson's signature elements with the manufacturing expertise and trusted quality of Hero. Together, we aim to create a unique value proposition for customers in the Indian market and target

a wider range of motorcycle enthusiasts."

Jochen Zeitz, Chairman, President and CEO, Harley-Davidson, said "Today's launch of the Harley-Davidson X440 marks the start of a new chapter in India for Harley-Davidson - we're excited to launch our first development as part of our partnership with Hero MotoCorp"

With a commanding road presence, the Harley-Davidson X440 carries the DNA of the iconic Harley-Davidson brand. It wears its heart on its sleeve with its distinctive design, all-metal body, and a powerful engine. Nimble and agile in traffic, yet supremely robust and comfortable over rough terrain, Harley-Davidson X440's ride quality opens up a whole new world of inspiring riding experience.

The much-awaited motorcycle of the year will be available in three variants - Denim, Vivid and S at Harley-Davidson dealer network across the country at an attractive price point of INR 2,29,000/- (Denim), INR 2,49,000/- (Vivid) and INR 2,69,000 (S) respectively.

## First nut-bolt industry was set up at Rohtak in 1958 having exports to 52 countries

SATISH HANDA  
Rohtak

Nut-bolts industry of Rohtak is popular not only in the country but all over the world and nut-bolt produced in the town are used in automobile, agriculture, railways, defence and even in missile testing sectors. The business in the town was adversely affected due to farmers' agitation caused traffic blocks at the roads and borders for a long time as well as frequent lockdown in the state due to epidemic outbreak when entire world was in the grip of COVID-19 are some of the factors when the business reduced more than 50% in past couple of years, which also adversely affected nut-bolt industry at Rohtak having between 3000-3500 manufacturing units supplying nuts and bolts to large number of auto spare parts traders as well as original equipment manufacturers in automobile sector in the country, apart from large number of countries in the world.

Pankaj Arora Secretary Lahu Udyog Bharti at Rohtak said that the manufacturing units in the town were either



compelled to close down their shutters or cut down their production and turned sick when they suffered losses due to this in past couple of years. He said, manufacturers were not getting raw material usually procuring from Ludhiana, Delhi and Faridabad due to frequent traffic blocked at the borders or highways by protesting farmers as well as worldwide economic slow, they were able to manufacture only 45-50% of their production capacity. S.K. Munjal of Chamber of Commerce Automotive said, nearly 80-90% production of nut-bolts at Rohtak is being supplied to the automobile sector including manufacturer of two-wheelers,

cars, trucks and tractors but the manufacturers are now getting limited stocks due to uncertain orders since the past two-three years. He said, moreover the manufacturers are unable to make supplies due to shortage of raw material as well as labour problems faced by them due to farmers' agitation which continued for a long time. Munjal said, on-line delivery business of nut-bolts has also witnessed heavy drop and the manufacturers are getting hardly 30 to 40% orders.

Past scenario of Rohtak nut-bolt industry reveals that first nut-bolt industry was set up at Rohtak in 1958 with only 15 workers by late Bimal Persad Jain who was earlier running cycle business and Rohtak started manufacturing cycle parts which he used to procure from Ludhiana, presently his son Rajesh Jain looking after the business. Jain set up another unit in the name of LPS Company at Hisar Road in 1966 to manufacture nut-bolts for automobiles and tractors which was the first big plant to manufacture nuts-bolts in Northern India after Ludhiana, since then they never looked back.

## Even Healthcare and Healthily announce landmark collaboration



FW DESK  
New Delhi

Even Healthcare, a leading Bengaluru-based healthcare provider, and Healthily, a London-based digital health company, have announced a strategic collaboration to deliver comprehensive and data-driven preventive healthcare services in India. Indians will also get free access to verified medical content, written, and reviewed by top medical professionals from across the world.

Healthily's proprietary AI-powered symptom checker and an extensive library of medically verified healthcare content work seamlessly with Even's mission to give millions of Indians accelerated access to quality healthcare information and proper care without having to rely on unfounded material available on the internet that does more harm than good.

## IIIT-Bangalore Spearheads 5G-Advance & 6G R-and-D and Product Lines Project



ARUN KUMAR RAO  
Bangalore

The International Institute of Information Technology Bangalore (IIIT-B) has NM-ICPS project from DST, Government of India that focuses on 5G-Advance and 6G research, Intellectual Property Rights (IPR), and product to promote start-ups in the niche areas of Advanced Communication Systems. IIIT-B is working with leading institutions and organizations. This strategic partnership aims to create cutting-edge research facilities equipped with the latest technology, enabling Indian researchers to lead global advancements in wireless communication.

Announcing this at a press

conference on the sidelines of the 23rd Convocation ceremony at the institute campus, Prof. Debabarata Das, Director of IIIT-Bangalore, said "In IIIT-Bangalore COMET Foundation, professors in the Networking and Communication domain are actively involved in, 5G, Open Radio Access Network (ORAN), 5G-Advanced and 6G-related R and D and standardization efforts, in collaboration with premier academic institutions across, the country. One of the important challenges in realizing Smart Radio Environments (SREs) using Reconfigurable Intelligent Surfaces (RIS) is Channel Estimation which will allow us to Dimension the unpredictable wireless environment.

## IFFCO forays into Agri-drones through "IFFCO Kisan Drone"

BIGGEST SMART AGRI-SOLUTIONS BY PROCURING 2500AGRI DRONES AS SPRAY SOLUTIONS FOR NANO UREA & NANO DAP

KULBIR SINGH KALSII  
Chandigarh

IFFCO has launched a massive Nationwide campaign for procuring 2500 drones "IFFCO Kisan Drones" as spray solutions for spraying its revolutionary products Nano Urea & Nano DAP inspired by Hon'ble PM vision of Sahkar Se Samridhi. This will lead to development of 5000 rural entrepreneurs which are identified by IFFCO to be trained for spraying drones. It is a huge Step for Upliftment of Rural Economy and a step towards Sustainable Agriculture and Holistic Cooperative development under the dynamic leadership of Hon'ble Union Minister of Home Affairs & Cooperation Shri. Amit Shah.

To access the technical capabilities, manufacturing capacity, manufacturing process, quality processes, training curriculum, infrastructure IFFCO Management hired a reputed consultant, M/s Drone Federation of India, New Delhi.



M/s Drone Federation of India evaluated the Specifications and mentioned that the technical specifications of Agri Drones being procured by IFFCO for spray of Nano Fertilizers are in accordance with industry standards. It is expected that one Drone would be able to cover 20 acres per day for spraying IFFCO Nanofertiliser, WSF, Bio-stimulants like Sagarika, Agro-chemicals etc. with backup.

IFFCO will also be procuring 2500 Electric Three Wheelers (loader type) under L-5 category Electric Vehicle 3 Wheelers to carry the Drones to the farmers' field along with the Nano fertilisers and associated utilities. These EV 3 Wheelers are environment friendly. This will also support PM PRANAM Scheme to reduce chemical fertiliser doses and to enable states for more assistance under this scheme.

In extension to this & to strengthen this nationwide campaign, IFFCO has also ordered Tractor Mounted Boom Sprayers, Tractor Mounted Hose Reel Sprayers, HTP Power Sprayers with Gun,Static/Portable Sprayer, Niyu Sprayers for foliar application of Nano fertilisers. The Nano fertilisers are applied on various crops through foliar application using Agricultural Sprayers and Drones. The Drones & Sprayers can be used for any kind of spray application.

Under the guidance of Hon'ble Minister of Chemicals & Fertilizers Dr. MansukhMandaviya, IFFCO has embarked on providing Nano Urea & Nano DAP to the farmer's field through these Smart high tech solutions.

## Eicher delivers first batch of Intercity 13.5m AC sleeper buses to Vijayanand Travels Private Limited

ARUN KUMAR RAO  
Bengaluru

Eicher Trucks & Buses, a business unit of VE Commercial Vehicles, Announced at a event of handing over ceremony of first deliveries against a prestigious order of 50 Eicher Intercity 13.5m AC sleeper buses to Vijayanand Travels Private Limited (VTPL), one of the most prominent players in the

Indian Bus Industry. Dedicated to providing exceptional travel experiences to intercity passengers, the Eicher Intercity 13.5m AC sleeper buses will form the latest addition to VTPL's extensive fleet. These state-of-the-art buses are a combination of the renowned body-building excellence of VE's Hosakote factory near Bengaluru and fully spaced Eicher 13.5m full-air suspension bus chassis. Designed



to elevate the travel experience, each berth in the sleeper variant offers a spacious and comfortable environment. Passengers

can enjoy personalized features such as individual headboards, well-lit saloons with LED lighting, reading lights, individual AC vents for optimal climate control, side guards for added safety, convenient upper deck access ladders, USB chargers, mobile holders, ample storage racks, dedicated footwear space, and large side windows that offer panoramic views of the surroundings.

Commenting on the partnership, Vinod Aggarwal, MD & CEO of VECV, stated, "We are delighted to strengthen our relationship with Vijayanand Travels Private Limited with this delivery of Eicher Intercity sleeper buses. VECV remains dedicated to offering secure, reliable, and premium transportation options, and our association with VTPL represents our commitment to achieving this goal."

## Big Companies Invest in Blue-Collar Workers as Internet Consumer Services Grow

OM PRAKASH MUPPURALA

In today's fast-paced digital era, Internet consumer services are flourishing, transforming the way we live, work, and interact. As the demand for these services escalates, big companies are recognizing the pivotal role that blue-collar workers play in supporting their operations and ensuring a seamless customer experience. Understanding the significance of investing in this vital workforce segment, companies like Amazon, Google, and Walmart are making substantial efforts to enhance the skills and productivity of their blue-collar workforce. This article explores the motivations behind these investments, the benefits for both companies and workers, and the potential implications for the future of the workforce in the digital age.

management to deliver products and services to consumers worldwide. As the backbone of this economy, blue-collar workers in warehouses and distribution centers play an indispensable role in ensuring timely and accurate order fulfillment. By investing in training programs, companies like Amazon are equipping their warehouse workers with the necessary skills to optimize operations, handle cutting-edge technology, and improve overall productivity.

Secondly, the growth of data centers is a key aspect of the Internet's expansion. These data centers require skilled technicians to operate and maintain the intricate infrastructure that keeps online services running smoothly. Companies like Google recognize the importance of investing in apprenticeship programs to develop a competent workforce capable of handling the complexities of data center operations effectively. Such investments ensure the uninterrupted functioning of critical digital services, ultimately benefiting consumers and businesses alike.

Lastly, in the highly competitive retail sector, companies like Walmart are embracing the



need for constant upskilling and adaptation. By investing in educational partnerships with community colleges, Walmart is empowering its employees with new skills that align with the ever-evolving demands of the digital economy. This not only helps retain a skilled workforce but also positions the company at the forefront of innovation in retail.

**Benefits for Companies and Workers**

Investments in blue-collar workers yield substantial benefits for both companies and the workforce. For companies, a skilled and productive blue-collar workforce translates into enhanced operational efficiency and cost-effectiveness. Efficient warehouse workers ensure quicker order process-

ing, reduced errors and minimized downtime. Similarly, well-trained data center technicians can maximize the performance of critical infrastructure, leading to improved service reliability for consumers.

Moreover, investing in the workforce also boosts employee morale and loyalty. When companies demonstrate a commitment to the professional development of their employees, it fosters a sense of pride and loyalty among the workers. This, in turn, reduces turnover rates and associated hiring costs, providing further long-term benefits to the companies.

For the workers themselves, the investments bring invaluable opportunities for personal and professional growth. Training programs and apprentice-

ships enable blue-collar employees to acquire new skills, stay relevant in the job market, and potentially explore higher positions within the organization. Such investments empower workers to build fulfilling and stable careers in the digital age, mitigating concerns about job displacement due to automation and technological advancements.

**Implications for the Future Workforce**

As big companies continue to invest in their blue-collar workers, the implications for the future of the workforce are significant. Firstly, the investments underscore the importance of continuous learning and upskilling in the digital era. The job market is evolving rapidly, and employees must adapt to stay competitive. Lifelong learning is becoming a necessity, and companies that prioritize employee development are likely to attract and retain top talent.

Secondly, these investments challenge the traditional perception of blue-collar work. Historically seen as labour-intensive and repetitive, blue-collar jobs are transforming into tech-savvy roles that demand specialized skills. This shift in

perception not only opens up new avenues for blue-collar workers but also diversifies the workforce, creating more opportunities for individuals from diverse backgrounds and skill sets.

In conclusion, as Internet consumer services continue to grow, big companies recognize the indispensable role of blue-collar workers in supporting their operations and maintaining a seamless customer experience. Investments in training programs and educational partnerships demonstrate a commitment to developing a skilled and productive blue-collar workforce. The benefits of these investments extend to both companies and workers, fostering operational efficiency, employee loyalty, and personal growth. Looking ahead, the emphasis on continuous learning and the changing perception of blue-collar work in the digital era will shape the future of the workforce, creating a more resilient and adaptable labour force that can thrive in the evolving landscape of the Internet economy.

*Om Prakash Muppurala is Head of Fountain India, view are personal.*

## Tesla produced nearly 480K cars, delivered 466K vehicles in Q2 2023



Elon Musk-own Tesla has announced that it produced nearly 4,80,000 vehicles and delivered over 4,66,000 cars in the second quarter (Q2) of this year.

Among a 66,000 delivered vehicles, 19,225 were Model S/X, and 4,46,915 were Model 3/Y, the company said in a post on Sunday. The automaker will post its financial results for Q2 2023 after market close on July 19. At that time, the company will also issue a brief advisory containing a link to the Q2 update, which will be available on Tesla's Investor Relations website.

"Tesla management will hold a live question and answer webcast that day at 4:30 p.m. Central Time (5:30 p.m. Eastern Time) to discuss the Company's financial and business results and outlook,"

the automaker said. Moreover, the net income and cash flow results will be announced along with the rest of the financial performance when the company announces Q2 earnings. "Tesla vehicle deliveries represent only one measure of the company's financial performance and should not be relied on as an indicator of quarterly financial results, which depend on a variety of factors, including the cost of sales, foreign exchange movements and mix of directly leased vehicles," the company added.

Meanwhile, last month, after hearing Prime Minister Narendra Modi's "Make in India" pitch, Tesla CEO Elon Musk announced a change of plans, saying that his electric vehicle and battery company will now come to India "as soon as it is humanly possible".

# RBI panel suggests inclusion of rupee in IMF's special drawing rights basket

NEW DELHI: RBI panel has suggested that in the long run, India will achieve higher level of trade linkages with other countries, as a result of which the rupee is likely to reach a level where it would be widely used, and proposed the currency's inclusion in International Monetary Fund's (IMF) Special Drawing Rights (SDR) basket.

The panel, whose report on 'Internationalisation of Rupee' was released on Wednesday, said that in the coming days, 'India will achieve higher level of trade linkages with other countries and improved macro-economic parameters, and rupee may ascend to a level where it would be widely used and preferred by other economies as a 'vehicle currency'. Thus, efforts should be made for the inclusion of rupee in IMF's SDR basket."

SDR is an international reserve asset created by the IMF to supplement the official reserves of its member countries.

It is a potential claim on the freely-usable currencies of IMF members.

SDRs can provide a country with liquidity. It is defined by a basket of currencies, namely the US dollar, euro, Chinese yuan, Japanese yen and British pound.

The panel or the inter-departmental group (IDG), headed by RBI's Executive Director R.S. Ratho, suggested a slew of short-term measures, like designing a template and adopting a standardised approach for examining the proposals on bilateral and multilateral trade arrangements for invoicing, settlement and payment in rupee and local currencies.

It also suggested that efforts should be made to enable rupee as an additional settlement currency in existing multilateral mechanisms such as Asian Clearing Union (ACU).

The panel also recommended facilitating local currency settlement (LCS) framework for



bilateral transactions in local currencies and operationalising bilateral swap arrangements with the counterpart countries in local currencies.

Opening of rupee accounts for non-residents (other than nostro accounts of overseas banks) both in India and outside India should be encouraged, the panel recommended. Integrating Indian payment systems with other countries for cross-border transactions should also

be implemented, it said.

The RBI panel also stressed on strengthening financial markets by fostering a global rupee market and promoting India as the hub for rupee transactions and price discovery. Facilitating the launch of BIS Investment Pools (BISIP) in rupee and inclusion of government securities in global bond indices should be ensured, the panel said in its report. It also suggested recalibration of the Foreign

Portfolio Investor (FPI) regime and rationalisation of the extant Know Your Customer (KYC) guidelines, as well as providing equitable incentives to exporters for rupee trade settlement.

As medium-term measures, the RBI panel suggested a review of taxes on Masala bonds and international use of Real Time Gross Settlement (RTGS) for cross-border trade transactions, as well as inclusion of rupee as a direct settlement currency in the Continuous Linked Settlement (CLS) system.

Also, it called for examination of taxation issues in financial markets to harmonise tax regimes in India and other financial centres.

The panel was formed by the RBI to examine the internationalisation of rupee and the objective was to review the extant position of rupee as an international currency and to frame a roadmap for its internationalisation.

## SBI launches interoperable cardless cash withdrawal facilities

NEW DELHI: Country's largest lender State Bank of India (SBI) launched its enhanced digital banking application, 'YONO for Every Indian' and Interoperable Cardless Cash Withdrawal (ICCW) facilities.



The facility was launched by SBI as part of the 68th Bank Day celebrations. With YONO for Every Indian, bank customers will have access to UPI features like Scan and Pay, Pay by contacts, Request money, among others on YONO's new avatar.

"This milestone upgrade further expands SBI's commitment to providing inclusive and customer-centric digital banking services to every Indian citizen," a statement issued by SBI said.

In 2022-23 itself, 64 per cent or 78.60 lakh savings accounts were acquired digitally through YONO. The upgraded version of the YONO app will empower customers of other banks to embark on the YONO journey, thereby encouraging them to become a part of the ever-growing SBI family, the statement added.

"With the rollout of the In-

teroperable Cardless Cash Withdrawal facility, both the customers of SBI and other banks can withdraw cash seamlessly from ICCW-enabled ATMs of any bank by using the 'UPI QR Cash' functionality. The transaction will be facilitated through a single-use dynamic QR code displayed on the ATM screen," the statement said.

"Users can conveniently withdraw cash by employing the Scan and Pay feature available on their UPI application. While the groundbreaking facility simplifies the cash withdrawal process, it also ensures enhanced security for customers," it added.

By eliminating the need to enter a PIN or physically handle a debit card, the ICCW facility minimises the risks associated with shoulder surfing or card cloning, the bank said.

SBI chairman Dinesh Khara said, "SBI is dedicated to offering cutting-edge digital banking solutions that empower every Indian with financial independence and convenience. The YONO app has been revamped, keeping in mind the expectations of our customers for a seamless and pleasant digital experience. This will further fulfill our goal of making the 'YONO for Every Indian' mission a reality."

## Nearly 25% of 69,000 suspected GST accounts fake, CBIC drive reveals

NEW DELHI: The Central Board of Indirect Taxes and Customs (CBIC) in the ongoing two-month drive to weed out fake GST accounts have found out that nearly 25 percent of suspected accounts do not exist, according to a TOI report.

As per reports, the fake accounts have vanished after availing benefits of around Rs 15,000 crore. The authorities used artificial intelligence and data analytics to identify around 69,000 suspected accounts after scrubbing the GST database. The drive, which ends July 15, found 17,000 of them to be bogus, the report said.

The report also found out that Delhi had the highest success



rate or the largest number of fakes detected from the list of suspect registrations.

"There are some decisions

that have already been taken by the GST Council on the issues, we will implement them. The idea is to ensure that leakages

are prevented," the daily quoted an official as saying. Currently, there are around 39 crore taxpayers registered under GST regime. The GST collections in June rose 12 percent to more than Rs 1.61 lakh crore, the finance ministry said on July 1. It was for the fourth time, the gross GST collection has crossed Rs 1.60 lakh crore mark.

The issue of fake accounts is likely to be addressed at the GST Council meeting on July 11, where the information will be shared with finance ministers of the states.

CBIC, however, does plan periodic checks to ensure that the benefits are not misused, the report said.

## Centre claims no proof signifying domestic economic slowdown

NEW DELHI: There has been no evidence by far that suggests a slowdown in the current financial year 2023-24, said Department of Economic Affairs under Ministry of Finance in its monthly review report.

Rather the Indian economy has carried the momentum from the past year into the current fiscal year, as per the central government.

According to the provisional estimates released by the National Statistical Office (NSO) recently, real GDP growth for 2022-23 stood at 7.2%, higher than the 7% as projected earlier. An upward revision in the 2022-23 GDP numbers is



expected going forward.

The union government sees growth at about 6.5% for 2023-24.

"A strong final quarter performance pushed the GDP growth for the full year to 7.2%, higher than the 7% estimated in February. This upside to the growth estimate takes

the growth momentum deep into the current year," said the finance ministry report.

Several forecasting agencies also share optimism as they have upwardly revised their growth estimates for India for 2023-24.

"The latest evidence also does not indicate any slowing of activity in the first two months of the current year. India is the fastest-growing major economy, is now no longer only a statistical fact," it added.

The finance ministry stated that what has been clearly working for India's economy is the strength of its domestic demand.

## Twitter sues top law firm that received \$90 mn in Musk deal



Twitter has sued a law firm that represented the micro-blogging platform as Elon Musk tried to back out of his deal to buy the platform for \$44 billion.

Twitter's previous management hired the corporate law firm after Musk tried to terminate his agreement to acquire the company last year.

Wachtell, Lipton, Rosen & Katz, a top mergers and acquisitions firm, received a \$90 million fee from Twitter, which according to the social network was "unjust enrichment", reports The New York Times.

## Battery Smart raises \$33 mn, targets 100K customers by 2025



EV battery swapping network Battery Smart on Thursday said it has raised \$33 million in its Pre-Series B funding that will be utilised to add 100,000 customers to its network by 2025 and expand its geographic footprint. The round saw participation from Battery Smart's existing investors, Tiger Global and Blume Ventures, as well as new investors, The Ecosystem Integrity Fund (EIF) and British International Investment (BII).

With 25,000 active customers across tier 1, 2 and 3 cities, we are keen to reinforce our Environmental, social, and corporate governance (ESG) objectives while supporting India's pursuit towards net-zero emissions," said Pulkit Khurana, Co-Founder and CEO, Battery Smart.

In June 2022, Battery Smart raised \$25 million in Series A funding led by Tiger Global, along with participation from Blume Ventures and Orios Ventures. Since then, the company has witnessed six times growth in its revenue and customer base, creating a dense network encompassing more than 600 battery swap stations across 25 cities.

The company said it has completed more than 12 million battery swaps and is looking to double that number.

"We are excited to continue to invest in the entire Battery Smart team and their mission to simplify and accelerate electric vehicle adoption, and therefore clean transportation," said Deep Varma, Head of Singapore, Tiger Global.

The battery-as-a-service model enables interoperable battery swapping for two and three-wheeler EVs in under two minutes, according to the company, and reduces the upfront investment borne by a consumer by up to 40 per cent.

## Paytm boosts merchant payments leadership with 79 lakh devices, adds 4 lakh in June alone

NEW DELHI: Leading payments and financial services company Paytm on Wednesday said it achieved a new milestone in merchant payments with 79 lakh devices deployed while the gross merchandise value (GMV) for the Q1 FY24 stood at Rs 4.05 lakh crore, a year-on-year (YoY) growth of 37%.

Driving payment monetisation, Paytm's subscription devices, Soundbox and PoS machines, continue to see an increased acceptance by merchants. The company continues to remain the market leader in merchant payments with the number of merchants paying subscription for payment devices has reached 79 lakh as of June 2023, an increase of 4 lakh devices in the month and 11 lakh devices in the quarter that ended on June 30.

Consumer engagement on the Paytm Super App remains high with the average monthly transacting users (MTU) at 9.2 crore, growth of 23 per cent YoY.



With an eye on profitability, the company said, "Our focus over the past few quarters continues to be on payment volumes that generate profitability for us, either through net payments margin or from direct upsell potential."

Paytm's credit distribution business, in partnership with large lenders, continues to witness robust growth with total disbursements for the quarter, surging 167 per cent YoY to Rs 14,845 crore (\$1.8 billion)

with 1.28 crore loans (51 per cent YoY growth) distributed.

"Our focus remains on the asset quality by continuously reviewing with our partners cohort data and tightening credit policy wherever needed proactively. This reflects in the growth of value of loans distributed in the quarter," said the company.

Paytm currently has seven active lending partners and it aims to onboard 3-4 partners this fiscal.

## Loyds Banking Group announces Sirisha Voruganti as CEO & MD of Lloyds Technology Centre in India

ARUN KUMAR RAO  
Bangalore

Lloyds Banking Group, one of the leading UK-based financial services groups has announced the appointment of Sirisha Voruganti as the Chief Executive Officer (CEO) and Managing Director of its new Lloyds Technology Centre, based in Hyderabad, India. Voruganti, a globally renowned technology and innovation leader joins from JCPenney, where she has served as the Managing Director and member of the Board for JCPenney in India, press release from company said here.



Voruganti is passionate about building a high-performing engineering organisation as well as being committed to promoting diversity and inclusion within technology roles. Her impressive track record includes steering organisations through significant transformation and has been an inspiration for women in technology, exemplified by her creation of India's first safety device for women's protection.

Sirisha Voruganti said: "I am thrilled to be leading Lloyds Technology Centre during this pivotal phase of Lloyds Banking Group's digital transformation. The new technology centre will allow us to tap into the extraor-

inary technology talent and expertise in India. It presents an incredible opportunity for brilliant and enthusiastic people looking to enhance their skills to drive innovation for Lloyds Banking Group's customers."

Commenting on the appointment, Ron van Kemmenade, Group Chief Operating Officer at Lloyds Banking Group said: "Welcoming Sirisha Voruganti marks a significant stride forward in our plans to establish our new technology centre. With her outstanding background, extensive experience and leadership qualities, I'm delighted that she's chosen to join Lloyds Technology Centre and excited about her passion for using technology and innovation to deliver great experiences for our customers." Sirisha Voruganti will assume her role as CEO and Managing Director of Lloyds Technology Centre later this month, overseeing its establishment and longer-term growth strategy.

# Knowledge gap around investing amongst Indians

MANU RISHI GUPTHA

Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman's recent caution on Financial Influencers (Finfluencers) is very aptly timed and essential precaution for the naïve retail investor community in the country. The statement highlights the lack of investments related knowledge among the majority of people and their blind trust in following investment advice given by anyone who claims to be an expert and offer paid advisory services via Twitter, WhatsApp or Telegram platforms. These practices are mostly prevalent in equity investments where the ease of understanding, execution and greed to multiply money in short periods often masks the complexity of the businesses that needs understanding to invest, importance of research and risks of deep losses when things go negative.

Human beings have been gamblers from time immemorial. The recorded history

of the chaos that gambling caused in the epic Mahabharata, pretty much defines the basic human character of winning it all suddenly than patiently. Warren Buffett also famously quips that stock market is the mode of transference of wealth from impatient to the patient. This weakness in human character has catalyzed the rise of Finfluencers who happily sold suboptimal/misleading courses in options trading at exorbitant prices but shy away from posting their verified P&L statements online. This highlights the gap in knowledge that require to patiently follow the fundamental tenets of investing as laid down by greatest icons like Graham, Buffet and Lynch. These have all been ignored by the fraternity in the zeal of getting rich overnight. Human beings are happy to pay top dollar to doctors and lawyers but always do a DIY with respect to their investing styles and habits. This is because people seeing equity investments as a gamble/short-term money-



making opportunity but real wealth parameters for us are always real estate investments and to an extent Gold. True to that, we ourselves see many crorepatris who were transformed due to the value of land that they hold but not many investors due to the stocks they bought. This is again due to lack of patience and understanding of equity products and also mostly due to uncontrollable emotions which change as fast as the changing colors of stocks readily visible on the mobile screens these days.

There are other asset classes

which can generate wealth apart from equity, real estate or gold and retail knowledge about these is quite dismal. Bonds and other debt instruments are one such asset class. Though there have been some advancements in making this asset class closer to retail guys the way equity investment has been, lack of promotions, complexity of the instrument and requirement of higher investment amount might be the reasons for these platforms not gaining enough traction.

There have been considerable promotions on TV and attempts to improve invest-

ments knowledge in the country. Campaigns like 'Mutual funds Sahi Hai' have been greatly successful and made the SIP route most preferred one for small scale investors who want to benefit from the equity markets. Thanks to the campaign and other promotions, in the past six years SIP investments have registered a CAGR growth of 24%. The campaign is also successful in making retail guys less anxious on market volatilities as it can be seen that the withdrawals were not much during market falls and the SIP amounts have increased in those periods to capitalize on the law of averages. The same cant be said about all the TV campaigns, some of the brokerage company ads seem to do more harm than good as they advertise on how easy to execute a trade and implying that stock market investing is an easy tool to make money.

Good investment decisions are the only way to financial freedom for many people in our country. It is an irony that our Indian educational sys-

tem makes it imperative to choose finance as an option only at UG/PG level and not from school curriculum where it should start from. We see many highly educated too suffer from poor financial decisions, often attributed to their lack of knowledge on how the financial markets work. Kerala which has the highest literacy rate in the country ranks among the lowest in mutual fund penetration (in terms of mutual fund AUM). While the same state has a thriving lottery business where almost all the lottery tickets printed in a day are sold out.

There is serious dearth of registered financial advisors (just 1300 RIAs in the country so far) too in the country who can guide people towards financial freedom at an affordable cost. Lack of mandatory rules for any advisor to procure registration and high cost to apply for the same are some hindrances for this. While SEBI does some adjustments to investment rules, these are more tuned to protect investors from fraud

but not necessarily help in promoting knowledge or drive investors to a good financial decision. Private sector's services in promoting knowledge aren't enough or can't be trusted as they are always followed by sales promotions of the company's product or service. Many a times, their knowledge services in their websites end at providing a glossary of terms and an EMI calculator.

Compulsory inclusion of financial syllabi in schools at an early age is the most preferable way to inculcate investment knowledge among citizens. This has to be done in a non-intrusive way so that the learning process is not hindered by any urges to invest and earn at early stages of life. A phased inclusion of knowledge and discipline has to be done so that it will all be useful once students enter the employability stage and start earning.

Manu Rishi Gupta is Founder and CEO of MRG Capital, view are personal.

## INTERNATIONAL

## US magazine Foreign Policy article highlights India's emergence as 'major player' in Middle East

**NEW DELHI:** An article in Foreign Policy, a noted US magazine focused on global affairs, has cited the emergence of India as a "major player" in the Middle East as one of the most interesting geopolitical developments in the region in years.

The write-up highlighted New Delhi's deep and growing ties with major countries in the region, including Israel, Saudi Arabia and the UAE, to assert that the evolution of India's place reflects the changing international order and the willingness -- perhaps even eagerness -- of these nations to benefit from the new multipolarity.

There is little that the United States can do about this development and may even in a paradoxical way benefit from it, its author Steven A Cook has argued. "If the United States



Middle Eastern partners are looking for an alternative to Washington, it is better that New Delhi is among the choices. "The US may no longer be the undisputed big dog in the region, but as long as India expands its presence in the Middle East, neither Russia nor China can assume that role," he asserted. The author recalled his visit to India around a decade

ago to state what had struck him then that Indians did not want to play a larger role in the Middle East. In the 10 years since his trip, however, things have changed, he said. "While US officials and analysts are obsessed with every diplomatic move Beijing makes and eye Chinese investment in the Middle East with suspicion, Washington is overlooking one

of the most interesting geopolitical developments in the region in years: the emergence of India as a major player in the Middle East," Cook wrote.

When it comes to the Gulf, the United Arab Emirates and Saudi Arabia are aggressively seeking ways to expand relations with India, the article said. It is a significant shift because both countries, particularly Saudi Arabia, have long aligned with Pakistan, it says, noting that the pivot to India stems in part from a common interest in containing Islamist extremism but much of the pull is economic. It highlighted the growing economic ties between India and the two countries to make the point. On India's strong ties with Israel, it said they are perhaps the most well-developed of New Delhi's relations in the region.

## Record-breaking wildfire season in Canada remains challenging

A Canadian government agency said the country's record-breaking wildfire season will continue to be challenging.

The 2023 wildfire season has already been the nation's most severe on record and current projections indicate that this may continue to be a significantly challenging summer for wildfires in parts of the country, Xinhua news agency quoted the Natural Resources Canada as saying in a statement on Thursday. According to the government agency, most recent projections indicate a continued potential for higher-than-normal fire activity across most of the country throughout the 2023 wildland fire season.

This is due to long-range forecasts for warm temperatures and ongoing drought, which are affecting parts of all provinces and territories and intensifying in



some regions. For July, warm and dry conditions will increase wildfire risk from British Columbia and Yukon through to western Labrador. During August, the area at risk will stretch from British Columbia through western Quebec, the statement said.

The Canadian Interagency Forest Fire Centre said on

Thursday there were 649 active wildfires nationwide and the number of out-of-control wildfires was 353. The number of wildfires in the country so far this year reached 3, 430, devouring about 88, 000 square kilometres of land. The government has already taken key steps to respond to the 2023 wildfire season, such

as making additional investments to train more firefighters and provide support to provinces and territories on equipment and deploying Canadian Armed Forces personnel and capabilities. Natural Resources Canada also announced two new steps to strengthen Canada's response to the wildfires including the upgrading of a National Fire Equipment Cache in Banff National Park to act as a central equipment repository for Parks Canada and augment local equipment reserves in national parks across the country.

Minister of Natural Resources Jonathan Wilkinson said in the release that coupled with long-term investments in wildfire fighting as well as climate mitigation and adaptation, Canada will address the root cause of these intensified fires: climate change.

## NIA attaches house of two brothers in Punjab in Pak sponsored narco terror case



The National Investigation Agency (NIA) has attached the house of two brothers accused in Pakistan-sponsored narco-terror case in Amritsar district of Punjab, officials said on Tuesday.

The case relates to a conspiracy hatched by a narco terror module to smuggle large quantities of drugs into India from Pakistan.

"The residential property of the brothers, Bikramjit Singh alias Bikram Singh and Maninder Singh alias Mani, has been attached under section 25(1) of Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act, after its designation as 'proceeds of terrorism'."

"The two brothers were earlier arrested by the NIA in the case," said the official.

The NIA said they have already filed four charge sheets (including three supplementary) against 13 accused under the relevant sections of the UAPA, NDPS and IPC in the case.

"The drugs were being smuggled in the garb of rock salt imported from across the border. The sale proceeds of the smuggled drugs were being used to create movable and immovable properties in Punjab, besides being channelised to fund terrorists of Hizb-ul-Mujahideen in the Kashmir Valley," said the official.

The NIA had earlier also attached some land, measuring 60 Kanal 10 Marla, in the case. Six vehicles and Rs 6, 35, 000 in cash were also seized.

## UK school condemns attack on Sikh student, denies it was racially motivated

A school in the UK has condemned a video, which was earlier circulated on the social media, showing a Sikh boy being pushed, grabbed, and kicked by another boy.

The boys were students of Colton Hills Community School in Goldthorn Park, Wolverhampton.

Without mentioning the age and name of the boys, the school described it as a standalone, and not "racially motivated", incident that has been "seriously" dealt with.

"Sikh children continue to be safe in our school," a statement from S. Blower, acting head teacher of Colton Hills Community School, said on Tuesday. "We are publishing this state-



ment to respond to an incident which took place on Friday (June 30) and has been shared on social media, to assure all in our community that it has been dealt with seriously."

The school said that the incident, which did not happen on school grounds, was reported to them by the parents of the Sikh boy. The parents said their ward was followed and then assaulted by a student from the

same school.

"The incident was reported to senior staff and immediate action was taken against the student who was the instigator in the incident. The nature of this will remain confidential, but the school has taken the strongest action as it would in any incident of this nature," the statement read, adding that the boy is safe and is attending the school.

The school authorities said they were also made aware of the posts circulating on social media regarding the incident, and an action on that has been taken. However, they denied that bullying or racism was involved, and this was "confirmed" by the Sikh boy.

## EAM Jaishankar pays homage to Indian soldiers at Commonwealth War Memorial in Tanzania

The External Affairs Minister arrived here on Thursday after visiting Zanzibar. India and Tanzania have traditionally enjoyed close and friendly relations. The visit to Tanzania will further consolidate the bilateral relations between our two countries.

On the second day of his two-day visit to the East African nation, Jaishankar paid homage to the Indian soldiers.

"Paid homage to Indian soldiers at the Commonwealth War Memorial in Dar es Salaam today. Their sacrifices in various theatres of war are an important aspect of our history. They are a reminder of India's global impact," he tweeted.

Dar es Salaam, now the capital of Tanzania, was at the outbreak of the First World War the capital of German East Africa.



The memorial which stands within Dar es Salaam War Cemetery, commemorates by name more than 1,500 officers and men who died in East Africa during and after January 1917. The cemetery also contains the Dar Es Salaam Hindu crematorium memorial which commemorates 14 Indian servicemen whose remains were cremated in accordance with their faith.

## ChatGPT officiates wedding of US couple in absence of priest

In an unprecedented but heart-warming event, OpenAI's chatbot ChatGPT stepped up to officiate the wedding of a US couple when faced with the unanticipated absence of a priest.

Reece Wiensch and Deyton Truitt celebrated their wedding last weekend with the voice of the

ChatGPT AI app leading the way, report Fox News. "Thank you all for joining us today to celebrate the extraordinary love and unity of Reece Wiensch and Deyton Truitt," the chatbot said at the couple's wedding last month.

Wiensch and Truitt said that they planned their wedding in five



days because Truitt was about to deploy for the Army and Wiensch

wanted to join him after basic training.

In the US-based Colorado, there is no requirement for a licensed marriage official to officiate ceremonies, therefore, the bride's father, Stephen Wiensch, came up with the idea of using a more accessible and cost-effective

official option. The chatbot was at first hesitant to conduct the ceremony, according to the report. "It said 'no' at first. 'I can't do this, I don't have eyes, I don't have a body. I can't officiate at your wedding,'" Wiensch was quoted as saying. The couple persisted and provided personal information

about themselves to the chatbot, which was woven into ChatGPT's remarks during the ceremony. This is not the first time that an AI chatbot like ChatGPT has done something unusual like this.

Last week, a woman revealed that her long-time client stopped working with her after discover-

ing that she was using a ChatGPT-like artificial intelligence (AI) to write content.

Last month, a US judge sanctioned the lawyer who submitted a legal brief written by ChatGPT, which included citations of non-existent court opinions and fake quotes.

## Dangers of Aging Population

1 child for a long time, the number of young populations in China has decreased drastically and the number of elderly people has increased radically. Due to the reduction of labour force in the country, the economic and social condition of the country is being negatively affected. In the year 1980, China implemented the one child policy to control the population. This plan was strictly implemented. In this sequence, apart from sacking people from their jobs, women were also forced to have abortions.

Due to this policy, extensive changes are being seen in the economic and social structure of China. Children are becoming victims of despair and depression. Due to psychological reasons, they are not being brought up properly. There is a lack of confidence in children. Children are seen trying to escape from the competition. Having a child has increased the income of the parents. The level of education has also increased. People have started getting more and more degrees. Education has also become expensive in the changed environment.

According to the United Nations Population Department, in the next century, the China's labour population will be only 548 million. According to an estimate, by the year 2030, there will be a huge gap in the age



difference in the population of China. Obviously, the reduction in the labour force will have a negative impact on the country's infrastructure, which is the driver of development. Lack of labour force will adversely affect road, electricity, health, education, industry, manufacturing etc.

## Effect of aging in India

In the states of India, a complex situation can be created regarding the elderly population. The data suggests that some states, which include most of the states in South India, may see an unprecedented increase in the elderly population. According to an estimate, India's population may reach 178 crores by the year 2050, while according to the World Bank, by the year 2050, India's population will be 173 crores, in which 27 crores population may be of the elderly. State-wise, this number looks alarming. By the

year 2050, in 4 southern states like Andhra Pradesh, Kerala, Karnataka and Tamil Nadu, one-fifth of the total population will be of elderly population, whereas, in the states of Maharashtra, West Bengal, and Odisha, a large population is elderly. There will be a continuous exodus of labour from Northeast India in the coming decades, as has been happening in these states for the past decade. In the states of Uttar Pradesh, Rajasthan, Assam, Bihar, Haryana etc., the number of youth population will be more in the year 2050, due to which the migration of youth from these states to the southern states will continue.

Such changes may also increase the pressure on the infrastructure of the southern states. To avoid a "Demographic Crisis", Andhra Pradesh has started encouraging people to have more children. State-wise

per capita income data shows that the southern states are richer than the northern states and there is a wide gap in the income of the two regions. For example, the difference in per capita income between Karnataka and Bihar is Rs.1.1 lakh, while the difference between Karnataka and the national average is about Rs.57,000. By the year 2050, the elderly population in southern states will increase, widening the income distribution gap even further.

## Conclusion

It can be said that the demographic change in India is pointing towards a big crisis, which needs to be acted upon in time. In totality, even though its effect is not visible in the economic and social perspective, but its far-reaching effect cannot be ruled out, because as the age of the people increases, there is an increase in savings, but in the older age, there is an increase in health expenditure. Reduction in savings has a negative impact on the domestic products of the states.

An analysis of demographic data shows that by the year 2050, Andhra Pradesh will have the highest percentage of elderly population in the country at 30.1%. Kerala with 25.0%, Karnataka 24.6%, Tamil Nadu 20.8%, Himachal Pradesh

17.9% etc., while Haryana will have the lowest population of elderly at 9.8% in the year 2050. However, the states of Bihar, Uttar Pradesh, Assam, Chhattisgarh, Rajasthan, Jharkhand, Madhya Pradesh, Gujarat, Uttaranchal etc. will be in a better position in the year 2050 in relation to the youth population.

Keeping in view the changing demographic trend, the states of the country need to formulate policies and implement them. States having young population should set up labour-intensive industries, so that the young labour force can be used properly, while states having large population of elderly people should go ahead with the policy of increasing the retirement age. However, India's social and economic policy is different from that of China and USA. Nevertheless, in our country, a policy can be made in favour of the common people. Presently, politicians in the country are working with full vigour even at the age of 70 to 80 years. If the policy is made according to the trend of demographic change in the states, then some better results can be expected on this front.

Satish Singh-The Author is Ahmedabad based Senior Columnist. Views are personal.

## Trump calls for special counsel to be 'defunded'

Donald Trump has called for special counsel Jack Smith, who is overseeing the twin criminal investigations into the former US President's handling of classified documents and activities related to the January 2021 Capitol riot, to be "defunded".

Since Smith was appointed last year by US Attorney General Merrick Garland to over the investigations, Trump has repeatedly attacked the special counsel, reports Newsweek.

In a post on his Truth Social app on Tuesday, Trump lashed out at Smith and called him a "sick puppet" of Garland and President Joe Biden.

"As my poll numbers go higher & higher, the Communists, Marxists, & Fascists get more & more crazy with their ridiculous Indictments & Election Interference plans & plots, all controlled by an out of control, & very corrupt, DOJ/FBI," Trump wrote.

"They have weaponized law enforcement in America at a level not seen before." "Deranged Jack Smith, who is a sick puppet for A.G. Garland & Crooked Joe Biden, should be defunded & put out to rest... Republicans must get tough on the Dems will steal another Election. MAGA!"

This was the second consecutive day that Trump attacked



Smith, Newsweek reported. In another Truth Social post on Monday, the former President called the special counsel "a major Sleazebag put up by the corrupt DOJ to damage the Republican Party" and also accused the latter of "election interference".

Last month, Trump pleaded not guilty to 37 counts related to the alleged mishandling of classified documents kept at his Mar-a-Lago resort in Palm Beach, Florida.

There has also been increasing speculation that Smith's Capitol riot probe may be ending with another criminal indictment of the former President.

Trump could also be charged in Fulton County, Georgia District Attorney Fani Willis' investigation of his ill-fated attempt to overturn his 2020 loss to Biden.

# Teaser of the upcoming Varun and Janhvi starrer film 'Bawaal' unveiled soon

The teaser of the upcoming Varun Dhawan and Janhvi Kapoor-starrer film 'Bawaal', which was unveiled on Wednesday has received polarising reactions from the people on the Internet. While many people appreciated the teaser of the film, a section of users on the Internet feels that the makers shouldn't have made reference to gas chamber in Nazi Germany.



As the Nazi party took hold of major parts of Europe and the Scandinavian, it unleashed a barrage of hate crime against the Jewish population in Poland, Hitler's homeland of Austria, Germany and other parts of Europe.

person shuts the window of the entrance on them. Several users took to Twitter to express their anger over alleged "romanticisation of holocaust" in the film. One user wrote: "n\*tsh t\*wari is f\*\*\*\*\* insane...you don't use a tragedy on the scale of holocaust to portray basic romantic strife...and then to show a gas chamber scene??? all my expectations for this film went out of the window."

Another wrote: "Was that a gas chamber in the final shot of the teaser?" One person on Twitter enquired: "#Bawaal teaser .. WHAT? What does that mean? I mean- what ... what is it

idk..... Let's wait for a trailer ig (sic)." A fourth person wrote: "Wtf happened in the last?! I got goosebumps. Were they inside a gas chamber in a concentration camp?! #Bawaal." The Jews, who were used as forced labour in several concentration camps like Auschwitz-Birkenau, Treblinka, Belzec, Sobibor, and Chelmno by the Nazis, were killed using Zyklon-B manufactured by the Pharma giant Bayer. As the World War 2 ended, the Nazis were tried and punished in the Nuremberg trials for waging war against humanity and for their shameful act of exterminating over six million people.

## Mozez Singh making documentary feature film based on the life of Yo Yo Honey Singh



Director Mozez Singh, who is known for directing movies such as 'Zubaan' and co-directing the medical thriller series 'Human', has concluded the principle photography for his documentary feature film, based on the life and journey of the rapper and hip hop artiste, Yo Yo Honey Singh.

When asked about his experience on making the documentary, Mozez said: "Working on this documentary feature has been the most exhilarating experience for me. The roller coaster ride in the world of Yo Yo Honey Singh has been one of the most adrenaline filled creative rides of my career, and my introduction to the hypnotic world of documentary film making."

"I remain eternally thankful to him, to Sikhya Entertainment and Netflix for so beautifully partnering with me on this fabulous musical adventure," he added. Penning a note of gratitude to the director, Honey Singh took to his Instagram and posted a picture of the two together. Along with the picture, the rapper wrote: "It's a wrap of my documentary!! It was a crazy emotional ride for me I want to thank my director saab Mozez Singh, my producer Guneet Monga for crafting it with love n faith !! It's been almost 1.5 year we been shooting this n finally its gonna come out in few months exclusively on @netflix in STAY TUNED TO WATCH WHATS REALLY A REAL SIDE OF ME #jaibholenath #satnamwahaguru."

## Hardayal Singh of United Sikhs gets 'Int'l Sikh of the Year' award

KULBIR SINGH KALSII Chandigarh

Hardayal Singh, the Program Director of United Sikhs, has won the prestigious International Sikh of the Year award at the 2nd British Sikh Awards 2023 function held in Birmingham, United Kingdom. Aimed at recognizing extraordinary sikhs and their achievements across various fields, the awardees are selected from among hundreds of nominations. United Sikhs Director Palwinder Kaur from our United Kingdom chapter collected the award on behalf



of Hardayal Singh. Indeed, it is impossible to extricate his achievements from the collective, consolidated efforts of thousands of donors and volunteers who supported the beliefs and actions of the organization he helped. Back in 1997, a group of young sikh professionals including Hardayal Singh, bonded together to serve the advocacy and socio-economic needs of marginalized communities in Queens

Borough, New York City. The year 1999 saw the birth of United Sikhs as a registered non-profit organization. Little did its founders imagine at the time that this was an organization destined to uplift millions of lives through its chapters across five continents. Hardayal Singh said, "The year 2004 saw our first large-scale humanitarian aid mission in which our volunteers set up langar camps and distributed relief supplies in India, Sri Lanka, and Indonesia after the devastating Indian Ocean tsunami."

## Introducing 'Fasal': A Powerful and Inspiring Punjabi Web Series Celebrating Women's Strength

KULBIR SINGH KALSII Chandigarh

Actor-turned-producer, Sehnoor is thrilled to announce her first Punjabi web series "Fasal" under the production house, Volume Nine Films. This groundbreaking series presents a unique storyline that celebrates the strength and resilience of women.

While the release date is yet to be unveiled, today marks the launch of the title poster, building anticipation for this remarkable production.

Written by the talented



Taj and directed by Mehraj Singh, «Fasal» delves into the extraordinary journey of a village girl, played by the talented Chandan Gill, who is raised with the spirit of men. Chandan's character fearlessly takes charge of various tasks in

## Arijit Singh to croon new version of 'Main Nikla Gaddi Leke' from 'Gadar 2'

MUMBAI: Playback singer Arijit Singh, who is often dubbed as the superstar of the Hindi music industry, has recorded another reprise version of a song after the much debated 'Pasoori Nu'. This time, the singer has lent his vocals to the new version of the superhit song 'Main Nikla Gaddi Leke' from the upcoming film 'Gadar 2'.

As per media reports, after the tremendous positive response to 'Udd Jaa Kaale Kaava', the



makers will soon release the reworked version of 'Main Nikla Gaddi Leke' in the lead upto the

film's release. The song was a smash hit when it was released more than 2 decades back and continues to command a solid fan following. In 'Gadar', the song comes at an important juncture when Sunny Deol's character of Tara Singh performs in Ameesha Patel's character's college at a cultural event and leaves the audience dancing their hearts out. The story of 'Gadar 2' is set in the 1971 war between India and Pakistan and this time Tara Singh will go to Pakistan to bring his son Charanjeet back to India.

## Mandeep Singh becomes the first doctor of Indian origin to perform In Utero Spina Bifida Repair procedure

UAE: Mandeep Singh, a doctor of Indian descent, attracted attention by performing a rare treatment on an unborn fetus. He is recognized as the first doctor of Indian descent who performed such treatment. Mandeep Singh, a famous medical expert from Mumbai.

Mandeep Singh, a doctor of Indian descent, attracted attention by performing a rare treatment on an unborn fetus. He is recognized as the first doctor of Indian descent who performed such treatment. Mandeep Singh, a renowned medical expert based in Mumbai, is working in a hospital in Abu Dhabi. At this time, the doctors found that the baby in the womb of a woman from Colombia has a spine problem. A rare surgery is required to



fix this problem. As a part of this, they resorted to Crypus Nicolaidin Fetal Medicine and Therapy Center in Abu Dhabi. A team of doctors led by Mandeep Singh successfully completed the surgery and solved the problem. A 24-week-pregnant infant had a modified spinal defect. Spina bifida is a problem in the fetus. It is a birth defect. This causes permanent disability

making a small incision on the uterus. This problem needs to be solved while the baby is still in the womb. For this we used synthetic patch. After the surgery, we close the uterus again by sending amniotic fluid into the cavity. The doctor said that the health of the mother and the baby is stable. The woman will give birth in August.

Meanwhile, there are only 14 centers in the world that conduct such surgeries. Couples from Asia and South America travel to Europe and North America for similar surgeries. This approach is very costly. The woman's family members said, 'In the 20-week scan, it was found that the back of the baby in the womb was not right. They advised that it would be better to remove the pregnancy.

# Unleashing the Potential of Digital Marketing as a Career Choice

PARMINDER KAUR

In today's fast-paced digital landscape, businesses of all sizes are seeking innovative ways to connect with their target audience and gain a competitive edge. This paradigm shift has led to the meteoric rise of digital marketing as a powerful tool for companies to engage their customers. Consequently, the demand for skilled digital marketers is soaring, making it an incredibly promising career path. In this article, we will delve into the world of digital marketing and explore the vast array of opportunities it offers to individuals looking to embark on a dynamic and rewarding professional journey.



to effectively target and engage audiences, measure campaign performance, and drive valuable conversions.

- 1. Understanding the Essence of Digital Marketing:** Digital marketing encompasses a wide range of strategies and techniques used to promote products, services, or brands through digital channels. These channels include search engines, social media platforms, email marketing, content marketing, mobile applications, and more. Digital marketers leverage these platforms
- 2. The Growing Significance of Digital Marketing:** With the increasing reliance on technology and the internet, businesses understand the necessity of establishing a robust online presence. Digital marketing provides the means to accomplish this objective by employing data-driven strategies that maximize reach, engage the right audience, and yield measurable results. As traditional marketing methods shift to digital platforms, the demand for digital marketing professionals continues to surge.
- 3. Lucrative Career Opportunities:** Digital marketing presents a plethora of career opportunities across various domains. Here are some popular roles within the field

- 4. Essential Skill Set:** To excel in digital marketing, a combination of technical and soft skills is vital. These include: soft skills is vital. These include:
  - a) Analytical Skills:** The ability to analyze data, measure campaign performance, and derive actionable insights is crucial for making data-driven decisions and optimizing marketing strategies.
  - b) Creativity:** Digital marketers need to think outside the box, develop innovative campaigns, and craft compelling content that captivates the audience.
  - c) Adaptability:** The digital landscape is ever-evolving, necessitating the need to stay updated with the latest trends, tools, and algorithms to remain competitive.
  - d) Communication Skills:** Effective communication is essential for collaborat-

ing with team members, understanding client requirements, and engaging with target audiences.

- 5. Continuous Learning and Growth:** One of the most exciting aspects of a career in digital marketing is the opportunity for continuous learning and growth. The field is constantly evolving, and staying up-to-date with emerging technologies and trends is crucial. Digital marketers can attend webinars, conferences, and workshops, and obtain certifications to enhance their skill set and remain at the forefront of the industry.

Conclusion- Digital marketing presents an exciting and promising career path for individuals passionate about technology, creativity, and data. As businesses increasingly embrace digital platforms to engage their audiences, the demand for skilled digital marketers continues to soar. By developing a strong skill set, staying adaptable, and continually expanding knowledge, professionals can unlock a world of opportunities in this rapidly evolving field. If you are seeking a career that combines innovation, creativity, and growth, digital marketing might just be the perfect

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