

REGION

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PUNJAB BJP PRESIDENT SUGGEST MANN TO SINK DIFFERENCES WITH GOVERNOR OVER A CUP OF TEA



CORPORATES & INDUSTRY

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WTC MUMBAI COLLABORATES WITH OTHER ASIAN WTCS TO PROMOTE TRADE & INVESTMENT



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SIKH BRAVERY AND RESILIENCE TO LIFE IN UPCOMING PUNJABI FILM "MASTANEY"



Bhagwant govt's 'Action Plan' against drug smugglers & terrorists in Punjab

SATISH HANDA
Chandigarh

About 16 months ago Punjab government launched operation against drug smuggling in the state as a result 21786 drug smugglers were arrested by state police and pushed the bars so far. Bhagwant government not only launched campaign in Punjab state but also in Gujarat and Maharashtra states from where drug supplies were being made and delivered at seaport with the help of Special Task Force and Anti-gangster Task Force, which succeeded in arresting several hard core criminals along with nearly 1068 declared offenders by the courts and were absconding since past couple of years, presently lodged in jails in past over a year.

Information reveals, under



'Nasha Mukti Abhiyan' Punjab police has recovered 1044.31 kg Opium, 525.69 kg Bhukki, 2.21 kg Smack, 15.25 kg Ganja, 47.21 kg Charas, 1239.49 kg Heroine and 86,28,522 intoxicated tablets, capsules and injections. As such Punjab police registered 16375 cases under NDPS Act so far in the past about 18 months. Not only this, ruling government in Punjab has arrested

66 large scale drug smugglers recovering drugs of value worth over Rs 26.72 crore from them and attached their properties which include 13 properties of value worth over Rs 2.34 crore in Barnala district, 9 properties of value worth over Rs 1.72 crore in Fazilka district and 6 properties of value worth over Rs 1.13 crore in Malerkotla district. Bhagwant government in

Punjab busted 206 gangster modules spreading terrorism in the state through special-ized Anti-gangster Task Force (AGTF) which was constituted in Punjab state in April 2022 to wipe out increasing terrorism from the state, which exhibited successful results in the state not only to control increasing incidents of terrorism but also to control drug smuggling in Punjab by the terrorists in neighboring Pakistan involved in sending weapons and RDX along with consignments of the drugs through drones. Information reveals, in the past about 18 months 208 gangster modules spreading terrorism in Punjab were busted with the killing of five hard core criminals spreading terrorism.

Information also reveals that AGTF also busted a large number of gangster gangs and

pushed 688 behind the bars and recovered 667 weapons and 157 vehicles. AGTF also recovered 44854 kg of heroin and Rs 1,76,703 from them. Punjab police busted 28 hard core terrorists spreading terrorism in Punjab through a network while sitting abroad and sending drugs, weapons and explosive material in our country. Punjab police captured 57 drone, arrested 181 hard core criminals involved in terrorist activities and seized from them 32 rifles, 213 revolvers, 9 tiffin bombs which were diffused, 10866 kg RDX, 7 detonators, 11 hand grenades, 2 rocket launchers in past nearly 18 months. Punjab Chief Minister Bhagwant Mann told media persons that the campaign against hard core criminals will continue till Punjab becomes terrorism-free state.

Tax on online gaming & casinos at 28%: Centre to seek introduction, passage of bill to amend GST Act



NEW DELHI: The central government on Friday will seek the introduction and passage of the Central Goods and Services Tax (Amendment) Bill, 2023 and Integrated Goods and Services Tax (Amendment) Bill, 2023 in the Lok Sabha.

The union cabinet earlier this week had cleared the two bills. The amendment in the Central Goods and Services Tax Act will allow introduction of a 28% goods and services tax rate on horse racing, online gaming and casinos. Similarly, states too will have to amend their individual GST legislations separately.

If the bill is passed in the

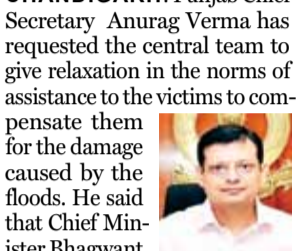
day, the new tax system will become applicable from October 1, as was decided in the GST council meeting held earlier this month. It was decided in that meeting that 28 per cent levy on online gaming, casinos and horse racing will become applicable from October 1 onwards and will be reviewed for six months, and if need arises, changes could be made in the tax structure after that.

Friday being the last day of the monsoon session of Parliament, Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman will introduce the two bills and if the House business continues, then it will also seek to get the two bills passed.

Considering the fact that the GST council had to meet twice within a month owing to continuous representations from the gaming industry, seeking to ease the 28 per cent tax slab on gaming, the bills are likely to be pushed for passing as the applicability of the new tax slab is October 1.

Punjab sought relaxation in norms from central team to double the compensation amount for flood victims

CHANDIGARH: Punjab Chief Secretary Anurag Verma has requested the central team to give relaxation in the norms of assistance to the victims to compensate them for the damage caused by the floods. He said that Chief Minister Bhagwant Mann has already written a letter to the Union Home Minister saying that there is no shortfall in the state disaster relief funds to compensate the victims, only a change in the norms for compensating the damage is required, so that the loss of people can be fully compensated. Punjab has demanded to increase the compensation amount for the loss of life and property. The seven-member Inter-Ministerial Central team on a visit to Punjab to make a ground level assessment of the damage caused by the floods in the state due to continuous heavy rains in the Punjab and hilly areas, after visiting various districts, today held a meeting with the Chief Secretary at the Punjab Civil Secretariat here.



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2,444 Women-led MSMEs reported Shut Down in FY23



NEW DELHI: About 2,444 number of women-headed MSMEs closed during the period of 2022-23, as per Udyam Portal, informed Minister of State for Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises, Bhanu Pratap Singh Verma in a written reply to the Lok Sabha on Thursday.

In the current fiscal year till 4 May 2023 total 320 MSMEs led by women have shut down so far and during FY 2021-22 the tally was 1,040, as per the official government data.

The MoS also shared the number of women owned MSMEs registered on Udyam Portal of Ministry of MSME.

According to year-wise data, 652,715 women owned MSMEs have been registered so far in the present financial year till 8 August 2023.

In FY23 and FY22 the registration records are 1487,840 and 910,375, respectively.

He emphasised on various schemes launched by the government to encourage entrepreneurship among women.

Through an amendment to the Public Procurement Policy,

MSME Ministry to Launch online portal with IMID Features of IC Scheme

The Ministry of Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs) is working with India Exim Bank to develop an online portal, incorporating the features of International Market Intelligence Dissemination (IMID) component of International Cooperation (IC) Scheme. This information was provided by Minister of State for MSME, Bhanu Pratap Singh Verma in a written reply to the Lok Sabha on Thursday. The IC Scheme of Ministry of MSME has added a new component 'Framework for International Market Intelligence Dissemination (IMID)'. Under IMID component, a National Resource Database System - Global Market Intelligence System for MSMEs is provisioned.

The Government has mandated that all Central Ministries/ Departments and Public Sector Undertakings should procure at least 3% of their annual procurement from women owned micro and small enterprises, said the MoS.

Manipur violence shameful, government has no intention to change demography, says Amit Shah

NEW DELHI: Home Minister Amit Shah on Wednesday said that the incidents of Manipur are shameful and said that the government has no intention to change the demography of the northeast state.

He also appealed the all the ethnic groups to shun violence and look for a peaceful solution to the problem by talking to the central government. "I agree with the opposition about the violence which has happened there. It is shameful, but it is all the more shameful to politicise it," he said. Shah at the same time said



that had the video been shared with the state's DGP or the police on time, then action would have been taken against the perpetrators at the earliest. The Home Minister won-

dered why the video was leaked just a day before the commencement of the monsoon session. He also urged the ethnic groups to talk to the Central government and look for a peaceful solution to the strife torn situation prevailing there. Participating in the discussion on the no-confidence motion in Lok Sabha, the Home Minister attacked the Congress-led opposition saying that the most instances of ethnic and communal violence and riots took place during the reigns of Jawaharlal Nehru, Indira Gandhi and Rajiv Gandhi.

SGPC executive takes notice of Govt interferences in Sikh affairs

Will provide legal aid to victim families to pursue cases in higher Court against Jagdish Tytler: Harjinder Singh Dhani

JAGMOHAN SINGH
Amritsar

The executive committee (EC) of the Shiromani Gurdwara Parbandhak Committee (SGPC) in its meeting held here today has taken notice of the Governments' interference in Sikh religious affairs and their organisations.

The EC meeting presided over by SGPC President Advocate Harjinder Singh Dhani passed



the resolution against the appointment of a non-Sikh as Administrator of the Gurdwara Board of Takht Sachkhand Sri Hazur Abdalnagar Sahib, Nanded, besides strongly opposed the efforts of the National Commission for Minorities (NCM) of weakening the Sikh organisations by going beyond its jurisdiction. Moreover, it has also been decided to provide legal aid to

victim families for pursuing case in the higher Court, against 1984 Delhi Sikh Genocide accused Congress leader Jagdish Tytler's anticipatory bail. In a statement issued here today, SGPC President Harjinder Singh Dhani said that the governments' unnecessary interference in Sikh affairs is a serious conspiracy, which the Sikh organisation SGPC will not tolerate at any cost.

Sukhbir Singh Badal calls on ailing Bhai Gurdeep Singh Khera



FW DESK
Amritsar

Shiromani Akali Dal president Sukhbir Singh Badal called on Sikh prisoner (Bandi Singh) Bhai Gurdeep Singh Khera at Guru Nanak Dev ji Hospital (Amritsar) where "the long time victim of governmental repression, injustice and insensitivity" is undergoing treatment.

Sukhbir Singh Badal inquired about Bhai Sahib's health and the quality of treatment he has been receiving at the hospital. "Although I was relieved to see the Sikh 'warrior for justice' in high spirits or, as he put it, Chardi Kala in true Sikh tradition, the Akali leader felt that Bhai Sahib needed to be shifted to a ward where the oppressed Bandi Singh will have access to better on-hand round the clock medical attention.

Explained : How Delhi Services Bill will impact governance of capital

YOGESH KANT
New Delhi

After the Rajya Sabha ratified the Delhi Services Bill, Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal on Monday said it was a 'black day' for India's democracy and accused that the BJP-led Central government is stealthily seizing authority.

This divisive bill, which passed with a count of 131 to 102 in the Rajya Sabha, empowers the Central government to supervise the bureaucracy within the Delhi government. Home Minister Amit Shah defended the Government of National Capital Territory of Delhi (Amendment) Bill, 2023, saying the proposed legislation is aimed at providing effective and corruption-free governance in the national capital. The recent legislation dictates that the Centre will oversee the transfer and duties of Delhi government employees across all categories. Kejriwal, in his critique, humorously questioned if such policies would lead the prime minister to micromanage even the daily tasks of a low-level government peon. "Will the prime minister now sit and decide what work a peon of the Delhi government will do? Is this the job of the prime minister?", asked Kejriwal. Expressing his gratitude, the Aam Aadmi Party chief lauded several political figures, such as the erstwhile PM Manmohan Singh and JMM head Shibu Soren, for standing by AAP during these challenging times. Emphasizing his deep-rooted connection with Delhi, Kejriwal stated that the citizens' affection for him remains unswayed, despite continuous criticism from BJP leaders. Condemning the bill's endorsement as a blatant overreach, Kejriwal opined that the BJP's central governance isn't acting in the nation's best interests but rather suppressing its citizens.



Hry khaps, farmers' union demand Monu Manesar's arrest

FW DESK
Chandigarh

Representatives from approximately 30 khaps in Haryana, leaders of the Sanyukt Kisan Morcha, diverse farmer unions, and individuals from various faiths convened a significant mahapanchayat in Bass village, Narnaund town, within the Hisar district. This event, held on Wednesday, centered on responding to the recent Nuh communal violence and culminated in the passage of several resolutions aimed at restoring peace and addressing the issues of unrest. Throughout the mahapanchayat, attendees underscored the crucial importance of maintaining peace and harmony within the state, cautioning against the employment of inflammatory slogans or language targeting the Muslim community. The gathering drew participants not only from the local vicinity but also from regions like Hisar, Jind, Kaithal, Karnal, Bhiwani, and Fatehabad. The assembly was orchestrated under the leadership of Suresh Kotha, a notable member of the SKM.



A recent report from the NITI Aayog said sex ratio at birth nationwide has dropped from 906 in 2012-2014 to 900 in 2013-2015. The number of girls born for every 1,000 boys in 17 States in the country witnessed a drop with Gujarat state performing the worst declining 53 points. While this is a highly disturbing trend, it is not new for India, which has seen a consistent downfall in girls as compared to every 1000 male children. The number of girls born is naturally lower than the number of boys because of the preference for the male child. Shockingly, in case of Haryana state Sex Ratio (SR) in male and female in eight districts including Rohtak, Mohindergarh, Sonipat

Drop in female sex ratio in eight Haryana districts, worrying state govt



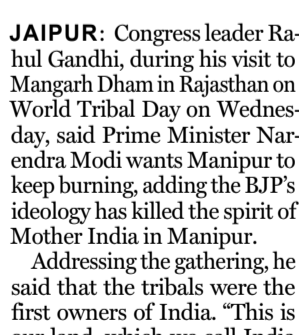
SATISH HANDA

Karnal, Charkhi Dadri, Kaithal, Bhiwani and Gurugram has been observed less than 900 girls as compared to 1000 boys. In spite of state health department efforts there is no control over illegal ultrasound centres across the state involved in detecting pre-natal sex of unborn child in pregnant, which usually charge amount between Rs 30000 to 40000 for determination of sex of child in womb and there are several private hospitals and 'Jhola-chhap' doctors charging amount between Rs 80000 to Rs 1 lakh for termination of pregnancy in case of female child in the womb. However, the health department has arrested a large number of persons including owners of ultrasound centres involved in this illegal practice.

'PM Modi wants Manipur to stay on fire', says Rahul Gandhi

JAIPUR: Congress leader Rahul Gandhi, during his visit to Mangarh Dham in Rajasthan on World Tribal Day on Wednesday, said Prime Minister Narendra Modi wants Manipur to keep burning, adding the BJP's ideology has killed the spirit of Mother India in Manipur.

Addressing the gathering, he said that the tribals were the first owners of India. "This is our land, which we call India today... this land was the land of tribals. This was told to me by my grandmother Indira Gandhi, but the BJP calls tribals



'Vanvasi'. This is an insult to the tribals and Mother India," he said. Regarding the violence in Manipur, Rahul Gandhi said



that the Prime Minister wants Manipur to keep burning. "The Prime Minister wants the fire to keep burning in Ma-

nipur. It has been three months, it seems that Manipur is not a part of the country at all. I went to the relief camp. The leader of the opposition went but the PM did not. He did not say a word about Manipur," the Congress MP said. The former Congress president further said "wherever the people of BJP go, they try to suppress the voice of India". "BJP's thinking has set Manipur on fire. Manipur has been on fire for months. Bharat Mata was murdered in Manipur. BJP's ideology has killed Mother India," he added.

What is regretful is that PM has not found time to visit Manipur says P. Chidambaram



NEW DELHI: Senior Congress leader and former Union Minister P. Chidambaram on Thursday took a dig at Union Home Minister Amit Shah, and also questioned the Prime Minister over not visiting violence-hit Manipur. In a tweet, Chidambaram said, "Ethnic cleansing is shameful," admitted the Home Minister. It happened under his watch. He added that it is 'more shameful' that politics is being played on it. He is wrong. "Raising and debating the issue of ethnic cleansing is the duty of every citizen, especially of political leaders and MPs. What is regretful is that the Prime Minister has not found the time to visit Manipur in the last 100 days," the Congress leader added. His remarks came a day after Shah, while speaking in the Lok Sabha on the no-confidence motion, said that the ethnic strife in Manipur "is shameful, but what's more shameful is how the opposition is playing politics over the issue".

Punjab students Left in Limbo as Canadian College Cancels Admissions

CHHAVI BHATIA
Jalandhar

Leaving students stranded in uncertainty, Canada's Northern College, Scarborough campus, has taken an unexpected decision that has caught numerous Indian students off guard, particularly those from Punjab.

Just weeks before the eagerly awaited September session, the college blindsided students by abruptly scrapping admissions, plunging them into uncertainty. Many of these students had already poured resources into



securing accommodations, purchasing airfare, and getting ready for their imminent voyage to Canada. The reason

for this unprecedented step was attributed to an overwhelming surge in applications received by the institution.

According to Nikhil Sharma who handles Canada student visa cases at Journey Onward, an immigration firm in the region, the college had taken a gamble by issuing more offer letters than their available seating capacity, under the presumption that not all applicants would successfully secure embassy clearance and visas. However, this time around, the rejection rate turned out to be significantly lower than expected, forcing the college's hand in retracting the admissions offers.

Punjab BJP president suggest Mann to sink differences with Governor over a cup of tea

JAGMOHAN SINGH
Amritsar

Punjab BJP president Sunil Jakhar advised Punjab Chief minister Bhagwant Mann don't behave childish and be sensible as Governor Punjab is such a respectable personality.

Addressing the press conference here today, Jakhar talking about the fuss between Punjab Governor and Punjab chief minister said that CM should use sophisticated language and give due respect to Governor Punjab but by not doing so Mann created unwanted situation.

Adding further he said, "Present ongoing war of words between Governor and CM was totally unavoidable and unfortunate as the matter should have been settled down over a cup of



tea but Mann deliberately created the tension by using wrong words for Governor Punjab as it is a deep rooted conspiracy of AAP. Here the CM should act with decency as whatever the words come from his mouth reflect all over the Punjab, so he should act sensibly. The wrong language used by Mann has hurt the Governor who should be given due respect, Jakhar quipped.

Talking about the Punjab state, said he was here while following the party high command directives to unfurl the party flags each corner of Punjab with developmental agenda in mind.

Coming to AAP he said, "Before forming the Government they were urging the people to give one opportunity to Aam Admi party in Punjab as all their election

candidates are common man as some are running mobile repair shops and some are doing cycle repair work. But after the landslide victory of the party all such party candidates are carrying Rolex watches on their wrists, costlier shoes worth Rs. 40,000 besides luxurious cars worth crores", Jakhar quipped.

He said it was not a victory for the Aam Admi party in Punjab since People of the State gave a chance to bring change while ignoring all traditional political parties. Now AAP should be duty bound to fulfill promises they have made during election days.

Urging people don't be emotional in future to cast their valuable vote to any political party, he said.

Punjab Police seized above 11 Lac cash, arms from five accused, arrested from Baramulla J&K

JAGMOHAN SINGH
Amritsar

Punjab police have seized one pistol (Glock), cash Rs. 11,20,000, two magazines and 46 live cartridges with the arrest of five accused from Baramulla area of Jammu and Kashmir. Addressing the press conference here today, DIG Border Range Narendra Bahrgav said that five accused who were arrested and traced from Uri district Baramulla of J&K were brought to Amritsar today. He said the money, arms and ammunition recovered from the arrested accused were to be used for terror activities. The five arrested accused from J&K were identified as Raveel Kataria, Imtayaz Ahmed, Nafeez, Mukhtiar Ahmad and Fiaz Ahmed all were residents of Baramulla (J&K).

Haryana focusing on mini clusters for MSME sector

SATISH HANDA



Chief Minister Manohar Lal Khattar while talking to media persons at Chandigarh said that inspired by the central government scheme to develop clusters for MSME units decision has been taken to develop mini clusters in Haryana state to assist micro and small industries in around 25 acre area, instead of 100 acre area which will be known as the State Mini Cluster Development Programme for which a 90 per cent grant-in-aid will be provided for setting up common facility centres. Khattar said that MSME units are providing maximum employment opportunities to people in the state and need full cooperation by the government.

Chief Minister said that the process for setting up 43 mini clusters initially in the state is going on, out of which work on 25 clusters have already started. He said, this scheme was dis-

cussed with the micro, small and medium entrepreneurs during a virtual programme and was much appreciated by them and large number of the entrepreneurs thanked him for the pro-MSME schemes being run by the state government to promote industries in the state. The Chief Minister said small-scale industries playing important role in strengthening the economy in the country at present and MSMEs help in realising the Prime Minister's self-reliant India dream. Deputy Chief Minister Dushyant Chautala was also present in the meeting in which changes were made in Padma policy in the state, since earlier the state government was giving importance to big industries but now focusing on promoting micro, small, and medium industries in the state which need less investment capital, but providing ample employment to people, said Khattar.

Punjab Unites to Honor Heroes in 'Meri Maati Mera Desh' Campaign Launch



FW DESK
Chandigarh

The nation stood as one today in commemorating the resounding launch of the "Meri Maati Mera Desh" campaign, a heartfelt tribute to the brave souls who made the ultimate sacrifice for our beloved nation. Under the captivating tagline "Mitti ko nam, veeron ka vandan," this monumental initiative stands as a people-driven homage to the valiant heroes who have selflessly served the country. The campaign seeks to reignite the indomitable spirit of these gallant individuals, whose unwavering contributions have significantly shaped India's journey through 75 years of independence. In the spirited heartland of Punjab, the campaign unfurled through a series of impactful events across various cities, each throbbing with fervor and reverence. Jalandhar, a dynamic city brimming with energy, bore witness to the combined efforts of Nehru Yuva Kendras (NYKs) and National Service Scheme (NSS) volunteers.

Two including a female arrested in drug smuggling



SATISH HANDA
Ambala

CIA Staff-2 of Ambala police on a clue held a police barrier to check vehicles on Defence Road Ambala Cantt and during checking of vehicles recovered 100 gm heroine and 680 intoxicated capsules from a woman sitting on a activa scooter along with a male partner carrying a knife. Both were taken to police station on Saturday evening and cases under NDPS Act (Sections 21/22-61-85 and Arms Act section 25-1B) were registered against them. Police also taken into custody their Activa Scooter bearing registration number HR85-F2977. The female was identified as Rajni a resident of House No, 275 in Lalkurti Bazar, where the arrested youth was also residing in the same area in separate house.

Concessional blood platelets service for the poor by Rotary



CHANDIGARH: Rotary Club of Chandigarh 200 single-user apheresis kits to the Rotary and Blood Bank Society Resource Centre in Sector 37, here today. Past Rotary International President Rajendra K. Saboo handed over the kits used for extracting platelets from blood, to the Chairman of the Centre, Arun Nehru.

These 200 kits costing about Rs.16.6 lakh have been made possible through the efforts of Rtn. P.J Singh, managing director of the IPF Vikram India Pvt Ltd, which contributed the amount through its CSR funds. With the availability of the kits, the economically challenged can obtain the platelets at 50 percent of the cost, informed Club President Anil Chadda.

The blood centre was established with the joint collaboration of Rotary Club Chandigarh and the Blood Bank Society, which has become today a centre of excellence, meeting the growing demand of blood and its units to the hospitals and nursing homes in the tricity.

Omega Seiki Mobility opens a new dealership 'Varun Electric Automobiles' in Derabassi

KULBIR SINGH KALSI
Chandigarh

Omega Seiki Mobility (OSM), an Anglian Omega Group company, opened a new state-of-the-art dealership - Varun Electric Automobiles at shop no. 210/S-10, 210-01/S-10 Saidpura, Derabassi (Mohali), today. It was inaugurated by Uday Narang, Chairman of OSM, in

Drop in female sex ratio in eight Haryana districts, worrying state government

SATISH HANDA

A recent report from the NTI Aayog said sex ratio at birth nationwide has dropped from 906 in 2012-2014 to 900 in 2013-2015. The number of girls born for every 1,000 boys in 17 States in the country witnessed a drop with Gujarat state performing the worst declining 53 points. While this is a highly disturbing trend, it is not new for India, which has seen a consistent downfall in girls as compared to every 1000 male children. The number of girls born is naturally lower than the number of boys because of the preference for the male child.

Shockingly, in case of Haryana state Sex Ratio (SR) in male and female in eight districts including Rohtak, Mohindergarh, Sonapat Karnal, Charkhi Dadri, Kaithal, Bhi-



wani and Gurugram has been observed less than 900 girls as compared to 1000 boys. In spite of state health department efforts there is no control over illegal ultrasound centres across the state involved in detecting pre-natal sex of unborn child in pregnant, which usually charge amount between Rs 30000 to 40000

for determination of sex of child in womb and there are several private hospitals and 'Jhola-chhap' doctors charging amount between Rs 80000 to Rs 1 lakh for termination of pregnancy in case of female child in the womb. However, the health department has arrested a large number of persons including owners of

ultrasound centres involved in this illegal practice.

Government of Haryana had started 'Beti Bachao-Beti Padoo' campaign from Panipat in year 2015 when in the year 2019 male-female sex ratio (SR) in newborns in Haryana state slashed down to 923 in 2019 and was recorded as 906 in July 2022. Information reveals, the use of ultrasonography and aborted female foetuses was first established through research in Bangladesh. Consequently, the Health Ministry of our country strictly banned the use of ultrasonography to determine sex of an unborn child. In February 2020, the High Court also banned gender detection to protect unborn female babies and pregnant women. Despite these efforts, gender detection of the unborn is still a common practice in the country.

Guru Nanak Dev Medical College and Hospital to be air-conditioned, equipped with world class facilities, says Health Minister

JAGMOHAN SINGH
Amritsar

The medical colleges and hospitals of Punjab will be equipped with all kinds of world-class health facilities for the patients in the near future and the patients will not have to go out of the hospital to avail any health facility, said Punjab Health and Family Welfare Minister Dr Balbir Singh here on Monday.

He was here to hold a meeting with the administrative officers at Guru Nanak Medical College and Hospital. He said that the health department has not been leaving any stone unturned to realise the dream of Chief Minister Bhagwant Singh Mann's dream to make Punjabis hale and hearty.

Citing hospitals as not ordi-



nary government buildings, he said that keeping in mind the needs of the patients, many types of comforts are needed, which requires all the material of best standard.

He instructed the officials that all the hospitals to be built in the future should be centrally air-conditioned to meet the health needs of the patients. Instructing the officials of various departments

in Guru Nanak Dev Hospital, including Public Works Department, PSPCL, Punjab Health System Corporation and Public Health Department etc., the Health Minister asked them to appoint junior engineer level officers permanently. Taking cognizance of the dilapidated condition of the TB Hospital, the Health Minister directed to construct a new building in place of the

old building and asked to make a blueprint plan from today. Keeping in mind the need for a medical college, the health minister has decided to construct a new administrative block, new houses for doctors, air-conditioning the nursing college, open multi-level parking, extend the blood bank and provide three rooms for doctors, staff and patients in the hospital. He also announced plans to construct caanteens.

The Health Minister instructed to complete the building work of the State Cancer Institute by October 31. He also reviewed the progress of construction of the Theater Complex, Examination Hall, New Medical Wards, OT and ICU Complex, Advanced Trauma Center, Pet and Gamma Scat Center etc.

Manohar's bulldozer speed increases, about 250 houses of anti-social elements razed



SATISH HANDA

Following Yogi Adityanath, Chief Minister Uttar Pradesh, the Haryana Chief Minister Manohar Lal Khattar has also started a bulldozer campaign in Mewat area in the state after the recent incidents of riots at

Nuh in Mewat. He said that all losses caused during recent riots will be recovered from those involved in these riots and a large number of them have already been identified by the state vigilance department. The Government in the state has already registered 102

FIRs, arrested 202 persons, nearly 170 suspected persons are in police custody for investigation likely to identify another eight accused actively involved in robberies and destroying government as well as private properties, including burning and damaging vehicles belonging to the public and looting commercial establishments. Khattar told that as many as six persons including two Home Guards have been reported lost lives in such incidents and the state government has already given an amount worth Rs 57 lakh towards compensation to the family of each lost life, besides suitable financial compensation will be given to the families of other four victims soon.

Complete Bandh observed in Amritsar



JAGMOHAN SINGH
Amritsar

A Complete bandh was observed in Amritsar here today, on the joint call given by Balmik Community, SC, Dalit, Christian communities and sanitation community for Punjab Bandh.

The purpose behind the bandh call was to register protest in view of the ongoing ethnic violence in Manipur and assault of women in the northern Eastern state.

Leader of Balmik Samaj Om Parkash Anaraya said that the Bandh call was supported by all the religious and various other originations. People extended full support from the core of their hearts while showing anger against the atrocities inflicted to women in Manipur during inhuman violence.

Earlier in the morning police machinery was also seen urging the people to shut their business establishments in order to maintain a peaceful situation in the district.

Empowering Lives : Sonia Mann founder of Mai Bhago Charity Unites Communities for "Health & Agriculture"



KAMALJIT SINGH
Amritsar

In a remarkable collaborative effort, Sonia Mann, the visionary behind Mai Bhago Charity, and Kulwant Singh Dhaliwal, the founder of World Cancer Care, united their endeavors to host the Guru Ram Das Ji Kisan Majdoor Sehat Mela on August 6th at Rajasansi Dana Mandi, Amritsar. This event marked a significant stride towards holistic community welfare.

Vikram Singh Sahani, a revered Rajya Sabha Member and the Sun Foundation's founder enriched the event with his insights on technical education, addiction recovery support, job opportunities for recovering patients, and the provision of free medicines for ENT patients. The

confluence of technical empowerment and healthcare access promises to uplift vulnerable sections of society.

The Guru Ram Das Ji Kisan Majdoor Sehat Mela saw the convergence of key figures like Dr Balbir Singh, Punjab's Health Minister, and Gurmit Singh, the state's Agriculture Minister. Horticulture Ministry's Chetan Singh Jauramajra, DC of Amritsar, Atari MLA Jaswinder Singh, and health advocate Kulwant Singh Dhaliwal lent their support. Notably, renowned Film-Director Amitoj Maan added significance. The event was elevated by the mesmerizing performance of legendary singer Kanwar Grewal, enriching the cause with cultural flair. A collective effort showcased holistic well-being and cultural celebration.

High Court directs action against 3 FSL officers alleged involved in Rs 11 lakh bribe



SATISH HANDA

In spite of Punjab and Haryana High Court's direction the action was not taken by Haryana state government against three officers of Forensic Science Laboratory (FSL) in Karnal district in spite of the fact the Special Investigation Team (SIT) led by IGP Karnal confirmed irregularities in purchase of DNA-PCR kits by FSL. Although Anti Corruption Bureau (ACB), Haryana state too confirmed that their investigation revealed that FSL officers had taken bribe against tender for supply of DNA-PCR kits required in cases of serious crimes including murders, rapes and gang rapes to match the DNA of the victim with the DNA of accused.

Stray dog attacks & govt taking steps to control menace?

SATISH HANDA

Fast increasing population of stray dogs is a major problem all over in Haryana as well as in other states with increasing number of incidents of attack by stray dogs on people being reported all over in the country including few incidents of death of children playing in streets reported quite often including the statement of government spokespersons in recent past who said it will move to court seeking changes in the rules on dealing with vagrant animals for which a writ was moved in the Punjab and Haryana High Court from Chandigarh having maximum number of pet dogs in twin city.

Information reveals, in spite of government in Haryana organized sterilization campaigns at various places on which huge amount was also spent, but there has been no relief in the increasing population of stray dogs and rightly said by a senior citizen



that in case no stern action will be taken in this regard the time is not far when the population of stray dogs will become higher than the population in the country. The increasing population of stray dogs has witnessed witnessed drastic increase all over the country in past few years.

In a recent hearing of a PIL initiated by the court in the wake of a gruesome killing of a dog which attacked, injured children playing in a residential area which was tied up and beaten to death by some people in the locality when speaking to me-

dia persons people blamed the state government to deal with the menace and were instead focused on blaming the administration. According to SMO Civil Hospital Ambala Cantt more than 40 to 50 cases of dog biting are received at the OPD in this hospital daily. In fact, this is not the case of only Ambala Cantt civil hospital, but all over in the civil hospitals in Haryana state and there is always a shortage of anti-rabies injections in government hospitals when the patients are asked to purchase the same from the market.

Rahul Gandhi reinstated as Wayanad MP

KAVITA SHARMA
New Delhi

Rahul Gandhi is reinstated as a member of Lok Sabha after the Supreme Court relief given to him on his conviction in the Modi surname case. The official announcement of Rahul Gandhi's reinstatement as an MP has filled the party workers and leaders with great happiness. He will now resume his duties in the Lok Sabha and serve the people of India. The new order withdraws the previous one that had led to Rahul Gandhi's disqualification from the Parliament following his conviction in Modi surname case. The earlier notification came on March 24, by Surat Court in Gujarat in the criminal defamation case of 2019.

Congress celebrates the victory of Rahul Gandhi calling it a "victory of love against hate". The Congress leader will now get an official residence in Delhi that was allotted to him as an MP. He stayed in 12 Tuglaq Lane Bungalow since 2005. He had vacated the Bungalow



on April 22, a month after his conviction.

Reacting to the recent developments Congress President Mallikarjun Kharge said the move brings relief to the people of India and especially Wayanad. It is a welcome step and... whatever time is left of their tenure, BJP and Modi govt should utilize that in actual governance rather than denigrating Democracy by targeting opposition parties, Kharge tweeted. Senior Congress leader Shashi Tharoor in a tweet said "with enormous relief, welcome the

official announcement of Rahul Gandhi's reinstatement. Congress Leader Priyanka Gandhi is also happy for his Brother's victory and has been posting pictures of Rahul Gandhi on social media.

The Apex court had stayed the case paving a way of reinstatement as Lok Sabha MP from Wayanad, Kerala on July 4. BJP leader Purnesh Modi filed a criminal defamation case in 2019 against Gandhi's remark "How come all thieves have Modi surname as a common

Rahul arrives in LS along with his mother Sonia Gandhi

NEW DELHI: Congress leader Rahul Gandhi, whose Lok Sabha membership was restored earlier in the day, arrived in Lok Sabha along with his mother Sonia Gandhi and several party members. He arrived inside Lok Sabha chamber much before 12 p.m., the time till which the House had been adjourned earlier in the morning. Rahul Gandhi's entry inside the House was led by Congress leaders, who could be seen chanting slogans: "Jodo Jodo Bharat Jodo!" He was kissed by his mother as soon as he took his seat, even as several members from the opposition, including BSP MP Danish Ali along with leaders from Samajwadi Party, NCP, DMK, Trinamool Congress and several others went up to his seat and greeted him.

in an election rally in Karnataka.

"Flying Kiss" of Rahul sparks controversy

KAVITA SHARMA
New Delhi

Union Minister Smriti Irani had accused Congress leader Rahul Gandhi of blowing "Flying kiss" in the parliament on August 10, after giving speech on no-confidence motion in the Lok Sabha. Smriti Irani objected to Rahul's passing flying kisses in the parliament which seats women members. Though Shiv Sena MP and Ex colleague Priyanka Chaturvedi called this a gesture of affection, not directed towards any individual. This incident happened when Smriti Irani was giving her speech on No confidence debate and Rahul Gandhi was leaving the premises for Rajasthan.

A massive controversy erupted when Smriti Irani blamed Rahul Gandhi of passing "flying kisses" in the lok sabha where women members are also seated. "The one who was given the chance of speaking before me had displayed indecency before leaving," Irani said. Such a conduct had never been seen in the Parliament earlier, she added. Some of the women MPs of NDA



have demanded strict action against Rahul and have written to the Lok Sabha Speaker Om Birla for his indecent behavior. BJP Leader Shehzad Poonawala called it a shameful act...last time Aankh maari and this time blowing flying kisses, Poonawala added. Rahul was caught winking on camera after he hugged Prime Minister Narendra Modi in Parliament in 2018. Senior Congress leader Rahul who is reinstated as an MP recently was giving his speech on No-Confidence Motion in the parliament yesterday. His speech is discussed everywhere but according to the sources former Congress President Sonia Gandhi played a special role in guiding his speech. Sonia Gandhi who was sitting in front of Rahul kept advising him. While speaking on Manipur Rahul Mentioned his mother also and talked about Bharat Mata.

Rahul slams PM Modi on Manipur Violence

KAVITA SHARMA
New Delhi

Congress Leader Rahul Gandhi today slammed the Modi Govt. over Manipur Violence. He also attacked Prime Minister Narendra Modi for speaking on Manipur in Lok Sabha only for 2 minutes in his two hour long speech and blamed the BJP govt. for assassination of the State.

"Prime Minister was Joking and Mocking when the Lok Sabha was discussing the Manipur Violence", Rahul Gandhi said in a press conference today. Manipur is burning from so many months, women are being raped and molested, people are killed, but Prime Minister is sitting shamelessly and laughing, Rahul added. This is not about Rahul Gandhi, not about Congress or opposition, this is about a State of our country, that is being decimated and destroyed, it does not exist anymore because of BJP. The Prime Minister seems to have forgotten that State Of Manipur that is been burning since four months.

Congress leader Rahul Gandhi had visited Manipur to meet Kukis and Meiteis last month. Talking about the alarming situation of the State Rahul said "when we visited Kukis area we were categorically



told we want you to come but please ensure there is no Mete in your security and same was with Meiteis area where we were told there should be no kuki in our security or they will shoot them. BJP's policy is to Divide, rule and burn and that why I said Bharat Mata is been murdered in Manipur in Lok Sabha. Mr Gandhi asserted that if the Modi govt wanted to stop the violence, there are tools in hands of the government that can stop it immediately. He also accused the government for not allowing the Army to control the violence in Manipur. Hours after Rahul Gandhi's strong attack several BJP leaders started criticizing Him. BJP IT cell Chief Amit Malviya slammed Rahul Gandhi for not having the decency to sit in the entire no-confidence motion moved by the opposition, skipped Home Minister Amit Shah's speech and walked out when Prime Minister spoke. The BJP leader said India deserves a more responsible opposition.

Non-Sikh administrator of Board of Takht Sri Hazur Sahib not acceptable: Dhami



JAGMOHAN SINGH Amritsar

The Shiromani Gurdwara Parbandhak Committee (SGPC) President Advocate Harjinder Singh Dhami has raised a objection to the appointment of a non-Sikh officer as an Administrator of Gurdwara Board of Takht Sachkhand Sri Hazur Abchalnagar Sahib, Nanded in Maharashtra and demanded the withdrawal of this decision of Maharashtra Government. In a statement issued here today the SGPC President has registered his objection by writing a letter to Maharashtra Chief Minister (CM) Eknath Sambhaji Shinde. SGPC President said that the appointment of a non-Sikh officer as the Administrator of Gurdwara Board, Takht Sachkhand Sri Hazur Abchalnagar Sahib, Nanded, is not in accordance with the Sikh sentiments and the Maryada (code of conduct). He said there is big resentment among the Sikh Sangat (community) against this decision of the Government of Maharashtra. He said that the role of Takhts (seats of power) in the Sikh community is to lead and give instructions from time to time for the implementation of Sikh Maryada, therefore, any non-Sikh person cannot be accepted as the Administrator of the Management Board of the Takht. He raised the question that how can a non-Sikh person run the Management of Gurdwaras as per the Sikh sentiments.

Three soldiers killed in encounter with militants in Jammu and Kashmir's Kulgam



FW DESK

Three Indian Army personnel lost their lives during an encounter with militants in the high reaches of Halan forest area in Kulgam district of South Kashmir. The soldiers, who had sustained injuries in the exchange of fire, were initially evacuated to a hospital for treatment but succumbed to their injuries. The Chinara Corps of the Indian Army, acting on specific inputs about the presence of terrorists in the area, launched operation. Search operations in the area are still ongoing.

PM lays foundation stone for redevelopment of 508 Railway Stations across the country

MANMOHAN SINGH NAULA

PM Narendra Modi, launches Amrit Bharat Station Scheme: Important Initiative Revolutionizing India's Railway Experience at 1309 stations across India, 76 stations in Central Railway.

Station upgradation work at three suburban Stations viz Parel, Vikhroli, Kanjurmarg at Mumbai was launched by PM today on 6th August 2023.

PM Narendra Modi launched Amrit Bharat Station Scheme signifying a paradigm shift, promising the transformation of 1309 railway stations nationwide. Central Railway will witness a rejuvenation of 76 stations and 15 within the Mumbai Division of Central Railway will undergo a remarkable upgrade. This holistic initiative aims to reimagine the way Indians



perceive travel, bringing about a remarkable enhancement in the quality of services and facilities offered at railway stations, this initiative echoes "As Atal Bihari Vajpayee is for Roadways, PM Mod is for Railways. PM Narendra Modi, launching the Amrit Bharat Station Scheme to rejuvenate 1309 stations at the cost of Rs. 24,470 crores envision a progressive, phased development approach for railway stations nation-

wide. Under this scheme, in first phase 508 stations will undergo a systematic transformation, involving the formulation and execution of Master Plans. This comprehensive strategy encompasses various facets, including enhancing station accessibility, upgrading waiting areas, improving hygiene facilities, installing lifts/escalators, ensuring Wi-Fi connectivity, and more. Moreover, the scheme underscores the integration of

stations with their surroundings, seamless multimodal transportation integration, provisions for differently-abled individuals, sustainable and eco-friendly solutions, and a heightened focus on passenger inclusivity. Amongst the 38 stations in Central Railway for which foundation stone was laid for upgradation/redevelopment work, three vital stations are suburban stations from Mumbai - Parel Railway Station at the cost of Rs 19.41 crore, Vikhroli at the cost of Rs 19.16 crore and Kanjurmarg at 27.01 crore. A pivotal highlight of this scheme is the comprehensive redevelopment of 76 Central Railway stations. Spanning Mumbai, Pune, Nagpur, Bhusawal, and Solapur divisions, these stations will undergo an all-encompassing metamorphosis.

Horizontal landing of Chandrayaan 3 is a challenge says ISRO

FW DESK
Bangalore

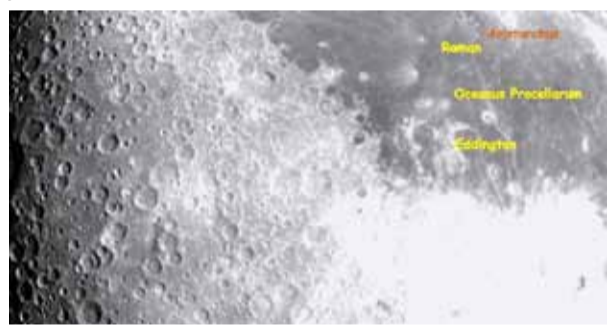
Vikram, the lander of India's third lunar mission Chandrayaan-3, will be able to make a soft-landing on the Moon's surface on August 23. These de-orbiting manoeuvres will be performed on August 9, August 14, and August 16 till its orbit reduces to 100 km x 100 km from the Moon, Somanath said. A lander propulsion module separation exercise will be taken up subsequently, soon after lander "deboost", a process that slows down the craft. It will be followed by landing on lunar surface on August 23, he explained. "We have also made sure that if two of the engines (in Vikram) don't work this time also, it will still be able to land," the ISRO chairman said. "So the whole design has been made to make sure that it (Vikram) should be able to handle many failures, provided the algorithms work

properly," he added. The biggest challenge before the ISRO team, according to him, is to make a horizontal Vikram land vertically on the lunar surface. Somanath said once the lander separates from the orbiter, it will move horizontally. Through a series of manoeuvres, it will be brought to a vertical stance in order to land safely on the Moon. This exercise is crucial, as



ISRO failed to get its lander to touchdown safely on the Moon's surface during the Chandrayaan-2 mission. "The ability to transfer from horizontal to vertical direction is the trick we have to play here. Here only we had the problem last time," Somanath pointed out. The challenge is also to make sure that the fuel consumed is lesser, the distance calculations are correct and all the algorithms work properly, the ISRO chief said. However, the ISRO team this time has made arrangements to ensure that Vikram makes an attempt to land properly even if there are some variations in the calculations, Somanath explained. According to him, the lander will have four payloads: Chandra's Surface Thermo Physical Experiment (ChaSTE) will carry out the measurements of thermal properties of lunar surface near polar region.

Anxious moment as Chandrayaan-3 just 1,437 km from lunar surface



ARUN KUMAR RAO
Bengaluru

Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) has released two images taken by the Chandrayaan-3 spacecraft. The first image is the Earth as viewed by Lander Imager (LI) camera. The Second image is of the Moon captured by the Lander Horizontal Velocity Camera (LHVC) on board the spacecraft on August 6. ISRO guided Chandrayaan-3 even closer to the lunar surface - It's now at 1,437 km at Apolune (farthest point from moon) with the completion of its third lunar-bound manoeuvre, including the lunar orbit insertion (LOI) carried out on Sunday.

The next lunar-bound manoeuvres will be on August 14, when ISRO will further reduce the distance between the spacecraft and Moon, on August 16, when Chandrayaan-3 enters the 100 km circular orbit, and August 17, when the landing module, comprising the lander Vikram and the rover Pragyan break away from the propulsion module. Once Vikram, with Pragyan sitting inside, separates, ISRO will de-boost it to an orbit where the perilune (closest point to Moon) is 30 km and the Apolune is 100 km. The final landing will be attempted from this orbit. S Somanath, ISRO chairman, in a lecture at the event organised by Disha Bharat, an NGO in Bengaluru, reiterated that various redundancies introduced in Chandrayaan-3 to ensure a safe

landing on August 23. Somanath said, "The most critical part of landing is the process of reducing the velocity of the lander from 30 km height to the final landing. At 30km, the spacecraft is horizontal. Transferring the spacecraft from a horizontal orientation to vertical is very challenging. We had problems here with previous mission Chandrayaan-2. We have to ensure that not too much fuel is consumed, the distance is calculated correctly. All algorithms work... For this, we have changed the guidance design, introduced newer algorithms and extensive simulations have been done" he added.

Meantime in other development ISRO discusses Moon, Sun data sharing with Japan. ISRO chairman S Somanath and National Astronomical Observatory of Japan director - general Saku Tsuneka discussed multiple possibilities of collaboration as part of Indo-Japanese bilateral relations and partnership through QUAD - Quadrilateral Security Dialogue between Australia, India, Japan and the US. Tsuneka, also the vice-chair of Japan's cabinet committee on National Space Policy (CNSP) met with Somanath at the ISRO head quarters in Bengaluru. "India-Japan space science cooperation at national level, space agency level (ISRO and JAXA) and institutes-level were discussed with specific reference to the proposed joint Lunar Polar Exploration (LUPEX) mission," ISRO said.

Couple arrested in Kashmir for posing IAS, IPS officers



NEW DELHI: Jammu and Kashmir Police have arrested a couple on charges of impersonating as IAS and IPS officers and duping people. The accused have been identified as Manmohan Ganjoo, and Ayoush Koul Ganjoo. According to a police spokesperson, the couple's modus operandi involved deceiving people by making false promises of lucrative positions, career advancements, and other personal favors. Further investigation revealed that Manmohan Ganjoo had been serving as a suspended police personnel. Law enforcement authorities executed a search warrant at the couple's residence, leading to the confiscation of incriminating evidence. Among the seized items were laptops, mobile devices containing fabricated transfer and appointment orders, including fraudulent documents related to Manmohan Ganjoo's induction into the Indian Police Service (IPS). The authorities also discovered cash, jewelry, and other belongings that were allegedly obtained through fraudulent means.

BSF seized a drone at Indo-Pak border of Tarn Taran district

JAGMOHAN SINGH Amritsar

Border Security Force have seized a drone at Indo-Pak border village Rajoke falling in the Tarn Taran district having close proximity with Pakistan. In a statement issued here by the BSF said that on 07th August at about 0330 AM, Border Security Force troops deployed at border, heard buzzing sound of a suspected flying object (drone) entering from Pakistan to Indian territory in the area near Village - Rajoke in District - Tarn Taran.

BSF seized a drone at Indo-Pak border in Amritsar sector

JAGMOHAN SINGH Amritsar

Border Security Force have seized a drone at Indo-Pak border village Rattan Khurd having close proximity with Pakistan. In a statement issued here today BSF official said that on 06th at about 10 PM, Border Security Force troops deployed at border, heard buzzing sound of a suspected flying object (drone) entering from Pakistan to Indian territory in the area near Village - Rattan Khurd in District - Amritsar. As per the laid down drill, troops endeavored to intercept the drone. Further, on the morning of 07th August a Joint search operation with Punjab Police was carried out. During the search of the area, troops recovered one Drone along with one battery (damaged) from the farming field near Village - Rattan Khurd, Distt - Amritsar.

Indi-Alliance should have shown patience

matter.

During the no-confidence motion debate in the Parliament, the 'Indi Alliance' group of MPs, including Rahul and Sonia, could not sit in front of Narendra Modi and ran away from the House. To avoid the piercing truth and past misdeeds, the Congress-led 'Indi Alliance' boycotted the Parliament proceedings for the first several days of the Monsoon session and ran away even when the PM spoke. This is the condition of the Congress-led 'Indi Alliance', which has no issues, no policy, no logic, and no courage to listen to the truth. Modi rightly said that Congress has nothing of its own. Congress's name was given by an Englishman, both Gandhi surname and the tricolor flag are also stolen, and now UPA's name has been dropped to avoid humiliation



because whatever Congress has done under that name has proved harmful for the nation. In such a situation, Modi rightly said that when this party would leave to become a strong opposition. The people of India also want that there should be a capable opposition to take on the ruling party, which would bring out the shortcomings of the government and contribute to the development of the

'INDI alliance', because the last A of the name already includes the word 'alliance'. Calling it by each letter separately i.e. I, N, D, I, A, is also justified, as rightly referred to by a few TV anchors. Calling it 'INDIA' is also wrong - because you cannot allow a group of controversial people to use your country's name! That too, for a political battle, is a big NO! In the poll campaigns, all the parties attack and abuse each other, calling names, but that name should not be India - our national identity! Hence, the Opposition party association should be either mentioned as I, N, D, I, A (pronounce each letter separately), or called it I-N-D-I alliance or the 'Indi Alliance'.

The writer is a senior journalist and columnist. Views are personal, Twitter @ narvijayyadav

Policy rate to balance growth and inflation

The Reserve Bank of India's (RBI) recent decision, steered by its Monetary Policy Committee (MPC), to maintain its policy rate is a strategic gamble. This move is particularly intriguing when juxtaposed against the MPC's upward revision of its inflation forecast. A mere two months ago, the MPC projected a 5.1% average inflation based on the Consumer Price Index for the fiscal year ending in March 2024. This forecast has now been adjusted upwards by 30 basis points to 5.4%. A significant factor in this revision was the unexpected surge in tomato prices, which propelled the inflation projection for the July-September quarter up by a notable 100 basis points to 6.2%. RBI Governor Shaktikanta Das recognized the transient nature of such price shocks but also cautioned against the potential destabilization of inflation expectations due to recurrent food price fluctuations. While the RBI rightly emphasizes the government's role in timely supply-side interventions to mitigate such shocks, it's undeniable that unchecked price instability can jeopardize macroeconomic stability and growth. The MPC's commitment to a 4% inflation target is evident in its majority-backed policy stance, which emphasizes the gradual withdrawal of accommodation. In alignment with the MPC's position, the RBI has temporarily mandated a 10% hike in the cash reserve ratio for banks. This move aims to absorb some of the excess liquidity in the banking system, which could otherwise fuel inflation. Das has assured a review of this increase by September 8, if not sooner, to maintain liquidity during the festive season. However, the MPC acknowledges potential inflation risks, including erratic rainfall, rising crude oil prices, and anticipated output price increases. While the RBI and the MPC have expressed their readiness to align inflation targets and anchor inflation expectations, their proactive intervention in the upcoming months will be the real test of their commitment to stabilizing the economy.

LETTERBOX

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Don't stop when you are tired. STOP when you are DONE!

THE FINANCIAL WORLD

RNI NO. CHAENG/2001/03736
PRINTED & PUBLISHED BY SWINDER BAJWA ON BEHALF OF FW MEDIA
PRINTED AT JAGJIT PUBLISHING CO. PVT LTD D-12, INDUSTRIAL AREA, PHASE-1, MOHALI, PUNJAB 160059
PRINTER & PUBLISHER SWINDER BAJWA
OWNER* : FW MEDIA
PUBLISHED AT: PLOT NO-F5, IT PARK, CHANDIGARH CHANDIGARH 160101; PHONE: 9888040061
EDITOR* ABDUL WASEY
(*RESPONSIBLE FOR SELECTION OF NEWS UNDER THE PRB ACT)



CHETAN RANA EXPLORES IF INDIA'S MYANMAR STANCE CONTRASTS WITH SECURITY CONCERNS AND CHINA RELATIONS

India's Myanmar dilemma



July 31 and August 1 will be recorded as the crucial dates when the history of Myanmar's ongoing tragedy was written. In the first case, the acting President of Myanmar, Myint Swe, announced the fourth extension of the 'emergency' for another six months, which is in violation of the 2008 Constitution. In the second instance, the military regime decided to release several political prisoners and even reduced the sentences imposed on Daw Aung San Suu Kyi and the deposed President Win Myint. Ms. Suu Kyi was also moved out of prison to house arrest. However, these developments do not signal the dawn of a democratic and peaceful Myanmar.

Emergency and elections

The extension of the emergency further delays the elections proposed by the military. Min Aung Hlaing, the coup orchestrator, justified the extension due to the failure to establish 'normalcy' in large parts of the country. However, it is this pursuit of 'normalcy' that has resulted in suffering, with ACLED, or the Armed Conflict Location & Event Data Project (a disaggregated data collection, analysis, and crisis mapping project) reporting that Myanmar civilians witness two and a half times more violence than those in Afghanistan.

The military regime's relentless campaign includes an average of over 30 airstrikes per month in 2023. Surprisingly, the Tatmadaw (the military of Myanmar) exerts real control in only 30 percent-40 percent of the territory, as in admissions from the Burmese military and a report of the Special Advisory Council for Myanmar (SAC-M). A factitious national election would lead to the loss of further credibility if it is conducted only in a third of the country.

Moreover, the reshuffling within the military-backed Union Solidarity and Development Party (USDP) under Khin

Yi, is aimed at adding more military hardliners, further raising concerns about the junta's commitment to democracy. The decision by the National League for Democracy decision not to participate in the new elections, combined with the exclusion of smaller parties through the new party registration laws, leaves no viable opposition to the USDP in a parliament whose constitutional structure gives the military a practical veto.

The junta's decision to reduce Ms. Suu Kyi's sentence and shift her from the prison is a move that has perplexed a few. Yet, it is not a step towards democracy. Despite being the Tatmadaw's biggest rival, Ms. Suu Kyi has demonstrated a willingness to compromise and work with the military. She remains the rallying point for political change in Myanmar despite international criticism over her position/stand and role in the Rohingya persecution. Some protest may ease with these symbolic gestures. But more importantly, Suu Kyi's return could potentially split the National Unity Government (NUG)-led resistance. A young generation of activists is leading the NUG and its cooperation with ethnic armed organisations and even reconciliation with

Rohingyas. This could all change if Ms. Suu Kyi is back in active politics.

These symbolic gestures by the junta, as said, may ease some protests and allow the military to claim progress over international and regional appeals, possibly leading to a lifting of sanctions and revived economic prospects. Additionally, they offer political bandwidth and a face-saving token to actors engaging with the junta, such as India.

Indian policy

At the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic and the coup, India took a proactive approach by providing food and vaccine assistance. However, the plight of the Myanmar people seems to have faded from memory, with accusations of instigating violence in Manipur replacing it. Communities along the border have already defied the Home Ministry by providing shelter to the refugees. Concerns over trafficking and drug smuggling in Myanmar led to India suspending the Free Movement Regime in September 2022. India's External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar raised the issue of infrastructure projects and stability in border areas with his Myanmar counterpart Than Swe in

Bangkok in July, on the sidelines of the Mekong Ganga Cooperation (MGC) meeting. India has also supported the Association of Southeast Asian Nations' 'Five-Point Consensus'. Nevertheless, India's policy towards Myanmar presents a paradox.

India's official rhetoric on commitment to democracy in Myanmar is in contrast with its policy framed through the lens of its security concerns in north-east India and relations with China. For example, India's announcement of the Sairang-Hmawngbuchhuah railway project near the Myanmar border, under India's Act East Policy, aims to counter China's railway access in Myanmar through Yunnan and the ambitious China-Myanmar Economic Corridor.

Disturbingly, sources such as Justice for Myanmar, SAC-M, and the United Nations Special Rapporteur have reported an increase in India's arms supply to the military since the coup. Arming the Tatmadaw not only undermines India's position on restoring democracy but also adds fuel to the fire, which spills over regularly across the border.

An approach to pursue

India's policy options in Myanmar are challenging, but not limited. The relaxation of Ms. Suu Kyi's prison sentence may provide an opportunity for India to engage with her and pro-democracy actors, including the NUG. Additionally, the government and media must avoid blanket securitisation and profiling of incoming refugees, many of whom have ties of kinship in India. This approach is essential to prevent further violence and foster an environment of care and compassion.

Chetan Rana is a doctoral candidate at the Centre for International Politics, Organization and Disarmament, Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi. Views are personal



PRABHASH RANJAN EXPLAINS WHY UNIVERSAL BAN ON CLUSTER BOMBS NEEDED, AS PER CONVENTION GUIDELINES

Time to stop the fence-sitting in cluster bomb use

The decision by the United States to send cluster munitions to Ukraine, as part of a new military aid package to bolster Kyiv's war efforts against Russia, has raked up controversy. Cluster munitions, or cluster bombs, are weapons that release multiple explosive submunitions, also called bomblets, into the air. These submunitions explode as soon as they hit the ground, killing and maiming people in the area. Many bomblets do not blow up instantly and remain dormant for years (also known as the dud rate). These inactive bomblets act as precarious landmines, posing a grave threat to the civilian population, including women and children, for a long time. According to the Human Rights Watch, which is a civil society organisation, Russia, since launching a full-scale invasion of Ukraine, has used cluster bombs against Ukraine in cities such as Kharkiv, resulting in hundreds of civilian deaths and damaging civilian objects such as homes, hospitals, and schools. Now, Ukraine using these dangerous weapons will worsen the situation.

Cluster bombs have a notorious history. They were used in the Second World War. Since then, cluster bombs have been used on multiple occasions including by the U.S. in the wars in Vietnam, Afghanistan, and Iraq. According to the Cluster Munition Monitor, anywhere between 56,000 to 86,000 people have died in cluster munition-affected countries, since the 1960s.



Enactment of convention

Along with its increasing use, the international campaign against cluster bombs led by the civil society organisations such as Human Rights Watch also gathered momentum. This resulted in an international treaty called the Convention on Cluster Munitions (CCM) being enacted in May 2008. The enactment of the CCM has been a major step in eradicating cluster bombs. However, the treaty is not universal — 112 countries have acceded to the CCM including many North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) members such as Canada, Germany, France, and the United Kingdom. But important countries such as the U.S., Russia, China, Israel, and India have not signed the CCM. Ukraine is not a member.

Article 1 of the CCM bans the use, production, stockpiling, and transfer of cluster bombs. The convention further obligates countries to destroy existing stockpile of cluster munitions in their possession. Countries are also legally bound to develop a victim assistance programme to provide support and rehabilitation to the cluster bomb victims in their jurisdiction.

Customary international law

Given that there is such an international treaty, are Russia and Ukraine violating international law by using cluster bombs? Since these countries are not signatories to the CCM, it is argued that they are not bound by international law banning cluster bombs. This is not correct.

International law on armed conflicts has always drawn a distinction between combatants and civilian populations and between civilian objects and military objectives. In this regard, a fundamental customary international law (CIL) norm applicable to armed conflicts is the prohibition of indiscriminate attacks. In other words, an essential canon of international law is that the use of force must be discriminate, that is, the force should target specific military objectives and not civilians. This CIL norm is codified in Article 51(4) of Additional Protocol I to the 1949 Geneva Conventions, to which both Russia and Ukraine are parties. Given the nature of cluster bombs, their usage is a classic example of indiscriminate use of force that fails to differentiate between combatants and civilians, or between civilian objects and military objectives, and is thus illegal.

Another fundamental international humanitarian law norm relevant here is proportionality. Codified in Article 51(5) of the Additional Protocol I to the 1949 Geneva Conventions, this rule prohibits excessive use of force that causes incidental damage to the civilian population or civilian objects, when compared to military benefits anticipated. Given the fact that the use of cluster bombs is inherently indiscriminate, harming civilians, their use will amount to disproportionate use of force and is thus illegal. In sum, even if Russia and Ukraine are not signatories to the CCM, their use of cluster bombs violates international law.

But what about the U.S.? Arguably supplying cluster bombs to Ukraine outside of the CCM, that Washington has not signed, is not a violation of international law. Moreover, it is claimed that the U.S.-made cluster bombs, unlike the Russian ones, have a low dud rate, that is, the prospects of unexploded bomblets are slim. Thus, questionably, they meet the requirements of the use of force being proportional and discriminate. Nonetheless, supplying cluster bombs to any country is an irresponsible act. The usage and the possession and transfer or supply of cluster bombs should be banned universally, as envisaged in the CCM. For this to happen, all United Nations member-countries should accede to the CCM and eradicate cluster bombs from the face of the earth.

Prabhash Ranjan teaches at the Faculty of Legal Studies, South Asian University. The views expressed are personal



BOOKS: REVIEW

Dethroned: The Nehru-Patel dynamic and country's unity

In "Dethroned: Patel, Menon and the Integration of Princely India," the author delves into the tumultuous relationship between Jawaharlal Nehru and Vallabhbhai Patel, two stalwarts of India's independence movement. The book offers a nuanced exploration of the ideological differences and personal dynamics that shaped their interactions, particularly in the context of integrating the princely states into the newly independent India.

The narrative underscores the pivotal role played by Patel in preventing the balkanization of India. While both leaders shared a disdain for the princely states, their approaches to integration differed starkly. Nehru's confrontational stance might have alienated many rulers, but Patel's diplomatic finesse and strategic alliances ensured the majority ac-

ceded to India. The author paints a vivid picture of Patel's pragmatic approach, juxtaposed against Nehru's idealism, leading to frequent clashes between the two.

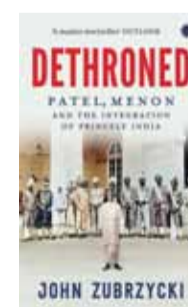
One of the book's highlights is the detailed account of the Junagadh and Kashmir crises. Patel's insistence on military intervention in Junagadh and his assertiveness during the Kashmir conflict underscore his unwavering commitment to India's territorial integrity. Nehru's hesitancy in these situations is portrayed as a reflection of his broader vision for India, often at odds with Patel's pragmatism.

The Hyderabad crisis further illuminates their contrasting styles. While Nehru initially took the lead, it was Patel's decisive action that eventually resolved the situation. Their disagreements reached a boiling point during this period, with Nehru famously labeling

Pandit Nehru's confrontational stance might have alienated many rulers, but Patel's diplomatic finesse and strategic alliances ensured the majority acceded to India

Patel a "complete communist." However, the author also touches upon their shared commitment to India's future. Despite their differences, both leaders recognized the importance of unity for the nascent nation. Patel's tactical brilliance ensured the integration of the princely states, allowing Nehru to pursue his vision for a socialist and secular India.

The book also delves into the contentious issue of privy purses. While Patel saw them as a neces-



Dethroned: Patel, Menon and the Integration of Princely India
By John Zubrzycki
Juggernaut;
360 pages; Rs799

sary concession, Nehru's socialist leanings made him uncomfortable with the idea. The eventual abolition of these privy purses by Indira Gandhi is presented as a culmination of this ideological divide.

"Dethroned" is a compelling read, offering fresh insights into the Nehru-Patel dynamic. It sheds light on the challenges of nation-building and the personal sacrifices made by these leaders. The author masterfully navigates the complexities of their relationship, presenting a balanced view of two giants of Indian history. The book is not just a chronicle of historical events but a deep dive into the personalities and principles that shaped modern India.

"Dethroned" also delves into

the personal dynamics between Nehru and Patel, revealing the depth of their mutual respect despite their ideological differences. The author paints a poignant picture of two leaders, bound by their shared struggle for independence, yet often at odds due to their distinct visions for India's future. Their disagreements, while profound, were never allowed to jeopardize the nation's unity. This delicate balance between personal convictions and national duty forms a recurring theme in the book, making it a riveting read.

The narrative also touches upon the lesser-known aspects of their relationship. For instance, the author delves into their correspondence, revealing the depth of their intellectual exchanges. These letters, often filled with candid admissions and reflections, provide a window into their minds, showcasing their unwavering commitment to India's progress. The book suggests that while public confrontations were frequent, in private, both leaders often sought each other's counsel, understanding the value of their combined wisdom.

WTC Mumbai collaborates with other Asian WTCs to Promote Trade & Investment

NEW DELHI: MVRDC WTC Mumbai has signed a MoU with Vietnam's WTC Binh Duong New City and China's WTC Shenyang at the Asia Pacific Regional Meeting in Vietnam.

The objective of the MoU is to set a framework for collaboration among the signatory WTCs to promote trade, investment, technology exchange, and joint ventures among their business members. The MoU was signed at the World Trade Centres Association's (WTCA) Asia Pacific Regional Meeting (APRM) held in Vietnam's southern province of Binh Duong, which is emerging as a world-class industrial smart city.

Former Chief Secretary of Maharashtra Sharad Upasani, who is also the Vice Chairman of MVRDC WTC Mumbai and Chairman, WTC Goa participated at the Asia Pacific Regional Meeting and shared



information about the various skill development and trade promotion initiatives of WTC Mumbai. WTC Mumbai has launched Center of Excellence to impart professional and vocational skills among economically weaker sections of society, women entrepreneurs, besides

providing business acceleration support to MSMEs and startups. WTC Mumbai also promotes trade through trade education programs and initiating various research activities in the areas of foreign trade and regional trade agreements. The multi-dimensional

WTC Mumbai also supports trade through world-class trade facilities and exchange of trade missions with overseas trade support institutions. Among other things, the MoU envisions collaboration among these three WTCs - WTC Mumbai, WTC Binh Duong and WTC Shenyang - in areas such as skill development, incubation, and acceleration support for MSMEs, women entrepreneurs, and startups. Speaking on the importance of this MoU, Dr. Vijay Kalantri, Chairman of MVRDC WTC Mumbai, remarked, "In this age of rapid technological progress, our alliance will strive to enhance the global competitiveness of our business members through the exchange of best practices in skill development, technology exchange and trade facilitation through e-commerce."

UNDP to discuss role of MSMEs in achieving SDGs at B20 India side event on August 24

New Delhi: The United Nations in India (the UN Resident Coordinator's Office and the UNDP (United Nations Development Programme) has announced "Driving the 2030 Agenda through Responsible Business Actions" as the title for its upcoming B20 India side event.

The event will be held in collaboration with the Confederation of Indian Industry (CII) and the European Union (EU), and is scheduled to take place on 24 August 2023, as per UNDP's official statement.

The B20 India side event aims to emphasize the critical role of businesses in achieving the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and emphasize on role play by private sector including MSMEs in addressing global challenges and fostering positive change.



It will see prominent business leaders, sustainability professionals, policymakers, NGOs, civil society organizations, academicians, and researchers to discuss and explore ways in which responsible business practices can lead to a more sustainable future for all, said the international agency.

The program will spotlight the challenges faced by businesses in creating resilient and equitable value chains, the role of non-financial disclosures in driving sustainable development, and the readiness of

the private sector and MSMEs in creating a stronger ESG (Environmental, Social, and Governance) enabling environment.

Among the key themes that the discussions will touch upon are the importance of gender equality, environmental stewardship, and ethical business practices in driving positive social and environmental impacts, and health in accordance with international agreements and guidelines like the UN Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights.

The B20 side event reflects the United Nations' commitment to advancing responsible business practices and supporting the global pursuit of the SDGs.

The event aims to catalyze positive change and foster collaboration towards a sustainable and equitable future.

Punjab MP urges Govt to revive Ludhiana's Textile Industry



LUDHIANA: The Spinning mills in Ludhiana are in a dire state and there is an urgent need to revive the city's textile industry, member of Parliament Sanjeev Arora said in the Rajya Sabha on Thursday.

Arora pointed out that through various forums and platforms, he has been receiving appeals to impose anti-dumping duty on import of polyester spun yarn (PSY) under ASEAN Free Trade Agreement (FTA) and making import of cotton duty free as this will provide a level playing field for all the stakeholders in the textile sector.

"It is shocking to learn that the Central government, after considering the final findings of the designated authority, has decided not to accept the aforesaid recommendations," Arora said. He pointed out that the Indian textile industry contributes to 40 per cent of the country's demand for man-made fibres.

The spinning industry employs more than 6.5 lakh powerloom machines weaving three crore metres of cloth a day, and a yearly consumption of over 6 lakh metric tons of various yarns and fibres.

The MP said that the government's decision of not imposing definitive anti-dumping duty on imports of "Polyester Yarn (Polyester Spun Yarn)" originating in or exported from China PR, Indonesia, Nepal and Vietnam has cast a shadow on the domestic weaving sector which is mainly dependent of various types of synthetic yarns. Also, it defeats the goal of Made in India.

Two top-level executives exit IPO-bound Ola Electric



NEW DELHI: Ola Electric has seen two more top-level exits, as it plans for an initial public offering (IPO) in early 2024, the media reported on August 5.

According to a report in Money Control, Slokarth Dash who is head of strategy and planning, and Saurabh Sharda, head of growth and corporate affairs, have moved on. Ola said in a statement that "Slokarth and Saurabh have delivered well for the company for over seven years, and we wish them well in their future pursuits". The company, however, denied that more CXO-level members are set to move on. "India is the future hub for tech and top global talent is eagerly joining new age companies like ours. Ola is the largest EV company in India thanks to the efforts of our world-class team," according to the company spokesperson.

Ola Electric has registered an operating loss of \$136 million (roughly Rs 1,116 crore) and revenue of \$335 million (roughly Rs 2,750 crore), missing its revenue goal disclosed publicly. The company reported sales of over 1,50,000 electric scooters for FY23, media reports said, citing sources. In the first two months of FY23, Ola Electric claimed to have surpassed Rs 500 crore in revenue and was on track to surpass \$1 billion by year's end. Meanwhile, leading US asset manager Vanguard has further slashed its holding in ride-hailing major Ola by more than half, which takes Bhavish Aggarwal-run company's valuation down to nearly \$3.5 billion from \$7.3 billion at the end of 2021, according to an earlier TechCrunch report.

Ban on Rice Exports and its Impact on NRI Consumers

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at the Asia Pacific Regional Meeting and shared information about the various skill development and trade promotion initiatives of WTC Mumbai. WTC Mumbai has launched Center of Excellence to impart professional and vocational skills among economically weaker sections of society, women entrepreneurs, besides

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"In this age of rapid technological progress, our alliance will strive to enhance the global competitiveness of our business members through the exchange of best practices in skill development, technology exchange and trade facilitation through e-commerce."

Qualcomm India appoints Savi Soin as President

NEW DELHI: Chip major Qualcomm on Friday announced to appoint Savi Soin as senior vice president and president of Qualcomm India, effective immediately. He will report to Jim Cathey, Chief Commercial Officer, Qualcomm Technologies.

Rajen Vagadia, Qualcomm India President for the last 5 years, will relocate to Qualcomm headquarters in San Diego, the US, and transition to a new role as a Vice President to lead Global Distribution and Global Carrier Strategy.

As President of Qualcomm India, Soin will be in charge of leading and executing the company's strategy in the country by fostering relationships with industry partners and the government across



mobile, automotive, semiconductor, industrial and IoT and communication infrastructure sectors. Soin has been with Qualcomm for more than 20 years, with the last 10 years as part of Qualcomm's senior leadership team. "India is a priority market for Qualcomm, and we remain committed to investing in it," said Cathey. In his new role, "Soin will continue to drive growth in one of the fastest growing economies, supporting India's digital transformation and the development of its domestic technology innovation capabilities," Cathey added.

Nilekani's FIDE launch ONDC-focused venture platform to help entrepreneurs create businesses

ARUN KUMAR RAO
Bengaluru

Investment platform Antler in India has launched an ONDC-focused venture platform, partnering with Foundation for Interoperability in Digital Economy (FIDE), an organisation co-founded by Nandan Nilekani. FIDE is not-for-profit organisation that fosters innovation and co-creation among ecosystem participants, by building interoperable open protocol specifications as a public good.

Nandan Nilekani said, "We are going to democratise e-commerce in India. It won't be limited to few players. Everyone, every supplier including small vendors, grocery retailers, kirana stores, electronics retailers, and restaurants should participate in the digital market place on open platform."

The platform offers pre-seed capital of \$300,000, along with an addition investment up to



\$200,000 from the key partners (including unicorn founders and strategic backers) in the Antler network, for teams with an idea. The Antler ONDC platform brings together capital, content, and community to help entrepreneurs create businesses and succeed on the open protocol.

Nitin Sharma, partner, Antler India said, "only 6% of MSMEs are active sellers on digital platforms, with ONDC, we believe this has the potential to grow to 30-40% over next decade boost-

ing massive growth for India. He added, "India has digitised identity and payments, and we believe it is time to now set our sights on the next major unlock-digitising commerce."

The platform is designed to support pre-team and pre-idea founders with a curated community to help them supercharge their early journey, by building alongside experts, operators, and top network participants such as popular Namma Yatri, Plotch.ai, Seller App, and Magicpin.

LPU Chancellor and Rajya Sabha MP Ashok Kumar Mittal meets PM Modi

FW DESK
Jalandhar

Dr. Ashok Kumar Mittal, the Chancellor of Lovely Professional University and a Member of Parliament in Rajya Sabha, along with his family members, recently met with the Honorable Prime Minister of India, Narendra Modi. During the meeting, Dr. Mittal reminded the Prime Minister of his visit to LPU during the Indian Science Congress in 2019, where he addressed the scientific community and coined the "Jai Anusandhan" slogan.

Dr. Mittal shared his views on the importance of promoting research and innovation in higher education and strengthening the industry-academia collaboration to drive economic growth and development. He also mentioned how LPU has been contributing to the national skill development mission by imparting industry-



relevant education and training to its students. Dr. Mittal further expressed his gratitude to the Prime Minister for his continued support to the education sector and also shared his appreciation for the government's New Education Policy (NEP) initiative. Dr. Mittal informed the Prime Minister that he and LPU would be ever ready to play any role

that the government feels is appropriate for the execution of NEP policy. Dr. Mittal and his wife Mrs Rashmi Mittal presented a bouquet, and a Punjabi hand-woven shawl (Phulkari) while his daughter and son-in-law Srishti & Sreshtha Khetan presented a frame that had a picture of PM Modi alongside his late mother. Moreover, Dr. Mit-

tal along with his son Pratham Mittal presented a portrait of PM Modi, which was painted by one of the LPU students. Prime Minister graciously also signed a book by Murlidharan Khetan, Grandfather of Dr Mittal's son-in-law Sreshtha Khetan.

PM Modi spent a considerable amount of time with the family, discussing various topics related to education and development. He appreciated Dr. Mittal's ideas and said that education reforms are very close to his heart. He acknowledged the importance of science and technology in driving progress and development and spoke about how the «Jai Anusandhan» slogan was added to the «Jai Kisan», «Jai Jawan», and «Jai Vigyan» slogans to emphasize the importance of science and technology in various sectors, including agriculture, defence, and healthcare.

VST Tillers Tractors Limited Launches 'Series 9' most advanced compact range

ARUN KUMAR RAO
Bengaluru

One of India's leading farm equipment manufacturers, VST Tillers Tractors Ltd, announced the launch of the Series 9 Range of Compact Tractors, 18 HP upwards. The company, with the aim of further establishing its leadership position in the 4WD Compact Tractor segment in the country, designed and developed the new series of tractors at its Hosur plant. The 6new models, in the range of 18HP to 36HP will be available from this month itself. The tractors are named, starting with "9", VST 918 (18.5 HP), VST 922 (22 HP), VST 927 (24 HP), VST 929 (28 HP), VST 932 (30 HP), VST 939 (36 HP). Series 9 by VST is "The Most Advanced Compact Range" with international design and technological integration to address the growing needs of farm mechanization in Orchard, Horticulture as well as Traditional Agriculture

Crops and non-agriculture field. The Segment's first features in the industry will make Series 9 as the right choice for aspiring Farmers.

VST's new multiutility compact tractors have several firsts to their credit including an independent PTO, MID PTO, Reverse PTO, fully Synchromesh Gearbox, Electro-Hydraulic Controls (EHC), and Dual Track width Option with selective models. By adopting advanced technology, the new range provides increased comfort for the operator. The EHC feature enables the driver to control the implements with the touch of a button. Its narrowest track width with Dual options and short turning radius allows farmers to navigate narrow spaces easily while working with different crops, considerably increasing productivity and reducing crop damage.

VST's feature-filled Series 9 tractor range comes with a state-



of-the-art design and optimal dimensions making it the REAL LIGHT WEIGHT tractor. Operating these tractors is very easy and hassle-free. The series is equipped with a best-in-Class Engine delivering best-in-class power, torque, and mileage.

The ergonomics of the new VST Series 9 Tractors include raised platform, a premium look, projector headlights, a heat protector shield, a new-generation instrument cluster, deluxe seat, and a short

turning radius. These versatile tractors are suitable for a wide range of applications and can be used with tillers, rotavators, MB plough, ridger, duck foot cultivators, sprayers, loaders, haulage, thresher, genset, and many more.

Addressing Media during the launch, Antony Cherukara, CEO, VST Tillers Tractors Ltd said "VST's compact tractor delivers best-in-class performance in the segment. The launch of the new Series

9 tractors is in line with VST's commitment towards Farm Mechanization of multiple crops and enriching the lives of Indian farmers. With the Indian farming community embracing newer technologies, which are innovative and efficient, our Series 9 Range will be the most advanced and versatile tractor offering in its segment and is developed to deliver a winning formula of "Extra Power - Extra Saving - Extra Comfort" for better earnings for Indian farmers. With this launch, we now have a complete range of compact tractors, and we are confident that these products will further cement our leadership position in the compact tractor market.

Progressing on the path of exponential growth by adopting a Fast, Frugal and Future ready approach, a premium series of VST-Zetor will also be launched in the coming months to offer a wide range of products to the farmers and business associates.

Bondada Engineering Limited's SME Initial Public Offering to open on August 18

NEW DELHI: Hyderabad based infrastructure player Bondada Engineering Limited, engaged in the business of providing engineering, procurement and construction ("EPC") services and operations and maintenance ("O&M") services to its pan India customers operating in telecom and solar energy industry has set a fixed price issue at Rs 75 per Equity Share for its maiden SME public offer. The SME initial public offering ("IPO" or "Offer") of the Company will open on Friday, August 18, 2023, for subscription and closes on Tuesday, August 22, 2023. Investors can bid for a minimum of 1600 Equity Shares and in multiples of 1600 Equity Shares thereafter.

The Public Issue of face value of Rs 10 per Equity Share comprises of fresh issuance of equity shares worth Rs 4,272.00 Lakhs with no Offer for Sale (OFS) component. Bondada Engineering is a leading provider of core design, engineering, and O&M services



for infrastructure projects. Their expertise, backed by a team of 550+ professionals, is evident from their successful track record. They received accolades, such as the "Telecom Infrastructure Services Provider" by the Economic Times in 2021 and "Company of the Year" by the Global India Business Forum in 2023. The Company offers a wide range of passive telecom infrastructure services, including turnkey solutions for cell site construction, telecom tower operation and maintenance, optical fiber cable laying, power equipment supply, and

more. With over 11,600 telecom towers and poles installed, they have shown significant progress, completing 7,700 installations in the last three fiscal years.

Bondada Engineering clocked a profit of Rs 18.25 crore in the financial year FY23 against Rs 10.13 crore in the previous year. Revenue during the year FY23 increased significantly to Rs 370.59 crore from Rs 334.11 crore in the previous year, an increase of 9.84%, primarily due to increase in revenue from EPC services, due to increased projects executed for solar sector.

From being a fragile economy, India now among fastest growing economies: FinMin

NEW DELHI: Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman on August 10 said that from being declared a fragile economy in 2013, India is now among the fastest growing economies in the world with real GDP growth being 7.2 per cent in 2022-23, which is expected to expand by 6.5 per cent in the current financial year.



Participating in the discussion on the no-confidence motion in the Lok Sabha, the finance minister said India's growth is in stark contrast to the deceleration being seen in the global economy. Sitharaman observed that within nine years, the Indian economy has risen and experienced substantial economic growth, largely due to the government's policies, despite the Covid pandemic. She said that India finds itself in a unique situation of harbouring optimism and positivity regarding its future growth. Taking potshots at the earlier UPA regimes, the finance minister said, "We only heard of slogans like 'Garibi Hatao', but never saw it happen for six decades. We don't give post dated cheques. Earlier it was 'milege', 'banega' and 'hoga'. Now all this has changed to ban 'gaya', 'mil gaya' and 'ho gaya'." All the treasury benches could be seen echoing Sitharaman's

fighting. In Kerala, Left and Congress are fighting. In J&K, the National Conference and PDP are fighting, etc," she said. Sitharaman, while referring to direct benefit transfer (DBT), said that it serves as a model for the global community. She acknowledged the implementation of DBT by the UPA, but pointed out that only Rs 7,367 crore were transferred in 2013-14. However, DBT transfers have grown five-folds. She informed that India's UPI was now a global success story, being emulated by many nations. Banks now were functioning professionally and NPAs had been drastically reduced from where they stood 10 years back. "Aapka phailaya rayta hum saaf kar rahe hain" she quipped amid peels of laughter by treasury benches. She even had a war of words with DMK MPs, while inform-

ing the House about the AIIMS in Madurai, which she said will have 900 beds, 150 more than other such institutes. When DMK members Kanimozhi and Dayanidhi Maran sought to know where the facilities were and that the minister was misleading the House, a war of words began between the DMK MPs and Sitharaman erupted. She could be heard saying that the new AIIMS won't burden Tamil Nadu, however the DMK MPs started shouting "Yeppo! Yeppo!" (Where! Where!). In retaliation, the BJP MPs started chanting "Modi! Modi!"

When TMC's Sougata Ray said that she was from the Rajya Sabha, the finance minister snapped back, saying that UPA's prime minister was also imported from the Upper House, referring to Manmohan Singh.

Rupee falls 16 paise to 82.82 against US dollar amid losses in local equities

MUMBAI: The rupee depreciated by 16 paise to settle at 82.82 against the US dollar on Friday amid weak sentiment in the equity markets and a strong dollar against major rivals overseas.



Foreign fund inflows and softening crude prices, however, supported the Indian currency even as investors were awaiting India's industrial output number, to be released later in the day, said analysts.

At the interbank foreign exchange market, the local unit opened at 82.75 against the US dollar. It touched the peak of 82.73 and hit the lowest level of 82.87 during intra-day trade before settling at 82.82 against the greenback, 16 paise lower from its previous close. "Indian rupee depreciated on a positive US dollar and weak domestic markets. However, FII inflows and over-

night decline in crude oil prices cushioned the downside," Anuj Choudhary, Research Analyst at Sharekhan by BNP Paribas, said. On Thursday, the rupee rebounded 19 paise to close at 82.66 against the US dollar after the RBI asked banks to set aside a larger part of incremental deposits under the cash reserve ratio (CRR) as part of measures to take out excess liquidity from the banking system.

The Reserve Bank of India in its bi-monthly monetary policy review also decided to keep key interest rate unchanged, but hinted at tighter policy if food prices drive inflation higher.

In the overseas currency market, the dollar strengthened after US consumer price inflation showed moderation in July, raising hopes that the US Federal Reserve would pause rate hike. Choudhary said the rupee is expected to trade with a "negative bias on risk aversion in global markets and elevated crude oil prices. However, fresh inflows by FIIs may support Rupee at lower levels". "Traders may take cues from India's industrial production and US PPI and consumer sentiment data. We expect the USDINR spot to trade in the range of 82.40 to 83.30 in the near term," he added. Meanwhile, the dollar index, which gauges the greenback's strength against a basket of six currencies, rose 0.11 per cent to 102.64.

Global oil benchmark Brent crude was trading 0.19 per cent lower at USD 86.24 per barrel.

Indian medical devices sector to reach USD 50 billion in coming years: Union Health Minister



NEW DELHI: The market size of the Indian medical devices sector is likely to reach USD 50 billion in the coming years from the current USD 11 billion, Union Minister Mansukh Mandaviya said on Thursday. Addressing a curtain raiser of India MedTech Expo 2023, to be held in Gandhinagar from August 17-19, the minister said that India is set to emerge as the global manufacturing hub for medical devices through a holistic development of healthcare, pharmaceuticals and medical devices sectors.

He further emphasised that to make healthcare affordable, the government is targeting to increase the share of generic medicines to 50-60 per cent from the current level of 14 per cent alongside localisation of medical devices.

"The medical device sector is considered one of the sunrise sectors in the country. While earlier, we used to think in silos, Prime Minister Modi's holistic thinking has put India on the path of being the global hub for manufacturing medical devices and producing innovative medical technologies," Mandaviya said. As per reports, over 230 delegates from 50 countries from ASEAN, Africa, CIS, Middle East, OCEANA are expected to participate in the three-day event. Over 400 exhibitors, including MSMEs, domestic and international manufacturers, start-ups, regulatory bodies, state governments and central ministries and departments are likely to participate in the event.

World Bank mulling local currency lending in countries like India: Official

MUMBAI: The World Bank is mulling local currency lending in countries like India to help borrowers save on costs, a senior official said on Friday. "How do we do local currency lending for a country like India is also something we are trying to think of at a price which is advantageous to this country," Anshula Kant, the Managing Director and Chief Financial Officer of the World Bank, said.



Speaking at the event on global economy organised by the Ministry of Finance and the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) as part of India's G-20 presidency, Kant said the Indian government has a "huge advantage" in local currency borrowing as compared to the World Bank, even though the Washington DC-based multilat-

eral bank is rated AAA. He said persistence of core inflation globally continues to be a cause of concern and added that there is a need for coherence between fiscal and monetary policies. Ashima Goyal, an academic who is also an external member on the monetary policy committee of RBI, said it is important for the monetary policy to address the financial stability needs. In some countries like the ones in Africa, which do not possess market infrastructure from where the bank can borrow, the bank may not adopt the local currency lending strategy, Kant said. At the event, Chief Economic Advisor to the Government of India V Anantha Nageswaran said global inflationary pressures are easing more than expected.

MSME's GVA share in GDP rise to 2%; Exports share decline in last 3 years

NEW DELHI: The share of MSME Gross Value Added (GVA) in all India Gross Domestic Product (GDP) during the year 2019-20, 2020-21 and 2021-22 was 30.5%, 27.2% and 29.2% respectively, informed Minister of State for MSME, Bhanu Pratap Singh Verma in a written reply to the Rajya Sabha on Monday.



He cited the latest information received from Ministry of Statistics & Programme Implementation. In view of export share of MSMEs, there has been a decline during the year 2020-21, 2021-22 and 2022-23 as the share reported 49.4%, 45.0% and 43.6% respectively, as per the information received from Directorate General of Com-

mercial Intelligence and Statistics (DGICIS). The share of MSME manufacturing output in all India Manufacturing output during the year 2019-20, 2020-21 and 2021-22 was 36.6%, 36.9% and 36.2% respectively, re-

ASSOCHAM expects no change in REPO rate

FW DESK New Delhi

ASSOCHAM expects the RBI Monetary Policy Committee to keep the policy REPO rate unchanged when it shares the outcome of its meeting tomorrow, giving the present state of the macro-economic situation along with a hint of future interest rates trajectory, chamber Secretary General Deepak Sood said today.

"It looks like a pause situation when it comes to policy interest rates, given some pressure in prices of food articles which we expect should abate in the next few months. Besides, the global macro picture also may work as a key factor to keep the rates unchanged," Mr Sood said. As on 2 July 2023, as per Udyam Registration Portal, the total number of persons employed in MSMEs which were registered from 1 June 2020 to 1 July 2023 in India was 12,36,15,681.

RBI's eye on sustainable growth is a prudent policy: ASSOCHAM

NEW DELHI: Credit policy review by the RBI Monetary Policy Committee focuses on ensuring sustainable growth of 6.5% or more for the economy while navigating the challenges of inflation related more to weather conditions, ASSOCHAM said today, expressing confidence that the RBI would ensure adequate liquidity in the banking system for a momentum to the India Growth Story.



"Anchoring of inflation may have led to measures like incremental Cash Reserve Ratio, but as the RBI Governor Shaktikanta Das has given an assurance it is a temporary intervention that would be reviewed on September 8. Besides, there is an assurance of enough liquidity in the system that should give us comfort," ASSOCHAM Secretary General Deepak Sood said. Retention of policy REPO rate to 6.5 per cent is on the expected line. He said, despite challenges emanating from the global

economy, the RBI-MPC has several positive macro take-aways like a sustainable GDP growth of 6.5 per cent, uptick in capacity utilisation in the manufacturing sector and revival of private sector investment in key sectors of the economy. Taking inflation to the RBI target of four per cent would eventually lead to a solid and sustainable growth. Excluding food and fuel, core inflation is declining while the weather conditions should play out in a few months.

RBI increases UPI Lite payment limit

MUMBAI: To promote online payments, the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) has increased the limit for small digital payments from Rs 200 to Rs 500 per transaction. 200 per transaction for small value digital payments in offline mode including National Common Mobility Card (NCMC) and UPI Lite, RBI Governor Shaktikanta Das said after the third bi-monthly meeting of the Monetary Policy Committee on Thursday. 2000 and set an overall limit of Rs.



Since the trend of transactions through this mode has increased rapidly, there has been a continuous demand to increase the transaction limit. To encourage wider adoption of this mode of payment and bring more use cases to this mode, it is now proposed to increase the per transaction limit to Rs.500. However, the overall limit has been retained at Rs 2000 to contain the risks associated with relaxation of two-factor authentication. Instructions will be issued soon in this regard.

Das said to promote the use of UPI-Lite, it is proposed to facilitate offline transactions using Near Field Communication (NFC) technology. This facility will not only enable retail digital payments in situations where internet and telecom connectivity is weak or not available but will also ensure speed. Instructions in this regard will be issued to NPCI soon. In addition, it is proposed to launch a new payment mode i.e. 'Conversant Payment' service on UPI. It will enable users to engage in conversation with an Artificial Intelligence (AI)-powered system to initiate

and complete transactions in a secure environment. This facility will be made available in both smartphone and feature phone based UPI channel, which will help in strengthening digital penetration in the country. Initially this facility will be available in Hindi and English and later it will be made available in more Indian languages. Instructions in this regard will be issued to NPCI soon. What is UPI Lite? UPI Lite is an on-device wallet feature that will allow users to make small value payments in real time without using a UPI PIN.

Odisha EOW busts pan-India crypto Ponzi scam, two arrested



NEW DELHI: The Economic Offence Wing (EOW) of Odisha police has unearthed a pan-India crypto currency-based Ponzi scam involving money of more than Rs 1000 crore, a police official said on Monday.

hean members of this scheme. This Ponzi scheme has more than 2 lakh members (Pan India) mainly in the states like Punjab, Rajasthan, Bihar, Jharkhand, Haryana, Delhi, Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra, Odisha and Assam, the official informed.

The EOW has arrested the head of STA Crypto Token namely Gurtej Singh Sidhu (40), from Sri-Ganganagar, Rajasthan and its Odisha unit head Nirod Das. Sidhu is a native of Faridkot, Punjab and Nirod belongs to Bhadrak district of Odisha. Sidhu was frequently changing his location in places like Goa, Lonavala, Mumbai, Delhi, Faridkot, Bhatinda, Hanumangadh and Sri Ganganagar. A team of EOW led by DSP Sasmita Sahoo was tracking his movement and finally able to arrest him, said an EOW official.

STA (Solar Techno Alliance) was launched in September 2021. In its website & social media accounts it claims to be a one stop solar technology etc. to mask its crypto-Ponzi scam. The STA website is hosted from Iceland but its business and activity is limited to India only and it is headed by one David Gez, a young Hungarian (Europe) national who has visited India multiple times. According to the EOW, both David and Gurtej Sidhu have travelled to many places in India including Odisha and have attended various STA programs. They are always seen using luxurious lifestyles like star hotels, expensive cars, fancy clothes, surrounded by bouncers, hero's welcome in meetings etc.

During the investigation, the EOW found that STA through some upline members are very active in these districts and they have been using various propaganda tools to persuade people to join in this scheme and earn huge money in a very short time. The members have started using the STA Token like a legal tender in their day to day business. It is estimated that more than 10,000 people from Odisha have already

being used to collect deposits, it runs a huge Ponzi (Pyramid) scheme in the garb of crypto tokens. The firm uses the socially popular terms like green energy, solar technology etc. to mask its crypto-Ponzi scam. The STA website is hosted from Iceland but its business and activity is limited to India only and it is headed by one David Gez, a young Hungarian (Europe) national who has visited India multiple times. According to the EOW, both David and Gurtej Sidhu have travelled to many places in India including Odisha and have attended various STA programs. They are always seen using luxurious lifestyles like star hotels, expensive cars, fancy clothes, surrounded by bouncers, hero's welcome in meetings etc. The Ponzi firm conducts several publicity programs at various places to spread its membership. They use fancy hotels, motivational speakers, music, lunch/dinner etc. in such meetings to brainwash future members.

Two Crore disbursed as pensions to 2103 dead beneficiaries, Rs 2.8 cr diverted for publicity: CAG

NEW DELHI: The Ministry of Rural Development (MORD) made payment of pensions amounting Rs 2 crore to 2,103 National Social Assistance Programme (NSAP) beneficiaries in 26 states and Union Territories even after their death, and funds worth Rs 2.83 crore were diverted for publicity and campaign, the Comptroller Auditor General of India (CAG) has said in its report.



The CAG report, on the performance audit of the NSAP from 2017-18 to 2020-21, was tabled in the Lok Sabha on Tuesday. The report said that according to NSAP guidelines, a pensioner's pension may be discontinued due to death or migration or crossing BPL or any other reason and the pension payment should be stopped accordingly. It said that further, gram panchayats or municipalities shall report every case of death of a

pensioner to the designated Sanctioning Authority. "Non-reporting of death leads to continuation of pension even after the death of the beneficiary leading to irregular payment of pension," it said. The death of beneficiaries was not being reported by gram panchayats or municipalities in a timely manner in case of 23 states and UTs of Arunachal Pradesh, Assam, Bihar, Delhi, Goa, Gujarat, Haryana, Himachal Pradesh, Jammu and Kashmir, Kerala, Ladakh, Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra, Manipur, Nagaland, Odisha, Punjab, Sikkim, Telangana, Uttar Pradesh, Uttarakhand, Andaman and Nicobar Islands and Puducherry.

India Exim Bank enters factoring segment of Trade Financing for MSMEs

NEW DELHI: The India Exim Bank has expanded its operations in the factoring segment of trade financing, reported FE. This move comes in the view of the MSME sector's huge potential for exports and the requirement for easily accessible trade finances.



India Exim Finserve IFSC Private Limited, the newly inaugurated subsidiary of India Exim Bank, will exclusively focus on factoring finance growth and development among MSMEs, reported FE. Speaking at the inauguration of its GIFT unit, Harsha Bangari, Managing Director, India Exim Bank, said, "In 2022-23 the exports from India stood at USD 774 billion, double the exports in 2013-14. The growth of Indian exports, despite the slowdown in advanced economies, continuing geopolitical conflicts and tightening monetary policies across the economies, shows the resilience

and sustainability of the Indian economy. Additionally there is a great untapped export potential among the MSMEs in India." "Access to finances is one of the major reasons for the MSMEs for not achieving desired growth. According to Udayam data, only 1.36% of 17 million registered MSMEs are exporting their products. This new service of international factoring will help the MSMEs to raise short term workable capital so that they can expand

their business without facing any financial constraint," added Bangari. K Rajaraman, chairman, IFSC GIFT said, "The foundation for certain and steady growth of financial services at the GIFT IFSC has been laid well. The India Exim Bank will be the first finance company at GIFT which will be doing work in trade financing. As India is working towards the goal to achieve USD 3 trillion worth of exports by 2030, there will

be a multifold growth in the scope for finances." The IFSC chairman also called upon other banks and financial institutions at GIFT to come forward and join the trade finance segment to enhance the whole banking ecosystem at the GIFT IFSC. Vivek Joshi, secretary, department of financial services, Union ministry of finance, said, "The macroeconomic fundamentals for the Indian economy are strengthening and they are improving the growth prospects. The fact that India's exports in 2022-23 stood at USD 776 billion (USD 450 billion merchandise exports and USD 326 billion services exports) indicates that international trade can be a viable growth engine. MSMEs contribute a substantial portion of exports from India (around 45%) but there is a lot of untapped export potential and factoring finance has the potential to unlock it."

Donald Trump pleads not guilty to latest charges in classified documents case

Former US President Donald Trump as well as his close personal aide Walt Nauta have pleaded not guilty to the latest charges in the case of mishandling classified documents.

Trump and Nauta, a former White House military valet turned personal aide, are facing charges which accuse the two men and a third aide of conspiring to conceal surveillance footage at the former President's Mar-a-Lago resort in Florida from the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI), reports the BBC.

They have already pleaded not guilty to previous charges against them.

The office of Special Counsel Jack Smith, who is leading



the documents case and also overseeing a separate indictment of Trump over his alleged efforts to overturn the results of the 2020 election, on Thursday recommended to a federal court in Washington D.C. that the former President

face trial in the election case on January 2, 2024.

In June, he charged the former President with 37 counts, for retaining hundreds of confidential files, including about US nuclear secrets and military plans, after leaving office and

for lying to investigators.

Nauta was also charged in the indictment and accused of moving files to hide them from the FBI.

In a superseding indictment, prosecutors detailed an alleged effort between Nauta and Carlos de Oliveira, the property manager at Mar-a-Lago, to obstruct the investigation, the BBC reported.

The court document alleges the two men, at Trump's request, tried to delete security footage outside the storage room where documents were being held.

That indictment added one count of wilful retention of defence information and two of obstruction against Trump,

bringing the total charges against him in the case to 40.

He had previously waived his right to appear in person in the Florida courtroom on Thursday.

His attorney Todd Blanche entered a not guilty plea on his behalf.

Nauta also received two additional charges of obstruction in the latest indictment, while de Oliveira was charged with four counts, including conspiracy to obstruct justice and making false statements.

Both men were present in the room, but de Oliveira was unable to enter a plea as he had not yet retained local counsel.

His arraignment has been rescheduled for August 15.

Chinese Naval warship docks in Colombo port after delay caused by Indian concerns: Report

COLOMBO: A Chinese Navy warship capable of surveillance has docked at the Colombo port, nearly a year after another spy vessel berthed at a strategic port in the country and raised concerns in India.

The Chinese People's Liberation Army Navy warship HAI YANG 24 HAO arrived at the port of Colombo on Thursday, the Sri Lankan Navy said. The vessel is to leave on Saturday.

"The 129 metre-long ship which arrived in Colombo is manned by a crew of 138 and it is commanded by Commander Jin Xin. The ship is scheduled to depart the country tomorrow," the Navy statement said.

According to media reports on Friday, Sri Lanka delayed its arrival upon concerns raised by India. "The Chinese authorities sought permission for it earlier, but Sri Lanka delayed permission because of resistance from India," the Daily Mirror newspaper reported. Despite a briefing by Sri Lanka to Indian officials, the latter remained concerned about the research ship's visit to the island nation.

In August last year, a similar



visit by the Chinese ballistic missile and satellite tracking ship, 'Yuan Wang 5', which arrived in the southern Sri Lankan port of Hambantota elicited strong reactions from India. There were apprehensions in New Delhi about the possibility of the vessel's tracking systems attempting to snoop on Indian defence installations while being on its way to the Sri Lankan port.

However, after a considerable delay, Sri Lanka allowed the ship to dock at the strategic southern port of Hambantota, being built by a Chinese company.

Sri Lanka considers both India and China equally important partners in its task to restructure its external debt.

The negotiations for Sri Lanka's external and domestic debt restructuring must be concluded by September, in time for the International Monetary Fund's review of its USD 2.9 billion bailout extended in March this year.

The island nation was hit by an unprecedented financial crisis in 2022, the worst since its independence from Britain in 1948, due to a severe paucity of foreign exchange reserves.

Person hit & killed by Caltrain in California



A person was hit and killed by a Caltrain in Redwood City of California on Tuesday afternoon, officials said.

At about 12:30 p.m., a train heading south struck and killed an individual, who hasn't been identified. None of the passengers onboard were injured, Xinhua news agency reported, citing Caltrain's public information officer Dan Lieberman.

The San Mateo County Sheriff's Office Transit Police and county coroner responded to the scene. The tracks were cleared by 3:00 p.m., according to Lieberman. None of the passengers onboard were injured, Xinhua news agency reported, citing Caltrain's public information officer Dan Lieberman.

The accident marked the transit agency's eighth fatality of the year. Five of them happened in the past two months, the transit agency said.

India and Nepal appreciate each other's strong cooperation in developmental partnership through LOCs

KATHMANDU: India and Nepal have both expressed appreciation for the strong cooperation in the developmental partnership between the two nations, including through the Line of Credits that is extended to the Himalayan nation for infrastructure development.

During the 10th India-Nepal Line of Credit (LOC) Review Meeting held on Thursday, both sides acknowledged their cooperation and reviewed the progress of projects which are at various stages of implementation, according to the press release by the Indian Embassy here on Friday. The Indian delegation also conducted site visits to ongoing road projects being built with the Government of India's (GOI) LOCs.

From the Indian side, the meeting was led by A. Ajay Ku-



mar, Joint Secretary, Ministry of External Affairs, and from Nepal side, the meeting was led by Shreekrishna Nepal, Joint Secretary, Ministry of Finance, Government of Nepal (GoN). Site visits to ongoing road projects being built with GOI's LOCs were also carried out by the visiting Indian delegation on 9 and 11 August 2023.

GoI's LOC portfolio is more than USD 30 billion and is spread across more than 60 partner countries. In Nepal, it includes four LOCs: US\$ 100 million, US\$ 250 million, US\$ 550 million and US\$ 750 million, totaling US\$ 1.65 billion. These LOCs are dedicated towards infrastructure development as prioritized by GoN. So

far, these LOCs have financed more than 40 road projects (1105 km completed), 6 projects in hydropower and transmission lines, and several others in housing and reconstruction.

Power transmission infrastructure in Nepal has been augmented with major LOC projects, such as Koshi Corridor (220 kV), Modi Lekhnath (132 kV), Solu Corridor (132 kV) and the Dhalkebar-Bhittamod (400 kV) projects. As of now, upto 452 MW of power export is being carried out through the Dhalkebar-Bhittamod 400 kV line. GoI has also agreed to fund Bheri Corridor, Nijgadh-Inaruwa and Gandak Nepalgunj Transmission lines and associated substations under Indian LOC at an estimated cost of US\$ 679.8 million.

UK Sikh MP Tanmanjeet Dhesi meets Sukhdev Singh Dhindsa at his residence

CHANDIGARH: UK Sikh MP, Tanmanjeet Dhesi who is on a Punjab tour, met Shiromani Akali Dal (Sanyukt) President, Sukhdev Singh Dhindsa at his residence in Chandigarh. Dhesi was accompanied by his family.

Notably, MP, Tanmanjeet Dhesi who had landed at Amritsar on Thursday was made to sit for two hours at Sri Guru Ramdas Jee International Airport by the immigration officers. After this incident, Sukhdev Singh Dhindsa had



an immediate conversation with the Union Home Minister, Amit Shah and Dhesi was given clearance by the airport authority.

Following that, the UK MP along with his family especially came to meet Sukhdev Singh Dhindsa at his residence in Chandigarh today and ex-

pressed his gratitude to him.

During the interaction with both the leaders, apart from the issues related to Panth also held key discussions on the difficulties faced by Punjabis living abroad while coming to India. Meanwhile, Dhesi gave a special invitation to Dhindsa to visit England. Parminder Singh Dhindsa, Paramjit Singh Raipur Member SGPC and Jaspal Singh Dhesi, father of Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi also remained present on this occasion.

British Sikh presenter arrested for alleged sexual offenses released

LONDON: British Sikh chef and former BBC presenter Hardeep Singh Kohli, who was arrested and charged over sexual harassment allegations, has been released on an undertaking and will appear in court at a later date, police said.

The 54-year-old was accused of predatory and sexually inappropriate behaviour by more than 20 women, according to an investigation by The Times newspaper. "A 54-year-old man has been arrested and charged in connection with allegations of non-recent sexual offences. He has been released on an un-

dertaking to appear in court at a later date," Police Scotland said in a statement on Wednesday.

"A report of the circumstances has been submitted to the procurator fiscal," the police said. Police Scotland started its probe last month after fresh complaints of sexual harassment allegations emerged against Kohli. They have submitted a report to the Procurator Fiscal, the independent public prosecution office of the devolved region. The Times newspaper reported in July that a former Labour party official alleged Kohli bombarded her with



unwanted sexual comments after he reached out to her on

social media.

"He phoned me and immediately started talking about sex," she said. "I told him I didn't feel comfortable but he tried to make out there was something wrong with me because I didn't want to engage with him in sex chat." Kohli deleted his X profile last month after women used the platform to accuse him of sexually inappropriate behaviour.

Born in London to immigrant parents from Punjab, Kohli presented several programmes for the BBC and other broadcasters, and was runner up in the 2006

edition of Celebrity Masterchef.

The BBC snapped ties with him in 2020.

Before that, the BBC had axed him for six months when he was a reporter in 2009 following allegations of inappropriate conduct towards a female researcher.

Kohli forayed into comedy in 2009 at the Edinburgh fringe, where he performed a one-man show, cooking curries on stage.

He also wrote for The Guardian and also participated in in Celebrity MasterChef in 2006 and Celebrity Big Brother in 2018.

Indian diaspora leaders to hold 'G20 Forum' in New Delhi

NEW DELHI: Indiaspora, a network of the global Indian diaspora, is organising a G20 Forum in New Delhi this month bringing together 200 leaders from 25 countries, according to its Executive Director Sanjeev Joshpuria.

The Indiaspora G20 Forum that coincides with India's presidency of the group of developed and emerging nations will explore how the diaspora "can contribute to India's journey towards 100 years of independence", he said.

"The Indian diaspora, working alongside prominent leaders in India, are committed to harnessing our collective strength to foster inclusive growth, sustainable development, and social progress, as



India continues to assume its global leadership position," Joshpuria said.

The speakers at the three-day meeting, scheduled for August 22 to 24, will include "government officials and policymakers, businesspersons and entrepreneurs, accomplished sportspersons, inspiring artists, and dedicated philanthropists, all of whom share a common vision for a better world", the organisation said.

The agenda includes foreign policy, financial inclusion, climate change, gender equality, health-care, philanthropy, entrepreneurship, sports, and trade and investments, it said.

Sreekumar Nair, the CEO of Indiaspora-India, said that the "forum is a testament to the Indian diaspora's collective commitment to creating positive change and leaving a meaningful legacy for generations to come".

The forum precedes the G20 summit led by Prime Minister Narendra Modi to be held in New Delhi next month bringing together the heads of state or government of more than 20 countries.

Islamabad HC orders Attock jail officials to allow lawyers to meet Pak ex-PM Imran

ISLAMABAD: The Islamabad High Court ruled on Friday that the lawyers of Imran Khan can meet the former Pakistan prime minister in Attock prison where he has been incarcerated after his conviction in a corruption case. The ruling came after Khan's lawyer Sher Afzal Khan Marwat appeared before Chief Justice Aamer Farooq and requested him to issue directives to allow the legal team access to Khan jailed since Saturday in the Punjab province.

Marawat said the lawyers were not permitted to meet the 70-year-old Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) Chairman despite the court orders, the Express Tribune newspaper reported. He said "false accusations" of causing disruptions in the jail were levelled against Khan's lawyers, it said.

"We have said this before and we will say it again, lawyers are allowed to hold meetings," the chief justice said. "Failure to allow these meetings will be viewed as contempt of court," he warned. The court also heard Khan's plea requesting a transfer from Attock district prison to Rawalpindi's high-security Adiala jail, the report said.

"There is the matter of meetings and facilities at the jail before us. We will issue appropriate orders," Chief Justice Farooq said. On Thursday, Khan's wife Bushra Bibi was allowed to meet her husband for the first time since the former premier was put behind bars on Saturday, while his legal team was stopped from having a meeting with Khan.

Bushra met Khan after the Islamabad High Court (IHC) granted her permission, said



Khan's lawyer Naeem Haider Panjutha. Panjuthaha was granted access on Monday by the jail authorities to meet Khan, but was denied permission on Thursday. After seeing the PTI chairman, he had said that the former premier was being kept in "distressing" conditions and provided "C-Class jail facilities". Attock prison in eastern Punjab province is infamous for its harsh conditions and its inmates include convicted militants.

Khan has told his lawyers to take him out of the Attock jail as he does not want to remain

in a small, isolated cell without air-conditioning that is infested with flies during the day and insects at night. His party has approached the Islamabad High Court (IHC) and sought Khan's transfer from Attock prison to Adiala jail in the garrison city of Rawalpindi. Khan, the cricketer-turned-politician, was arrested on Saturday from his Lahore house shortly after an Islamabad trial court found him guilty of "corrupt practices" in the Toshakhana corruption case.

He was sentenced on charges of unlawfully selling state gifts acquired by him and his family during his 2018-2022 tenure.

Khan has also been barred from politics for five years, preventing him from contesting an upcoming election. He has denied any wrongdoing.

Biden reportedly to create Grand Canyon national monument to block new mining

US President Joe Biden is leaning toward designating a vast area near the Grand Canyon as a national monument to safeguard it from uranium mining, a media report said.

"Leaders of local tribes and environmentalists have spent years lobbying to protect areas near the park from potential uranium mining, which they say would threaten aquifers and water supplies," Xinhua news agency quoted The Washington Post report as saying citing sources.

"They have asked Washington to double the protected area around the canyon by including 1.1 million acres of public lands in a Baaj Nwaavjo



a focus of his stops on the tour.

Federal officials have started telling tribal and environmental groups to be available for a potential Grand Canyon announcement early next week, which would fall during Biden's travel, said the report.

"No decisions have been made," White House spokesman Abdullah Hasan said in an email. "But I can tell you that President Biden has conserved more land and water in his first year than any president since JFK, and his climate protection record is unmatched." Uranium deposits sit deep within sandstone, siltstone, and mudstone layers across the US Southwest.

In the Grand Canyon region, uranium ore is found in geologic features called breccia pipes. Uranium mining near Grand Canyon National Park began in the 1950s at Orphan Mine. At least eight uranium mines have operated near the park, including the active Canyon Mine. Since 2012, a 20-year mineral withdrawal has blocked new efforts to mine uranium on 1 million acres of public lands surrounding the Grand Canyon.

But the relief is temporary. As of May 2022, there were still nearly 600 mining claims on national forest and other public lands around the Grand Canyon.

As of May 2022, there were still nearly 600 mining claims on national forest and other public lands around the Grand Canyon.

Sikh Bravery and Resilience to Life in Upcoming Punjabi Film "Mastaney"



KULBIR SINGH KALSI
Chandigarh

"Mastaney," the highly anticipated upcoming Punjabi film, is being produced by the dynamic trio of Manpreet Johal, Aashu Munish Sahni, and Karamjit Singh Johal. Known for their unwavering support and passion for cinema, these talented producers have brought forth a cinematic masterpiece that promises to captivate audiences with its enthralling narrative of Sikh bravery and resilience.

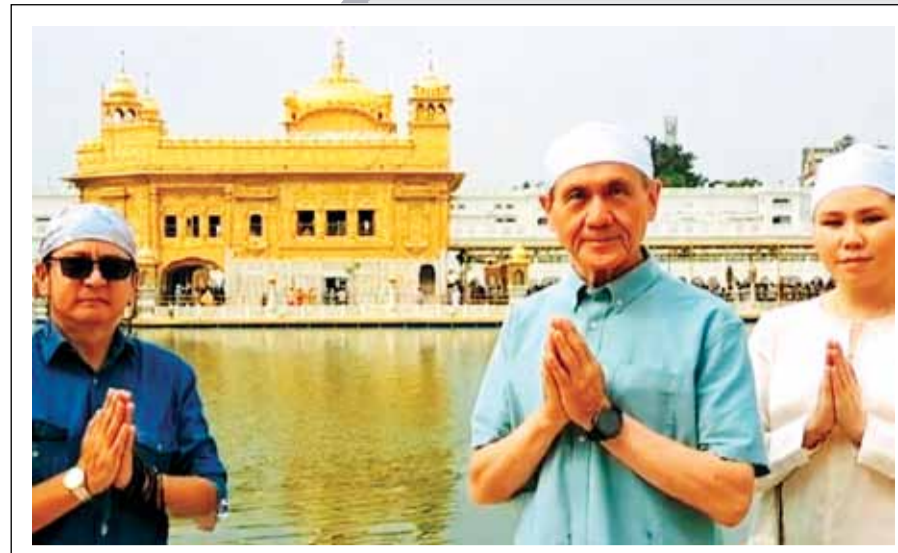
"Manpreet Johal, Aashu Munish Sahni, and Karamjit Singh Johal have meticulously woven cultural essence and historical reverence into 'Mastaney.' Their resolute dedication and pursuit of excellence shine through, shaping an extraordinary film that honours Sikh heritage and resilience. With an exceptional cast and meticulous attention to detail, the producers have transformed a vision into a vivid reality. 'Mastaney' not only commemorates bravery and sacrifice but also stands as

a remarkable testament to the producers' unwavering commitment to preserving history and evoking a profound cinematic experience."

Manpreet Johal, Aashu Munish Sahni, and Karamjit Singh Johal shared their experience as producers of "Mastaney". The film stands as a testament to our unwavering dedication, innovative spirit, and commitment to excellence. As the film's release approaches, we eagerly await the magic that is set to unleash upon the silver screen."

Presented by Vehli Janta Films and Omjee's Cine World, "Mastaney" is a collaborative project produced by Manpreet Johal alongside Aashu Munish Sahni and Karamjit Singh Johal. The film is written and directed by the brilliant Sharan Art. The "Mastaney" trailer offers a glimpse into the extraordinary world created by the talented team, featuring a stellar cast that includes Tarsem Jassar, Simi Chahal, Gurpreet Ghuggi, Karamjit Anmol, Honey Mattu, and Baninder Bunny.

POTPOURRI



Former president of Mongolia Enkhbayar Nambar offers prayers at Sri Harmandir Sahib, in Amritsar on August 8. PHOTOS-PRABHJOT GILL

Punjabi film Buhe Bariyan releasing on September 15

KULBIR SINGH KALSI
Chandigarh

Pratap Singh and written by the creative mind of Jagdeep Warring, "Buhe Bariyan" is set to be an unforgettable cinematic spectacle.

The poster launch showcases the film's stars in all their glory, featuring the powerhouse performances of Neeru Bajwa, Nirmal Rishi, Rupinder Rupai, Rubina Bajwa, Gurpreet Bhanghu, Simran Chahal, Malkit Rauni, Anita Meet, Seema Kaushal,

Baljinder Kaur, Dharminder Kaur, Sukhwinder Raj, Deepak Niaz, Balli Baljit, and Parkash Gadhu. With such an ensemble cast, audiences can expect a rollercoaster of emotions and riveting storytelling. Produced by the esteemed Sarla Rani, Santosh Subhash Thite, and Lienniaz Ent., "Buhe Bariyan" is set to be distributed worldwide by the renowned Omjee Group, promising to reach audiences far and wide.

Get ready to be swept off your feet as the upcoming Punjabi film "Buhe Bariyan" reveals its mesmerizing poster, giving audiences a glimpse of the captivating journey that awaits them. In the film "Buhe Bariyan," Neeru Bajwa portrays the role of a determined and fearless cop. Directed by the talented Uday

Sunny Deol and Ameesha Patel visit Attari-Wagah border



Actor Sunny Deol and Ameesha Patel visited Attari-Wagah border in Punjab before the release of their film 'Gadar 2'.

Ameesha, who plays the role of Sakeena Ali Singh in the movie after 22 years, shared a video on her Instagram account where she was seen standing alongside Sunny Deol and Udit Narayan alongside a full contingent of BSF soldiers and with the whole border on the Attari side completely full.

She captioned: "Gadar 2 team at Indo-Pak border for promotions"

Following this, netizens shared their excitement, praising the cast and in a patriotic fervour wrote "Jai Hind", "Vandemataram", "Hindustan Zindabad!" and "Mera Bharat Mahan!"

Prior to this, the actors had also attended the Beating the Retreat Ceremony. Sunny Deol posted on his Instagram: "Was honoured to witness the Retreat ceremony at the Attari Border with the illustrious @bsf_punjab_frontier @

bsf_india . Loved the energy and the fervour with which the atmosphere was filled with emphatic chants of #hindustanzindabad."

The movie has already garnered immense excitement after its trailer and the revamped version of the classic 'Gadar' song 'Mein Nika Gaddi Leke' which gained immense praise for its distinct and more unique modern take on the track while still very much honouring the original. It was particularly praised for the singing of Udit Narayan, Aditya Narayan and Mithoon whose voices became nearly indistinguishable.

'Gadar' was a massive hit when it was released back in 2001. As such, 'Gadar 2' will be set 22 years after the events of the first film which dealt with post India-Pakistan Partition. The movie will kick off from 1951 and then proceed to the events leading up to the 1971 Bangladesh Liberation War, also known as the third Indo-Pak War.

Rajinikanth's upcoming film 'Jailer' is one of August most anticipated release

MUMBAI: Megastar Rajinikanth's upcoming film 'Jailer' is one of August's most anticipated releases alongside Sunny Deol's 'Gadar 2'.

Both have generated immense excitement across the country. However, when it comes to Rajinikanth, the craze in South India can never be matched.

In a surprising move, many offices in South India have declared holiday on August 10, the release date of 'Jailer'.

And it is not just in Chennai or Madurai, but offices in



other cities such as Bengaluru, Hyderabad, Thanjavur, Vishakapatnam, Mysuru, El-

lore, Thiruvananthapuram and Kochi have also declared holidays, with many big com-

panies handing out free tickets to their employees so that they can watch the film.

Many companies have taken to their X (formerly Twitter) account to share their holiday list. As such, people have already mass booked the movie in advance with big multiplexes in Thiruvananthapuram, Chennai and Bengaluru already becoming full.

Even in North India, in states such as Uttar Pradesh, Punjab, Gujarat and Delhi, the movie has seen a great deal of bookings as Rajinikanth is a huge star

across India, and coupled with the popularity of South Indian movies these days in the North, the advance bookings are not a surprise, particularly as the film marks the Tamil legend's return to the big screen after two years.

The story of the film revolves around a jailer named Muthuvel Pandian, also called 'Tiger', under whose custody a very powerful gangster from a notorious gang is imprisoned.

The members of the gang manage to rescue their leader, leading to Muthuvel tracking them.

Sonu Sood helps man from Bihar to clear debts



MUMBAI: Bollywood actor and humanitarian Sonu Sood helped a 65-year-old man from Bihar to help him clear his debts.

The man named Khilanaad Jha travelled all the way to Mumbai only to meet Sonu, whom he fondly refers to as 'Gareebo Ka Masih' or the Messiah of the Poor. Jha's story, riddled with struggles and financial burdens, touched Sonu's heart, prompting him to lend him a helping hand. For the unversed, Jha's wife, Minoti Paswan, passed away earlier this year after a paralytic stroke, leaving him with a debt of Rs 12 lakh for her medical expenses. With creditors demanding the clearance of payment, he sought Sonu's assistance after hearing about his efforts to help the less fortunate during the pandemic.

Jha, accompanied by his son, recently met Sonu at his office. The actor empathised with the elderly man's situation and readily agreed to offer him support. Recently, Sonu was honoured with a well-crafted massive pop art piece which spans over an enormous 1.17 lakh sq ft at the village of Ajitwal, in the Moga district of Punjab. The actor shared a video of the same on his Instagram handle and thanked the team for their efforts.

Chandigarh Olympic Association to celebrate National Sports Day on August 29



KULBIR SINGH KALSI
Chandigarh

Chandigarh Olympic Association (COA) in association with Sanjay Gandhi Educational Society will celebrate the National Sports Day on August 29 in which over 40 players will be felicitated by the Association. The decision to celebrate National Sports Day in an exemplary manner was taken at a

meeting held here. More than 50 representatives from nearly 30 sports associations which come under the ambit of COA participated in the meeting.

Ranjan Sethi, President, Sanjay Gandhi Educational Society, "The event would be a befitting tribute to our iconic sports person Major Dhyan Chand. Players from Chandigarh who got first, second and third positions at both an

international level or a national level shall be honoured by the COA for their achievements. In all, we are expecting a good gathering of players, coaches and representatives of different sports associations at the event which will be held at SD College, Sector 32." Apart from Ranjan Sethi other key people who were present at the meeting included N S Thakur, General Secretary, Chandigarh Olympic Association; K P Singh, Executive Member, Chandigarh Olympic Association; Hem Raj, Executive Member, Chandigarh Olympic Association; and Surinder Mahajan, Secretary, Chandigarh Badminton Association among others. President of Chandigarh Olympic Association Amrinder Singh Bazaz could not attend as he was unwell.

MK Bhatia doing a commendable job of grooming young talents: Afsana Khan



KULBIR SINGH KALSI
Panchkula

Starting from Muzaffarnagar, traveling from Panchkula to Mumbai and Dubai and London, MK Bhatia, the creator of startup MITSkart, which has made international recognition, had a ceremonial meeting with well-known Punjabi singer

Afsana Khan. It is said that Mits Entertainment Bhatia is closely associated with the cine world, he keeps trying to give platform to young talents. Starting MITS Kart from his birth place Muzaffarnagar, now after Dubai he will start in Panchkula this month and the MITS convoy is ready to fly across the world.

'Heart of Stone', director Tom Harper calls Alia Bhatt a formidable, intelligent, charismatic talent



MUMBAI: As the Alia Bhatt and Gal Gadot starrer action spy thriller film 'Heart of Stone' draws closer to its release date, director Tom Harper detailed both what the film is about as well as the characters of Alia Bhatt and Gal Gadot. Speaking of Alia, Harper went on to call her a formidable and intelligent talent with great charisma.

"Heart of Stone" marks the 'Gangubai Kathiawadi' actress' debut in Hollywood. Regarding her acting, Tom Harper said "We were so excited that Alia was going to join us."

"She's huge in the Indian film industry, but this is her first Hollywood production and full English language film. She's a formidable talent, has great intelligence, and expert attention to detail as well as that amazing film star charisma".

Detailing 'Heart of Stone', Tom Harper said, "When I first came onboard, two things really struck me about the project:

different, and as such is different from standard spy-thriller as he pioneers a fresh narrative approach, giving audiences a different storyline with fleshed out characters that transcend conventional heroism.

Tom also delves deeper into his artistic vision, emphasizing the creation of authentic and relatable personas that forge profound connections with viewers, because at its very core 'Heart of Stone' apart from being a female-led spy-thriller film is also focused on the world of AI. The movie aims to explore the damage that such a powerful piece of technological force can unleash when unchecked, particularly as that technology is advancing day by day.

As such, in 'Heart of Stone', Tom delves into big data, technology, and the balance between human instinct and algorithms, a conversation very much present in our world today. Harper's vision here challenges conventions and celebrates the triumph of humanity amid high-stakes action.

Apart from its deep themes, great action and storyline, the movie also packs in a star-studded cast composed of Alia Bhatt, Gal Gadot and Jamie Dornan. Set to release on Netflix on August 11, 2023, 'Heart of Stone' promises to be one exhilarating thrill ride full of action, suspense and thrills.

Nawazuddin Siddiqui's new look from his upcoming streaming release 'Haddi'



MUMBAI: Actor Nawazuddin Siddiqui's new look from his upcoming streaming release 'Haddi' has been unveiled and it shows the actor in the role of a transgender, in an intense look with a penchant for blood as he holds a butcher's knife laced with blood. With the new look, the film has also locked its streaming partner.

In the new poster, Nawaz's character can be seen sitting comfortably on a chair with a blood stained knife in hand surrounded by many women in the background. The film has been helmed by the debutant director Akshat Ajay Sharma, and also stars Anurag Kashyap along with Ila Arun, Mohammed Zeeshan Ayyub, Saurabh Sachdeva, Shridhar Dubey, Rajesh Kumar, Vipin Sharma, and Saharsh Shukla. Co-written by Akshat Ajay Sharma and Adama Bhalla, 'Haddi' is a crime revenge drama that showcases the prolific actor Nawazuddin Siddiqui in a never-seen-before avatar. In the film, Nawazuddin takes on the challenge of portraying two distinct characters - Haddi and Harika, a transgender woman.

Talking about the film, director Akshat Ajay Sharma said: "Haddi" circles around the intoxicating world of vengeance, violence, and power, delving into the very essence of a criminal's psyche. It highlights the ruthlessness of society. It took me a lot of time to flesh out characters and craft this politician-mobster-transgender drama. With bated breath, I am truly hoping that 'Haddi' exceeds every expectation, leaving an indelible mark on the hearts of the audience."

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