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**'PEOPLE OF INDIA WANT CHANGE', SAYS PAWAR ON EVE OF I.N.D.I.A. CONCLAVE**



**RETAIL INFLATION EXPECTED TO START COMING DOWN FROM THIS MONTH: RBI GOVERNOR**



**NEERAJ CHOPRA WON HISTORIC GOLD AT THE WORLD ATHLETICS CHAMPIONSHIPS**

**'Delhi Services Act': Officers openly rebel against written orders of elected govt- Kejriwal**

NEW DELHI: Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal on Wednesday targeted the Central government saying that the Delhi Services Act has granted officers the licence to openly rebel against the written orders of the elected government of Delhi. "Delhi Services Act gives officers the licence to openly rebel against written orders of the elected government. Officers have begun to refuse to obey the orders of elected ministers. Can any state, country, or institution function under such circumstances? This Act will harm Delhi, and this is what the BJP wants. The Act needs to be struck down as soon as possible," Kejriwal posted on X. Earlier in the day, Delhi Minister Atishi said that officials were openly rebelling against the Delhi government. While addressing a conference, Atishi said that the Chief Secretary had previously de-

clined to act on their order, and now the Finance Secretary had written a 40-page letter refusing to comply with their directive. "The statements previously made by officials about resisting orders now appear to be coming true. Following the Chief Secretary in Delhi, the Finance Secretary has also declined to adhere to the government's orders by composing a 40-page letter. With reference to the Delhi Services Act, there is an ongoing attempt to impede all government activities," she said. "I'd like to inquire again: Has the Central government instructed officials in Delhi to reject orders from the elected government and undermine the democracy? Does the notion of the 'Triple Chain of Accountability' mentioned in the Supreme Court's orders not hold any significance for them?" she asked.

**Modi govt formed a committee on 'One Country One Election'**

MEENAKSHI BHATTACHARYA  
New Delhi

The Modi government seems to be taking a big step to push back opposition in the current political scenario before the Lok Sabha elections next year. The issue of "one country, one election" is continuously making headlines and meanwhile, the Government of India has constituted a committee, which will give its report on this. This committee will be headed by former President Ramnath Kovind. The Government of India can also issue an official notification on this today.

If the decision of "one country-one election" is implemented in the country, then the assembly elections of all the states and the Lok Sabha elections will be held simultaneously. Prime Minister Narendra Modi has raised his voice loudly in favor of this on many occasions and now an atmosphere is being created in the country regarding this. Some time ago, the Law Commission had also sought the opinion of the common people on "One Country One Election".



Yesterday only, the Central Government had announced to call a special session of Parliament from 18 to 22 September. After which speculations were being made that in this special session, Modi government can bring a bill regarding "one country-one election" and pass it after discussion as they had majority. As soon as this speculation started, a new debate started in the country, many opposition leaders termed bringing any such bill will be unconstitutional.

**'Shocking to see BJP taking credit of AAP's developmental work'**



NEW DELHI: Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) on Sunday that it is shocking to see that the BJP takes credit of the developmental work done by the AAP government. AAP said that all money on PWD roads was spent by the PWD of Delhi government, and all money on the MCD roads was spent by the MCD. "The Central government has only spent money on NDMC and NHAI roads. Such level of politics is not going to help the country. We are about to host the G20 summit where India but the only thing BJP cares about is playing dirty politics," AAP said.

**Circular Business to generate \$7 bn revenue by 2035 in India: Report**

NEW DELHI: Circular business models have the potential to attract revenue potential of USD 7 billion by 2035, according to a joint report by India Cellular & Electronics Association (ICEA) and Accenture issued Monday.



A total of six circular business models, including circular design, repair, and resell, can reshape the electronics sector, driving economic growth and boosting resilience. "The projected market size for these circular models is valued at USD 13 billion by 2035. Yet, the total addressable market, achievable through the public and private partnerships, increases to USD 20 billion, revealing an untapped potential of 35%," the report said. The circular economy approach in electronics domain must outgrow its role in e-waste management to evolve into a powerhouse for resilience, resource efficiency, and economic growth. India's dynamic circular elec-

tronics policy framework is undergoing a metamorphosis, driven by the pivotal E-Waste Management (EWM) Rules and the strategic prioritization of e-waste by NITI Aayog. The report highlighted that failure to embrace the circular transition could affect approx. 1-3% of electronics industry's EBITDA, leading to potential revenue loss. India's unique socio-economic and manufacturing landscape, a strategic balancing of five key trade-offs is imperative. These include decisions on policy vision, formalizing the informal sector, incentivizing ease of doing business, managing supply-side strength, and tapping into consumer-driven demand shift, the report added.

**INDIA bloc leaders accuses BJP of destroying country**



MUMBAI: Several leaders from Opposition bloc INDIA have launched a scathing attack at the ruling BJP, accusing it of destroying the country, and said its alliance is for rebuilding the country. "The future of India now as a nation is integrally linked to the future of this alliance (INDIA). This is not a coalition of

fight elections, it is for rebuilding the country." Echoing a similar sentiment, Samajwadi Party (SP) MP Ram Gopal Yadav while taking a swipe at the BJP said, "The alliance of Opposition parties has taken place to save the soul of India. Those sitting in power are destroying India." He also exuded confidence that the Opposition will oust the ruling BJP in the 2024 Lok Sabha elections. "We will work unitedly. We will oust them in 2024," Yadav said referring to the forthcoming General Elections. Rashtriya Lok Dal (RLD) President and MP Jayant Singh said, "This country with its great diversity, history, importance in the world stage, needs collective leadership that is responsive to the needs and aspirations of all sections of society."

**Launch of Aditya-L1 and IIA's VELC technically most challenging payload onboard it**

ARUN KUMAR RAO  
Bengaluru

Aditya-L1 will be launched by PSLV-C57 rocket on September 2 at 11:50 AM. It carries seven payloads to study the Sun, four of which will observe the light from the Sun and the remaining three will measure in situ parameters of the plasma and magnetic fields. Aditya-L1 will be placed in a halo orbit around the Lagrangian Point 1 (L1), which is 1.5 million km from the Earth in the direction of the Sun. It will revolve around the Sun with the same relative position and hence can see the Sun continuously.

The largest and technically most challenging payload on Aditya-L1 is the "Visible Emission Line Coronagraph" (VELC) was integrated, tested, and calibrated at Indian Institute of Astrophysics' CREST (Centre of Research and Education in Science Technology) campus in Hosakaote with substantial collaboration with ISRO, VELC is an internally occulted coronagraph, with 40 different optical elements (mirrors, gratings, etc) inside it that are aligned precisely. The atmosphere of the Sun, the Corona, is what we see during a total solar eclipse. A coronagraph like the VELC is an instrument that cuts out the light from the disk of the Sun, and can thus image the



much fainter corona at all times. During the Press conference at IIA, Aditya L1 Project Scientist and Operation Manager for VELC Dr Muthu Priyal said "From the continuum channel, which is the imaging channel, an image will come -- one image per minute. So approximately 1,440 images for 24 hours, we will be receiving at the ground station,". She said IIA will host the VELC Payload Operations Centre (POC), which will receive raw data from ISRO's Indian Space Science Data Centre (ISSDC), process them further to make it suitable for scientific analysis, and send it back to ISSDC for dissemination. "Also a unique software has been developed by IIA to detect automatically the occurrence of coronal mass ejection and

the time it happened, which will be provided to science community within 24 hours -- whether it is directed towards the earth or whether it is a very energetic event, if the speed is high, will it hit the earth or not, etc -- all those information will be made available," she added. IIA officials told to media that 190 kg VELC payload will send images for five years, which is the nominal life of the satellite, but it could last long depending on the fuel consumption, etc. K Sasi-kumar Raja of IIA further said, out of four channels the continuum channel will run independently and send 1,440 images per day, while the other three spectroscopy channels will also give images, but that is dependent on how the observer wants.

**After Moon mission, India set date for the launch of its Solar Mission on Sept 2**

ARUN KUMAR RAO  
Bengaluru

Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) has set the date for the Launch of solar mission on September 2 at 11.50am. As Vikram and Pragyan, the Chandrayaan-3 lander and rover, continue to do science on the moon. The agency has completed the integration of the Aditya-L1 spacecraft -- India's first solar observatory mission with its workhorse launch vehicle, the PSLV, at Sriharikota. Aditya-L1 will take 4 months to travel till Lagrangian point 1 which is between the Sun and the Earth, about 1.5 million km from out planet. Fom L1 point, craft will provide remote observations of solar corona and in-situ observations of the solar wind.



Vikram Sarabhai Space Centre director S Unnikrishnan Nair told media that with this, Isro has entered the last leg of launch preparations. "The launch vehicle and spacecraft has been integrated. Now, we are carrying out tests after which the PSLV WILL BE MOVED TO THE LAUNCH PAD," he added. The spacecraft, realised at the UR Rao Satellite Centre (URSC), Bengaluru, had reached the spaceport in Sriharikota on August 14. Aditya-L1 is the first pace-based observatory class Indian solar mission to study the Sun. Aditya -L1 spacecraft will carry seven payloads to observe the photosphere, chromospheres, and the outermost layers of the Sun (the corona) using electromagnetic and particle detectors. Using the special vantage point of L1, four payloads will directly view the Sun and the remaining three payloads will carry out it --situ studies of particles and fields at the Lagrange point L1. It is planned to be placed in a halo orbit around the Lagrangian point1 (L1) of the Sun-Earth system, which is about 1.5 million km from the Earth. A satellite placed in L1 point has the major advantage of continuously viewing the Sun without any occultation or eclipse. This will provide a greater advantage of observing the solar activities continuously. Meantime ISRO said, Chandrayaan-3 rover Pragyan's baby steps towards functioning on lunar surface fraught with potential pitfalls continued when it spotted a crater of 4-metre diameter barely 3m ahead of where it stood, causing it to change course.

**SC questions J&K bifurcation, citing similarities with Punjab, Northeast**

The Supreme Court of India has raised significant queries regarding the bifurcation of Jammu and Kashmir in August 2019, drawing the parallels with situations in Punjab and the Northeast. Chief Justice DY Chandrachud also expressed concerns about preventing potential misuse of the authority to bifurcate a state, once delegated to the Central government. During the ongoing hearing of petitions that challenge the annulment of Article 370, which granted special status to Jammu and Kashmir, the centre has argued for its uniqueness. However, Justice SK Kaul, a member of the five-judge bench led by Justice Chandrachud, highlighted that various Indian states have encountered comparable challenges due to shared borders. Chief Justice Chandrachud questioned the authority of parliament to convert an existing state into a Union Territory.

**J&K statehood return: no fixed timeline, Centre tells SC**

FW DESK  
New Delhi

The Central government has informed the Supreme Court that it cannot provide an exact timeline for the restoration of statehood to Jammu and Kashmir, while emphasizing that the current union territory status is temporary. This statement was made during the hearing of a set of petitions challenging the 2019 Presidential Order that revoked the special status of the erstwhile state of Jammu and Kashmir and divided it into two Union Territories. The government's representative, Solicitor General Tushar Mehta, explained that the process of progressing towards granting Jammu and Kashmir full statehood is ongoing. However, he stated that due to the complex history of disturbances in the region, it's challenging to predict an exact timeframe for the complete restoration of statehood. The move to Union Territory status was described as a temporary measure.



Mehta also indicated that the Central government is prepared for elections, with the voter list update almost complete. He mentioned that the decision to hold elections will be taken by the respective State Election Commission and the Election Commission of India. The Solicitor General provided updates on the progress in the region, citing figures such as reduced instances of terrorist activities, infiltration, and casualties among security personnel. He pointed out that tourist visits to the region have increased and highlighted the decline in incidents like stone pelting.

**BJP, AAP spar over 'Shivling-shaped' fountains in Delhi installed ahead of G20**

NEW DELHI: AAP spokesperson Priyanka Kakkur's allegation that fountains installed at various places in the national capital ahead of the G20 Summit are 'Shivling-shaped' has created a controversy with BJP accusing the Kejriwal government of erecting them. The AAP and the BJP, are now accusing each other of hurting religious sentiments of Hindus. According to information, Shivling-shaped fountains have been installed between



Indira Gandhi International Airport and Dhaula Kuan. A few days ago, Delhi Lieutenant Governor V. K. Saxena also paid a visit to this place. Now, the AAP spokesperson has accused the L-G of playing with the sentiments of Hindus.

**E-Commerce Platforms to serve as enablers for Start-Ups, MSMEs: Union Minister**

NEW DELHI: Union Minister of State (Independent Charge) Science & Technology Jitendra Singh said that e-Commerce platforms can serve as important enablers for StartUps and MSMEs.



Addressing the fourth Amazon SMBhav Summit" on the theme 'Nurturing Innovation and Entrepreneurship: Paving the Path for Small Business Success', Singh said, the Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs) are crucial to India's economy as this sector comprises ancillary units, thereby contributing enormously to the overall industrial development of the country. These enterprises are engaged in the production, manufacturing and processing of goods and commodities. "All this is eventually going to take us step forward in the direction of Ease of Doing Business, particularly for the MSMEs, which are the greatest stakeholders and the potential beneficiaries," he said. Singh added that the collaboration with the e-Commerce platforms has an important role to play as

"You are, in a big way, supporting the MSMEs, but you could also look forward to creating MSMEs, young MSMEs with young entrepreneurs"

a bridge between the private and the public sector, the government and the industry, and most importantly between the capacity resources and the MSMEs. "You are, in a big way, supporting the MSMEs, but you could also look forward to creating MSMEs, young MSMEs with young entrepreneurs," he said. He said that the MSMEs hold the key to making India a USD 5 trillion economy and enhancing our 'Atmanirbhar Bharat' vision.

**INDIA parties to jointly contest the forthcoming Elections of Lok Sabha**

KAVITA SHARMA  
Mumbai

We, the INDIA parties, hereby resolve to contest the forthcoming Lok Sabha elections together as far as possible. Seat-sharing arrangements in different states will be initiated immediately and concluded at the earliest in a collaborative spirit of give-and-take. We, the INDIA parties, hereby resolve to organize public rallies at the earliest in



different parts of the country on issues of public concern and importance. The source said, "During the meeting today, a

deliberation will be held on the formation of the coordination panel, which will help in easing the discussions for the

INDIA bloc." "Besides the coordination panel, the leaders will also discuss the strategy for the upcoming Special Session of Parliament, on how the INDIA bloc will once again present a united face," the source said. We, the INDIA parties, hereby resolve to coordinate our respective communications and media strategies and campaigns with the theme Judega Bharat, Jitega India in different languages.

# 'People of India want change', says Pawar on eve of I.N.D.I.A. conclave

MUMBAI: Setting the tone for the two-day I.N.D.I.A. Conclave starting here on Thursday, Nationalist Congress Party (NCP) President Sharad Pawar said on Wednesday that "the people of the country want a change", for which the Opposition leaders are gathering here.

Speaking at a joint media briefing, Pawar hinted at the possibility of discussing the prickly issue of seat-sharing for the 2024 Lok Sabha elections by the national Opposition parties.

The NCP chief said that the first two I.N.D.I.A. alliance meetings were very critical and now the joint strategy of the Opposition bloc to counter the Bharatiya Janata Party is likely to be discussed over the next two days.

He said a panel comprising some senior leaders may be formed and given the task of discussing the seat-sharing formula for the Lok Sabha polls



at the state and local levels.

To a question on the allegations recently hurled by Prime Minister Narendra Modi at various national Opposition leaders, Pawar dared the Centre that "if they have the courage, they should investigate the cases and bring out the facts" instead of just making such accusations.

On the likely stance of BSP

supremo Mayawati, who is reportedly toying with the idea of joining I.N.D.I.A., Pawar said it remains to be seen, as "she is also having discussions with the BJP".

The 83-year-old leader was addressing a packed media conference on the eve of the two-day I.N.D.I.A. Conclave scheduled on Thursday-Friday to chart out the national

Opposition parties' gameplan to dislodge the BJP from power.

So far, 28 Opposition parties have confirmed participation in the meeting from all over India. This is the first INDIA Conclave to be held in a state not ruled by any of the bloc's constituents, unlike the previous two meetings held in Bihar and Karnataka.

# CAG Report: 25 samples of drinking water in Haryana found unfit containing bacteria, frogs and coliform

SATISH HANDA

A report by the Comptroller and Auditor General (CAG) reveals that drinking water in several places across Haryana state is contaminated with bacteria, frogs and even coliform, whereas physical and chemical parameters are beyond the permissible limits. Most of the samples were sent to the Public Health Department laboratory at Karnal and Shriram Institutes of Industrial Research New Delhi for testing. According to the CAG report, with effect from 2016 to 2021 samples of the water were detected contaminated which caused health diseases in 2901 cases, of whom as many as 14 persons were reported dead.



as many as 12 patients were reported dead.

In an audit of rural and urban water supply schemes, CAG took samples of water supply at 25 locations in the state, collected by the Public Health Engineering Department which included 13 water samples, Urban Local Bodies collected eight samples, Haryana Shehri Vikas Pradhikaran collected four samples and one set of the samples was sent to the Public Health Engineering Department (PHED) laboratory at Karnal and the other set was sent to the Shri Ram Institute of Industrial Research (SRI), New Delhi for

analysis. According to information, with effect from April 2016 to March 2021 the Public Health Department in the state collected a total number of 2,64,025 water samples for testing, of which 18,107 water samples (nearly 7%) were found unfit for drinking.

According to CAG report, Service Reservoirs were in use and at three locations the cleaning status was not satisfactory, there was formation of algae and frogs inside these reservoirs which were found uncovered. There was growth of Sarkanda in few water tanks and the CAG even produced photographs to prove the fact. At most of the locations of the bacteriological analysis of the samples, the presence of coliform confirmed that water was not potable, said CAG that the presence of coliform was detected in 19 samples out of 25 samples as per the report submitted by PHED laboratory, whereas the Shriram Research Laboratory detected five samples having the presence of coliform.

It was observed that at 12 locations out of the selected 25 locations, chlorination was not detected in the water samples. At 11 locations chlorination was found to be more than the prescribed limit and at two locations, chlorination was found within the permissible limit. However, at the Shriram Research Laboratory, chlorination was found slightly above

# Fast increase in prices, unemployment and crimes during BJP rule in Haryana: Hooda



SATISH HANDA

Addressing media persons at Chandigarh, former Chief Minister Haryana Bhupinder Singh Hooda said that ruling BJP government in Haryana increased the price of LPG cylinder from Rs 400 to Rs 1150, have now reduced the price by Rs 200 only which is 'Badi Loot-Chhoti Chhoot' just to befoul consumers. He said that in past nine years when BJP came to power in the state the prices of all essential commodities have increased four times, unemployment in the state has witnessed three times increase, crimes in the state have been increased by hundred percent in past nine years. Hooda said, during recent Monsoon Haryana Vidhan Sabha session BJP ministers avoided to reply to any query raised by opposition in the session. He said, questions were raised regarding protests against ruling government by the government employees, Asha workers, farmers Panchayat

members, temporary as well as contract basis workers but the ruling government refused to reply in most of the issues raised recent in Vidhan Sabha session.

Hooda said that ruling government admitted, there is drastic increase in prices of every essential commodity, unemployment in the state witnessed three times increase recorded as 8.8%. He said nearly two lakh posts in government offices in the state are lying vacant but state government is busy only in sorting out 'paper leak' and 'paper copy' scams instead of filling up the vacant positions scams which clearly indicates that the ruling government playing with the future of youths in the state. Former Chief Minister Hooda said that according to available government data since after year 2014, as many as 12 unemployed youths have been compelled to commit suicide in the state being remained unemployed for a long time.

# BJP govt in Haryana pushed state 20 years behind in 9 years: Shelja

SATISH HANDA  
Ambala

Addressing large number of Congress leaders in the area, All India Congress Committee General Secretary and former HPCC president Kumari Shelja



accused ruling BJP government in Haryana responsible for pushing the state about 20 years behind in past nine years rule and during coming 2024 Vidhan Sabha polls people of the state will take revenge from BJP wiping them out from the state. Shelja was addressing a large gathering at her Ambala Cantt residence and gave them directions for the success of the party in the coming Lok Sabha and Vidhan Sabha elections.

Shelja said that BJP is a political party always in favour of the rich people and have no concern for the welfare of common communities including those living below poverty line in the state, as such people have lost their confidence in BJP provided repeated severe shocks to over 45 lakh people in the state by imposing heavy property tax on their properties as well as charging garbage collection tax from the residents for three years in spite of the fact BJP government had assured that door-to-door garbage will be collected free of cost, although the concerned minister of the department had objected over the same. Shelja alleged BJP government in the state has failed to control rising prices of all essential commodities and it has become for poor as well as mid-income families to meet the expenses of both end meals to their families.

# Babaria to submit report of 10 Lok Sabha Congress contestants & 33 district presidents in Haryana

SATISH HANDA

Haryana Congress in-charge the report to the Congress high command to finalize the names of the candidates likely to contest in coming 10 Lok Sabha seats in Haryana. He completed the work of one-to-one meetings with the representatives of all parliamentary constituencies for few days and shortlisted the names of a few Congress leaders. With the upcoming Lok Sabha elections, Babria had meetings regarding the formation of the organization in Haryana. He prepared his report based on the feedback of the leaders of 90 assembly constituencies falling under all 10 Lok Sabha constituencies and submitted to the party's higher leadership so that the final can be taken accordingly.

Babria given a hint that ticket system will not be held on quota basis this time but on the basis of merits and ability based on the feedback collected by him. He said that prospective candidates to fight elections on 10 Lok Sabha seats has already been chosen on the basis of a feedback report. Babria said that meanwhile Congress is going to constitute a working committee awaited since a long time in Haryana state selecting as many 33 faces in all districts and first list of district working body will be released between 10th to 15th September after having consultation with Rahul Gandhi.

Meanwhile, a delegation led by Rashtriya Punjabi Mahasabha President and former Information Commissioner Ashok Mehta met state in-charge Deepak Babaria in which there was an important discussion on the subject of



giving representation to the Punjabi community in the upcoming elections. But due to lack of time, Babaria asked for a separate meeting shortly. Mehta told that he has already demanded to give representation to the Punjabi society in front of the state in-charge where it will be discussed in detail in the next meeting. Babria said that as many as 10 teams of three members each are having a survey to recommend faces suitable for district presidents in a week's time when the list of names will be released before September 10. He said that in Ambala district three district presidents are being appointed to look after rural areas in the district, Ambala City and Ambala Cantt.

Congress has already released a list of media in-charge in all 33 districts in the state enabling it to start spade work. Babria said that a decision has been taken to give a chance to hold positions in district-wise network including to youths, females and those belonging to backward class irrespective of caste and religion. He said that initial discussion has already been made in every district by him after having feedback from party leaders as well as workers. Sources reveal, Babria smelled differences and groupism in party senior leaders in Haryana state and advised that everyone should join hands for the victory of party at this stage in the state, otherwise it will be too late.

# Arvinder Singh Lovely appointed Delhi Cong Chief

NEW DELHI: Congress president Mallikarjun Kharge on Thursday appointed Arvinder Singh Lovely as the Delhi Congress chief replacing Chaudhary Anil Kumar. Congress took this decision when less than seven months left for the Lok Sabha elections,



In an official communication, Congress general secretary (organisation) K.C. Venugopal said, "Congress president has approved the appointment of Arvinder Singh Lovely as the Delhi Congress chief, with immediate effect."

It also said that the party appreciates the contribution of outgoing state unit chief Chaudhary Anil Kumar. The development comes days after the Congress president discussed the issue of replacing the Delhi unit chief with sev-

eral leaders, including former Congress president Rahul Gandhi and several others from the Delhi unit.

Lovely has also served as a minister in the Sheila Dikshit-led Congress government in the national capital. He contested the 2019 Lok Sabha elections unsuccessfully from the east Delhi Parliamentary seat.

The Congress, which had ruled the national capital for three consecutive terms under Sheila Dikshit has been unable to win a single seat in the Delhi assembly in two consecutive assembly elections. The appointment comes at a time when the Congress along with 26 like-minded opposition parties have brought the Indian National Developmental Inclusive Alliance (INDIA) to take on the BJP at the centre.

The AAP, which is currently a ruling party in the national capital is also part of the alliance and many of the senior leaders of Delhi have objected to having any kind of alliance with it in the national capital. Even several Congress leaders have objected to having any kind of alliance with AAP in Punjab.

# Sukhbir Badal urges GOI to review its decision to effectively ban export of rice

CHANDIGARH: Shiromani Akali Dal (SAD) president Sukhbir Singh Badal urged the union government to immediately review its decision to effectively ban export of rice, saying "every time our farmers stand to profit from an increase in global rice prices, the centre bans its export. This is discriminatory. The ban needs to be revoked immediately".



The SAD president was reacting to the ban imposed on basmati rice valued at less than \$1,200 per metric tonne which the government claims is aimed at stopping the export of non-basmati rice by reclassifying the same. This will however have an impact on even export of basmati rice.

Stating that this was another anti-farmer decision on the heels of ban on export of non-basmati rice and levy of 20 per cent duty on export of par-boiled rice, Sukhbir Singh Badal said "instead of such bans the union government should hike the minimum support price (MSP) of paddy to aid the food security needs of the country". Asserting that farmers had been dealt a double whammy by being forced to sell their paddy crop at a lower msp compared to world prices, Badal said "now when they stand to benefit due to high export price of rice, export of this commodity has been banned".

Sukhbir Badal said earlier farmers had been denied the benefits of an increase in wheat prices globally while

the central government banning wheat export last year. "Farmers desperately need higher prices to offset the loss due to flooding which has forced many of them to go in for re-transplantation of paddy when the first crop was destroyed. With no fair compensation for their crop losses in sight with the Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) government failing to even complete the girdawari exercise, the ban on export of rice as well as exorbitant duties on par-boiled rice will heighten the farm crisis in the State".

The SAD President also asserted that contrary to projections, rice prices only accounted for a slight increase in the consumer price index and should not be decreased forcibly. "Inflation in India is being driven by the high prices of petrol and diesel as well as vegetables and these twin issues which should be addressed immediately" Badal also asserted that a deliberate attempt to reduce paddy prices in the open market in the country was also against the centre's resolve to double farm income by this year end.

# Controversy between Khattar & Hooda pointing at each other

SATISH HANDA

Haryana Chief Minister Manohar Lal Khattar during Monsoon session in Vidhan Sabha on Monday took the fight through allegations war with the opposition Congress former Chief Minister Bhupinder Singh Hooda alleging sex molestation allegation on one of its MLAs Sandeep Singh a former Sports Minister in Haryana saying that in spite of the fact Chandigarh police has already issued the against the alleged former minister but Haryana Chief Minister saving him as well as not pressing him to submit his resignation on humanity grounds. During the Vidhan Sabha session fingers were also pointed against some Congress MLAs in connection with the Nuh violence. Khattar also hinted that he won't be ordering any judicial inquiry into the communal clashes in Nuh violence and also in adjoining areas after a Vishwa Hindu Parishad procession was attacked by a mob on July 31 leading to the death of six people, including two home guards and a MLA of the Congress suspected involved



in happenings. Khattar said media persons after the day's proceedings in the state Assembly ended that Haryana Police has sent a notice to Congress MLA Mamman Khan to question him regarding Nuh violence on August 30. He disclosed that more than 300 persons suspected involved in recent violence at Nuh and adjoining area have been arrested by the police registered as many as 160 FIRs. Khattar expressed appreciation for the residents of Nuh and adjoining area and several social welfare organizations from both communities of the area who made an appeal for peace and also supported police to stop violence. He conveyed thanks to the Vishwa Hindu Parishad (VHP), Bajrang Dal, other religious organizations and saints for making efforts to maintain peace and stop violence by antisocial elements in the area.

# 14 months baby, saved by AIIMS doctors' onboard Vistara flight, is still "critical"

YOGESH KANT  
New Delhi

In a tense moment high in the skies, a 14 months old baby, who was saved by a team of doctors from All India Institute of Medical Sciences (AIIMS) on board a Bengaluru-Delhi Vistara flight on Sunday, is in a critical stage on a life support ventilator at a Nagpur hospital in Maharashtra.

"Late night on August 27, a critical medical situation arose involving an infant passenger - a 14-month-old baby - travelling on Flight No. UK814 of Vistara Airlines from Bangalore to Delhi. In a remarkable display of preparedness and professionalism, co-passengers from medical backgrounds on board promptly initiated life-saving measures by providing CPR (cardiopulmonary resuscitation) to the baby passenger," said deputy general manager (communications) of Nagpur-based KIMS-Kingsway Hospitals Aejaz Shami in a statement.

As the situation got critical, the airline team efficiently coordinated with Nagpur airport authorities for an emergency landing in Nagpur. KIMS-Kingsway Hospitals' ambulance was at service to ensure the seamless transfer of the infant passenger to KIMS-Kingsway Hospital, the statement added.



A team of medical experts, was a co-passenger, and returning from an even hoisted by the Indian Society for Vascular and Interventional Radiology (ISVIR) stepped up, exemplifying the core spirit of their profession.

Senior Resident (Cardiac Radiology) Dr Damandeep Singh,



Senior Resident (Anaesthesia) Dr Navdeep Kaur, Senior Resident (OBG) Dr Oishika, former senior resident (AIIMS Radiology) Dr Rishab Jain, and Senior Resident (Cardiac Radiology) Dr Avichala Taxak found themselves jumping into action when a distress call came through in the cabin of the Vistara Airline flight UK-814.

As fellow passengers watched in awe, these individuals — their backgrounds as diverse as their skills were complementary — transformed from mere travellers into a formidable medical team.

# Markazi Taleemi Board condemns child slapping incident in UP school, calls for strict action against school and accused

FW DESK  
New Delhi

The Chairman of the Markazi Taleemi Board (MTB), Prof Salim Engineer condemned the child slapping incident in a school in Khubbapur, Muzaffarnagar, Uttar Pradesh, and demanded strict action by the authorities against the school and the accused. In a statement to the media, the MTB Chairman said, "We are highly disturbed and condemn the incident of child slapping in the Neha Public School, Muzaffarnagar, Uttar Pradesh. Looking at the video that is being widely circulated in social media and from credible media reports, it appears that a teacher sitting in a classroom makes the students slap a Muslim boy on his face and back, one by one. From the video one can make out that the accused passes some racial slurs against other Muslim students and threatens them with similar treatment.

## Reduction in cooking gas cylinder prices will provide convenience to all my sisters says Modi



**NEW DELHI:** Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Tuesday said that the reduction in prices of cooking gas cylinders by Rs 200 for all connection holders will give a lot of convenience to all my sisters and family members on the occasion of Rakshabandhan. "Modi said that he wishes that all his sisters remain happy and healthy, he wrote on X. His comment came after the union cabinet announced reduction in prices of cooking gas LPG cylinders by Rs 200 for all connection holders. The cabinet also announced 75 lakh new connections under the Ujjwala scheme.

## 'Slashing cylinder price': Sins of nine years cannot be washed away: Kharge

**NEW DELHI:** Congress President Mallikarjun Kharge on Tuesday took a veiled dig at the BJP government for Centre alleging that the election gifts started rolling out after

fearing a dip in the vote and said the saffron party had mercilessly looted the people for last nine and half years and their sins cannot be washed away.

"When the votes started decreasing, then the election gifts started getting distributed. The merciless Modi government, which looted the hard earned money of the people, is now showing feigned goodwill towards the mothers and sisters. For 9 and a half years, by selling Rs 400 LPG cylinders for Rs 1, 100, they kept destroying the life of the common man, then why didn't any 'affectionate gift' come to mind?" Kharge wrote on X.

## Treating other countries only as a market will never work: PM Modi

**NEW DELHI:** Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Sunday said a profitable market can be sustained where there is a balance in the interests of producers and consumers, adding treating other countries only as a market will never work.

"A profitable market can be sustained where there is a balance in the interest of producers and consumers. This also applied to nations, treating other countries only as a market will never work. It will even harm the producing countries sooner or later," Modi said while addressing the B20 Summit here.

He said, "Making everyone equal partners in the progress in the way forward. There are many global business leaders here, can we all give more thought on to how to make business more consumer cen-



tric. These consumers could be individuals or countries, their interest need to be taken care of as well." "Can we think of a yearly campaign for this? Every year, can global business leaders come together to dedicate themselves for the good of the consumers and their markets. We talk about consumer rights. The Consumer Rights Day is also celebrated across the world.

Can we take the initiative for consumer care?," Modi asked the delegates. "Once we start celebrating the Consumer Care Day, the environment will change with a positive signal. If we talk about the consumer care, then the issues related to rights, will automatically be solved. Therefore International Consumer Care Day, I want you all to think on this. This will further strengthen trust between the consumer and the business," he said. India holds an important place in building an efficient and trusted global

supply chain, Modi added.

Referring to climate change, water security, cyber security, among others, the Prime Minister said, "These all puts an impact on business. To tackle this, we have to increase our initiatives." Talking about issues of crypto currency, Modi said, "More and more integrated approach is required. For this, a global framework should be made in which all the stakeholders should be taken care of."

Mentioning about the Artificial Intelligence (AI), the Prime Minister said, "Today the world is seeing excitement for AI. But, there are some ethical considerations, skilling and re-skilling. We have to unitedly solve this." "Global business communities and governments, together have to ensure that ethical AI gets expansion," Modi added.

## Article 35A denied key rights to non-residents in J&amp;K: Supreme Court

FW DESK

Chief Justice of India DY Chandrachud on Tuesday said that Article 35A of the Constitution had stripped individuals not residing in Jammu and Kashmir of significant constitutional rights. The Chief Justice highlighted that this article had particularly curtailed equality of opportunity, state government employment, and the right to purchase land for non-residents.

Article 35A, which was annulled in August 2019 alongside Article 370, permitted the state's legislature to define "permanent residents" and grant them special privileges concerning public employment, property ownership, and settlement.

Chief Justice Chandrachud pointed out the direct impact of Article 35A on certain fundamental rights. Article 16(1), which assures citizens of equal opportunity in public employment, had been negated by Article 35A. This infringement remained protected from legal challenges, effectively restricting the power of judicial review.



Moreover, Article 19, which guarantees the right to reside and settle in any part of the country, was also compromised. The rationale for scrapping the special status of Jammu and Kashmir, as advocated by the Centre, was to create a level playing field and integrate the region with the rest of the country. Solicitor General Tushar Mehta, representing the Centre, highlighted that the move had brought Jammu and Kashmir in line with the nation, thereby implementing welfare laws that were previously not applicable to the region.

A notable example mentioned was the introduction of the Right to Education through a constitutional amendment.

## Police busts terror module In Jammu and Kashmir's Bandiporav

FW DESK

The Jammu and Kashmir Police, in collaboration with Army and the CRPF dismantled a terror module operating in the Bandipora district of North Kashmir.

Acting swiftly on a specific intelligence, Jammu and Kashmir Police established a checkpoint in the Dardgund area of the district on August 25. During this operation, the police apprehended a suspicious individual who attempted to evade capture. The detainee, identified as Shafayat Zubair Rishi from Nesbal Sumbal, was found in possession of incriminating evidence including a pistol, a pistol magazine, eight rounds of ammunition, and other materials, the officials said.

"Pertinently, the accused was in touch with Pak based terror handler Mushtaq Ahmad Mir who exfiltrated to Pak in 1999 and was working on revival of terrorists in the district. He was also involved in the year 2000 Kothibagh IED blast in which 14 people including 12 police personnel were killed and had remained associated with proscribed militant outfit HM and later on with militant outfit Al-Badr. Shafayat Zubair Rishi is also involved in burning an Army vehicle in Sumbal in 2009 and is out on bail in the said case," the police spokesman said.

His interrogation revealed that he was en route to meeting with Munira Begum, the wife of a deceased terrorist and former area commander Yousuf Choupan. The aim was to collect a cache of arms and ammunition.

## Modi, Meets ISRO scientists involved in Chandrayaan-3 Mission in Bengaluru

ARUN KUMAR RAO  
Bengaluru

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Saturday visited the ISRO Telemetry Tracking and Command Network (ISTRAC) in Bengaluru after his arrival from Greece and addressed team ISRO on the success of Chandrayaan-3. PM Modi met and interacted with ISRO scientists involved in the Chandrayaan-3 mission where he was also briefed about the findings and progress in the Chandrayaan-3 Mission.

Earlier on his arrival addressing a large gathering outside the HAL airport, Modi raised the slogan "Jai Vigyan Jai Anusandhan". He said "I could not stop myself as I was not in the country, but I decided to visit Bengaluru first

and meet our scientists right after visiting India," PM Modi said outside HAL airport in Bengaluru.

He also made three big announcements on the occasion, while giving emotional speech to ISRO heroes and scientists. PM Modi announced the point where the moon lander of Chandrayaan-3 landed will now be known as Shiv Shakti. He said "In Shiv, there is resolution for the welfare of humanity and Shakti gives us strength to fulfil those resolutions. This Shiv Shakti point of the moon also gives a sense of connections with the Himalaya to Kanyakumari, Shiv Shakti point of the Moon will bear witness to this scientific and philosophical thinking of India," He added.

## PM Modi greets nation on World Sanskrit Day



**NEW DELHI:** Prime Minister Narendra Modi on August 31, greeted the nation on the occasion of World Sanskrit Day. "Greetings on World Sanskrit Day. I laud all those who are passionate about it. India has a very special relation with Sanskrit.

"To celebrate this great language, I urge you all to share one sentence in Sanskrit. In the post below, I will also share a sentence. Don't forget to use #CelebratingSanskrit," he said on X (formerly Twitter).

Sanskrit Diwas is usually celebrated on Shraavana Poonmima, which is the full moon day in the month of Shraavana.

It is an annual event that focuses on the ancient Indian language and tells people why they should learn it.

## Additional attention to Biden's security, a special elevator is being prepared in Delhi's hotel!

MEENAKSHI BHATTACHARYA  
New Delhi

Preparations are in full swing for US President Joe Biden's visit to India. He is coming to Delhi within few days to attend the G-20 summit and will stay at the ITC Maurya Sheraton Hotel in the capital where 400 rooms booked for him and his companions. A special elevator is being made in the hotel with extra attention to his safety! As you know, the G20 Summit is being held in New Delhi in the second week of September. The main event will be held on September 9 to 10. On this occasion, the state leaders of several countries, including US



President Joe Biden, will come to the capital. Heads of state of 29 countries are expected to be accompanied by heads of the European Union, invited guest countries and heads of 14 international organizations. More than 30 hotels in the Delhi Capital Region have been earmarked to accommodate the

guests. Undoubtedly, among all the guests, there will be a special eye on the President of the United States, Joe Biden. The president of the world's most powerful country will stay at the ITC Maurya Sheraton Hotel. Preparations for this have already started.

## Why the farmers have to agitate everytime to get compensation?

JAG MOHAN THAKEN

While participating in a protest march to press

for compensation for crop loss in the recent floods in the state, a Punjab farmer, Preetam Singh, died in a chaos during a clash between the agitating farmers and the police on August 21. On the call of farmer unions of Punjab, Haryana and other neighbouring states the farmers were marching ahead towards Chandigarh to congregate on August 22, 2023 for highlighting and pressurising for their demands including to seek compensation for the damage to their crops incurred during the recent floods.

Haryana farmers are also organising rallies and sit-ins and the recent was the state level rally on August 23, held in Bhiwani under the banner of All India Kisan Sabha (AIKS), wherein they had programmed to gherao the residence of Haryana Agriculture & Farmers' Welfare Minister, J P Dalal, but Mr. Dalal did not come forward for the meeting despite a pre-notice by the farmer union as alleged by AIKS leaders.

Addressing the farmers' congregation, National Vice President of All India Kisan Sabha and national leader of Samyukta Kisan Morcha, Com. Inderjit Singh said that thousands of crores of rupees of insurance claim and compensation of the farmers of the state for the damaged crops are due, half of Haryana's districts have been affected in the flood, the crops were damaged, thousands of milch animals died and now also due to severe drought in many parts of the state, the kharif crops have been destroyed, and farmers are protesting and demanding for relief and compensation, but the state government and the central government have become deaf and dumb and no one is listening to the cry of the distressed farmers. Even the state unit of AIKS had submitted a memorandum to the Agriculture & Welfare Minister of the state a month back, demanding time for the delegation to talk, but the minister is deliberately not

giving time and today, even after coming to know, he is not at the residence to meet the farmers.

Haryana Deputy Chief Minister, Dushyant Chautala also accepting the loss to crops and lives in Haryana Vidhan Sabha on August 25, 2023, said, "The total crop loss area uploaded at E-Kshatipurti portal, by 1,35,541 farmers, in 4,475 villages of the State as on August 22, 2023 is 6,61,644 acres. 47 human lives have been lost. 333 claims against the animal loss have been reported in the portal and a total number of 5,380 houses are claimed to have been damaged due to flood besides the damage of 109 commercial units in the State."

Dushyant Chautala assured that whatever damage has been caused to the life, property, farm or business of any citizen due to the recent flood disaster, it will be completely compensated as per the guidelines of NDRF.

AIKS claims that on the 81st anniversary of the "Quit India Day" called against British Imperialism, on 9th August, 2023, farmers, agricultural workers and workers of India had collective actions across the country with the slogan "Corporate Looters, Quit India, Quit Agriculture" in protest against the pro-corporate policies of the Narendra Modi-led BJP-RSS Union Government.

In Rajasthan also the situation is also the same and the farmers are continuously agitating for getting the insurance claim under Prime Minister Fasal Bima Yojana (PMFBY). On 9 August 2023, the 81st anniversary of Quit India Day, the AIKS Churu District Committee in Rajasthan organised a massive rally of thousands of farmers. Among the main speakers, those who addressed the rally were AIKS President Dr Ashok Dhawale, Vice President Amra Ram and State President Pema Ram.

This rally was the next stage in the one-year-long AIKS struggle for just compensation for heavy crop damages in the Kharif 2021 season under the crop insurance scheme.

Farmers Leaders alleged that instead of 700 crore rupees that were due to farmers by using crop cutting data, the SBI General



Year	Premium collected	Claim Paid	Profit
2016-17	21949.87	16826.75	5123.12
2017-18	24468.36	22087.97	2380.39
2018-19	29687.75	29336.91	350.84
2019-20	32362.06	27372.97	4989.09
2020-21	31689.95	20771.05	10918.90
2021-22	29598.43	17881.43	11717.00
2022-23	27900.78	5760.80	22139.98
TOTAL	197657.20	140037.88	57619.32

Insurance Company had given them only 213 crore rupees by using satellite data. The central and state governments of the BJP and the Congress respectively were in league with the insurance company.

Other demands of the rally were MSP guarantee, complete loan waiver to the peasantry, six hours regular electricity to tube wells, and urgent demands concerning irrigation.

## What the PMFBY is?

To provide financial support to farmers suffering crop loss/damage arising out of unforeseen events, a new scheme namely, Pradhan Mantri Fasal Bima Yojana (PMFBY) was approved for implementation in all States and Union Territories from Kharif 2016 season in place of National Agricultural Insurance Scheme (NAIS) and Modified National Agricultural Insurance Scheme (MNAIS). PMFBY was claimed a marked improvement over the earlier schemes on several counts and a comprehensive risk coverage from pre-sowing to post-harvest losses was provided under it. A budget provision of Rs.5501.15 crore was made for the scheme during 2016-17.

The PMFBY was made compulsory for loanee farmers availing crop loans for notified crops in notified areas and voluntary for

non-loanee farmers.

Stating PMFBY a successful and beneficial scheme for the farmers, Union Minister of Agriculture and Farmers Welfare, Narendra Singh Tomar in a written reply in Rajya Sabha on 21 July, 2023 submitted details about Premium Collection and Insurance Claims under Pradhan Mantri Fasal Bima Yojana and shown that a claim amount of Rs. 140037.88 crore has been paid to the farmers from 2016-17 to 2022-23 by the insurance companies.

## (AMOUNT IN CRORES, FIGURES OF PREMIUM AND CLAIM PAID - SOURCE PIB, AND PROFIT CALCULATIONS MADE BY THE AUTHOR)

PMFBY: Is it a defective scheme or failure in implementation?

Union Minister of Agriculture and Farmers Welfare, Narendra Singh Tomar in a written reply in Rajya Sabha on 21 July, 2023 claimed that all the major work relating to the assessment of crop yield/crop loss for calculation of admissible claims are being performed by the concerned State Government or Joint Committee of State Government officials and concerned insurance company. However, during implementation of the PMFBY, some complaints against insurance companies about non-payment and delayed payment of claims; under payment

of claims on account of incorrect/delayed submission of insurance proposals by banks; discrepancy in yield data & consequent disputes between State Government and insurance companies, delay in providing State Government share of funds, non-deployment of sufficient personnel by insurance companies etc., have been received in the past in the country. Most of the complaints have been suitably addressed.

If most of the complaints have been suitably addressed, as claimed by Union Agriculture Minister, then why a claim amount of nearly Rs.1178 crore relating to the period of 2018 to 2022 is still pending in Haryana and why 2.43 lakh farmers are eagerly waiting for the PMFBY claim to be settled yet? The Union Minister should look into the matter personally, whether it is due to the defective PMFBY scheme or failure of the implementing system?

A Hindi daily, Dainik Bhaskar, in its Hisar (Haryana) edition dated 20 August, 2023 reports that in Haryana a claim of Rs. 1178 crore relating to the year 2018 to 2022 of 2.43 lakh farmers residing in 17 districts of the state is pending under PMFBY. Topping the list 1.25 lakh farmers are waiting for their claim amounting more than Rs.600 crore in Sirsa district, in Hisar 75 thousand farmers are being still deprived of Rs. 309 Core and in Bhiwani district also the farmers are at the third position and waiting for a claim amount of Rs. 200 crores.

The problems being faced by the farmers at ground level show that the PMFBY has both - A defective scheme as well as failure of the implementing system.

The premium collection from farmers for Kharif crops generally runs up to 31 July by the banks and after the process completion the banks send the premium money to the concerned Insurance agencies, the agencies also take some time to generate the insurance policies, till then harvesting of the kharif crops gets started. A banker from Haryana says that the banks have collected the insurance money from the farmers and the amount is being kept in Sundry Account,

because the data feeding process is so complicated that it will take one month more to upload the required data on the portal.

It is very strange to mention that in Haryana even the insurance agency had not been finalised in cluster-3 till 27 August, the banks have collected the premium from the farmers and keeping the premium amount with them.

Additional Director (Statistics), Agriculture & Farmers Welfare Department, Haryana in its letter No. 9995 dated 25/8/2023 sent to The Convener, State Level Bankers Committee (SLBC), Chandigarh, informed that Re-tender is under process by the state government to select the Implementing Insurance Company only in cluster-3 for Kharif 2023 to Rabi 2023-24 under PMFBY. Therefore, Banks are requested to stop enrolment for cluster-3 till the Implementing Insurance Company is finalised.

How the insurance companies can assess the loss in the harvested crops and how they can apply the 'Crop -Cutting' method after the crops have been harvested? To hide their failure to work in time, the insurance companies take the help of satellite data and pictures, which creates resentment among the farmers as satellite cannot show the actual loss/ damage. How can a satellite capture the insects/ crop diseases hit crops? For example, the insurance company used satellite data instead of crop cutting method in Churu district of Rajasthan. Rajasthan farmers leaders allege that instead of 700 crore rupees that were due to farmers by using crop cutting data, the SBI General Insurance Company had given them only 213 crore rupees by using satellite data.

Now through its letter dated 18/8/2023, Akhil Bhartiya Kisan Sabha, District committee, Churu, Rajasthan has requested the District Collector, Churu to order to start 'Crop Cutting' immediately so that exact loss to the crops can be assessed, as due to severe heat and shortage of rain in the region the kharif crops are ready to be harvested and some farmers have even started the harvesting. The central government has accepted some discrepancies in

PMFBY and laxity by the system in implementation. (PIB release dated 14 March, 2023)

"Though timelines for each activity including settlement of claims are provided in the Operational Guidelines of PMFBY, settlement of few claims in some States got slightly delayed due to reasons like delayed transmission of yield data and late release of State share in premium subsidy by the States, yield related disputes between insurance companies and States, non-receipt of account details of some farmers for transfer of claims to the bank account of eligible farmers and National Electronic Fund Transfer (NEFT) related issues, erroneous/incomplete entry of individual farmers data on National Crop Insurance Portal (NCIP), delay in remittance of farmers share of premium/non-remittance of farmers share of premium to concerned insurance company etc."

Feeling the shortcomings in PMFBY, some States/UTs like Bihar, Telangana, Andhra Pradesh, Jharkhand, West Bengal and Gujarat have opted out of the scheme after implementing it for some seasons due to their own reasons like perception about risk and financial constraints. Due to the efforts of Ministry of Agriculture & Farmers Welfare, Andhra Pradesh re-joined the scheme from Kharif 2022 season and Punjab has made a budget announcement to do so. Farmer Unions are also demanding a new policy in place of PMFBY.

A Haryana based RTI activist and farmer leader Dr. Balbir Singh alleges that there is a nexus between governments and the insurance companies for allowing the insurance companies to loot the farmers' as well as public money. He says, "The savings of over Rs 57000 crore under PMFBY since 2016, mostly to private insurance companies clears the ulterior motive. This explains the reasons for the nexus between governments and insurance companies. Governments of India and the states deliberately try to cover up the loot of companies by disseminating the figures of insurance claim pay-

taken from the farmers through huge advertisements, hiding the premium paid from the government exchequer. But the reality of these efforts comes to the fore when the state governments fail to bear the PMFBY premium subsidy and by not accepting the average production figures (CCEs) by the companies, on the pretext of satellite technology. Due to denial of insurance claim, under PMFBY by the insurance companies on one or the other pretext, state governments of Punjab, Bihar, West Bengal, Andhra Pradesh, Telangana, Jharkhand, Gujarat etc. have shied away. The Maharashtra government is scrambling to get out. Madhya Pradesh and Tamil Nadu governments have adopted the Beed formula (80:110)."

Dr. Singh demands that in order to stop the loot of government and farmers' money by private insurance companies, the insurance premium for all the crops of all the farmers should be paid by the government and got it done by the government insurance company. All India Joint Convention of Workers and Farmers was held on August 24, 2023 at Talkatora Stadium, New Delhi. The convention was called by Samyukta Kisan Morcha and Joint Platform of Central Trade Unions, representing farmers and workers from across the nation. The Convention highlighted the agricultural crisis in India due to the pro-corporate and anti-farmer policies of the Union Government, which has resulted in falling incomes and rising indebtedness and suicides among the farmers.

The Convention culminated in the formulation of a Charter of Demands, encompassing issues such as implementation of written assurances made by the Union Government including the legal guarantee of MSP; withdrawal of PMFBY and establishing a comprehensive Public Sector Crop Insurance Scheme for all crops along with other issues.

Will the Central Government re-assess the PMFBY or leave the harassed, distressed and loan burdened farmers to suicide under the present system?

## India's MSME push needs refining for better results

The recent G-20 trade and investment ministers' meeting, under India's presidency, was a significant event, representing a vast majority of the world's economic output, trade flows, and population. While the geopolitical tensions surrounding Ukraine led to China and Russia blocking certain references, the broader focus on global trade and investment remained undeterred. The inability to release a comprehensive communiqué due to geopolitical disagreements is concerning. However, the silver lining is the G-20 nations' collective commitment to bolstering global trade and investment. This collective resolve is a testament to the belief that cross-border commerce and investment are pivotal for global prosperity and growth. India's government has identified five key outcomes from the meeting. These include discussions on global standards to bridge regulatory differences and a compendium of best practices for recognizing professional qualifications in sectors like medicine, law, and nursing. Commerce and Industry Minister Piyush Goyal's assertion that these outcomes are among the most significant in G-20 discussions is noteworthy. The push for digitalization of trade documents is a progressive step. While the focus is currently on transactional paperwork, future discussions should also encompass government filings for cross-border trade. The Jaipur Call for Action' is particularly promising. By urging global organizations like the International Trade Centre, WTO, and UNCTAD to enhance the Global Trade Helpdesk, the G-20 is addressing the information gap that often hampers small businesses. This initiative aligns with Prime Minister Narendra Modi's emphasis on supporting MSMEs, which play a crucial role in global employment and GDP. However, while global initiatives are essential, domestic actions are equally critical. India must introspect on its support mechanisms for MSMEs. The current push for investments through productivity-linked incentives can be refined to cater more to MSMEs. While large investors might find the bureaucratic process smoother, smaller enterprises still face challenges.

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## THE FINANCIAL WORLD

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SRINATH SRIDEVAN BELIEVES ORIENTAL AND OCCIDENTAL LEGAL VIEWS DIFFER, BUT INDIA SHOULD LOOK EAST.

## India needs to regulate AI



Consider these facts: Artificial Intelligence (AI) is here to stay; AI possesses the capability to fundamentally change the way in which we work; AI can, by assimilation of data from multifarious online sources, present far more powerful (and seemingly creative) solutions than any human can; AI is a far greater force of either good or evil (or both). Given all this, AI needs to be regulated.

Governments across the world are grappling with the regulation of AI. Till recently, the greatest advances in the regulation of AI have been made in the European Union (EU), Brazil, Canada, Japan and now, China. Countries in the EU, Brazil and the United Kingdom (which shall be referred to hereafter as "western systems") have adopted regulatory measures with differences which, on a closer study, are superficial. Regulations in Japan and China, however, are fundamentally different from the western system. The western systems have all adopted means of regulation which are intrinsically western in character. That is to say, they are founded in the Eurocentric view of jurisprudence. The eastern model is entirely different.

The western model focuses on a risk-based approach. First, lawmakers create a pyramid of risks and identify the risks posed by every type of AI-based application. The pyramid of risks then proceeds to be divided into four categories: 'unacceptable risk', 'high risk', 'limited risk' and 'low risk'. In the EU therefore, lawmakers have gone about prescribing prohibited classes of activities for the 'unacceptable risks', a regulated class of activities for the 'high risks', and a simple set of disclosure-based obligations for the 'low risks'. Brazil too has followed a system of categorisation of risks and regulations to address those risks. It also has strict governance measures to be complied with by all AI applications. Canada too follows a similar pattern of identifying activities to be prohibited, and clear regulations on how AI-based applications must function.

As far as the eastern models are concerned, the Japanese government's Integrated Innovation Strategy Promotion Council has framed a set of rules called the "Social Principles of Human-Human-Centric AI". It was published

by the Japanese government in March 2019 and manifests the basic principles of an AI-capable society. The first part contains seven social principles that society and the state must respect when dealing with AI: human-centricity; education/literacy; data protection; ensuring safety; fair competition; fairness, accountability and transparency, and innovation.

The Chinese regulations are even more interesting. The opening lines of Article 4 of these regulations are: "The provision and use of generative artificial intelligence services shall abide by laws and administrative regulations, respect social morality and ethics, and abide by the following provisions".

The law goes on to prescribe the kind of values that should be upheld and promoted by artificial intelligence services, and the ends that should be achieved through these AI-based applications and services. The difference is stark. While there are areas of overlap, it is readily evident that one set of rules (the western model) spells out what must be done, and how to do it. The weight of the rules rests on the means to be adopted and the rationale underlying those means. The other set of rules focuses on the ends and the values that must be upheld by compliance with the rules. The western model is perfect for the West — a clear set of rules, which a rule-abiding society will undoubtedly comply with, along with a set of

proscriptions and punishments for the few who violate the law. The eastern model is more open, and embraces the overlap between the legality of the rules and the morality of the rules. Legal systems which possess this overlap have even been given the name, "Hindu Jurisprudence", by legal philosopher Harrop Freeman.

Why is there this difference between the West and the East? In the 1930s, Professor Northrop of the Yale Law School undertook a very interesting study of legal systems in the East and the West. While he was not particularly focused on Indian legal systems, his conclusions, as outlined below, are very apt to us as well.

### Deifferent theories

After examining the cultural relativism between the eastern and the western systems, Professor Northrop concluded that eurocentric legal systems (or western legal systems) created rules of law through "postulation". That is to say, the legal system defines precisely what must be done in any given social order, by humans, and prescribes the penalties for non-compliance therewith. On the other hand, eastern or oriental legal systems created rules of law through "intuition". That is to say, the law prescribes the end that is to be achieved, and the morality underlying that law. The subjects intuitively divine for themselves the most appropriate

means of achieving those ends, keeping in view the underlying morality of the law. In India, our ancient legal systems were so profoundly successful because there was a clear indication of the end to be achieved, as well as an underlying moral code. People complied with those laws by the process of intuition underlaid by morality. We see repeated echoes of these in the Pandavas' exile to the forest, and in Emperor Ashoka's edicts. This served us well. Neighbour China has a story where Emperor Wudi in 140 BC punished his errant sister, by proclaiming, "The laws are created by my former royal fathers. If I break their laws because of my sister, how can I face them in the royal temple after I die?" Law and morality are synonymous in the East. Justice V. Ramasubramanian, who retired recently from the Supreme Court of India has lamented in more than one judgment that our slavish tendency is to ape western legal systems. One of his most celebrated judgments, on cryptocurrency in India, has, at its core, the Sanskrit epigram "neti neti" — meaning "it is neither this nor that". One would expect regulators to take the cue from our judges and frame our newest regulations based on our eastern models of jurisprudence.

Thus, systems based on AI must be regulated. It is for India to frame its regulations. Do we slavishly copy the West, and frame lengthy regulations, with labyrinthine procedures and procrustean punishments?

NITI Aayog has circulated three discussion papers which touch upon AI. In each of these, there are references only to the AI regulations in the EU, the United States, Canada, the United Kingdom, and Australia. It has gone on to state: "The responsible AI principles discussed earlier in this Paper, have been developed by first identifying systemic considerations prevalent among AI systems across the world, and identifying principles that may be used to mitigate the identified considerations." A reading of the discussion paper suggests that NITI Aayog is going to follow the western model.

Srinath Sridevan is a Senior Advocate at the Madras High Court. Views are personal.



MANJARI KATJU EXPLAINS WHY ELECTION COMMISSION'S APPOINTMENT PROCESS IS IN TIGHT SPOT AS GOVT AND JUDICIARY CLASH

## The Election Commission — autonomy in the crosshairs

Of late, the Election Commission of India (ECI) has been a focal point of differences between the government and the judiciary. This time, the clash of opinions is over its appointment.

The Supreme Court of India, in a judgment on March 2, directed that the Chief Election Commissioner (CEC) and the Election Commissioners (EC) will be appointed by the President of India based on the advice of a committee made up of the Prime Minister, the Leader of the Opposition in the Lok Sabha or the leader of the single largest Opposition party and the Chief Justice of India (CJI). This judgment of the Constitution Bench was a major step towards broadbasing the ECI and enhancing its constitutional status. Article 324 of the Constitution contains a provision for such a law to be enacted by Parliament.

The significance of this judgment also lies in the fact that this was a unanimous judgment of a five-judge Bench. So far, the top officers of the ECI have been appointed by the President of India on the advice of the central government. However, the government of the day, in an unambiguous move, introduced a Bill in the Rajya Sabha on August 10 which if passed will overturn this verdict.

The Bill seeks to replace the Chief Justice of India from the high-powered selection committee, meaning the committee will be made up of the Prime Minister (Chairperson), Leader of the Opposition in the Lok Sabha (Member) and a Union Cabinet Minister to be nominated by the Prime Minister (Member).

The government, through this Bill, has taken the Supreme Court head on, making



it clear that it wants greater weightage in the appointments of the top election officials — and thus a greater hold over the institution. Experience and research show that incumbent governments, especially those with authoritarian streaks, do not usually do away with democratic institutions but, instead, relentlessly work towards making them pliant. The institutional structures remain but are drained of their substance. And, in this case, one is dealing with a matter of electoral winnability and a consolidation of state power.

The procedure of appointments of the CEC and the ECs has seen much debate in policy and political circles ever since the Constituent Assembly debates and much has been written about it.

A suggestion during the Constituent Assembly Debates was that the appointment of the CEC should be subject to confirmation by

two-thirds majority in a joint session of both Houses of Parliament (Constituent Assembly debates, June 15, 1949). However, Parliament was entrusted with the charge of making appropriate laws on the matter.

The V.M. Tarkunde Committee appointed by Jayaprakash Narayan in 1975, the Dinesh Goswami Committee on electoral reforms set up by the then Prime Minister, V.P. Singh, in the 1990s, and the second Administrative Reforms Commission in its fourth report in 2009 among others made recommendations that the appointments of members of the ECI should be more broad based (through a collegium) than leaving this solely to the government on whose advice the President made these appointments.

In 2006, a suggestion was made by a former CEC, B.B. Tandon, to the former President of India, A.P.J. Abdul Kalam (when both were in office) that a seven-member committee headed by the Prime Minister should choose the CEC and the other ECs. The committee should include the Lok Sabha Speaker, the Leaders of the Opposition in the Lok Sabha and the Rajya Sabha, the Law Minister, the Deputy Chairperson of the Rajya Sabha and a judge of the Supreme Court nominated by the CJI. The Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) had supported such a suggestion and argued for a representative collegium, which included the CJI to appoint the apex electoral officials. BJP General Secretary Arun Jaitley in a press release on the CPI(M)'s suggested electoral reforms in 2006 had said, 'Any monitoring of Election Commission by Government or their nominee will be destructive of the indepen-

dence of Election Commission'.

In 2012, senior leader of the BJP and former Deputy Prime Minister L.K. Advani reiterated the argument that such a collegium should be formed with the Prime Minister as its chairperson, with the CJI, the Minister of Law and Justice and the Leaders of the Opposition in the Lok Sabha and the Rajya Sabha as its members. He argued that the prevalent system, whereby members to the ECI are appointed by the President, solely on the advice of the Prime Minister, does not inspire confidence among the people.

### Held in high regard

The ECI has been held to be a reliable, responsible and trustworthy institution by the people of India. Handling elections that involve about 900 million voters (2019 election data) through a machinery of 11 million personnel in a setting of economic hardship and inequalities is a remarkable feat. However, going soft on the ruling party or its ideology, as the perception is, whether this has to do with election schedules, electoral speeches, alleged hateful propaganda, electoral rolls or other kinds of malpractices, is eroding not only its own autonomy but also people's trust. Nevertheless, the point remains that the present regime still sees the ECI as an institution with autonomy. And this autonomy does not get with its goals. It would instead like a firmer grip on the ECI through statutory means.

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### BOOKS: REVIEW

## Book highlights Ambedkar's holistic approach to reform

The year 2023 marked a significant surge in literature dedicated to Babasaheb Ambedkar, with seven distinct volumes released in just seven months. The remarkable aspect of this literary outpouring is the minimal overlap among these works, a testament to the multifaceted life and vast output of Ambedkar.

Savita Ambedkar's autobiography, Babasaheb, offers readers a rare glimpse into Ambedkar's personal life, focusing on their marital years. In stark contrast, Shashi Tharoor's Ambedkar: A Life delves into the legacy of the man, steering clear of personal anecdotes. Scott Stroud's The Evolution of Pragmatism in India and the co-edited volume Ambedkar in London both explore the profound influence of Ambedkar's education in New York and London. Ashok Gopal's A Part Apart and the re-

viewer's own Becoming Babasaheb approach Ambedkar's life from different angles, with the former concentrating on his writings and the latter on his personal journey.

However, Syed Sayeed's Understanding B.R. Ambedkar's Annihilation of Caste stands out, focusing solely on a single text. While the other books are rooted in historical context, Sayeed's work deliberately removes the text from its historical backdrop. An intriguing aspect of this literary wave is the fact that all these books are authored by non-Dalits, raising pertinent questions about representation and appropriation.

Sayeed's book, in particular, delves into the complex realm of identity. He differentiates between the essence of a person and their identity, suggesting that the former is independent of socio-cultural contexts. He challenges the prevailing notion that only those who

**The surge in literature on Ambedkar is not just a reflection of his enduring legacy but also a testament to the contemporary relevance of his teachings**

share Ambedkar's identity can truly understand or represent him. Sayeed posits that empathy and sensitivity are more crucial than shared identity or experience. However, his assertion that Ambedkar's Dalit identity was merely incidental to his fight against the caste system is debatable.

While Sayeed's work is a summary of Ambedkar's Annihilation of Caste, it also seems to be a cri-



Understanding B.R. Ambedkar's Annihilation of Caste  
By Syed Sayeed  
Permanent Black  
252 pages, Rs 595

tique of modern 'wokeness' and the left-liberal approach to Ambedkar. The reviewer finds this perspective limiting and suggests readers might find more comprehensive insights in the other available works.

The surge in literature on Ambedkar is not just a reflection of his enduring legacy but also a testament to the contemporary relevance of his teachings. As the world grapples with issues of inequality, discrimination, and social justice, Ambedkar's vision offers a beacon of hope and a roadmap for a more equitable society. His emphasis on education, social reform, and constitutional morality provides lessons that are timeless and universal.

Another noteworthy aspect is

the diversity of authors who have chosen to write about Ambedkar. From seasoned politicians to academics, from journalists to social activists, there's a wide range of voices contributing to the discourse. This diversity enriches the narrative, offering readers a kaleidoscope of perspectives and interpretations.

However, the absence of Dalit voices in this recent wave of literature is glaring. While non-Dalit authors can provide valuable insights, the lived experiences of Dalits can offer a depth and authenticity that's irreplaceable. Future publications should strive for a more inclusive representation, ensuring that Dalit voices are not just subjects of discussion but active participants in the discourse.

In the broader context, these books also highlight the global appeal of Ambedkar's philosophy. His ideas resonate not just in India but across the world, wherever there are struggles against oppression and injustice. The universality of his teachings, combined with the specificity of his Indian experience, makes Ambedkar a global icon whose relevance transcends borders and cultures.

# Fortification standards have paved the way for a healthier and more nutritious food supply in our country says Dr. Bharti Pravin Pawar

FW DESK  
Mumbai

1st September 2023: "There is a need to balance technology and the digital age's distractions and emphasise the importance of nutrition in maintaining a healthy lifestyle", stated Dr. Bharti Pravin Pawar, Hon'ble Minister of State, Ministry of Health & Family Welfare, Govt. of India at the National Conference & Excellence Awards, Food Fortification and Nutraceuticals—The Way Forward for Achieving Nutrition Security. The national conference was organised by the Associated Chambers of Commerce and Industry of India (ASSOCHAM) in New Delhi.

She further stated, "In today's fast-paced world, it is evident that technology is evolving rapidly, and its impact on our lives is profound. From smartphones to laptops, digital devices are ubiquitous, especially among the younger generation. It is essential to manage and strike a balance in our usage of these technologies. Digital detoxification has become a necessity to maintain focus and mental



well-being."

Dr. Pawar emphasised that recent lifestyle changes, characterised by increased screen time and reduced physical activity, have contributed to the rise of non-communicable diseases. Nutrition, she emphasised, plays a pivotal role in maintaining good health, and "Eating right is not just a slogan but a way of life that we must embrace."

Dr. Pawar also commended the government's Eat Right India initiative, which has been promoting healthy eating habits and ensuring access to nutritious food for all. She cited the positive impact of fortifying staple foods like salt and cereals, addressing micronutrient

deficiencies on a large scale.

In a significant announcement, Dr. Pawar stated, "I am pleased to announce that voluntary standards for fortifying staples such as milk, oil, wheat, flour, rice, and salt were notified in 2018. Additionally, standards for the fortification of processed foods were notified in December 2020. These standards have paved the way for a healthier and more nutritious food supply in our country."

Understanding the potency of food fortification in the battle against malnutrition and related health challenges, she stressed that "enhancing the nutrient content of commonly

consumed foods can make a substantial impact on public health." Dr. Pawar stressed that "it is our collective responsibility to ensure that this knowledge is translated into practical solutions that reach those in need."

India's commitment to the International Year of Millets was also highlighted by Dr. Pawar, who underlined the nutritional benefits of millets and their potential to improve the health and well-being of the nation's citizens.

Lastly, Dr. Pawar urged unity, harmony, and collaboration in the mission to build a healthier and more prosperous India, emphasising the importance of leveraging knowledge gained during the conference to effect meaningful change.

In his welcome address, Vivek Chandra, Chairman of the Food Processing and Value Addition Council at ASSOCHAM and CEO of Global Branded Business at LT Foods Ltd, stated, "As we stand here at the intersection of science, innovation, government policy, and private sector initiatives to together tackle the com-

plex challenges of addressing malnutrition, we recognise the critical role that food fortification and nutraceuticals play in shaping the health and well-being of our society. India achieved food security with the Green Revolution and has now, in fact, become the leading exporter of agricultural products to the world in several categories. We account for almost 40% of the global trade. However, India still has a long way to go to provide nutrition security, and that is why the focus now moves from not just food security, but from food security to nutrition security."

Arun Om Lal, Co-Chairman of the Food Processing and Value Addition Council and Chairman of the Food Fortification & Nutraceuticals Taskforce at ASSOCHAM, stated "my primary focus is addressing malnutrition, whether undernutrition or overnutrition, through food fortification. Nutraceuticals play a crucial role, covering health supplements, botanical products, and more under FSSAI regulations clarified in March 2022."

## BEL & Israel Aerospace Industries sign MoU to tap opportunities in Short Range Air Defence Systems' domain



ARUN KUMAR RAO  
Bengaluru

Navratna Defence PSU Bharat Electronics Limited (BEL) and Israel Aerospace Industries (IAI), Israel's leading aerospace and defence company, have inked an MoU for co-operation in addressing India's requirements in the domain of Short Range Air Defence Systems, Press statement from BEL said.

The MoU was signed by K V Suresh Kumar, Director (Marketing), BEL, and Avi Elisha, VP and General Manager, Missile Systems Division, IAI, in the presence of Bhanu Prakash Srivastava, CMD, BEL, in Bengaluru. The partnership marks yet another significant step towards cementing the synergy between the two companies which have a long history of association. BEL and IAI are engaged in several joint development / production / product support programmes for the Indian Defence forces. The MoU

aims at leveraging IAI and BEL's capabilities, and is in sync with the 'Atmanirbhar Bharat' and 'Make in India' policies of the Government of India.

Bhanu Prakash Srivastava, CMD, BEL, said, "BEL considers IAI, Israel, as a key strategic partner. This MoU is envisaged to boost the co-operation between the two companies in the field of Short Range Air Defence Systems. It will empower the Indian industry to make significant contributions towards equipping our forces with state-of-the-art Short Range Air Defence Systems." Boaz Levy, IAI's President and CEO, said, "BEL and IAI have a successful partnership in the field of Air Defence in India. Together, we are providing the Indian Armed Forces with high-end Air Defence capabilities that meet their high-end operational requirements on one hand and 'Make in India' requirements on the other.

## BEL receives orders worth Rs. 3,289 Cr



ARUN KUMAR RAO  
Bengaluru

Navratna Defence PSU Bharat Electronics Limited (BEL) has received new Defence and non-Defence orders worth Rs. 3,289 Cr. during July and August 2023 (till date). Orders are for supply of Low Level Light Weight Radars, SONARS, IFF Systems, SATCOM Systems, EO/IR Payloads, TRM/DTRMs, Jammers, Encryptions, Data Link Systems, Fire Control Systems, Radars for Directed Energy Systems, Semi Rugged Telephone Exchanges, Software Defined Radios and various others types of radios, Electronic Voting Machines, AMC and Spares. These also include the LoI / order worth Rs 1,075 Cr received today from Hindustan Shipyards Limited for supply of CMS, Communication Systems, EW Systems and other sensors for Fleet Support Ships.

## Twitter's Rebranding to X caused decline in rankings

NEW DELHI: X, formerly Twitter, underwent a number of changes after being acquired by tech billionaire and SpaceX founder Elon Musk last year. The latest one was renaming the micro-blogging platform from Twitter to X and changing the "iconic" bird logo in favour of an "X" logo. The platform witnessed not a decrease in the number of downloads but saw a decline in weekly active users too, the media has reported. There was a four per cent decline in X's weekly active users in the weeks that followed the rebranding of Twitter, says a report by TechCrunch that quoted data from SensorTower.

As per Eric Seufert of Mobile Dev Memo, Twitter witnessed a drastic fall in its "Top Downloaded" chart position across both Android and iOS devices, following Twitter's renaming to X. However, the installs for the Twitter Lite app, which has been designed for emerging markets, increased after the name change.

However, the report (again quoting Sensor Tower) noted that the company's revenue surprisingly increased after the rebranding and between August 6 to August 20, the company's revenue substantially jumped by ~25 per cent, primarily driven by revenue from iOS (up 24 per



cent). This comes amid recent reports that say a majority of followers that Musk has, are fake. A significant number of Musk's 153 million followers are fake and they may be inactive and new accounts. According to a report by Mashable, out of the more than 153 million followers Musk has, about 42 per cent or more than 65.3 million accounts have zero followers. The report mentioned and reviewed data collected by third-party researcher Travis Brown.

X's rival Instagram Threads is also struggling to retain its users after an initial high and launch. The company lost more than 75 per cent of its daily active users (DAUs) on Android. According to analytics firm Similarweb, the Instagram Threads app for Android peaked at 49.3 million daily active users on July 7, globally. Now, the app has lost 79 per cent of its DAUs. As on August 7, the app's DAUs were down to 10.3 million.

## Asit C Mehta Investment Intermediates launches all-new version of trading & investments platforms



NEW DELHI: Asit C. Mehta Investment Intermediates Ltd (ACMIL), a leading brokerage house and subsidiary of Asit C Mehta Financial Services Ltd, announced latest version of trading & investments platforms, which was unveiled by Bollywood actor Pratik Gandhi at the Bombay Stock Exchange.

The new version aimed at investors, traders, and business associates is designed to provide a seamless and flexible trading and investment user experience. Brokers can execute the trade on behalf of investors. Besides, investors themselves too can download the app and execute the trade more proficiently.

Deena Mehta the First and only woman President of BSE and the Managing Director of Asit C. Mehta Investment Intermediates Ltd, said, "We at ACMIL, have always been at the forefront of technology enablement. This is largely to assist our clients and associates in running their businesses skillfully and in a cost and risk-efficient manner. The launch of our new BAT app will help in channel-

izing the larger investor pool driven by investors beyond metros. We are extremely confident that we would be right on top from a technological innovation perspective in the industry."

Madhu Lunawat, Director on the board of ACMIL and Executive Director at Pantomath Group, said, "We treat our business partners more like family and will always be supportive of their expansion as a company. In addition to assisting our associates and partners with their technological needs, we are also working to promote their business growth through lead generation along with various other strategic initiatives. The BAT app is a step to transform Tier II and Tier III regions into growth enablers for India, as collective growth is the key to improving the Indian economy."

Bollywood actor Pratik Gandhi, said, "While most companies are focusing on larger cities and larger investors, ACMIL is going to smaller cities and working with smaller investors to create financial awareness across the country."

## Nearly 80% small scale industry in Haryana either closed down or facing sickness: Bajrang Garg

SATISH HANDA  
Ambala

Addressing press conference at New Grain Market Ambala City, President of Haryana State Vyapar Mandal Bajrang Das Garg a former CONFED Chairman accused ruling government policies responsible for decline of small scale and medium industry in Haryana state as a result nearly 80% small scale industry manufacturing consumer and engineering products has either been closed down or facing severe sickness and on the verge of closure causing severely unemployment in the state due to erratic government policies. Garg said that trade and industry owners in



the state are extremely upset, annoyed due to complicated GST formalities imposed with effect from 1st July 2017 as well as money laundering law and ED staff excesses on business community compelling them to leave their profession.

Garg said that small scale industry manufacturing consumer products, food products, cosmetics, phar-

maceuticals, textile goods engineering consumer products and electrical goods are worst affected in the state. He said, ruling state government in Haryana state had assured that 75% youths in Haryana will be provided jobs in private sectors, but government has failed to provide jobs even to 75 unemployed youths in private sectors in the state in past

about four years. Garg said bringing GST under money laundering law by the ruling government has proved worst for business community due to severe harassment by the officers of the department. The worst part is that government has failed to implement GST since after it was launched and changes in GST rules have been made by the government itself hundreds times since after it started, clearing indicating that the government itself is unaware of the same. Garg said that ruling government should roll back money laundering law immediately for the survival of trade and industry as well as harassment over businessmen by ED officers.

## Ambani sets succession plan in motion; appoints children to Reliance board

MUMBAI: Asia's richest man Mukesh Ambani began executing a succession plan for his USD 200-billion energy-to-technology conglomerate Reliance Industries, appointing his three children Isha, Akash, and Anant to the board of the company which he will continue to chair for five more years.

Till now, the three children were involved only at operating business-level and none were on the board of the India's largest listed company.

The board of Reliance met ahead of the company's annual general meeting to approve the appointment of twins Isha and Akash as well as Anant, as the "non-executive directors of the company," the firm said in a stock exchange filing on Monday.

At the shareholders' meeting, Mukesh Ambani said US Ivy



League university-educated sons have "earned their stripes" and he saw "the flame" of his legendary father Dhirubhai shine in them.

The 66-year-old tycoon, joined the board of India's most valuable company at the age of 20 years in 1977, has secured another five-year term as the company head after expiry of

the current terminal on April 19, 2024.

"Today, I see both my father and me in Isha, Akash, and Anant. I see the flame of Dhirubhai shine in all of them," he said, adding he would mentor them for the leadership role. "I shall continue to perform my duties and responsibilities as Chairman and Managing

Director for five more years, with greater vigour." Ambani has been talking about succession since 2021. Last year, he handed over the baton of India's largest mobile firm Reliance Jio Infocomm Ltd to his first-born Akash Ambani, and identified retail business for his twin sister Isha, 31, and new energy business for Anant, 27. Jio Infocomm is a subsidiary of Jio Platforms, in which Meta and Google hold stakes and is still chaired by Mukesh Ambani. Reliance Industries Ltd is the parent of Jio Platforms.

Reliance also said Mukesh Ambani's wife Nita has stepped down from the board to focus more on strengthening the firm's charity arm. She will continue attend all board meetings as a permanent invitee in capacity as the Chairperson of Reliance Foundation.

## 'Amaze' launches widest range of Inverter, batteries & solar products in presence of Brand Ambassador Virat Kohli

ARUN KUMAR RAO  
Bengaluru

Amaze, a leading provider of power backup solutions in India, unveiled its widest range of energy solutions. One of the fastest growing inverter and battery brand in India, Amaze offers an extensive range of inverters, batteries and solar products that are designed to withstand long and frequent power cuts. The launch ceremony was graced by Indian cricketer, Virat Kohli, along with Luminous Power Technologies team including Preeti Bajaj, CEO and MD, Neelima Burra, Senior VP and Chief Strategy, Transformation and Marketing Officer, Amit Shukla, Senior Vice President & Country Head - Energy Solutions Business and Rajesh Kalra, Vice President - Amaze Energy Solutions Business.

Speaking on the occasion, Preeti Bajaj, CEO and MD of Luminous Power Technologies, said, "Amaze has established



itself as a high-performing, energy-efficient and reliable brand, powering the dreams and aspirations of emerging India with uninterrupted power supply. The next wave of growth in the retail and energy sector is being witnessed in Bharat, from tier 2 and 3 cities, powered by higher purchasing power. With a strategic focus on innovation, sustainability and expansion, Amaze is poised to make a significant impact on the energy landscape in India, and our target is to double our market share and

customer touchpoints in next 3 years. Leveraging this expansive distribution network, we aim to further boost our growth with strong focus on high-capacity inverters and solar solutions."

"India is on the pathway to build a sustainable power network on its road to achieve Net Zero targets. In a world where sustainable energy is becoming a necessity, Amaze Solar Solutions have been developed to cater to a diverse range of consumers, from individual homeowners to small enterprises.

## Exploring Hydro Power Potential & Pumped Storage Vital for Grid Resilience, says M. A. K. P. Singh

FW DESK  
New Delhi

"The concept of pumped storage is gaining importance and it's time to focus on building up hydropower potential", stated M. A. K. P. Singh, Member Hydro & CISO Ministry of Power (MoP), Central Electricity Authority (CEA) at the Annual Conference 2023 titled Hydropower & Pumped Storage - Critical for Grid Resilience organised by the Associated Chambers of Commerce and Industry of India (ASSOCHAM) in New Delhi. He further highlighted the Government's perspective on the energy sector's requirements and the essential role of stakeholders in advancing the nation's power capabilities.

Centered around the discussions on the hydro-rich state's industry, M. A. K. P. Singh provided insights into the nation's evolving energy landscape. "We

have been adding more thermal capacities in the previous years. Initially, hydro was at its peak, and later on, we leaned towards thermal generation, including rapid gas expansion. However, this led to a slip in capacity addition in the micro sector," he explained.

With the advent of Renewable Energy with Forecasting and Scheduling (RAFC) capacity, the Member Hydro & CISO MoP, CEA explained the pressing need for additional storage solutions. "There is an urgent need to add storage capacity," he asserted, citing the significant role Pumped Storage Schemes play in grid stability. He highlighted their essential services, including grid levelling and supporting the integration of renewable energy sources.

Addressing the challenges facing the sector, M. A. K. P. Singh acknowledged ongoing discussions related to

geological services and developers' issues at project sites. He specifically noted hurdles in obtaining Environmental Clearance (EC) and forest clearance (FC), emphasising the importance of streamlining these processes.

He also shed light on a promising benchmark project. "One project will showcase the developmental prowess of our hydro sector. While it typically takes a decade for construction to commission, this benchmark aims to achieve it within 32-36 months," he revealed, encouraging accelerated project execution.

Highlighting the private sector's role, he mentioned, "Private players have been contributing remarkably well to the micro sector. This positive trajectory should alleviate concerns about returns and investment, as we embrace the forthcoming hydro policy."

## TRAI releases recommendations on "License Fee and Policy Matters of DTH Services"



KULBIR SINGH KALSI  
Chandigarh

Telecom Regulatory Authority of India (TRAI) has issued the recommendations on "License Fee and Policy Matters of DTH Services".

The Ministry of Information and Broadcasting (MIB), vide letter No. 2/33/2021-BP&L dated 02.02.2022, sought recommendations of TRAI under Section (11) (1)(a) of the TRAI Act, 1997.

The reference alluded to the amendments carried out by the Department of Telecommunications (DoT) in Unified License (UL) Agreement. Vide the amendments dated 25.10.2021 and 06.10.2021, DoT has rationalized the definition of Adjusted Gross Revenue (AGR) and Bank Guarantee (BG) quantum respectively under structural reforms.

The DTH operation in India is governed by the policy guidelines for obtaining license for providing DTH broadcasting services in India. These guidelines prescribe a License Fee (LF). LF is a non-tax fee levied on a service provider against the privilege of being permitted to carry out a licensed activity. As per the provisions of the guidelines, the DTH operators are required to pay

a LF, which is 8% of Adjusted Gross Revenue (AGR) on a quarterly basis to MIB.

Bank Guarantee (BG) is a type of financial instrument to ensure that a service provider pays their dues on time and is obligated to fulfil the terms and conditions of the license agreement. The extant DTH guidelines prescribe a BG for an amount of Rs 5 crore for the first two quarters, and thereafter, for an amount equivalent to LF for two quarters and other dues not otherwise securitized.

Based on the reference, a Consultation paper on "License Fee and Policy Matters of DTH Services" was issued by TRAI on 13th January 2023. Written comments and counter-comments on the Consultation Paper were invited from the stakeholders by 27th February 2023 and 13th March 2023 respectively. The Authority received 07 comments and 1 counter-comment from various stakeholders. All these comments and counter-comments are available on TRAI website www.trai.gov.in. An Open House Discussion was also convened on the issues raised in the Consultation Paper on 20th April 2023 through video conferencing.

# India's GST collection increases 11% to Rs 1.59 trn on better compliance

**NEW DELHI:** Goods and services tax (GST) collection in August grew 11 per cent to Rs 1.59 trillion annually on account of increased compliance and anti-evasion measures. In August 2022, collection was Rs 1.43 trillion.

However, during the month, the tax collected by the Centre (CGST) and the states (SGST), and the revenue from imports and inter-state sales moderated over the previous month. In July, GST collection stood at Rs 1.65 trillion. Economists attributed the moderation in collection to muted growth in integrated GST (IGST) and the cess on imports, up merely 3 per cent in August.

However, in June and July, imports fell annually. Collection from IGST on imports had

fallen in April too, but recovered in May. "The headline GST numbers are marginally lower than our estimates, dampened by imports. However, overall collection so far this financial year remains robust," said Aditi Nayar, chief economist, ICRA.

The government expects average monthly GST collection to be Rs 1.6-1.65 trillion this financial year. Experts are expecting the momentum to continue but are not ruling out certain inhibiting factors.

"The steady increase in revenue not only reflects resurgence in consumer demand but also underscores the government's efforts to boost capital expenditure, which, in turn, is encouraging private investment. Nonetheless, it's worth noting that growth prospects may be



tempered by factors such as a weak monsoon, elevated inflation, and higher interest rates," said Saurabh Agarwal, tax partner, EY. After the settlement of taxes for inter-state sales, the Centre collected Rs 65,909 crore, while the states garnered

Rs 67,202 crore, the ministry said. Notably, April had seen the highest ever GST collection at Rs 1.87 trillion, followed by the second highest in July.

"The revenues for the month of August 2023 are 11 per cent higher than the GST revenues

in the same month last year. During the month, revenue from import of goods was 3 per cent higher and the revenues from domestic transactions (including import of services) are 14 per cent higher than the revenues from these sources during the same month last year," the finance ministry said in a statement on Friday while releasing the provisional data.

Major states such as Uttar Pradesh, Maharashtra, Gujarat, and Tamil Nadu reported double-digit annual growth rates in GST collection.

While Maharashtra reported a strong 23 per cent jump at Rs 23,282 crore, Karnataka's increased 16 per cent to Rs 11,116 crore and Gujarat's went up 12 per cent to Rs 9,765 crore, the official data showed.

# Retail inflation expected to start coming down from this month: RBI Governor

**INDORE:** Reserve Bank governor Shaktikanta Das on Friday said the central bank expects retail inflation to start declining from this month.

He was referring to the central government's steps to check prices of vegetables like tomatoes, restrictions on export of non-basmati rice and reduction in prices of household LPG cylinders. Das was addressing a programme organised by Devi Ahilya Vishwavidyalaya in Indore to interact with local students. Earlier, he also attended the central board meeting of the Reserve Bank.

"We expect (retail) inflation to start coming down from September. Although August's (retail) inflation will be very high, we expect inflation to start coming down from September. Tomato prices have already fallen and retail prices of other vegetables are also expected to come down from this month, he said. Das said the government has taken several steps to ensure affordable supply of tomatoes and other items of common need to the people. "Restrictions have been imposed on the export of non-basmati rice. The prices of LPG cylinders used in



**FW DESK**  
New Delhi

homes have been cut recently. According to government data, retail inflation rose to a 15-month high of 7.44 per cent in July. "In July, (retail) inflation was at a very high level. This surprised everyone. But mainly due to high prices of tomatoes and other vegetables, we were expecting it to remain high in July." He asserted that despite all the global challenges, India is among the fastest-growing major economies in the world.

Das said that the position of Indian banks is strong and stable due to strong regulatory measures. "but the domestic financial world always needs to be vigilant".

"You must have seen the failure of some banks in the US recently and big banks like Credit Suisse in Switzerland. But this global turmoil had no impact on India," he said.

# 7.8% GDP growth to make big economies envy of Indian economy: ASSOCHAM



**FW DESK**  
New Delhi

Real GDP growth of 7.8 per cent in the first quarter of 2023-24 would certainly make major economies of the world envy of India which has become a major force in driving the global economy, ASSOCHAM Secretary General Mr Deepak Sood said.

At a time when major economies are grappling with high inflation, tight monetary conditions, supply disruptions amidst geo-political issues, India has navigated the global headwinds with courage, tenacity and a strong-willed political leadership, Mr Sood said. Given the present global environment, India is set to retain its coveted status of being amongst the fastest growing economies of the world for long.

# Rupee recovers 8 paise to settle at 82.62 against US dollar on forex inflows

**MUMBAI:** The rupee recovered 8 paise to close at 82.62 against the US dollar on Friday due to forex inflows and strong macro data. The domestic currency also found support from positive sentiment in equity markets while a stronger dollar and a spike in crude oil prices restricted gains.

According to a survey released on Friday, manufacturing activities in India gained momentum in August as new orders and output increased at the quickest rates in nearly three years. The seasonally adjusted S&P Global India Manufacturing Purchasing Managers' Index (PMI) rose to 58.6 in August from 57.7 in July. The latest government data released on Thursday showed India recorded GDP growth of 7.8 per cent during the April-June period of 2023-24, the highest in the past four quarters, retaining its position as the world's fastest-growing major economy.

At the interbank foreign exchange, the domestic unit opened at 82.58 and touched the lowest level of 82.76 during intra-day trade. The Indian currency finally settled higher by 8 paise at 82.62 against the greenback.

The American currency stayed firm tracking cues from positive GDP numbers in the US while forex traders awaited employment and manufacturing growth numbers. Anuj Choudhary, Research Analyst at Sharekhan by BNP Paribas, said: "We expect rupee to trade with a slight negative bias on rising US dollar and surge in crude oil prices. However, rise in risk appetite in global markets may support rupee at lower levels. Traders may remain cautious ahead of US non-farm payroll report and ISM manufacturing PMI data. USDINR spot price is expected to trade in a range of Rs 82.30 to Rs 83.20." Meanwhile, the dollar index, which gauges the greenback's strength against a basket of six currencies, rebounded 0.59 per cent to 104.23.

Brent crude futures, the global oil benchmark, climbed 1.08 per cent to USD 87.77 per barrel. On the domestic equity market front, the BSE Sensex closed 555.75 points or 0.86 per cent higher at 65,387.16 points while the broader Nifty jumped by 181.50 points or 0.94 per cent to end at 19,435.30 points. Foreign Institutional Investors (FIIs) turned net buyers in the capital market on Friday as they bought shares worth Rs 487.94 crore, according to exchange data.

# Adani Group market cap jumps by Rs 12,675 crore

**NEWDELHI:** Adani Group stocks posted gains on Friday, leading to an increase in its market capitalisation by Rs 12,675 crore.

The total market capitalisation of the 10 listed Adani Group companies touched Rs 10.62 trillion, up from Rs 10.49 trillion in the previous closing.

An analyst said, "The Adani Group's recent surge, especially in its power portfolio, exemplifies the renewed confidence and focus of the investor community on its potential instead. This interest isn't merely based on current performance but is also a due to the Group's robust financials and strategic decision-making.

"Even with recent media reports casting a shadow, the market is largely brushing aside the negatives and pivoting to future growth potential of the conglomerate. The Group's resilience and adaptability in



these challenging times have set them apart."

The Adani Group's power portfolio posted strong gains on renewed domestic investor interest. Adani Power's shares increased by 2.79 per cent to Rs 330.25, taking its market cap to Rs 1.27 lakh crore. Adani Green Energy's shares gained 1.94 per cent with its market cap rising to Rs 1.49 lakh crore, while Adani Energy Solutions gained 1.59 per cent to post a market cap of Rs 92,017 crore.

Adani Enterprises, the group's flagship company, saw its share price rise by 1.27 per

cent to Rs 2,450.05, and its market capitalisation increased to Rs 2.79 lakh crore. Shares of Adani Ports also moved up by 0.92 per cent. The boost to the Adani group stocks comes as the market recognises group's fundamental strengths and brushed aside reports such as the Hindenburg report and the recent OCCRP report. The Adani group has rejected these reports' claims. As per reports, the regulator has already examined the funds named by OCCRP in the Adani probe. Despite these external challenges, the Group's financial numbers are robust, reflecting operational strength and resilience.

In Q1FY24, EBITDA of Adani listed portfolio for Q1 FY2024 grew by 42 per cent year on year to Rs 23,532 crore. The core infrastructure EBITDA registered a growth of 34 per cent Y-o-Y to Rs 20,233 crore (86 per cent of portfolio).

# CBDT signs 95 APAs in FY'23, highest ever since launch

**NEW DELHI:** The Income Tax department has signed 95 advance pricing agreements (APA) in 2022-23 - the highest ever in any financial year since its launch in 2012.

"In FY 2022-23, CBDT recorded the highest ever APA signings in any financial year since the launch of the APA programme, signing a total of 95 APAs," the income tax department said in a statement.

The APA programme of CBDT is one of its foremost initiatives for promoting an investor-friendly and non-adversarial tax regime in India. Since its commencement in



July 2012, the Indian APA programme has contributed significantly to the Government of India's mission of promoting ease of doing business, it added.

The Central Board of Direct Taxes (CBDT), which is the apex decision-making body in direct taxes, also signed 32 Bilateral Advance Pricing Agreements (BAPAs) in 2022-23

being the maximum number of BAPAs in any financial year till date.

The BAPAs were signed as a consequence of entering into mutual agreements with India's treaty partners-- Finland, the UK, the US, Denmark, Singapore, and Japan.

Bilateral APAs help reduce the transfer pricing disputes that arise in respect of international transactions between related companies located in the two countries. Also, they would lend certainty to international transactions between related companies of the two countries.

# India on the Way to Become a Developed Country



**SATISH SINGH**

India can become a developed country in the year 2047, which will be the hundredth year of India's independence. This fact came out from the analysis of income tax returns filed by the citizen of India, according to the World Bank, the population of India is 140 crores now, which will increase to 161 crores in the year 2047.

At present the number of workers in India is 53.0 crores, which may increase to 72.5 crores in the year 2047. In percentage term it is 37.9 today, which will increase to 45 in the year 2047. At the same time, the number of workers/professionals/businessmen, who are eligible to pay income tax is 31.3 crore at present, which may increase to 56.5 crore in the year 2047. In percentage term it is 59.1, which may increase to 71 in the year 2047. According to the United Nations, the number of workers aged 15 to 64 will remain at a high level until the year 2040, but after that it will decrease. This shows that there will be a boom in economic activities till 2040, which will help India to become a powerful country in the world.

In 2047, 22 percent of the workers will be associated with agriculture. Since, farmers working in agriculture sector are exempted from income tax. Therefore, due to the decrease in the number of workers in agriculture and increase in their number in other sectors, there will be a significant increase in income tax collection. In the assessment year 2023, the weighted average income of Indians has become Rs.13 lakh, which can increase to Rs.49.7 lakh in the year 2047. It may be noted that the weighted average income of Indians in the assessment year 2013-14 was just Rs.4.4 lakh.

The number of income tax return filers in assessment year 2023 has increased from 7.3 crore to 7.8 crore in comparison to assessment year 2022. Of these, 5.8 crore or 75 per cent income tax returns were filed before the due date. There has been a huge reduction in the number of people filing income tax returns with penalty charges after the due date. In the assessment year 2020, the number of such people was 60 percent, which decreased to 25 percent in the assessment year 2023. In the assessment year 2024, 6.8 crore people filed income tax returns by the due date, while by March 2024, 1.8 to 2.0 crore people can file income tax returns.



There has been a significant reduction in the percentage of people filing NIL income tax returns in assessment year 2023. The number of such people was 84.1 per cent in assessment year 2012, which reduced to 64 per cent in assessment year 2023.

The top 5 states with the highest number of income tax return filings in AY 2023 are Maharashtra, Uttar Pradesh, Gujarat, Rajasthan, and West Bengal. Compared to the assessment year 2022, 64 lakhs more income tax returns were filed in the assessment year 2023. Maharashtra topped the list of states that filed income tax returns. Thereafter, Uttar Pradesh, Punjab, Gujarat, and Rajasthan ranked second, third, fourth and fifth respectively. Among the smaller states, Manipur, Mizoram, and Nagaland saw a 20 per cent increase in the number of income tax return filers in the last nine years. Over-

all, 4.81 crore more income tax returns were filed in AY 2023 as compared to AY 2015 and 1.00 crore more income tax returns were filed in AY 2023 as compared to AY 2020. Among the states filing income tax returns, the maximum increase was in Maharashtra, followed by Uttar Pradesh.

There is a difference in the place of work of income tax return filers and their permanent residence, its reason may be migration of workers to other states for employment. Linking of PAN card with Aadhaar can reveal the real picture of permanent residence of income tax return filers and state-wise percentage of income tax return filers can also change. This may also change the ranking of states filing income tax returns.

To provide better facilities to the entrepreneurs, the Udyam Portal was launched by the Modi Government on 1

July 2020, in which so far 2.2 crore Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs) have registered themselves. A tally of MSME registration data on the Udyam portal with state-wise income tax return filing data reveals that 2.18 crore entrepreneurs have contributed significantly to the increase in the number of income tax return filers.

In assessment year 2011, the number of income tax return filers was 1.6 crore or 84 per cent in the income tax slab of Rs.5 lakh, whose number increased to 6.85 crore in assessment year 2023. This confirms that both the number of people filing income tax returns and their income have increased in the past years.

In AY 2023 as compared to AY 2012, 13.6 per cent of those filing income tax returns have shifted from the slab above Rs 5 lakh, out of which 8.1 per cent have shifted to the slab of Rs 5 lakh to Rs 10 lakh, 3.8 per cent people have shifted from Rs 10 lakh to Rs 20 lakh slab, while 1.5 percent people have shifted from Rs 20 lakh to Rs 50 lakh slab. Whereas 0.2 percent people have shifted from Rs 50 lakh to Rs 1 crore slab and 0.02 percent people have shifted to above Rs 1 crore slab.

Not only this, but it is also estimated that in the year 2047,

about 27 percent of the people filing income tax returns will shift from the bottom to the top slab. 17.5 per cent of those filing income tax returns will shift from Rs 5 lakh to Rs 10 lakh slab, while 5 per cent will shift from Rs 10 lakh to Rs 20 lakh slab. Whereas 3 percent people will shift from Rs 20 lakh to Rs 50 lakh slab, 0.5 percent people will shift from Rs 50 lakh to Rs 1 crore slab and 0.075 percent people will shift to above Rs 1 crore slab. The increase in the number of income tax return filers and income tax collection can be attributed to various reasons such as increase in income of low-income group people, increase in the number of people who were not filing income tax returns earlier, showing low income or zero income. There is a decrease in the number of such people who are avoiding to paying tax.

It can be said that due to the appropriate policies of the government, the Indian economy is continuously getting stronger and for this reason, the per capita income is expected to increase from Rs.2.14.9 lakhs in the year 2023 to Rs.14.9 lakhs in the year 2047.

Satish Singh, Ahmedabad based Senior Columnist, Views are personal.

# Airtel Payments Bank, Frontier Markets & Mastercard Partner to Support one Lakh Business Women



**ARUN KUMAR RAO**  
Bengaluru

Airtel Payments Bank, Frontier Markets and the Mastercard Center for Inclusive Growth announced the launch of She Leads Bharat:Udyam, an initiative to elevate 100,000 women-owned small businesses with resources, tools and opportunities to grow and diversify their incomes. The announcement was made at the Asia Inclusive Growth Forum, an event convening over 100 cross-sector leaders for candid, impact-driven dialogues on advancing inclusive growth in India and across the global south, Company press statement said.

In this first phase, this initiative will enable 100,000 women-owned small businesses in Rajasthan and Uttar Pradesh to learn and earn via Frontier Markets' proprietary, flexible "Meri Saheli" platform. 10,000 of these women small business owners will be further enabled to grow their business by becoming Airtel Payments Bank Business Correspondents (BCs) and unlock additional revenue streams. This is aligned with

the Bank's vision of 'Empowering India with Accessible and Inclusive Banking.'

Anubrata Biswas, MD&CEO said, "Taking our commitment forward to empower women in rural India to embark on their entrepreneurial endeavors, we are collaborating with Frontier Markets and Mastercard on She Leads Bharat:Udyam." He said, Airtel Payments Bank "We take pride to welcome them on board as Business Correspondents, joining hands with our existing network of 50,000 women BCs who play a vital role in taking banking and financial services to underserved rural pockets of the country. We look forward to our journey in building a financially inclusive economy." He added.

Ari Sarker, President Asia Pacific, said, Mastercard "More women entrepreneurs are coming into India's workforce and adding energy to the economy. When these business owners can access credit and digital tools, they can keep expanding and become more resilient. That's good for their families, employees and communities. That's what inclusive growth is all about."

# Soft Bank likely sold 10 cr shares in Zomato for Rs 947 cr stock up

Around 10 crore shares of online food delivery platform Zomato, amounting to an 1.17 per cent of the company's equity, changed hands on Wednesday at a total deal value of around Rs 947 crore.

Japanese company Soft-Bank's SVF Growth Fund is the likely seller in this mega transaction, according to CNBC TV18. The report had earlier said that SVF Growth Fund may sell 10 crore shares of the company or 1.17 per cent of the total equity via block deals at Rs 94 per share. SVF Growth (Singapore) Pte. Ltd. had 3.35 per cent stake in Zomato, totalling around 28 crore shares.

Zomato shares reached near Rs 100 after the block deal, and were hovering around Rs 98.45 in morning. The fresh block sale came after another foreign institutional investor, Tiger Global Management, offloaded its entire shareholding of 1.44 per cent in Zomato on Monday.

The deal earned Tiger Global a total of Rs 1,123.85 crore. US-based investment major, via its



VC fund Internet Fund III Pte Ltd, exited online food delivery platform Zomato. The VC firm sold around 12.34 crore shares or 1.44 per cent stake in Zomato at an average price of Rs 91.01 per share. Brokerage firm HSBC maintained its buy rating on Zomato and raised its price target to Rs 120 from Rs 102 earlier. The note said that hyperlocal can become a much bigger business for Zomato in the long-term. Zomato's stock is likely to be volatile in the near term on account of market speculation around possible exits by some pre-IPO shareholders (VC/PE/Chinese investors) of the company as well as erstwhile shareholders of Blinkit who had received it under a share swap deal, JM Financial Institutional Securities had said in its recent report.

## INTERNATIONAL

## G20 Summit : Canadian PM Justin Trudeau expresses displeasure at not inviting Ukrainian PM Zelensky

MEENAKSHI BHATTACHARYA  
New Delhi

The G-20 summit is going to be held in New Delhi next month in India. It will be attended by Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau. He has confirmed joining the G-20. But expressed disappointment over not including Ukraine during this period. In a recent telephone conversation with Ukrainian President Vladimir Zelensky, Trudeau promised to ensure that Kiyiv's concerns would be given due attention. Russia is also a member of the G-20, but President Putin has confirmed that he will not attend.

The Canadian PM said that he will be at the G-20 next week and he is disappointed that Ukraine is not being included, but he said that he will stand up for Ukraine. He said



that he will continue to make sure the world stands with Ukraine just as Canada does. He assured to look forward to speaking with Zelensky again soon. This conversation between the two leaders took place on Thursday. Trudeau's remarks came in response to the revelation by India's External Affairs Minister S

Jaishankar that nine other countries have been invited as observers, but Ukraine is not in it. Ukraine has not been invited to the G-20, but still many countries have given their support to Zelensky. However, the Foreign Minister has defended India's decision. He said that G-20 is primarily an economic

forum. This is not a forum for resolving conflicts & War. India's G20 Sherpa Amitabh Kant further strengthened India's focus on prioritizing economic and developmental issues at the summit on the Ukraine war. However, despite all this, Trudeau's assurance is a big hope for Ukraine.

Though, Bangladesh is not a member of the G20, but Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina will attend it on India's invitation. This summit will be held on 9-10 September. On behalf of the Embassy of Bangladesh in India, it was said that bilateral talks are expected between PM Modi and Sheikh Hasina. The summit will be attended by leaders of other member countries including US President Joe Biden, Chinese President Xi Jinping and French President Emmanuel Macron.

## Donald Trump mulling to skip September 6 hearing at Atlanta

ATLANTA: Former US President Donald Trump is mulling over skipping his appearance in the Fulton County Court at Atlanta in Georgia on September 6, and instead permit his attorney to enter his plea in writing.

Trump is scheduled to return to the city next week as all the 18 co-defendants in the election racketeering case will appear in a courtroom and plead to the charges brought against them by District Attorney (DA) Fani Willis. Trump is, however, considering skipping the September 6 court date, as the state law allows, an have his attorney enter his plea in writing instead. If that happens, it would make Georgia the only one of the four criminal cases he's facing where he does not enter his plea in person, according to CBS News reports.

DA Fani Willis' case is still in the nascent stages and Trump along with some of his 18 co-defendants has signalled that they have no interest in seeing their proceedings resolved anytime soon. However, according to media reports, Willis capitulated on a motion filed by indicted former Trump attorney Kenneth Chesebro to have his trial start on October 23 to ask a judge to start the other defendants' trials also at the same time — unless they object. Media reports said that one could expect plenty of the accused to do so, perhaps as soon as Wednesday.

Trump has personally appeared at arraignments in



courthouses in New York City, Miami and Washington, but reportedly he may decide to skip a court appearance in Georgia and enter his plea in writing, CBS News said.

Meanwhile, a top Georgian Republican is considering sanctioning DA Willis over Trump indictment. Steve Gooch, the majority leader of the Republicans and the chief whip in Georgia Senate, said the party is considering whether to sanction Fulton County DA Fani Willis. Republicans in the Congress have supported Donald Trump's defence as Georgia prosecutors brought charges against him this year.

The GOP controls the legislature in the Peach State, and in an interview with the Atlanta Journal-Constitution published on Wednesday, Gooch said: "We firmly believe that Willis' office is being used for political purposes, and that it's being weaponised against Republican candidates running for office." People in this state are angry on both sides of this issue. Yet, a majority of the Republican base feels there was fraud in the 2020 presidential elections and that it was not completely vetted properly, Gooch was quoted as saying. A lot of people are

upset and feel they haven't been heard, he said.

Gooch said the party is considering hearing witnesses to testify about "how the DA's office is being run". Willis could face complaints under a new law coming into force on October 1 on creating a commission to discipline prosecutors, that goes up to their eventual removal. Meanwhile, a federal judge has rejected the crucial defence offered by former Donald advisor Peter Navarro, paving his trial on contempt charges related to defying a subpoena from the January 6 Congressional committee, media reports said.

Navarro had declined two subpoenas from the bipartisan committee investigating the Capitol attack and was thus indicted. One of them demanded documents and the other required him to sit for a deposition. Navarro, while facing the criminal trial, argued that Trump had invoked executive privilege, which would prevent him from cooperating with the summons. But in a hearing to consider pre-trial motions in the case, federal judge Amit Mehta rejected that defence, seen as vital to pre-empt Navarro's conviction, The Guardian reported.

As many events unfolded on Wednesday, former Proud Boys leader Enrique Tarrio's sentencing on charges of seditious conspiracy has been rescheduled to 5 September, due to unspecified logistical issues, media outlet Politico reported.

## Malaysia celebrates 66th I-Day



Malaysia on Thursday celebrated its 66th Independence Day with parades, fireworks and large scale gatherings under the theme of unifying ties between the nation's diverse groups.

Shortly after midnight on Wednesday, thousands of Malaysians marked the occasion through the singing of patriotic songs and other activities, with the festivities culminating in a parade overseen by King Sultan Abdullah Sultan Ahmad Shah at the administration centre of Putrajaya on Thursday morning, reports Xinhua news agency.

The Malaysian monarch was joined by Prime Minister Anwar Ibrahim, members of the cabinet and other officials, with thousands of military and civilian personnel participating in the parade besides dancers and other performers. In a message to the people, Sultan Abdullah reminded Malaysians that unity is key to harmony, wellbeing of the people and the Southeast Asian country. "In fact, this strong unity is also the main key to the stability and prosperity of the country, as well as the seed and source of strength for us to face any current and future challenges," he said. "Therefore, it is a joint responsibility of the leaders and the people to not only preserve and strengthen the harmony and unity that has been achieved but also to fuel it among us," he added.

## 9th UK National Gatka Championship in Hayes on Sept 2: MP Dhesi



LONDON: UK-Gatka Federation UK, affiliated with the World Gatka Federation, in collaboration with Gurdwara Nanaksar Garib Niwaj in Hayes, are organising the upcoming 9th UK Gatka Championship 2023 on Saturday, September 2 in the grounds of Gurdwara Nanaksar. This event will witness the participation of Gatka Akharas (Teams) from various cities and towns across Britain.

Revealing the details about the event's preparations, Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi, MP from Slough and the founder President of Gatka Federation UK for over a decade, informed that boys and girls, women's and men's Gatka teams will compete in various age categories during this annual national championship.

## States must safeguard children's rights from climate change and environmental damage: UN committee

FW DESK

Responding to the authoritative guidance issued by the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child, which has concluded that countries must urgently implement measures to address the damage and threat to children's rights from climate change and environmental degradation, Ann Harrison, Amnesty International's Climate Advisor, said:

"Children are among those most vulnerable to the impacts of climate change and environmental damage worldwide, yet they are the least responsible for this global crisis, which is now threatening their rights. "The UN Committee's new guidance underscores that children have the right to a clean, healthy and sustainable environment, as well as a right to life, survival and development, the highest attainable standard of health, an adequate standard of living, and education.

"This is a legally significant guidance that lays out the obligation for countries to act under the Convention on the Rights of the Child to ensure the rights of



activities of businesses.

"Children often struggle to make their voices heard. Their participation in the UN Committee's guidance underscores the importance of children's activism to protect the environment and the obligation for states to respect and protect children's rights to freedom of expression, association and peaceful assembly.

"Amnesty International agrees with the UN Committee's conclusion that there is an urgent and collective need for higher-income countries, which have historically been the largest emitters of greenhouse gases, to meet climate finance commitments to avoid further negative impacts on children's rights in lower income states and elsewhere."

children, including Indigenous children, are protected from environmental degradation and climate change, and that they receive remedies for harms already caused. "It also reinforces the requirement on states to take all necessary measures to protect children's rights from the harms caused by the emissions or other

## Finland's economy to slip into recession



Finland's economy is projected to enter a moderate recession within the next 12 months, according to a recent forecast.

In its forecast, the OP Financial Group (OP), one of the largest financial companies in Finland, said Scandinavian country's economy is expected to contract by 0.3 per cent in 2023 and remain stagnant in 2024, reports Xinhua news agency.

OP Financial Group is made up of 106 OP cooperative banks and the central cooperative which they own, including its subsidiaries and affiliated entities. Its previous forecast predicted economy to grow by 0.3 per cent in 2024. In a statement on Tuesday, the OP Financial Group said that construction and company profitability are heading for a sharp downturn, and investment outlooks remain bleak for this year and the next.

## BRICS bloc comprising Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa, was held in Johannesburg

The 15th summit of the BRICS bloc comprising Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa, was held in Johannesburg, and majorly focussed on two issues; first, admitting new members to the five-nation organisation and boosting trade using the local currency of the member nations.

Reportedly, encouraged by BRICS success on the economic and geopolitical fronts, a growing number of countries in the Global South consider it as an attractive agent of multilateralism. More than 40 nations, including Algeria, Egypt, Thailand, and the United Arab Emirates, as well as key G20 countries such as Argentina, Indonesia, Mexico, and Saudi Arabia, had formally expressed their interest in joining the BRICS. But finally only six more were added to the original members' list. South African President Cyril Ramaphosa formally announced BRICS expansion, and now Iran, Saudi Arabia, Egypt, the UAE, Argentina and Ethiopia will join BRICS.

Overtly this seems to be an attempt to reshape the global world order and provide a counterweight to the US and its allies. Chinese President Xi Jinping, described the expansion as "historic". Xi had leading the demand admitting new members, thus shaping-up an enlarged BRICS as a way for the Global South to have a stronger voice in world affairs. Prime Minister Narendra Modi, welcoming the expansion of the five-nation grouping, said: "Through this step, the faith of numerous nations in a multipolar world order will become stronger." Media reports prior to the summit cited Chinese officials furthering the view that the bloc should be a rival to the G7. But they were silent on plans to enhance the group's clout on the global stage. It would depend on how far it will be able to act in unison, as the addition of new members has made it even more disparate. The Guardian quoted the director of the Asia and Latin America programme at the Inter-American Dialogue, Margaret Myers, as saying that this move is more symbolic than anything — it's an indication of wide-ranging global south support for a recalibration of the global order.

The decision to admit Iran represented a win for both Russian President Vladimir Putin and Xi, giving the group a more anti-western nuance. Iran, which has been looking for ways to sidestep the US sanctions, was indeed elated and same could



be said about Putin, who'll be hosting the next summit and addressed the Johannesburg summit virtually.

While India had not opposed the expansion of the BRICS, it did push for rules and procedures to be laid down, which would govern which countries could enter the bloc. China's push to incorporate Pakistan into the BRICS alliance earlier stirred a diplomatic conundrum, but ultimately it was not amongst the lucky six. For Argentina, facing dire economic problems, membership may provide a lifeline to escape from the deepening crisis. Its president, Alberto Fernandez, said it represented a "new scenario" for the country. Ethiopia became the only low-income country in the group. Its Prime Minister, Abiy Ahmed, described it as "a great moment" for his country.

Al Jazeera quoted Ayham Kamel, the head of Eurasia Group's Middle East and North Africa research team, as saying that in one move, the Middle East and North Africa region could have four members in an expanded BRICS organisation. This will structurally enhance their leverage regionally and globally.

A strengthened region would further pave the way for a multipolar world, Al Jazeera quoted Trita Parsi, vice president of the Quincy Institute for Responsible Statecraft, as saying. "As the world moves away from unipolarity, the US is also losing its ability to act as a gatekeeper, no one single state can any longer decide who is in the Community of Nations and who is a pariah." However the most important takeaway from the summit was described by Ryan Berg, the head of the Americas programme at the Centre for Strategic and International Studies, quoted by the Guardian as saying: "For China and Russia, this is a win. They have been pushing for this for five plus years now. For China, it allows them to continue to build what they hope is a Beijing-centric order. For Russia, who is hosting it next year, it sees this as a tremendous opportunity in

its current moment of significant isolation." In addition, BRICS members also discussed sustainable development in the climate change era, global governance reform, and an orderly process of increasing trade in local currencies, which many emerging economies are exploring and where India is pushing for trade in the Indian rupee.

Hippolyte Fofack, chief economist and director of research at the African Export-Import Bank (Afreximbank) told The Atlantic magazine that the dollar remains the global reserve currency, and the pace at which other currencies have chipped away at its dominance has been incremental. But a growing number of experts, including senior US government officials, recognise that the aggressive use of economic and financial sanctions to advance US foreign policy could threaten the dollar's hegemony in the years ahead.

There were also rumours that the Summit may announce a BRICS-issued reserve currency to be used by members in cross-border trade. Though the member nations collectively enjoy a comfortable balance of payment surplus, they don't have the financial wherewithal, Hippolyte opined to establish such a currency as they lack the institutional architecture and the scale to sustainably achieve this end. Reflecting on these challenges, Anil Sooklal, South Africa's ambassador-at-large to BRICS, had reiterated in July earlier that a BRICS currency will not be on the agenda during the summit, though expanding trade and settlement in local currencies will be. According to Hippolyte BRICS countries are already making strides in the use of local currencies in cross-border transactions. Their use is helping to sustain and boost cross-border trade between members, even amid a challenging operating environment of heightened geopolitical risks. It is also loosening the balance of payments constraints associated with dollar funding, bolstering local economies.

## Thailand's employment growth slows despite tourism recovery

Thailand's employment growth slowed in the second quarter of this year as droughts affected farming despite improvements in the vital tourism sector with an inflow of foreign visitors, official data showed on Monday.

The Southeast Asian country's labour force amounted to 39.7 million individuals in the April-June period, representing a 1.7-per cent year-on-year increase, a slowdown from an expansion of 2.4 per cent in the previous three months, according to the National Economic and Social Development Council



(NESDC).

The growth was mainly due to an expansion of the non-agricultural sector, with employment in hotels and restaurants jumping 11.7 per cent from a year earlier, attributed to the recovery of the

domestic economy and inbound tourists, Xinhua news agency quoted the NESDC report as saying.

However, employment in the agricultural sector saw a dip of 0.2 per cent year on year to 11.6

million jobs, partly due to the impact of drought, which was linked to the El Nino weather phenomenon, the report said. The agency noted that as current cumulative amounts of rain across all regions remained below normal levels, the growing impact of drought on agricultural employment and income adversely affected farming activities. The country's unemployment rate was registered at 1.06 per cent in the second quarter, edging up from 1.05 per cent in the January-March period, according to the NESDC.

## Singapore's Indian-origin ex-minister Tharman Shanmugaratnam wins presidential election

SINGAPORE: Tharman Shanmugaratnam, an Indian-origin Singapore-born economist, registered a landslide victory in Singapore's presidential election on Friday, winning over 70 per cent of votes in the country's first contested presidential polls since 2011. The 66-year-old former senior minister bagged 70.4 per cent (1,746,427 votes) of the 2.48 million votes cast, while his Chinese-origin rivals Ng Kok Song and Tan Kin Lian received 15.72 per cent and 13.88 per cent respectively, the Elections Department said.

The result was announced by Returning Officer Tan Meng Dui at past midnight, making Tharman Singapore's third Indian-origin president. Elected as the 9th president of Singapore, Tharman Shanmugaratnam, a distinguished economist, became the third Indian-origin person to head the prosperous city-state for the next six years.

Born to Tamil ancestors from the Singapore Indian community that forms approximately nine per cent of the over 2.7 million Singaporeans, Tharman is one of the most qualified citizens of the resource-scarce city-state that has witnessed various development phases



for over 50 years.

"I have been deeply privileged to serve you in many ways over the decades — working on the ground as well as shaping national policies for a fairer and more inclusive society, and flying the Singapore flag high internationally," said the 66-year-old economist, sportsman and poet just days before the Presidential Elections was held on September 1. Tharman beat Ng Kok Song, a former chief investment officer with the Government of Singapore Investment Corp (GIC), and Tan Kin Lian, the former chief of the NTUC Income, a state-owned

union-based insurance group by a huge margin, bagging over 70 per cent votes in the first contested presidential election since 2011. Incumbent President Halimah Yacob's six-year term will end on September 13. The elected president serves a six-year term.

Born on February 25, 1957, in Singapore, Tharman is a multi-generational Singaporean of Tamil ancestry from the 19th century. One of three children, Tharman is the son of Emeritus Professor K. Shanmugaratnam, a medical scientist known as the "father of pathology in Singapore", who founded the Singapore Can-

cer Registry and led a number of international organisations related to cancer research and pathology.

Tharman is married to Jane Yumiko Ittogi, a Singaporean lawyer of mixed Chinese-Japanese ancestry, who is actively engaged in social enterprise and the non-profit arts sector in Singapore. The couple have one daughter and three sons.

Tharman attended the Anglo-Chinese School before graduating from the London School of Economics (LSE) with a Bachelor of Science degree in Economics. (LSE later awarded him an

Honorary Fellowship in 2011). He subsequently went on to Wolfson College at the University of Cambridge, where he completed a Master of Philosophy degree in Economics.

He then became a student at the Harvard Kennedy School at Harvard University, where he completed the Master in Public Administration (MPA) degree and was a recipient of the Lucius N. Littauer Fellows Award (given to MPA students who demonstrate academic excellence and leadership). An economist by profession, Tharman has spent his working life in public service roles principally related to economic and social policies. He has also led various high-level international councils and panels. Tharman has served as Singapore's Deputy Prime Minister between 2011 and 2019 and as Senior Minister in the Cabinet between 2019 and 2023. In June 2023, Tharman announced his intention to be a candidate in the 2023 presidential election and resigned from all his positions in the government and as a member of Singapore's governing People's Action Party (PAP) in July 2023, as the presidency is a non-partisan office.

# Miss World 2023 to be held in Kashmir

71st Miss World 2023 contest is set to be held in Kashmir later this year with 140 participating countries, thanks to the G20 meet held here in May. This was disclosed at a breakfast press briefing in Srinagar on Tuesday. The press briefing was attended by Miss World, Karolina Bielawska, Miss India, Sini Shetty, Miss World Caribbean, Emmy Pena and Miss World England Jessica Gagen and Miss World America Shree Saini and Miss Asia Pricilia Carla Saputri Yules. "Kashmir has everything and it is the best place to host an event like Miss World. I am so grateful to see the beautiful place in India, the beautiful lakes here, everyone has welcomed us nicely. "The hospitality we got was wonderful. It would be exciting to see 140 countries participating in the event. Every place



has its own beauty, but the pleasant hospitality here has been overwhelming", Karolina Bielawska said. Miss India, Sini Shetty said, "It is a proud moment that Miss World 2023 is going to be held in Kashmir. This moment would be like Diwali as 140 countries are coming to

India and participating as a family". All pageant winners had breakfast with other dignitaries at a local five-star hotel. Rouble Nagi of Rouble Nagi Art Foundation and Chairman PME entertainment in India, Jamil Saidi were also present at the breakfast meeting. Miss World America, Shree Saini and Julia Morley, chairperson and CEO of the Miss World Organisation have joined the pageant winners' Kashmir tour. India would be hosting the pageant after nearly three decades. The last time the country hosted the event was in 1996.

# Doctors save two year old baby who wasn't breathing in a Mid-air miracle

**ARUN KUMAR RAO Bengaluru**  
In a Mid-air Miracle, A two year-old girl, who had suddenly stopped breathing onboard a Bengaluru-Delhi Vistara flight on Sunday, was saved through emergency medical treatment by five doctors who happened to be the toddlers co-passengers. The aircraft made an emergency landing in Nagpur and the child was handed over to paediatricians. She is still under treat-



ment, though doctors said she is out of danger. Bengaluru's Kemppegowda International Airport (KIA) confirmed that Vistara flight U814 which took off at 9.01 pm, had mid-air medical emergency when the minor girl with a heart

# Hockey India felicitates Hangzhou Asian Games-bound Men's and Women's Hockey Teams in Bengaluru

**ARUN KUMAR RAO Bengaluru**  
Hockey India hosted "Sunehra Safar" in Bengaluru, witnessed a joyful and special send-off ceremony for the Hangzhou Asian Games-bound Indian Men and Women Hockey Teams. The occasion, particularly for the players, was doubly special as the federation had invited their parents and family members from different parts of the country to be part of the occasion, which also involved the teams and their family members getting felicitated. For many, this was the first time, to have their parents, spouse, children and siblings part of a ceremony of this accord which was graciously attended by Tusharkanti Behera, Minister For Electronics and IT, Sports And Youth Services And Home, Government of Odisha, Hockey India President and former hockey player Dilip Turkey, Hockey India Secretary



General Bholanath Singh, Executive Members of Hockey India, former players and also technical officials and umpires from India who have been named to officiate at the Hangzhou Asian Games. While there was as much fun, frolic and joyous celebrations with some enticing performances of yakshagana - a traditional dance-drama with origins in Dakshina Karnataka, Rajasthani folk and a fusion ensemble - the event also underlined the teams' preparedness to bag the top honours in the quadrennial extravaganza. While Hockey India officially

# BEL hands over CBRN HAZMAT Vehicle to NDRF

**ARUN KUMAR RAO Pune**  
Navratna Defence PSU Bharat Electronics Limited (BEL) has designed and manufactured a customised Chemical Biological Radiological Nuclear (CBRN) HAZMAT (Hazardous Material) Vehicle in a

record time for the National Disaster Response Force (NDRF). At a ceremony held August 30, at BEL's Pune Unit, which has designed and manufactured this Vehicle, Atul Karwal, IPS, Director General, NDRF, and Bhanu Prakash Srivastava, Chair-



man & Managing Director, BEL, flagged off the first of the CBRN HAZMAT Vehi-

# Most of the Indian Birds Species show a dip, raises concern



**KAVITA SHARMA**

Climate Change, Forest degradation and illegal hunting and trade are some of the major threats for the Birds in India. A recent Report of State of India's Birds gives some worrying trends. Out of 942 bird species assessed, 204 species have declined in last 30 years. According to a report released recently, which is based on 30,000 birdwatchers in the country, 338 bird species studied in India for changes in numbers over the last 30 years, 60% birds species have shown a long term decline and 40% of the bird species are currently declining. There are many species of birds that are declining and those with a large range in habitats outside the Protected Areas, especially habitats like grasslands, rivers and coasts. Protection of birds requires an approach beyond Protected Areas incorporating entire landscapes. The State of India's Birds report was created to assess the conservation status of the majority of species of Birds that regularly occur in the country. Though



widespread species of Birds are declining worldwide, but in India lack of Information has meant that conservation attention has been focused on only few species. The factors that affect the Birds in India are Climate change, Urbanization, hunting, pollution, disease, ecosystem degradation and monocultures. Wild bird populations and assemblages can be impacted by these threats in complex ways and at different spatial scales. The report contains a brief outline of the methods used to come up with the State of In-

# POTPOURRI

dia's Birds. Powered by Citizen Science, State of Indian Birds returns with a wider assessment of Birds in India for conservation priority. This second addition of SoIB 2023, which is coming after a gap of three years, is based on much larger information, around 30million field observations from over 30,000 birdwatchers spanning across the country, enabling more species to be assessed. It was 867 species in the year 2020 to 942 species in 2023. The International Union For Conservation of Nature (IUCN) Red List shows that 49% of bird species are declining worldwide, compared with only 6% increasing. In India generalist species like Feral Rock Pigeon, Ashy Prinia, Asian Koel and Indian Peafowl are doing well. Other common species like Baya Weaver and Pied Bushchat are relatively stable. But the larger picture is grim 60% of species are showing long term decline and 40% of special are currently declining. According to the habitats Specialist, Birds of grasslands and other open habitats, wetlands and woodlands are declining rapidly. In terms of diet carnivores, insectivores and granivores are declining rapidly than omnivores or nectar eaters. The Species endemic to the western Ghats- Sri Lanka region are faring worse than others. Some kinds of Birds are faring particularly poorly including Bustards, coursers, riverine sandbar, some nesting birds, open country raptors, shoe-birds and a number of ducks. The report says that large number of Birds species are in trouble and is a cause of concern for the country.

# SRK's 'Bete ko haath...' dialogue in 'Jawan' trailer makes Sameer Wankhede trend on X



**MUMBAI:** It was the trailer of the Shah Rukh Khan and Nayanthara-starrer 'Jawan' that was released on Thursday, but why is Sameer Wankhede, the controversial Narcotics Control Bureau (NCB) officer, trending? It is because of the line mouthed by Shah Rukh Khan's character in the 'Jawan' trailer, and it comes right after the credit line, 'Produced by Gauri Khan': "Bete ko haath lagane se pahle, baap se baat kar."

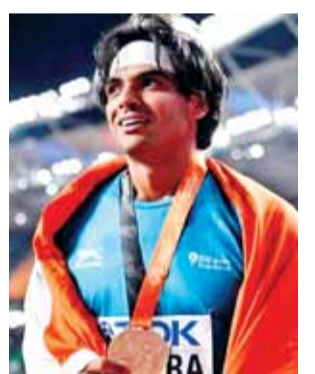
The declaration was seen by SRK fans as King Khan sending out "a clear message to Sameer Wankhede and his handlers in Delhi". On the face of it, it may seem like just another dialogue in the context of the film and its story, but for the twitterverse (or Xverse), it seemed like SRK's fitting riposte to Wankhede for the arrest of Aryan Khan and the media circus that the now-discredited officer had instigated around King Khan's son.

On October 3, 2021, an NCB team led by Wankhede had arrested Aryan along with six others during a raid on an alleged rave party on a cruise ship. Aryan was granted bail after almost three weeks on October 28 and was later cleared of all charges. Wankhede, who had earlier investigated the drug involvement angle in the Sushant Singh Rajput suicide case, was later charged with corruption and extortion in connection with the Aryan Khan case. The Central Bureau of Investigation has alleged that the drug charges were part of a scheme to blackmail the Khan family.

# Neeraj Chopra won historic gold at the World Athletics Championships

**SUNIL THAPLIYAL New Delhi**

Neeraj Chopra won the gold medal at the World Athletics Championships in Budapest, Hungary, on Sunday night. He thus ended India's gold medal drought at the World Championships, which had been going on since the inception of the competition in 1983. The 25-year-old Neeraj is the first Indian athlete to win a gold medal at the World Athletics Championships. Kishore Jena of India finished fifth and DP Manu sixth. The year before, Neeraj had won silver at the World Championships in Eugene, which he converted into gold this time. Neeraj's first attempt in the final was a foul. However, he bounced back tremendously in the second attempt and achieved a



distance of 88.17 metres, which was not matched by any player till the end. Neeraj scored 86.32 metres in his third attempt, 84.64 metres in his fourth attempt, 87.73 metres in his fifth attempt and 83.98 metres in his sixth attempt. Arshad Nadeem of Pakistan, a gold medalist at the 2022 Commonwealth

Games, competed against Neeraj. Nadeem, a 90-metre thrower who has just undergone elbow surgery, made his comeback with a throw of 70.63 metres in the first round. He qualified for the final in second place behind Neeraj Chopra with a personal best of 86.79m. Arshad Nadeem from Pakistan took silver. He set a personal best of 87.82 metres. Jakob Wadlech from the Czech Republic won the bronze medal after his third place. Julian Weber of Germany finished fourth, missing out on a medal. Neeraj won the historic silver medal in the last season of the championships. In the competition held in Oregon, Neeraj threw the javelin 88.39 metres. He ended India's 19-year drought for a medal. This championship has been held since 1983.

# Rain to hit the India vs. Pak match in the Asia Cup



**SUNIL THAPLIYAL New Delhi**

India will open their Asia Cup campaign against arch rival Pakistan at Pallekele on September 2. Cricket fans from all over the world are looking forward to this encounter. However, rain may spoil this fantastic contest. The weather forecast for this match is not favourable for either the teams or the fans. There is a 70 percent chance of rain. In such a case, the chances of the match being completed are extremely slim. The Sri Lanka Meteorological Department predicts that rain will continue to fall in numerous areas for hours. Meanwhile, teams from India and Pakistan will meet in One-Day International (ODI) after a four-year hiatus. During the 2019 World Cup, the two teams clashed in Manchester. After that, the two teams met

twice in the T20 Asia Cup and the T20 World Cup. In this case, this is the first of three possible contests between the two teams before the World Cup. And it will most likely be ruined by rain. Last year, both teams met in the T20 tournament. This time it will be one-day internationals. The last five One-Day Internationals between India and Pakistan were one-sided. However, fans are expecting a tough battle in the Asia Cup. Both teams faced each other three times in last year's Asia Cup T20 and T20 World Cup. All the three matches were decided only in the last over. Fans can expect a similar match. Fans can look forward to a similar thrill. In ODI cricket, Pakistan has the edge over India when the matches are compared directly. The first One-Day International (ODI) was played between India and Pakistan in 1978.



Girls tying rakhi on the wrists of Border Security Force (BSF) Jawans on the occasion of Raksha Bandhan festival at the India-Pakistan joint border check post of Attari-Wagah border, about 35 kilometers (22 miles) from Amritsar on Thursday. PHOTOS: PRABHJOT GILL

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