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DISMISS PUNJAB GOVT FOR 'COMPROMISING' INTERESTS ON SYL CANAL ISSUE: AKALI DAL TO GUV



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RAILWAYS SUFFERED LOSSES WORTH OVER RS 1,500 CRORE DUE TO KISAN, JAT RESERVATION & AGNI PATH YOZNA PROTESTS



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TANISHA MEHTA ON 'IKK KUDI PUNJAB DI': 'HEER IS AN INSPIRATION FOR ME'



Venugopal stands with Sanjay Singh, reminds AAP of Cong leader's arrest in Punjab

NEW DELHI: Congress on Thursday condemned the arrest of Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) Rajya Sabha MP Sanjay Singh by the Enforcement Directorate (ED) in the alleged liquor scam case in Delhi, saying that his arrest takes BJP's vendetta politics to another level and the party stands in solidarity with Singh rejecting the use of agencies to settle political scores.



complete solidarity with him and reject the use of law enforcement agencies to settle political scores."

However, highlighting the arrest of Congress leaders in AAP-ruled Punjab, Venugopal also said, "For this reason, we also oppose the arrests of All India Kisan Sabha Chairperson

Sukhpal Khaira ji and former Punjab Deputy Chief Minister O.P. Soni ji by the Punjab police."

"Democratic principles of a fair trial and authorities acting within the boundaries of the Constitution are non-negotiable. We cannot become those we oppose," Venugopal added. His remarks came almost 24 hours after the arrest of Singh by the ED in an alleged money laundering case involving the now scrapped excise policy case.

World Bank Retains India's GDP Estimates At 6.3 pc

NEW DELHI: According to World Bank's latest projection India will witness its economic growth at 6.3% for FY24, which same as its previous April estimate.



However, it attributed the moderation from FY23's 7.2% growth to adverse global factors affecting foreign demand and consumption growth.

"The expected moderation is mainly due to challenging external conditions and waning pent-up demand,"

as per World Bank's latest India Development Update.

Nevertheless, service sector activity is expected to remain strong with growth of 7.4%, and investment growth is also projected to remain robust at 8.9%, said the report.

Other institutions such as the OECD, Asian Development Bank and Fitch, but slower than the government's and the Reserve Bank of India had similar estimates.

SC blasts Punjab govt for delay in SYL canal, orders survey by Centre

NEW DELHI: The Supreme Court on Wednesday came down heavily on the Punjab government for its delayed approach towards the construction of the Sutlej-Yamuna Link (SYL) canal.

An apex court bench comprising Justices Sanjay Kishan Kaul, C.T. Ravikumar, and Sudhanshu Dhulia heard the case regarding the ongoing dispute between Haryana and Punjab over the construction of SYL canal. Punjab government's counsel expressed his predicament, citing pressures from the opposition parties and the land acquired by the farmers. The apex court, in its order, has directed the Centre to look into the mediation process over the dispute and also carry out a survey on Punjab side to see the extent of construction made by the state.

In March, the court had directed the Centre to play a more active role in the resolution as the main arbitrator in the case. Earlier on July 2020, the apex



court had also asked the Chief Ministers of the two states to resolve the issue amicably. The conflict dates back to a water-sharing agreement of 1981 after Haryana was carved out of Punjab in 1966. The SYL canal once constructed will facilitate watersharing between the two states from the Ravi and Beas rivers. Punjab was opposed water sharing citing riparian principles.

It was agreed upon that both the states would construct their portions in the SYL canal. In 2004, the Punjab government passed the Punjab Termination of Agreement Act (PTAA) cancelling the SYL agreement.

Most Indians facing extreme levels of economic distress with rise in inflation: Congress

NEW DELHI: The Congress on Thursday once again targeted the BJP-led Central government, alleging that a vast majority of Indian families are facing "extreme levels of Modi-made economic distress" with rise in inflation and debt and a decline in household savings.



Congress General Secretary Jairam Ramesh, in a post on X, said: "Some fresh and concerning analysis coming out of the RBI's data. In addition to household savings rates now at historic lows, income growth adjusted for inflation over the past four years is the slowest in the past 40 years". He said that other key findings are that net household financial savings have reduced by a fifth in FY23, and non-housing borrowing has doubled in FY23, which is most likely debt taken on to finance consumption.

Digging of the SYL canal is next to impossible: Dal Khalsa

JAGMOHAN SINGH
Amritsar



With the issue of the Sutlej-Yamuna Link (SYL) canal, coming yet again at the centre stage after the apex court passed an order telling the Govt to come out with a solution, the hardline Sikh group Dal Khalsa has cautioned that any attempt to construct the SYL canal has a potential to trigger the "rebellion in Punjab."

The Sikh organisation has categorically stated that the people of Punjab have not allowed the construction of the SYL canal in the past and will not allow in future what may come.

"Punjab owns the waters of the rivers Sutlej, Ravi and Beas and no legislation or court could deprive the State of its legitimate right of ownership. We will defend the rights of the State at any cost and would not let anybody take away the waters forcefully with State's might and if it will happen, we have a right to resist and fight back," said spokesperson of Dal Khalsa Kanwar Pal Singh.

No spare water to share with any state: Punjab Cabinet

CHANDIGARH: Punjab Cabinet, chaired by Chief Minister Bhagwant Singh Mann, on Thursday opined that the state has no spare water to share with any other state so there "is no question of construction of the Satluj Yamuna Link (SYL) canal".

It firmly said the Satluj river has already dried up and there is no question of sharing even a single drop of water from it.

"Punjab has no surplus water to share with Haryana and reassessment of availability of water is required as per international norms," an official statement said. It was also observed that Punjab's 76.5 per cent blocks (117 out of 153) are



over exploited where the stage of groundwater extraction is more than 100 per cent, whereas in Haryana only 61.5 per cent (88 out of 143) are over exploited.

The Cabinet also gave its consent for sending the case of two prisoners for seeking the premature release of life convicts confined in jails of the state.

After the nod of the Cabinet under Article 163 of the Constitution, these special remission

or premature release cases will be submitted to the Governor under Article 161 of the Constitution for consideration.

In a major relief to the people, the Cabinet also remitted three percent additional stamp duty (Social Security Fund) levied on Property Registration in Urban Areas (Municipal Corporation and Class-1 Municipalities) upto December 31. Keeping in view the public interest, the Cabinet gave its consent to omit Section 3-C and Schedule 1-B, which is chargeable under section 3-C of the Indian Stamp Act 1899. This move will provide concession to property buyers in Urban Areas (Municipal Corporation and Class-1 Municipalities).

Indian Space Conclave to be held in Delhi from Oct 9 to 11

FW CORRESPONDENT
New Delhi



Space experts from across the world will gather in the national capital for the Indian Space Conclave, an event organised by the Indian Space Association to nurture innova-

tion and collaboration in the rapidly evolving sector. The three-day event is scheduled to begin with the Indo-French

Space Summit, organised in association with the French Embassy and to attended by astronaut Thomas Pesquet from the European Space Agency. The Indian Space Conclave will be held from October 9-11, the organisers said in a statement.

ENSURING WOMEN-LED DEVELOPMENT WITH

NARI SHAKTI VANDAN ADHINIYAM



NARI SHAKTI VANDAN ADHINIYAM: NATION CELEBRATES

- **India's giant leap with Nari Shakti Vandan Adhiniyam** amplifies women empowerment.
- **Empowers her voice** with 33% seats for women in Lok Sabha and State Assemblies.
- **Reservation for SC and ST women** within the reserved quota.
- The Act reaffirms the commitment of Prime Minister Narendra Modi towards **gender equality and inclusivity**.
- This legislation fosters female leadership paving the way for women in **high-stakes decision-making**.

NARI SHAKTI MARCHING AHEAD

- **Permanent commission** granted to women officers in Defence services.
- **Sainik schools now open to girls**.
- **Armed Forces have opened entry for women candidates in National Defence Academy (NDA)**.
- **First time ever** deployment of rifle women along the LoC in J&K.
- **India has the highest number of female pilots across the world**.
- **Chandrayaan-3**, saw more than **100 women** play a significant role in executing the mission.
- **43% of STEM graduates** in India are women which is **highest** in the world.

Stand-Up India 81% of loans to women paves the way for inclusive economic growth.

PM Mudra Yojana Nearly 70% of accounts belong to women entrepreneurs.

PM Jan Dhan Yojana 56% of Jan Dhan Accounts with women, paves the path to financial freedom.

Jal Jeevan Mission Over 13 Crore Tap Water Connections transforming rural living.

Ujjwala Yojana Around 10 crore LPG gas connections provided women with a smoke-free cooking environment.

SUVIDHA, SURAKSHA, SAMMAN TO WOMEN

PM Awas Yojana -Gramin 70% of around 2.5 crore PMAY-Gramin houses are owned by women.

26 Weeks of Maternity Leave India offers one of the longest paid maternity leaves globally, increasing it from 12 to 26 weeks.

Triple Talaq Abolished Ensuring dignity for Muslim women by abolishing Triple talaq.

"At a time when women are rapidly progressing and taking leadership roles in every sector, it is crucial that our mothers, sisters, our women power contribute the utmost in policy formulation and policy-making. They should not just contribute, but also play significant roles."

- Prime Minister Narendra Modi

4 found dead after Pharmaceutical unit caught fire in Amritsar

JAGMOHAN SINGH
Amritsar

At least four people killed after a massive fire broke out inside the pharmaceutical factory located outskirts of Amritsar on Thursday night.

According to police, a major fire broke out inside the medicine manufacturing factory 'Kwality Pharma', at village Nag Kala area on Majitha Road located outskirts of the city.

Confirming the death toll, SHO Majitha Balwinder Singh said that fire was brought under control last night, thereafter four persons working in the factory who went inside and didn't come back for long time, then another team was sent to locate them only to find them lying unconscious on the floor. On being sifted to hospital where they were declared dead after some time. The dead were identified as female Rani (28) she was married,



Sukhdeep Singh, Gurbhraj Singh and Kulwinder Singh

However, the Pharma "Kwality Pharma" is one of the renowned export unit and internationally renowned. It also manufactures

Inhabitants nearby came out of their houses when they saw high flames coming out of the

factory. The smoke spread everywhere in the Nag Kala village in the area around the factory.

At least ten fire tenders engines were pressed into service to douse the fire flames. By the time flames were brought under control the factor unit was completely reduced to ashes, said police.

Shelja alleges Rs 238-cr rice scam by government officers & rice millers

SATISH HANDA

While talking to media persons All India Congress Chief General Secretary and the former Union Minister Kumari Shelja accused ruling state government officers in Haryana as well as the rice millers responsible for Rs 238 crore rice scam in the state, demanding immediate probe in the matter. She said that with effect from 2014 till 2021 the state government agencies have lost an amount worth Rs 200 crore in which



paddy crop was procured from mandis by the rice millers for milling and the rice stocks were not returned to the government agencies after milling, alleged in alliance with the government officers.

The government has decided that now onwards the transportation of paddy from mandis to the rice mills will be done by the state Food and Civil Supplies

Department and other procurement agencies instead of by the millers. The trucks deployed for transportation will be GPS-fitted so that their movement can be monitored. The decision has been taken after a detected a shortfall of 42,589 metric tonnes paddy in its stock at the rice mills suspecting bogus procurement with the involvement of rice millers, supervising officers, procurement agencies, arhtiyas (commission agents) and marketing board officials.

Rice miller trapped in Rs 197 crore alleged fraud in 4783 quintal rice

SATISH HANDA
Ambala

Naraingarh police station in Ambala district registered a fraud case against three persons identified as Ram Karan owner of Shri Krishna Rice Mill at village Dharelikalan in Naraingarh sub division of Ambala district and two others Izzat Ali a resident of village Saidpur in Yamunanagar district and Aman Kumar a resident of village Talhedi

(Naraingarh) both were the guarantors in the agreement allegedly non-supply of rice after milling paddy crop given to the rice mill for milling which was not returned to the Food Corporation of India (FCI) allotted to the rice mill by the HAFED after milling. Alleged fraud case was registered by Naraingarh police station on the complaint of Amit Kumar, District Manager The Haryana State Cooperative and Marketing Federation Ambala.



Punjab Chief Minister Bhagwant Mann and Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal at the newly revamped Mata Kaushalya Hospital, in Patiala on October 2. PHOTO: PRABHJOT GILL

National Education Summit 2023 held at Amity University Punjab

KULBIR SINGH KALSI
Mohali

Amity University Punjab, in collaboration with Prithvi Abhyudaya Educators Association-India (PAAI), hosted the National Education Summit 2023 at its campus in Mohali.

The theme of the summit was 'Vision of Higher Education Institutes (HEI's) and Universities in - Empowering Workshop for the Jobs of Tomorrow'.

Dr. R K Kohli, Vc Chancellor, Amity University, Punjab, said, "The National Education Summit 2023 served as an invaluable platform for educators to connect, share ideas, and deliberate on various aspects of education and its policies in



India. It fostered collaboration and dialogue among leaders in the education sector, furthering the goal of enhancing the quality of education in the country."

The summit convened over 300 distinguished Vice-Chan-

cellors, Principals, and Educators from renowned educational institutions across the nation. The highlight of the event was a special session dedicated to honoring the unwavering commitment of Vice-Chancellors,

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Gold worth Rs. 1.52 crore seized at Indo-Pak Attari border



JAGMOHAN SINGH
Amritsar

Indian Customs department have seized Gold having worth of Rs. 1.52 crore at Indo-Pak Attari border. In an official statement, Customs said that officers of Amritsar Customs at ICP Attari intercepted various passengers coming from Pakistan on foot through Indo-Pak Border and recovered 2552.39 grams (2.55 kgs approximately) of 24 Carat gold valued at Rs.1.52 crores in six different cases. The gold was worn by the various passengers in raw form in Rings, broken Kada and Chain. The gold was seized as per provisions of Customs Act, 1962. Further proceedings are underway, said the official.

Jai Inder Kaur Presides over first meeting after taking over as president of BJP Punjab Mahila Morcha

Instructs district Presidents to take Modi Govt's pro women policies to the masses

FW DESK
Chandigarh

BJP Punjab Mahila Morcha President Jai Inder Kaur presided over her first meeting of BJP Punjab Mahila Morcha unit after taking over as its President at Chandigarh today.

Addressing the meeting of all the District Presidents and office bearers of Mahila Morcha Jai Inder Kaur said, "First of all I would like to thank the BJP High command, Punjab President Sunil Jakhar ji, Punjab Incharge Vijay Rupani ji, Punjab General Secretary Incharge Manthri Srinivaslu Ji and especially each one of you sitting here for giving me the opportunity to serve the party and the people of Punjab through this position."



She further said, "I assure you all that we will all work together to take the party and the Mahila Morcha to newer heights. The Bharatiya Janata Party government led by our Hon'ble Prime Minister Narendra Modi ji has taken many big steps for the upliftment and empowerment of women in our society, the most recent example being the Women's Reservation Bill. It is now our duty to bring these works and other women centric schemes of the Modi government to every household in Punjab."

Jai Inder Kaur further said, "If we can inform the people of Punjab about the steps taken by the BJP government for our welfare then we won't even need to ever ask them for votes, as they will themselves vote for this progressive BJP government."

The senior BJP leader also urged the Mahila Morcha workers to take active part in Anti Drug drives in villages. Jai Inder Kaur was accompanied by the outgoing Mahila Morcha President Meenu Sethi and Mahila Morcha Team.

Dismiss Punjab govt for 'compromising' interests on SYL canal issue: Akali Dal to Guv

The Shiromani Akali Dal (SAD) on Friday urged Punjab Governor Banwarilal Purohit to dismiss Chief Minister Bhagwant Mann for "compromising" the state's interests while defending the Sutlej Yamuna Link (SYL) canal case in the Supreme Court.

A delegation led by party President Sukhbir Badal met the Governor here and handed over a representation to him apprising him of the manner in which the Chief Minister had "backstabbed" Punjab and people of the state in the Supreme Court at the instance of AAP convener Arvind Kejriwal, who was "hell bent" on giving Punjab's water to Haryana and even Rajasthan in direct violation of the Riparian Principle.

Badal also asserted the party would not allow one drop of water to go out of Punjab. He said, "There was no SYL canal in the state after the land on which the canal stood was transferred back to farmers in 2016 by former chief minister Parkash Singh Badal. Neither do we have any water to give."

Sukhbir Badal also said the party would terminate all water sharing agreements once it assumed power in the state. "We will stop water flowing into Rajasthan. He also appealed to the Governor to recommend to the Central government to bring in legislation in Parliament



to correct the historic injustice meted out to Punjab on the SYL canal issue and settle it once and for all on the Riparian Principle under which Punjab has an inalienable right over all water flowing in its territory."

The SAD delegation which included Bikram Singh Majithia, Daljit Singh Cheema, Sukhinder Kumar and Anil Joshi appraised the Union government of the ground situation in Punjab and asserted that any attempt to hold "forcible" surveys by the Centre with the intention of transporting the state's waters to Haryana was likely to result in the "eruption of a volcano" of anger among the state peasantry which would be difficult of control.

"This step will also not be conducive to peace in the sensitive border state," it said.

The delegation also highlighted the "treachery" of the AAP government in the apex court in which it expressed

its willingness to construct the SYL canal but for pressure from Opposition parties as well as difficulties in acquiring land for the canal which had been returned to farmers by the erstwhile SAD government.

"This contention is tantamount to backstabbing farmers," it said adding "it seems the AAP government failed to argue Punjab's case convincingly. It also failed to stress the Riparian Principle by way of which Punjab has an inalienable right over the water flowing in its territory."

The delegation also detailed how Delhi Chief Minister Kejriwal had announced that Haryana and Delhi should be given water through the SYL canal and how the Delhi government filed an affidavit in the Supreme Court in April 2016 asserting both Haryana and Delhi should be granted their share of water from the SYL canal.

SGPC extended all support to Rahul during his visit to Sri Harmander Sahib



JAGMOHAN SINGH
Amritsar

Shriomani Gurdwara Pharbhandhak Committee (SGPC) extended all cooperation to Congress leader Rahul Gandhi during visit to Golden Temple and while performing sewa in the Harmander Sahib Complex.

Speaking over the visit of Congress leader Rahul Gandhi, SGPC General Secretary Gurcharan Singh Grewal said that Rahul Gandhi was facilitated in every way during his visit to Harmander Sahib and extended all support when he was performing Sewa.

He said, "Sikh community is very generous and never keeps any personal animosity or hatred to anyone. Nevertheless to say that his grandmother was solely responsible for sending the Army inside the Harmander Sahib and demolishing the highest Sikh temporal seat Akal Takht which was later built again by Sikhs. Rahul Knew it very well that his father Rajiv Gandhi was also responsible for the statement wherein he had said that 'Earth trembles when

a big tree falls' that led anti Sikh riots in Delhi and across India. The wounds of Sikh widows are still simmering and who lost their husbands and family members during 1984 anti Sikh riots in Delhi as Gandhi family never bothered to visit them since they don't have any remorse as what his father had done in past".

Adding further he said, "His sister Priynka Gandhi visited Nalni in the prison who was accused of killing his father Rajiv Gandhi the reason behind to secure Hindu vote bank since Nalni was Hindu lady. But here Rahul never bothered to say anything that could show his repentance for what his father and grandmother did with the Sikh community".

"Sikhs are not fundamentalists as this community is very kind and humble since when its enemy visits them always give them cosy welcome and leave no stone unturned in the tune of hospitality for which Sikh community is known worldwide", he quipped.

This is the glaring example of kindness of Sikh community when Rahul Gandhi was performing sewa in the Harmander Sahib (Golden Temple) at that time none of the member of Sikh community asked him about the wrong doing of his elders rather they facilitated him as per his convenience since he was here as devotee but it would be difficult to say that at the time of Sewa he was carrying any repentance in his inner mind for the blunder committed by his grandmother Indra Gandhi", he quipped.

Cheat immigration agent posing as haryana Chief Secretary arrested in alleged Rs 35 crore frauds

SATISH HANDA

Mohali police arrested a cheat immigration agent posing himself as Chief Secretary of Haryana state government usually traveling in luxury vehicles alongwith gunmen along with his two companions allegedly defrauded a large number of people amount worth Rs 35 crores. The prime accused identified as Sarabjit Singh Sandhu (28) defrauded nearly 300 visas mostly in Punjab promising them to settle abroad, also duping the people as a senior Haryana bureaucrat. He was running a fake racket along with two companions identified as Rahul (35) a resident of Bilaspur in Himachal Pradesh and Ravi Mishra (27) originally hailing from Chhapra in Bihar state. Mohali senior superintendent of police (SSP) Sandeep Garg while addressing media said the prime accused Sarabjit Singh Sandhu hails from Achint Kot near Attari, Am-



ritsar, is estimated to have defrauded nearly 300 visa aspirants in Punjab. Mohali police out of the nearly 300 victims have traced about over 100 people and recovered as many as 60 fake passports having fake visa stamps. Among the victims are nearly 15 genuine immigration agents who were also duped by Sandhu, also a qualified business management graduate. Sandhu's accomplice Rahul, an MBA in finance used to arrange fake visas and deal bank accounts for Sandhu in Delhi, Karnataka and other states,

whereas his other accomplice Ravi Mishra was a science graduate presently residing in Sector 18, Gurgaon both are also presently in police custody. Preliminary investigation reveals that out of the total money earned in frauds Sandhu was keeping 70%, while the remaining amount was being shared between Rahul and Ravi. Sandhu was operating two offices in Mohali in Sector 82 and another at Dera Bassi, besides also running a pub in which Sandhu had invested an amount worth Rs 70 lakh.

Custom department seized 3.40 Kgs of 24 Carat gold valued at Rs.1.95 Crores at SGRDJI



JAGMOHAN SINGH
Amritsar

Sleuths of Customs department at Shri Guru Ramdas International Airport (SGRDJI), Amritsar intercepted various passengers coming from Dubai and Sharjah by Spicejet/Air Express flights and recovered 3.40 Kgs of 24 Carat gold valued at Rs.1.95 Crores in 13 different cases. In an official statement issued here today, the Customs department said that the gold was concealed in the bottle cap of a water bottle, beneath the luggage trolley, zip-lining of jeans pants, swallowing of gold coins by the passengers, in the undergarments, rectum concealment. The gold was seized as per provisions of Customs Act, 1962. Further investigation is underway, said customs official.

Divisional Forest Officer arrested while taking Rs 3 lakh bribe



SATISH HANDA
Rohtak

Joint teams of CM Flying Squad Haryana and Anti Corruption Bureau (ACB) Rohtak during a raid arrested Dadi Forest Mandi Department Divisional Forest Officer Dalip Kumar Singh red handed while taking a bribe of Rs 3 lakh from a forest contractor Sandeep Kumar whose firm was blacklisted by the department earlier. ACB DSP Sumit Kumar told media persons that Dalip Singh had assured the contractor that blacklisting of his firm in 2021-22 may be withdrawn in case amount worth Rs 3 lakh paid him. The contractor also informed the Anti Corruption Bureau, which further reported the same to CM Flying Squad also when both teams joined hands during the raid. The teams arrested the Forest Officer while recovering bundles of Rs 500-500 notes from the cupboard at his Dadi government residence.

1297 internet media accounts supporting terrorists, gangsters, Khalistani activists blocked

SATISH HANDA
Chandigarh

The Chandigarh Police has closed 1297 internet media accounts suspected to be hard core criminals and gangsters involved in terrorism and Khalistani activities. Information also reveals that there are still 591 other such accounts on the police radar. Since past about a year, a joint team of Cyber Cell, Operation Cell and CID has identified these accounts which includes accounts posting in support of Khalistan and also including gangsters Lawrence Bishnoi, Sampat Nehra, Raju Bisaudi, Kala Rana Jathedi, Neeraj Bawana, Devendra Bambiha Group and a long list of many others.

Ketan Bansal, SP Cy Pollice Chandigarh said that the youths are being attracted towards criminal activities through IDs operated in the name of gangsters. Police also believe that after incidents like gang war, the trend of using internet media among criminals to establish their influence is now becoming common and the internet media is also being used by terrorist organizations and Khalistan supporters for spreading anti-India agenda and lure young generations

to adopt a career of antisocial activities. Information also reveals that such hard core criminals are getting drugs supplied through ISI Pakistan in order to make the young generation in Punjab as well as the other neighboring states addicted to it and indulge themselves in terrorism. Moreover, illegal deals related to the supply of arms and RDX material for spreading terrorism in India is also being finalized through internet media platforms

The police data further identifies that such active internet media accounts in past about a year, with effect from September 2022 to September 2023 and later closed down a total number of 1888 such accounts were verified which included 96 in the first phase, 427 in the second phase, 331 in the third phase and 443 in the fourth phase. Information also reveals that 1297 such internet media accounts have been blocked in the past one year. Information about other suspicious accounts is being investigated by the investigating teams. The joint team of police is keeping an eye on all such internet media accounts. The process of blocking accounts that promote anti-India activities, break

laws and instigate the youth is going on.

According to Ketan Bansal SP Chandigarh, a joint team of Operation Cell, Cyber Cell and CID has been formed to stop terrorist and Khalistani activities. This team keeps an eye on suspicious internet media accounts and the list has been handed over to the cyber cell by the CID. After this, the cyber cell team would block active accounts of the internet media platforms including Facebook, WhatsApp, YouTube and Instagram through technical and legal process. Some of the internet accounts got blocked in recent past some time include the names of Khalistan Force, Rinda Brigade, Sukhdul Sukkha alias Sukkha Duneke team, Babbar Khalsa Pride Group, Neeraj Bawana Brigade, Lawrence Bishnoi, Davinder Bambiha (shooter), Kala Rana Group (Dabangg), vicky gounder one thought and most of them were also involved in arms deal through internet media enabling spread terrorism in Punjab and few other states. These gangsters are active in Delhi-NCR, Punjab, Haryana and Rajasthan. Training was being given on the platform from loading to using illegal weapons.

Centre should declare Sikkim, Himachal tragedies as national disasters: Kharge

NEW DELHI: While condoling the loss of lives in the Sikkim cloudburst and subsequent flash floods, Congress President Mallikarjun Kharge on Thursday said that such tragedies, also including the recent rain-related calamities in Himachal Pradesh, should be declared as national disasters by the Centre.

In a lengthy post on X, Kharge said: "The situation in Sikkim is precarious as several people have lost their lives and many including our brave Army personnel are missing due to cloudburst and flash floods. Our thoughts are with the people of Sikkim who are battling these distressing times."

The Congress president went on to say that the Centre "must do everything possible to rescue people in safer locations and find the missing persons, whose count is reportedly steadily increasing." "A lot of damage has been done to the infrastructure,



and the Union and the state governments must work together in the medium and long term to rebuild this beautiful state."

He also said that the Congress and workers will provide help in "all possible ways in this humanitarian crisis".

Drawing a similarity, Kharge said that the Centre "must recalibrate its strategy in dealing with ecologically fragile Himalayan states and must declare such tragedies, like Sikkim and



Himachal Pradesh, as national disasters so that these states get adequate funds to rebuild themselves in a more sustainable manner".

On Wednesday, the Defence

PRO in Guwahati said that one soldier has been rescued so far while search and rescue operation by the Army continued for the remaining 22 soldiers who went missing after the sudden cloudburst over the Lhonak Lake in north Sikkim. Release of water from the Chungthang dam led to further sudden increase in water level upto 15-20 feet high downstream, the Army spokesman said.

"Sudden increase in water level has led to Army vehicles parked at Bardang near Singtam getting affected," he said.

The Sikkim State Disaster Management Authority has said that in Pakyong district, 59 people including 23 Army personnel have been reported missing, while at least five people were confirmed dead.

The National Disaster Response Force has deployed three teams in the affected areas and rescued many people.

Election Commission may announce Polls date of five states next week, the last battle between BJP and Cong before the LS

MEENAKSHI BHATTACHARYA
New Delhi

The Election Commission may announce the schedule of assembly polls in five states between Monday and Wednesday. According to Election Commission sources, polling will be held on separate days between the second week of November and the first week of December, but the assembly votes of five states will be counted simultaneously in December. A source in the commission said on Friday that polling is likely to be held in Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh, Chhattisgarh, Telangana and Mizoram between the second week of November and the first week of December.

According to the sources, the counting of assembly votes of five states will be done simultaneously in the second week of December, even though the polls will be held on separate days. Chief



Election Commissioner Rajeev Kumar has started a visit to five states this week to check the preparations for the polls. This is the last big electoral test for BJP and Congress before the Lok Sabha polls.

In 2018, polling was held in two phases in Chhattisgarh and in one phase in the remaining four states. In Chhattisgarh out of 90 assembly constituencies, the first phase of the Maoist-infested 18 constituencies was held on November 12. And the

second round of 72 constituencies was held on November 20. The commission had announced the polls in Madhya Pradesh and Mizoram on the same day. The 230-seat Madhya Pradesh assembly went to polls on November 28. Voting was also held in 40-seat Mizoram on that day. In 2018, Rajasthan with 200 assembly seats and Telangana with 119 seats also went to polls on the same day — December 7. Counting of votes in five states took place on December 11.

Conspiracy to disrupt India's sovereignty; funds came from China: Delhi police FIR against NewsClick

FW CORRESPONDENT
New Delhi

The Special Cell of the Delhi Police has filed an FIR under the anti-terror law UAPA against Prabir Purkayastha, the founder and editor of NewsClick, along with others. The FIR alleges that a significant amount of funds from China was funneled to "disrupt the sovereignty of India" and create disaffection against the country. It is claimed that major Chinese telecom conglomerates such as Xiaomi and Vivo established numerous shell companies in India, violating PMLA/FEMA regulations, to illegally inject foreign funds into India in furtherance of this conspiracy.

Additionally, the FIR states that Purkayastha, Neville Roy Singham, Geeta Hariharan, and Gautam Bhatia (a key figure) conspired to establish a "Legal Community Network" in India. This network aimed to advocate for and provide a strong legal defense for the aforementioned Chinese telecom companies in exchange for benefits from these Chinese firms.

The foreign funds were allegedly fraudulently infused by an active member of the Communist Party of China, Neville Roy Singham. The Delhi High Court provided a copy of the FIR to NewsClick, following a court directive. Meanwhile, the Delhi High Court has requested a response from the police regarding the pleas filed by Purkayastha and Chakravarty, who are challenging their arrest under UAPA. Justice Tushar Rao Gedela also asked the police to respond to their applications seeking interim release while their petitions are pending. The high court has scheduled further hearings on October 9 and is considering challenges to their arrest, police custody, and the quashing of the FIR.

The FIR alleges that Purkayastha conspired with the People's Alliance for Democracy and Secularism (PADS) to disrupt the electoral process during the 2019 Lok Sabha polls. It is claimed that substantial funds were routed from China in a concealed manner and used to promote narratives critical of Indian domestic policies and development projects while projecting and defending Chinese government policies.

The FIR further asserts that these foreign funds were distributed to activist Gautam Navlakha and associates of activists Teesta Seetalvad, her husband Javed Anand, and journalists Urmilesh, Aratrika Halder, Paranjay Guha Thakurta, and Abhisar Sharma, among others. Navlakha, who is under house arrest in the Elgar Parishad-Maoist links case, has a long association with Purkayastha and has been a shareholder of PPK NewsClick Studio Private Limited since 2018.

Rakesh Sharma elected as president of Indian newspaper society



NEW DELHI: The 84th Annual General Meeting of the Indian Newspaper Society - an apex body of Publishers of Newspapers, Magazines & Periodicals in the country, was held through Video Conference ("VC")/ Other Audio-Visual Means ("OAVM") on Sep-30. Rakesh Sharma (AajSamaj) has been elected President of the Indian Newspaper Society for the year 2023-24. He succeeds K. Raja Prasad Reddy (Sakshi). M. V. Shreyas Kumar (Mathrubhumi) is the Deputy President, Vivek Gupta (Sanmarg) is the Vice President and Tanmay Maheshwari (Amar Ujala) is the Honorary Treasurer of the Society for the year 2023-24. Mary Paul is the Secretary General of the Society.

Monthly press conference organized at the headquarters of Jamaat-e-Islami Hind

FW DESK
New Delhi

In the monthly press conference organized at the headquarters of Jamaat-e-Islami Hind today, Vice Presidents of Jamaat-e-Islami Hind, Professor Salim Engineer and Malik Motsem Khan, National Secretary of Women's Wing of Jamaat, Rahmatunnisa R, National Media Secretary of Jamaat, KK Sohal and participated. Some contemporary issues of the country were discussed in the conference. These included topics like Women's Reservation Bill, vulgar and objectionable language in Parliament, mob lynching and sexual violence against women, caste census in Bihar and Delhi Police raid on the houses of journalists. Women's Reservation Bill - The Indian Parliament passed the Women's Reservation Bill on September 18, 2023, and it has received the assent of the President of India.

HAL hands over the first LCA Tejas twin seater to IAF

BY ARUN KUMAR RAO
Bangaluru

Hindustan Aeronautical Ltd (HAL) handed over the first LCA Tejas twin seater to the Indian Air Force in the presence of Raksha Rajya Mantri, (Minister of State for Defence) Ajay Bhatt at a ceremony here today. Press statement of HAL said here. Addressing packed audience Minister said, It is a huge boost to self-reliance, said. "I am proud to be part of this historic occasion and salute the spirit of HAL which has been spearheading Swadeshi manufacturing in defence", he said. He unveiled the twin seater LCA. "In all, the development of LCA Tejas has also brought about a shift in our approach to defence procurement. It has demonstrated that India has the talent, knowledge



and capability to design, develop and manufacture world-class fighters", he added. Speaking on the occasion, Chief of Air Staff Air Chief Marshal VR Chaudhari said that IAF would be going forward to procure 97 more LCAs and with this it will have 220 LCAs in its inventory. C B Ananthakrishnan, CMD (Addl. Charge), HAL said that the company is committed to deliver all the twin seater aircraft pertaining to IOC and FOC contract to IAF in the current financial year. With this, we are moving

one step closer towards achieving self-sufficiency on the fixed wing segment. These trainers also ensure smooth transition for the pilots from trainer to fighter aircraft in this class", he added.

The event was graced by Chief of Air Staff Air Chief Marshal VR Chaudhari, Mr C B Ananthakrishnan, CMD (Addl. Charge), Mr Girish S Deodhare, Director General, ADA, Mr A P V S Prasad, CE (A), CEMILAC, officials from IAF, Mod, DGAQA, DRDO, HAL and production partners.

Azad refutes rumours he is the next Jammu and Kashmir LG

FW DESK

Former Chief Minister Ghulam Nabi Azad has refuted rumors about his potential appointment as the Lieutenant Governor of Jammu and Kashmir. He said his intentions were to serve the people of the Union Territory instead.

Azad made this statement during a rally held to commemorate the foundation day of his Democratic Progressive Azad Party (DPAP). Addressing the crowd, Azad urged the public not to believe in the ongoing speculation regarding his supposed interest in rehabilitation. He stated firmly, "I will request people not to trust the rumour mills which are working overtime..."

Priyanka Gandhi Questions ED for not conducting raids on scam tainted officials in MP

KAVITA SHARMA
Dhar (Madhya Pradesh)

Congress General Secretary Priyanka Gandhi today asked why the Enforcement Directorate was not pursuing the cases against the scam-tainted officials and others in Madhya Pradesh. She said, over 250 scams had been reported in MP during the 18 years of the BJP rule, but the ED had not summoned or questioned anyone.

Addressing a massive public rally here today, Gandhi also announced several guarantees for the people of Madhya Pradesh which include debt waiver of farmers, 100 units of power for Rs 100, up to 200 units at half the rates, Rs 1,500 social security stipend to women and restoration of the old pension scheme.

Priyanka urged the people to not get carried away by big promises. She asked them to make their choices based on their own experiences. She also cautioned against being distracted on emotive issues like caste and religion. These were just the distracting and diversionary tactics to divert attention from the pressing issues like unemployment, rising prices, farmers' distress and other things, which the government does not want to be discussed, she added.

Without taking any names, she said, some people have turned their leaders into gods. Leaders are not gods,



she said, while adding, they are from amongst the common people. She said, "if someone gets arrogant, you have to make him answerable".

Referring to the claims made by the BJP about providing free ration to the needy, she said, it was their right and not any favour done by anyone. She said, this is nothing as compared to thousands of crores of debts owed by Adani, which have been waived off.

She cautioned people against getting carried away by the "election announcements". She said, they should be asking the Prime Minister who has been making all sorts of announcements, as to why these announcements were being made now when elections are round the corner. These could have been done during the 18 years of BJP rule, she pointed out.

Gandhi expressed confidence that if people made a reasonable choice based on their own experiences, while keeping in view their own future, state's and country's future, they would only vote for the Congress party.

Manipur unrest: Draped in Black, Mouths Sealed, Khurai Youth's Silent Protest Speaks Louder

ARIBAM BISHWAJIT

In response to the government's continued disregard for numerous protests expressing the people's concerns, hundreds of young individuals from the Khurai Assembly constituency have taken to the streets. As violence in Manipur reaches its sixth month, these protesters, adorned in black shirts and masks, march silently without chanting or shouting. Their demands are clearly displayed on placards they carry, united in their stride through the streets of Khurai.

The "Khurai Pana Naha Sing (Youth of Khurai Pana)" conducted their silent demonstration for about 3 kilometres, starting from YOSC Ground and culminating at the Social Standard Club ground in Khurai Nandeibam Leikai, Salanthong. In a poignant moment, they paused for two minutes of silence, paying tribute to those who have tragically lost their lives in the ongoing conflict.

Contrastingly, the previous evening, a Meira Paibi delegation conveyed to the media their disapproval of the rally orga-



nized by the youth of Khurai Pana. They urged the residents of Khurai Assembly constituency to refrain from participating. Yet, in an unexpected twist, hundreds of Meira Paibi members, alongside numerous youths, openly supported the rally's organizers and their cause.

Building on the unfolding events, Ms. Sana Mangang, one of the participants in the rally, conveyed her disapproval towards the district administration's decision to declare a curfew in the Khurai areas. "We had clearly communicated that our intention was a non-violent, peaceful protest," she pointed out. "Through our release, we ensured the public knew it was

going to be a silent demonstration. Our attire, black shirts and masks covering our mouths, was symbolic, and we refrained from shouting any slogans. Everything we wanted to say, we did so through banners and placards."

She then shifted her focus to the broader issue at hand. "Today marks the completion of five distressing months of violence in Manipur, and we're yet to see a resolution from the government. As young citizens of a democratic country, we, the youth of Khurai Pana, express our profound disappointment at the government's move to impose a curfew, essentially trying to undermine our peaceful rally."

Maha CM Shinde highlights Cleanliness, Fisherfolk Colonies Tourism



DOMINICK RODRIGUES
Mumbai

Maharashtra Chief Minister Eknath Shinde recently assured availability of funds for developing and beautifying the "Fisherfolk Colonies" and adjoining areas as Tourist Spots, besides four fishing boats damaged in accidents being given financial assistance. Work on these colonies including clean roads, water, jetty and food courts would be completed by March 2024, he said.

Meanwhile, Shinde while wielding a broom and sweeping in the cleanliness drive that began October 2 and witnessed also the Maharashtra Governor Ramesh Bais and other officials joining in this effort covering 72,000 places in urban and rural areas of Maharashtra to ensure cleaning of public toilets and lavatories +five times a day+ not only on seashores and main chowks, but also on small roads and bylanes, slum areas and drainages. The Chief Minister, while visiting Mumbai areas as part of the "One Date One Hour" campaign, gave a patient ear to civic issues raised by local residents.

Shinde also highlighted making the transformation of residential colonies housing sanitation workers, who were responsible for keeping Mumbai city clean and beautiful in all types of weather. Speaking here recently during a cleanliness drive visit to these colonies, he said an independent team will immediately make a review of facilities provided in these workers' colonies, for which directions were given to the administration. Toilets should be improved, study centers with facilities and the Balasaheb Thackeray Apla Dawakhana should be set up alongside the Municipal Corporation preparing a scheme of higher education to children of sanitation workers, he said.

Two Hizbul Mujahideen militants killed in South Kashmir



FW DESK

Security forces killed two Hizbul Mujahideen militants during an encounter in Kulgam district of south Kashmir on Wednesday. The militants, identified as Basit Amin Bhat from Frisal and Saqib Ahmad Lone from Hawoora, Kulgam, were targeted based on specific intelligence. A joint team of police and Army initiated a cordon and search operation in the Kujjar area of the district. The militants, hiding in the area, opened fire on the security party, to which the security forces retaliated. In the ensuing exchange of gunfire, both militants were neutralized, and their bodies were recovered from the encounter site.

BJP will be 'without Gandhi' in twenty-four! Speculation abounds



MEENAKSHI BHATTACHARYA
New Delhi

Congress's Gandhi family was attacked day and night by BJP leaders. Even Prime Minister Narendra Modi himself leaves no chance to corner the Gandhi family. But for the last few years, there are two Gandhis inside the BJP family. But very soon, Saffron Shibir may say goodbye to late Sanjay Gandhi's wife and son.

Maneka Gandhi and Sanjay Gandhi are probably no longer getting BJP tickets. Maneka and Varun are currently MPs from Sultanpur and Pilibhit in Uttar Pradesh. But according to the party sources, the two Gandhis will not be given tickets by the BJP. The local BJP leadership there are no longer wants to accept Varun-Maneka as party candidates. Perhaps that is why Maneka and Varun will not be given tickets again.

After the death of Sanjay Gandhi, Maneka joined the

BJP due to differences with her elder sister-in-law Sonia Gandhi. Maneka herself and his son Varun enrolled themselves in the Saffron camp. At one time, when Atal Vihari Vajpayee and Lal Krishna Advani were the party leader, they got a lot of prestige in the party. Maneka became Union Minister and Varun was party's General Secretary and both of them won Lok Sabha election on BJP ticket. And last few days, Saffron camp has downplayed their importance.

In fact, BJP's distance with Varun Gandhi and Maneka Gandhi has been increasing for quite some time. Varun is almost regularly raising the voice against his own party. It was heard that Varun had once expressed his desire to leave the party and join the Congress. However, it was not possible due to Rahul Gandhi's objection. It is believed that the Gandhis were not given tickets could also be a reason.

JantarMantar Protest: Abhishek Banerjee was exactly on the path and in mood, like Mamata Banerjee showed in her younger days

MEENAKSHI BHATTACHARYA
New Delhi

In a very "Mamata Banerjee's" mood today, "bhatija, like bua" stormed from Jantar Mantar to Krishi Bhawan. Country is remembering the young Mamta Banerjee when she was just a Congress Worker.

Abhishek Banerjee, All India General Secretary of Trinamool, directly threatened the Narendra Modi government from Jantar Mantra stage. He said, "don't touch our job card holders from Bangla, even if there is a scratch on them, then remember that many representatives of the central government, many leaders and workers of BJP have to stay in Bengal! I will answer in the language that BJP understands".

The Delhi Police, under the control of Union Home Minister Amit Shah, turned the area from



JantarMantar to KrishiBhawan into a virtual fortress to deal with Trinamool leaders and activists from Bengal. The administration made almost wartime preparations to prevent the huge crowd, a repeat of the way the crowd of Trinamool became disorderly at Rajghat. There was ample food and drink provided by the police administration

who were deployed at dharna place. Around two kilometers of the road outside it, there was a crowd of Trinamool leaders and workers from Bengal and people who were complaining about not getting money for 100 days of work.

Abhishek gave a speech at around 5:30 pm. He raised slogans with the crowd in the

style of Trinamool leader Mamata Banerjee, his Aunt. The entire Jantar Mantra echoed his slogan "ZamindarHathaoDesh-Bachao". The Delhi Police were apparently 'scared' then. He kept chanting, "Pull the ropeand hit it" which in bangla, "dorid-horemaarotaan" to which the crowd responded with "Raja hobe khan khan". Abhishek warned, "The Modi government tried a lot, but could not stop this public meeting today". Within the next two months, we will bring two lakh people from Bengal and hold another meeting under the leadership of our leader Mamata Banerjee. Today the movement did not end but began." Then Abhishek said, "I don't trust this government. You will not walk with us to the KrishiBhawan procession." Tell yourselves, did we bring you paying money? The unanimous answer, "No."



Monsoon deficit calls for resilient infrastructure

India's monsoon season this year has been a study in contrasts. For the first time since 2018, the country witnessed a deficit monsoon, receiving rainfall nearly 6% below the considered 'normal'. This was not entirely unexpected. Early indications, including the looming El Niño, hinted at a subdued monsoon. Historically, this warming of the central and eastern Pacific Ocean has led to decreased rainfall in India, especially in the north-west. Between 2019 and 2022, the Indian monsoon was influenced by the cooling La Niña phenomenon, often linked to above-average rainfall. Given this background, hopes for a normal monsoon in 2023 were tempered. Yet, the actual monsoon experience was anything but typical. While parts of the country experienced 'excess' rainfall, others grappled with 'deficient' showers. August, a crucial monsoon month, saw a significant dip in rainfall. Conversely, several northern states, which anticipated minimal rain, faced deluges due to unprecedented rainfall events. Cities were inundated, and natural calamities like floods and landslides became common, particularly in regions like Chandigarh, Haryana, and Himachal Pradesh. Conversely, regions like Maharashtra experienced drought-like conditions, leading to water disputes, as seen between Karnataka and Tamil Nadu over the Cauvery river. The India Meteorological Department's forecast for a 'normal' north-east monsoon and increased rainfall in parts of north-west and south India further emphasizes the unpredictable nature of our changing climate. This unpredictable monsoon pattern underscores a pressing need: investing in resilient infrastructure. Such infrastructure can act as a safeguard against the erratic behavior of global climate patterns. While efforts have been made to improve forecast models, they often fall short in capturing the Indian monsoon's dynamics. It's high time we channel more resources and expertise into developing models that can provide accurate and timely warnings, ensuring the safety and well-being of our citizens.

LETTERBOX

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a little progress each day adds up to big result

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MAITREYI MISRA EXPLORES HOW MAJOR BILL CHANGES COMPROMISE PEOPLE AND EMPOWER STATE AGAINST THEM

A hollow decolonisation



In introducing the three criminal law Bills in 2023 and, earlier, while setting up the Committee for Reforms in Criminal Law in 2020, a lot was said about the decolonisation that these Bills will bring about. Unfortunately, the Bills do very little to decolonise Indian criminal law. They do, however, indicate the continuation and intensification of colonial-style powers.

Colonisation is, broadly, a process of oppression where the colonised become vehicles for the supreme colonial power to fulfil its desires. The subject unquestioningly serves the colonial state and remains at its mercy. Those in power have rights; those without must oblige. At the same time, the colonial state also considers itself to forever be at risk of being victimised by those it rules. Therefore, the interest it needs to protect is its own, not the subjects', who are not just inferior but also suspicious. This is the foundational essence of colonial laws — to secure and protect the colonial state and not the colonised. The purpose of laws such as the Indian Penal Code (1860) which the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita (BNS) seeks to replace, was not just to maintain law and order; it was an opportunity for the colonial state to legitimise, through the law, its status as a potential victim under threat from the people it colonised.

Overbroad and constitutionally suspect

A 'decolonised' or a post-colonial law, then, would necessarily need to reflect the changed relationship between the citizen and the state. An independent people are not to serve but to be served through the state and government they give themselves. This fundamental shift changes the process of law-making, and the priorities and purpose of the law.

The Bills fail these essential requirements both in how they have been brought about

and their content. The framework produced by them views citizens with such increased suspicion and mistrust that the state appears to almost be in opposition to the citizen.

Through the major changes in the Bills run twin threads which severely compromise people and simultaneously arm the state against them. That almost all proposed changes to the BNS (see provisions on organised crime, false information jeopardising sovereignty, acts endangering sovereignty, terrorist acts) are overbroad, and constitutionally suspect is not just the result of poor drafting. It is an outcome of the state casting the net of what constitutes an offence as wide as possible, which in parallel increases the avenues to use police powers. Many of the 'new' offences are already covered by existing laws (either under special laws or the Indian Penal Code). Adding an additional layer of criminalisation, therefore, does nothing except increase police powers.

An expansion of suppression

A notable feature of colonisation is sup-

pression in the guise of security by giving the executive unchecked police powers. This particular feature is so deeply entrenched that the Indian state has only increased its police powers post Independence. The Bharatiya Nagarik Suraksha Sanhita (BNSS) — it repeals the Code of Criminal Procedure, 1973 — expands those powers considerably. For instance, it allows police custody for periods longer than is allowed under the current Criminal Procedure Code. Some provisions of the BNS, such as terrorist acts, allow the police powers that are significantly broader than even those under harsh laws, such as the Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act. The legislative increase in the use of police or police adjacent powers, including through other laws, is a continuation of colonial powers — not a route for undoing them.

Enough has been written about the police and prison being relics of colonisation. Yet, the decolonisation that the Bills seek to achieve provides no scope for their reform. Without reorienting the foundational perspective of these institutions, though, calls for decolonisation will

remain vacuous. The hope of decolonisation will remain unfulfilled because the state has not indicated, either now or earlier, the willingness to audit and reimagine these essential instrumentalities of colonial power. Increasing terms of punishments across the board, as the BNS does, while broadening police powers borrows heavily from the logic of colonial criminal law. What this means for India's severely overcrowded prisons and the implications on policing (how, who and on whom) are either non-considerations or over-looked considerations.

In perspective

The narrative of decolonisation surrounding the Bills must not be seen in isolation from developments in other areas of criminal law that are contemporaneously pushing us back into colonial ways and outcomes of lawmaking. For instance, laws such as the Criminal Procedure (Identification) Act, 2022 which authorises the police to take measurements of convicts, accused and even those taken into custody for preventive detention, further the aim of colonisation — increased surveillance of the populace and increased control by the state.

Though the idea of decolonisation must be seen in opposition to colonisation, that is not all it is. It is an optimistic endeavour brimming with the promise of a people shaping their own destinies. It gives effect to reordered relationships between the state and citizen. It honours and centres the citizenry. But, hidden behind the rhetoric of decolonisation of the criminal law Bills lie exaggerated anxieties of colonial power.

Maitreyi Misra works at Project 39A, National Law University Delhi. Research assistance by Pulkit Goyal, a fourth-year student, National Law University Delhi. Views are personal.



MANURAJ SHUNMUGASUNDARAM EXPLAINS WHY UNPAID LABOR RECOGNITION AND SHARED DUTIES ARE CRUCIAL FOR GENDER EQUALITY

From women's reservation to gender equality

Last week, Parliament passed the women's reservation Bill, which provides one-third reservation for women in the Lok Sabha and Legislative Assemblies. Data from the Inter-Parliamentary Union show that the share of women in Parliament in India is around 15%. India ranks 141 out of 193 countries on this count. Even Pakistan, South Africa, and Kenya have a higher share of women representatives. Over the last 27 years, there have been several efforts to introduce the women's reservation Bill in Parliament. Such efforts faced opposition from different quarters. That there is a strong moral imperative to increase women's representation is beyond debate. The smooth passage of this law shows consensus around this issue.

Reservation for women in elections to the local bodies in India has resulted in increasing their participation in governance. Research by Tanya Jakimow of the University of New South Wales and Niraja Gopal Jayal shows that, contrary to popular belief, elected women representatives have over time asserted their presence in spite of interference from male family members. A similar outcome may also be seen in higher elected bodies.

However, implementation of the present law is contingent on the conduct of the next Census and the subsequent delimitation exercise. Census and delimitation are not purely administrative eventualities. There has been a freeze on delimitation since 1976 in order to provide a level-playing field for States to contain population growth. The southern States have been more successful in reducing population growth through a series of measures focused around women empowerment. It is now well understood that higher education among girls, increased



female labour force participation, and greater financial autonomy among women directly correlate with lower fertility rates. Ironically, States which have improved indicators around women empowerment would now stand to lose seats to Parliament if a delimitation exercise is held.

Another central issue revolves around the legality of the contingency clause itself. Whether a law, let alone a constitutional amendment, can be contingent upon an uncertain future event requires determination by the constitutional courts. It is strange that a much-needed and near-unanimous legislative reform is now inextricably tied to another future law which may not be dealt with until after the next general elections to the Lok Sabha.

In spite of the law, and its laudable intent, the ultimate game changer lies in changing societal approach to gender roles. Representation of women to elected bodies must necessarily be seen in the larger context of female labour force participation in India, which is abysmal by any standards. Real and substantive gender justice will only be

achieved when there is an equitable and fair sharing of household chores and domestic responsibilities, which are all aspects of unpaid labour.

Recent research from the Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation's Time Use Survey (2019) shows that for 97 minutes spent daily by men on unpaid domestic services for household members, women spend 299 minutes. Women spend 134 minutes on average daily on unpaid caregiving services for household members as compared to the 76 minutes spent by men. It is clear that women bear a disproportionate burden of household responsibilities. This is a result of a patriarchal societal mindset, which will need to change if women are to fully and effectively participate in the labour force, let alone hold the highest elected representative positions. In this context, government programmes which recognise unpaid labour done by women within households, such as the Magalir Urimai Thogai in Tamil Nadu, are designed to recognise and address the vast gulf in unpaid household labour. The Urimai Thogai scheme is a monthly

cash transfer programme. It is devised not as a largesse but as an obligation to women who carry a disproportionate burden in the household. While Tamil Nadu has already a greater number of women in the active labour force in comparison with the rest of the country, this scheme, along with free bus passes for women, is expected to drive numbers up over the next two decades.

Nevertheless, when the proportion of women in higher elected bodies increases in accordance with the present law, questions still remain with regard to building capacity for first-time representatives. Initiatives in other countries offer an interesting case study on sustaining women in the political arena. EMILY's List in the U.S. has been providing campaign guidance, mentorship and building capacity for women as they enter politics. Active for nearly four decades, EMILY's List has helped elect 201 members of Congress (equivalent to the House of the People) and 20 Governors (similar to Chief Minister).

Regardless of whether political parties actively groom women leaders, it is now the duty of the governments to build capacity and ensure that the reservation model leads to successful outcomes. The role of the National Commission for Women and the Parliamentary Committee on Empowerment of Women need to be significantly revised to ensure that the women reservation law does not stay a symbolic gesture. Similarly, the recognition of unpaid labour and equitable sharing of household duties will ultimately dictate whether substantive reform in gender equality is achieved.

Manuraj Shunmugasundaram is DMK spokesperson and Advocate, Madras High Court. Views are personal.



BOOKS: REVIEW

Between leadership and legacy: A look at Modi's political journey

In his latest offering, Minhaz Merchant delves deep into the political landscape of India, focusing on Prime Minister Narendra Modi's tenure since 2014. "Modi: The Challenge of 2024 - The Battle for India", published by Amarjyllis, is not a mere biography of Modi but an analytical examination of his two terms as the prime minister.

Merchant's narrative is enriched by his personal interactions with Modi since 2012, providing readers with a unique insight into the prime minister's perspectives on economic reforms, geopolitics, secularism, and democracy. The book is timely, given the impending 2024 Lok Sabha election, which Merchant believes could be a historic turning point for Indian politics.

One of the book's strengths is its balanced portrayal of Modi. Merchant describes Modi's evolution from a state leader to a global figure. He highlights Modi's multifaceted persona: the hard Hindutva warrior during elections, the pro-poor

messiah domestically, and the sober global statesman on the international stage. This layered portrayal provides a comprehensive understanding of Modi's leadership style and his impact on both the national and global stage.

The 2024 election, as Merchant suggests, could determine the trajectory of Indian politics for the subsequent decade. If Modi secures a third term, he would achieve a feat only previously accomplished by Jawaharlal Nehru. This potential historical significance adds weight to Merchant's analysis.

However, the book is not solely about Modi. Merchant astutely observes the challenges faced by the Opposition. He underscores the need for the Opposition to be more than just disruptive; they must present a united front, offer alternative policies, and have the numbers to provide voters with a genuine alternative. The dynamics between various Opposition leaders, their ambitions, and the possibility of their collaboration form a significant part of the narrative.

If Modi secures a third term, he would achieve a feat only previously accomplished by Jawaharlal Nehru.

Merchant also touches upon the future of the BJP under Modi's leadership, emphasizing the importance of cultivating a second line of leadership. He identifies key figures like Amit Shah, Yogi Adityanath, and Himanta Biswa Sarma as potential leaders in a post-Modi BJP.

Beyond the political intricacies, Merchant's book also offers a socio-economic perspective. He delves into the implications of Modi's policies on the Indian economy, examining both the successes and the areas needing attention. The book provides a holistic view, considering the global economic landscape and India's posi-



Modi: The Challenge of 2024 - The Battle for India
By Minhaz Merchant
Amarjyllis
456 pages; Rs899

tion within it. Furthermore, the book sheds light on India's foreign relations under Modi's leadership. Merchant discusses the strategic alliances, the challenges, and the opportunities that have arisen in the global arena. This international perspective is crucial, given the rapidly changing geopolitical dynamics in today's world.

"Modi: The Challenge of 2024 - The Battle for India" is a compelling read for anyone interested in Indian politics. Merchant's insights, backed by his personal interactions with Modi and his astute observations of the political landscape, make this book a valuable addition to the discourse on contemporary Indian politics. Whether one agrees with Merchant's assessments or not, the book undeniably sparks thought and discussion on the future of India's political landscape.

"Modi: The Challenge of 2024 - The Battle for India" also delves into the socio-cultural impact of Modi's leadership. Merchant touches upon the changing fabric of Indian society, where traditional values meet modern aspirations. Under Modi's tenure, there has been a noticeable shift towards a more digital, self-reliant India, and the book examines how these changes resonate with the diverse population of the country. From the Digital India initiative to the push for local manufacturing through the 'Make in India' campaign, Merchant evaluates the successes and the challenges of these flagship programs.

Another significant aspect that the book delves into is the role of media in shaping perceptions. In the age of information, where narratives can be built or dismantled with unprecedented speed, the relationship between the government and the media has been under scrutiny. Merchant provides a balanced view, discussing both the accolades and the criticisms that the Modi government has received from various sections of the media. He also touches upon the rise of digital media platforms and their role in shaping public opinion, a factor that cannot be ignored in the run-up to the 2024 elections.

Nokia opens 6G Lab in India

Nokia launches first-of-its-kind 6G Lab in India; research areas will include foundational 6G technologies like Network as a Sensor, Network Exposure and Automation.

FW DESK
New Delhi



Ashwini Vaishnav.

Nokia announced that it has established a 6G Lab at its Global R&D center in Bangalore, India. The first-of-its-kind project aims to accelerate the development of fundamental technologies and innovative use cases underpinned by 6G technology that will address the future needs of both industry and society. The Lab was inaugurated virtually by the Hon'ble Minister of Railways, Communications, Electronics & IT, Government of India,

Nokia's 6G Lab supports the Government of India's 'Bharat 6G Vision,' introduced by Prime Minister Narendra Modi, that envisions a key global role for India in the standardization, development, and implementation of 6G technology. The Lab will function as a platform for collaboration for industry stakeholders and facilitate the testing of innovative solutions while establishing their potential for commercialization.

The Lab includes a setup to research 'Network as a Sensor' technology that enables the network to sense objects, people and movement without the need for on-board sensors. In the 6G era, 'Network as a Sensor' has been identified as a key enabling technology that supports the vision of bringing the digital and physical worlds together. Sensing will be fully integrated into the wireless network and operate simultaneously with communication

services. This has the potential to enable people to see around corners, gather information about their surroundings and even interact with objects at a distance. The Lab will also provide an experimental platform for researching algorithms, privacy, and sustainable system design.

Nokia is a pioneer in 6G work and is engaged in several global projects and regional initiatives with industry peers, customers, academia, and research institutions. This work aims to form a common view and direction for 6G, including 6G Hexa-X and Hexa-X-II, the first and second phase of the European 6G Flagship. Nokia is also a founding member of the Next G Alliance which is helping to drive the 6G ecosystem in North America and coordinating the German Lighthouse project 6G ANNA.

Speaking on the occasion, the Minister of Railways, Com-

munications, Electronics & IT, Government of India, Ashwini Vaishnav said, "The inauguration of the Nokia 6G research lab in Bengaluru today is another step towards PM Narendra Modi's vision of making India an innovation hub. Interesting use cases coming out of this lab will be related to transportation safety, health care and education which will be another big contribution in the entire Digital India suite."

Nishant Batra, Chief Strategy and Technology Officer, Nokia said: "Nokia is honored to contribute towards the realization of the Indian government's 'Bharat 6G vision'. We look forward to collaborating with key stakeholders to help India become a major player in 6G technology development and adoption; and take its place in the global arena as a leading developer and supplier of advanced telecom technologies and solutions."

Railways suffered losses worth over Rs 1,500 crore due to Kisan, Jat Reservation & Agni Path Yozna protests

SATISH HANDA

Railways has suffered a lot as and when there is an incident of protest as witnessed in past few years, some of these include Kisan protest, Jat Reservation issue, in protest of Agni Path Yozna and incidents of throwing stones on moving trains for one reason or the other. Usually, the protestors block railway tracks to stop movement of the trains which cause not only heavy loss to the railways but also cause inconvenience to the travelling passengers generally along with their families forcing them to drop their journey on way to their destination. According to the railway authorities, Railways has suffered loss worth over Rs 1500 crores in past few years during major protests: Kisan Aandolan, Jaat Reservation in Haryana and in protest of Agni Path Yozna which alone suffered loss to the railways for amount worth about 1000 crores in which railway properties were vandalised, torched or attacked from Bihar to West Bengal amid the protests against the Agnipath Scheme.

Indian Railways incurred huge losses in terms of blockage of rail tracks by the protesting farmers recently during four days protest in Punjab as a result the travelling passengers had to suffer but railways had to refund ticket money to the passengers since hundreds of trains were cancelled, which according to railway authorities caused Rs 103 crore loss to railways due to refund of money. Information also reveals that during the Kisan protest in 2121, as many as 1212 dharna protests by the farmer groups were reported caused heavy loss to the railways for amount worth over Rs 22.58 crore which included



Rs 3.34 loss to the Northern Railways and Rs 6.79 crore loss to the Eastern Railways. With effect from 14th June to 30th June, as many as 3132 trains were cancelled due to protests incurred Rs 103 crore loss to the railways, besides damage to the railway properties.

Similarly, due to protests during year 2019 railways suffered Rs 151 crore loss, in 2020 suffered Rs 904 crore loss, during 2021 suffered Rs 62 crore loss and railways also faced 4233 incidents of throwing stones on running trains between year 2020 to 2022 in which not only the trains were severely damaged but also travelling passengers sustained severe injuries. Amid the mass protests in several parts of the country against the launch of Agnipath Scheme, railway properties were vandalised, torched or attacked from Bihar to Telangana. Indian Railways incurred losses of over Rs 1,000 crore including damage and reimbursement to passengers for ticket cancellations in a few days. The protesters not only damaged railway property and torched dozens of trains, the Railways stated that it had suffered a loss of more than Rs 700 crore in just four days of the protests since more than

60 crore passenger tickets were cancelled. Information reveals, preparing a general coach costs Rs 80 lakh to railways, while a sleeper coach and an AC coach cost Rs 1.25 crore and Rs 3.5 crore respectively to railways. Similarly, to build one rail engine the government has to spend an amount worth over Rs 20 crore. The 12-coach passenger train costs over Rs 40 crore and the 24-coach train costs upwards of Rs 70 crore.

According to data received from the Ministry of Railways, in 2020-21 the Railways suffered a loss of more than Rs 467.20 crore due to the deteriorating law and order situation and protests. In 2019-20, it had suffered a loss of more than Rs 100 crore. Damage to the railway property is a criminal offense and people can be punished with imprisonment of up to 5 years. A provision has been made for punishment for this in Section 151 of the Railways Act, 1989. Section 151 says that if any person willfully causes damage to any railway property by setting on fire, by means of explosives or by any means, he shall be punished with imprisonment of either description for a term which may extend to five years, or with a fine, or with both.

Indian Fan Industry at Rs 12,000 crores with 9% Annual CAGR



DOMINICK RODRIGUES
Mumbai

The Indian fan industry is pegged at Rs 12,000 crores approximately with CAGR growth of between 8 to 9 per cent, while the BLDC segment is valued at Rs 1500 crore (LY) with CAGR growth of 4.5% in the ceiling segment, besides growing paradigm shift to the BLDC segment from conventional induction fans.

Ramachandran V, Director and COO, V-Guard Industries Ltd, highlighted these statistics while unveiling the company's premium BLDC High-Speed Fan Insight-G in Mumbai today. Noting that the Insight-G has been meticulously crafted in the company's state-of-the-art factory at Roorkee, Hardwar, he said it offered cutting-edge technology coupled with brilliant aesthetics and lifestyle upgrade embodying comfort, elegance and innovation wrapped together. "As we move forward, we will be introducing IoT smart variants that will cater to the diverse requirements of the next-gen consumers," he said while pointing out that the Insight-G marked a strong statement in the BLDC

segment from the house of V-Guard, underlying its commitment to innovation and a greener planet.

Describing the Insight-G BLDC fan as a "delectable" fusion of aesthetics and efficiency in 12 colours including wood finish and a meagre 35 watts power consumption, 5-star rating and 5-year warranty, Ramachandran said its other highlights included "Reverse" mode operation for winters, an intuitive user interface and a user-friendly remote control with timer options.

V-Guard - a publicly listed entity - recorded revenues of Rs 4,126 crores in FY2023 and is present in pan-India through 32 branches with over 50,000 channel partners to become a force to reckon with in the Indian electric and electronic goods scenario, "V-Guard not only exhibits market leadership in India in several categories, but also product leadership through launching several 'industry-first' smart products like intelligent and Smart water heaters, Smart fans with LED lights and several other innovative and aesthetically superior designs in various product categories," he added.

ISA inks MoU with GeM to help MSMEs in supply and procurement through online marketplace

NEW DELHI: The Indian Steel Association (ISA) has signed an agreement with the Government e-Marketplace (GeM) to help MSMEs in supplying their products and make procurement through the online marketplace, reported Money Control.

"ISA proudly announced the signing of a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with GeM. This partnership aims to facilitate the integration of all ISA members onto the GeM platform, both as sellers and buyers," it said in a statement



on Friday.

The agreement was signed on October 4, to promote knowledge exchange and direct communication between ISA members and GeM.

Speaking about the MoU, the ISA Secretary General Alok Sahay pointed out that

the main objective of this collaboration is to support Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises in supplying their products as well as make procurement through the online platform.

"GeM plans to launch an effective government interface for financing as well. This initiative is scheduled for implementation in the coming months and will involve the onboarding of various banks, as informed by GeM authorities. This will be another major help to the MSME buyers of steel," it said.

Airtel launches Innovative Marketing Communications Platform "Airtel IQ Reach"

KULBIR SINGH KALSII
Chandigarh

Bharti Airtel one of India's leading telecommunications service providers, today, announced the launch of a first-of-its-kind marketing communications platform- Airtel IQ Reach, in Chandigarh.

Designed to enable emerging and small & medium businesses (SMBs) to enhance their customer engagement strategy with tailor-made communications, the platform will enable businesses in the city to reach out to their target customers in a cost-effective manner.

Businesses in Chandigarh across all sectors like tourism, real estate, textile, pharmaceuticals, and others, to easily manage and fully control their marketing campaign starting from designing customized messages, to uploading or selecting their target audiences, and finally, tracking campaign effectiveness, all in just a few clicks.

Walter P Moore Expands Global Footprint with Office Opening in Bengaluru

Bengaluru (India), Walter P Moore, a global leader in engineering, is proud to announce the opening of its newest office in Bengaluru, India. This marks the company's second office location in India and its seventh international office, demonstrating our commitment to expanding its presence in key global markets.

"Growing business in India is an important piece of our firm-wide growth strategy to expand the company's international re-



venues. We also continue to pair our India staff with U.S.-based employees to create integrated global teams that deliver the most innovative solutions for our clients around the world," says Dilip Choudhuri, President and CEO of Walter P Moore.

As part of Walter P Moore's global network of over 30 offices, the Bengaluru office will contribute to the company's 90-plus-year legacy of innovation and exceptional service. The expansion also signifies our belief in the potential of India as a strategic market and our dedication to nurturing local talent, allowing us to better serve our growing clientele in Southern India. Positioned at the intersection of three states, our presence

in India's "Silicon Valley" allows active participation in the country's growth. "Our commitment to delivering excellence in India is underscored by the opening of our Bengaluru office. At Walter P Moore India, we are primed and ready to embark on projects of all scales in this dynamic market. We are uniquely positioned to combine international-quality expertise with in-country expediency, deep local insights, and cost-effective solutions.

Infineon acquires Ultra-Wideband pioneer 3db access to further strengthen its connectivity portfolio

Infineon Technologies AG announced that Infineon has acquired the Zurich-based startup 3db Access AG (3db), a pioneer in secured low power Ultra-Wideband (UWB) technology and already today a preferred IP provider for major automotive brands, Company press release said here. The acquisition further strengthens Infineon's portfolio for secured smart access, precise localization and enhanced sensing. Infineon now adds UWB to its connectivity range including Wi-Fi, Bluetooth® /Bluetooth® Low Energy and NFC solutions. The first set of IoT use cases include secured access and authentication, accurate location tracking and indoor navigation, as well as presence detection utilizing UWB radar implementations. Infineon is acquiring 100 percent of the company's shares.

ARUN KUMAR RAO
Munich

"The expertise of 3db in Ultra-Wideband technology accelerates Infineon's IoT roadmap for leveraging the market opportunities of secured, connected devices. Our combined strengths enable the UWB roll-out to address additional automotive, industrial and consumer IoT applications as the next logical step," said Thomas Rostek, President of Infineon's Connected Secure Systems division. "ABI Research expects the UWB chipset market to grow at an annual 13 percent, amounting to approximately US\$3.1 billion by 2028. Together, we will now create full system solutions with unique features which combine low-power consumption, enhanced physical layer security, feature-rich Radio Frequency (RF) frontend configurations and localization-optimized hardware architecture." He added, "With Smartphone manufacturers adding UWB capability in the latest and future generations of their products, the demand for UWB-capable devices is expected to grow significantly. Our mission is to open up the best of this technology to smartphones as well as cars and to enable standalone integration in low-power IoT devices," said Boris Danev, Co-Founder and CEO of 3db Access AG

India now 2nd-biggest manufacturing hub for mobile phones globally

NEW DELHI: India is now the second-biggest manufacturing hub for mobile phones due to heavy investment from original equipment manufacturers, original design manufacturers and companies dealing in components and parts, a new report showed on Tuesday.

India is expected to export about 22 per cent of its total assembled mobile phones in 2023, according to Counterpoint Research. However, China's manufacturing and supply chain will still maintain its essential role in the longer run, "said senior research analyst Ivan Lam.

In a fillip to the 'Make in India' initiative, India saw mobile phones exports worth \$5.5 billion (over Rs 45, 000 crore) in the April-August period in the ongoing fiscal year (FY24), government and industry data showed recently. As per the estimates by the Department of Commerce and the India Cellular and Electronics Association (ICEA), the April-August period saw mobile phone exports worth \$5.5 billion, against \$3 billion (about Rs 25,000 crore) in the same period in FY22-23.

India is set to cross Rs 1,20,000 crore in mobile phone exports in the current fiscal year, with Apple leading the market with more than 50 per cent in FY24. Meanwhile, according to



the report, smartphone shipments from original design manufacturers (ODMs) and Independent Design Houses (ODMs/IDHs) declined six per cent (year-on-year) in the first half this year, according to the report. "The YoY decline in ODM/IDH companies' H1 2023 shipments was driven by Samsung, Xiaomi and Lenovo Group's weak performance. However, Vivo, HONOR and Transsion Group's rise offset part of the decline," said senior research analyst Shenghao Bai.

Huaqin, Longcheer and Wingtech continued to dominate the competitive landscape of the global smartphone ODM/IDH industry in H1 2023. The companies, also known as the 'Big 3,' accounted for 76 per cent of the global ODM/IDH smartphone market in the first half. Outsourced design shipments decreased in H1 2023 but their share increased when compared to the same period last year, the report mentioned. The top six ODMs took 95 per cent share of the total ODM shipments.

Essar Oil UK selects Mitsubishi Heavy Industries as technology licensor for EET Industrial Carbon Capture

Essar Oil UK Limited (EOUK), the leading integrated downstream energy company, announces that it has completed the selection of a key licensor technology provider and signed a contract for the development of the required basic engineering design package for its new EET Industrial Carbon Capture facility based at Stanlow, UK.

This is a leading use of carbon capture technology, associated with a fluid catalytic cracker within refineries globally. Following a detailed due diligence process, technology provider MHI has been selected for the carbon dioxide capture process section of the plant. Once captured, the carbon dioxide will be permanently sequestered into depleted gas fields under the sea in Liverpool Bay, as part of the HyNet cluster in the North West of England. Essar announced the proposed construction of the EET Industrial Carbon Capture plant at the Stanlow Refinery in November 2022.

Participating in the Cluster



Sequencing Track One Expansion process, the company plans for the facility to be operational in 2028, eliminating an estimated 860, 000 tons of carbon dioxide per year - the equivalent of taking 400, 000 cars off the road, or more than 40% of all Stanlow emissions. The plant is a key part of Essar's overall decarbonisation strategy, and central to its aim to meet its objective of becoming the UK's first low carbon refinery. The company is investing \$1.2 billion over the next five years to lower

emissions through decarbonising its production processes, putting it at the forefront of the UK's energy transition and securing the refinery's vital role ongoing role in UK energy security and resilience. Essar will achieve its decarbonisation targets through a combination of incremental transformational projects, including energy efficiency and EET Industrial Carbon Capture and, as a result of the significant investments it is making into hydrogen and biofuels, via Essar Energy Transition (EET).

Sachin Tendulkar and DP World join forces by launching a global initiative to make cricket possible



Global supply chain leader will use smart logistics offering and end-to-end network to deliver much needed kit and equipment to grassroots cricket clubs around the world

New Delhi : DP World, a global leader in smart end-to-end supply chain logistics, has today unveiled the new 'Beyond Boundaries' initiative, in partnership with cricketing legend Sachin Tendulkar and the ICC, aimed at driving the growth of cricket around the world. This global mission will see DP World use its end-to-end network and smart logistics capabilities to distribute fifty repurposed shipping containers to grassroots cricket clubs around the world, each one kitted out with essential equipment.

Ahead of the 2023 ICC Men's 50 Over Cricket World Cup, taking place in India from 5 October to 19 November, the first container was unveiled by new DP World Global Ambassador Sachin Tendulkar at NSCI, Mumbai. The first DP World container along with 40 cricket kits will be placed at the Chikhali Sports Club in Palghar, Maharashtra while another 210 kits will be presented to young cricketers from academies like Achrekar Cricket Academy,

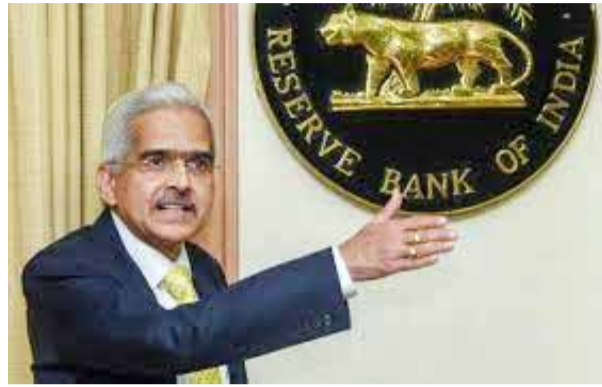
and Shivaji Park Gymkhana Academy, to name a few.

Included within each of the containers is 250 bespoke kits: each made up of a cricket bat, helmet, gloves and pads. Each container is multipurpose, also serving as a pavilion which includes an in-built scoreboard, sun protection and seating.

Speaking during the first container launch, DP World Global Ambassador Sachin Tendulkar said: "I am extremely happy to partner with DP World to go beyond boundaries and help make cricket possible globally. Like most young cricketers, I grew up playing for my local club I understand the importance of quality cricketing equipment and kits. Grassroots clubs are the bedrock of every nation's cricket. It's heartening to see DP World's commitment to nurturing young cricketing talent not just in India, but across the world. These cricket containers will provide budding cricketers a place to rest and pad up. More importantly, this can be a great step towards ensuring a safe space for girls, as the containers can be used as changing rooms. I am happy to be a part of this initiative and look forward to witnessing its impact in supporting the next generation of cricketers across India and beyond."

RBI Maintains Repo Rate; Projects India's FY24 GDP Growth at 6.5%

MUMBAI: The Reserve Bank of India's (RBI) Monetary Policy Committee (MPC) on Friday decided to keep the repo rate unchanged at 6.50 per cent under the liquidity adjustment facility (LAF). The central bank has projected India's real gross domestic product (GDP) growth for fiscal 2023-24 (FY24) at 6.5 per cent. The standing deposit facility (SDF) rate remains unchanged at 6.25 per cent and the marginal standing facility (MSF) rate and the Bank Rate at 6.75 per cent.



Headwinds from global factors like geopolitical tensions, volatile financial markets and energy prices, and climate shocks pose risks to the growth outlook. Taking all these factors into consideration, the real GDP growth for the second quarter (Q2) FY24 is projected at 6.5 per cent, Q3 FY24 at 6.0 per cent, and Q4 FY24 at 5.7 per cent, with risks evenly balanced. Real GDP growth for Q1 fiscal 2024-25 is projected at 6.6 per cent, the RBI said in a statement. CPI inflation is projected at 5.4 per cent for FY24, with Q2 FY24 at 6.4 per cent, Q3 FY24

at 5.6 per cent and Q4 FY24 at 5.2 per cent, with risks evenly balanced. CPI inflation for Q1 fiscal 2024-25 is projected at 5.2 per cent. The real GDP posted a growth of 7.8 per cent year-on-year (y-o-y) in Q1 FY24 (April-June), underpinned by private consumption and investment demand. The index of industrial production rose by 5.7 per cent in July; core industries' output expanded by 12.1 per cent in August. On the demand front, urban consumption is buoyant while rural demand is showing signs of revival. Investment activity is benefitting from public sector capex. Merchandise exports and non-oil non-gold imports remained in contraction in August, although the pace of decline eased, the release added.

Finance Minister asks SIDBI to Increase Direct Lending to MSMEs by 20 per cent

NEW DELHI: Union Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman on Tuesday told SIDBI that there is a requirement to increase its share in direct finance in credit to MSMEs by 20% to meet growing need of capital of such enterprises. She was in Coimbatore earlier this week for the inauguration of a new branch of Small Industries Development Bank of India (SIDBI). According to a release by SIDBI, the FM mentioned that while SIDBI was predominantly doing indirect finance as mandated and it reached out to the MSMEs through Banks, NBFCs, MFI etc., it has now felt that the financial needs of MSMEs are dynamic and need to be met in a timely and cost-effective manner. "With this background, SIDBI started direct finance which is around 10% of total credit to MSMEs. However,



the 10 per cent of the credit has its relevance and needs to be increased to 20% and further," she said. The minister further informed that SIDBI is currently fully digitized and caters to the varied needs of the MSME with its innovative products. She also noted that MSMEs are a vital part of the Indian economy and have made significant contributions to the country's socio-economic growth. "Since MSMEs make a crucial contribution to India's GDP, are the second-largest employment provider, and have a significant contribution to the overall exports of the country, there is a need for providing timely and adequate credit to MSMEs by banks and financial institutions, she added.

India Crossed \$230 Bn FDI in Three Years



NEW DELHI: India received over USD 230 billion foreign direct investment (FDI) in the last three financial years, said Union Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman on Wednesday. She said that mostly the FDIs came in the areas of building physical infrastructure and removing logistic bottlenecks. "Interest of companies to get invested in India and to run businesses here is now very clearly pronounced," the FM said while addressing the 55th foundation day celebration of the Institute of Company Secretaries of India (ICSI). Giving details about the FDI received in the country in the recent years, she said, "Most of these investments are coming into physical infrastructure building, most of them are going into removing logistic bottlenecks, improving regional connectivity, increasing port and air capacity and increasing overall efficiencies." The FM said decisions taken by the government to make doing business easier have helped in attracting overseas investments in the country. According to the minister, 39,000 "unnecessary compliances" have been removed while over 1,500 laws have been revoked during Prime Minister Narendra Modi's tenure to make doing business easier. She underlined the steps taken by the government like decriminalisation of minor offences, introduction of Insolvency and Bankruptcy Code, simplification of regulatory framework and tax reforms.

Migration of SME stocks to BSE, NSE records lower returns

NEW DELHI: There is a significant drop in the returns from SME stocks since it migrated to the main platform of Bombay Stock Exchange (BSE) and National Stock Exchange (NSE), reported in media. The average return of these stocks was 229.75% prior to migration, according to a sample of 25 stocks from NSE SME platform. The average return fell sharply to 86.4% after one year of moving to the main platform, reported FE. Moreover, the growth rate in returns fell for 19 out of the 25 stocks. Only a few stocks have been able to maintain their momentum. Owing to the frenzy in the initial public offering (IPO) market SME stocks now in focus. Looking at the record of last year, 155 SMEs have raised as much as Rs 4,000 crore - more than 50% of the Rs 7,000 crore raised in the past five years.

FIEO urges centre to extend ECLGS till 31 March 2024



NEW DELHI: Federation of Indian Export Organisations (FIEO) has reached out to the central government to provide affordable and easy availability of credit to MSMEs amid global headwinds due to lack of liquidity, reported FE. The exporters' body has submitted a request to the Union Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman highlighting the issue. It has sought for the extension of Emergency Credit Linked Guarantee Scheme (ECLGS) till March 31, 2024 and restoration of interest subsidy benefit of 5 per cent to manufacturer MSMEs. It said some of the MSME sectors are affected due

India Inc Sees 14.3 per cent Jump In Salary Bill In FY23

NEWDELHI: The total salary bill of India Inc went up by a 14.3% to about Rs 9.4 trillion in FY23, as per a latest study. This is the fastest increase in 10 years and moreover the average salary in the organised sector rose by nearly 10%, an eight-year high and much above the rate of retail inflation in the country. A study of 7.5 million employees across 1,800 listed entities by Jefferies revealed the increase has happened on the back of substantial pay hikes by the IT sector. Excluding for salaries in the IT sector, the rise in pay packets drops to 6.8%, which is in line with the 10-year average. The estimated increase in salaries per employee is even higher at an effective 15.6%, also an eight-year high, when the data is adjusted for the recruitment of juniors and retirees. In absolute terms, the numbers employed rose by a reasonably good 4% to 7.5 million, on the back of a 7% increase in FY22, a year in



which the economy had not fully recovered from the effects of the pandemic. The study by analysts at Jefferies showed that the deceleration in hiring by IT firms was by and large offset by more recruitment in the BFSI (banking, financial services and insurance) space. The headcount in this sector went up by 8% whereas the increase for the IT sector, was 6%. Between them, the two sectors contributed about 85% to the incremental jobs created in the year. Interestingly, the analysis showed that state-owned undertak-

I-T raids underway at various locations in Hyderabad

HYDERABAD: The Income Tax department was conducting raids at several places in Hyderabad on Thursday. About 100 teams of I-T sleuths were searching the premises of industrialists, businessmen and contractors. Searches were also on since early morning at their houses and offices. The I-T department also conducted raids at some chit fund companies, finance companies and their directors. The search was on at a few premises in areas like Kukatpally, Ameerpet, Shamshabad and Jubilee Hills. The officials were reportedly looking into complaints of tax evasion. They were checking records of financial transactions. The I-T sleuths were checking computers, laptops and other digital records. Further details were awaited.

Financial health analysis of upcoming four key electoral states



DR P S VOHRA
These days, in some states of India, elections are looming, and there is a lot of buzz about populist and social welfare schemes in all these states. Is this a political strategy of the present state governments? Is this not impacting the economic development of the states? Many such questions are being discussed continuously these days. Under the democratic system, the government's main responsibility is not only to lead society towards economic prosperity, but at the same time, there is also the need for the economic well-being of the deprived section from the mainstream. It's a dilemma where drawing the right line is a very complex task because economic prosperity and social welfare are just contrasting. The notion that we can achieve 100% economic prosperity is an idealistic perspective. Therefore, within the democratic system, a responsible approach can only be exercised with the mindset that the economically backward and poor section always receive priority in economic policies. By the end of this year, there will be elections in four major states of the country: Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh, Chhattisgarh, and Telangana. These four states are crucial to the country's economic development just as much as they are in terms of geographical and social structure. However, comparing them on various economic indicators, such as the fiscal deficit, it's evident that they cannot be measured on the same scale. For instance, Rajasthan and Madhya Pradesh show a significant fiscal deficit, estimated at 4%, surpassing the 3% limit set by the Finance Commission for the current fiscal year. On the other hand, Chhattisgarh has an



mitted expenditure, the greater the opportunities for the fiscal deficit to increase, requiring financial loans for capital expenditure. According to these expenses, when comparing the four states, Rajasthan is once again at the top. Based on the figures from the last three years, these expenses in Rajasthan account for 60% of revenue expenditures, with pension expenses exceeding 10%. Meanwhile, in Madhya Pradesh, it is 45%; in Chhattisgarh, 43%; and in Telangana, 38%. These figures clearly indicate a significant difference in interest payments among these states over the past few years. Chhattisgarh has the smallest share, where the average rate of financial interest payment is 7% of the revenue income. It is 9.75% in Madhya Pradesh and 12.3% in Telangana. Rajasthan has the highest interest payment, with an average rate of over 14%. In this regard, the 14th Finance Commission has set a limit for interest payments, up to 10% of revenue income, and payments beyond that are not considered rational given the economic condition of the state. The focus on economic policies emphasizing capital expenditure can propel any state toward economic prosperity. Therefore, it is crucial to continually increase the proportion of capital expenditure and implement approximately 90 per cent of the budgeted expenditure in reality. Conversely, a significant portion of revenue allocated to salaries and pensions in expenditure will undeniably escalate the revenue deficit. Hence, it is essential to keep it below 50%. Otherwise, the state will struggle to prosper and work towards its social welfare goals, ultimately leading to a poor and backward state. Dr P S Vohra is Writer, columnist and financial thinker. View are personal

estimated 3% deficit, and Telangana has an estimated 2.7% deficit, indicating a better economic situation. It's crucial to note that fiscal deficit is a complex aspect of the economic situation, and comparative analysis reveals multiple facets. While the fiscal deficit of Rajasthan and Madhya Pradesh may be similar, Madhya Pradesh is relatively in a better position. Similarly, although Telangana has the lowest fiscal deficit among the four states, it doesn't necessarily imply it has the best economic conditions. The ideal situation for the economic development of any state can be primarily understood through three aspects: firstly, the ratio of state's capital expenditure to total expenditure; secondly, the actual implementation of budgeted capital expenditure; and thirdly, the ratio of committed expenditures in revenue spending. It should be noted that committed expenditures refer to expenses such as salaries, pensions, and interest payment. Based on these factors, despite Rajasthan and Madhya Pradesh having similar financial deficits, the difference lies in the fact that Madhya Pradesh is burdened with financial debt due to the purposeful increase in capital expenditure, leading to significant interest payments. In contrast, Rajasthan's proportion of committed expenditures in revenue spending is much

Maruti Suzuki gets GST notice for paying up Rs 139 crore



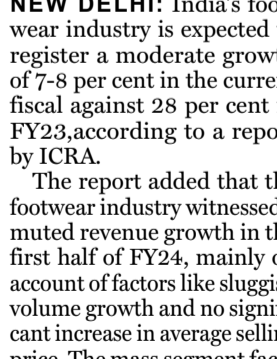
NEW DELHI: Leading car manufacturer Maruti Suzuki has been sent a show cause notice by the GST Authority proposing to demand Rs 139.3 crore as tax inclusive of interest and penalty. The notice pertains to the matter of tax liability under reverse charge basis on certain services for the period of July 2017 to August, 2022, the company said in a regulatory filing. The company said it will file a reply to the show cause notice before the Adjudicating Authority. Maruti Suzuki claimed that it has received a favourable order from the Punjab and Haryana High Court wherein appeals filed by the Central Excise Department for the period June 2006 to March 2011 were dismissed in an earlier Rs 57.2 crore case. The company further stated in the filing that the Central Excise Department had filed appeals before the high court against an earlier tribunal order of August 2016, which was passed in favour of the company in which input service credit on certain services was allowed to it and the penalty imposed was dropped.

Indian direct-2-consumer market set to reach 3 bn shipments by 2027

NEW DELHI: The Indian direct-2-consumer (D2C) market is projected to reach a gross merchandise value (GMV) of \$30-35 billion by 2027 with up to 3 billion shipments, and third-party logistics providers will be the direct beneficiaries, a report showed on Friday. This is a compound annual growth rate (CAGR) of around 40 per cent, which is more than three times that of the broader retail market and 1.6 times of the e-commerce market for the same period, according to a report by Redseer Strategy Consultants.

One of the direct beneficiaries of the D2C market growth are third-party logistics providers (3PLs). In 2022, the number of D2C shipments stood at approximately half a billion, and their projections indicate a substantial increase to 3 billion D2C shipments by 2027. "3PL solutions tie-in well with the D2C segment as demand varies across cities/regions and the required logistics investment is on the higher side. Brands need reliable logistics partners with a wider reach across India to ensure consistency of experience," Mrigank Gutgutia, partner at Redseer. Among the 3PL players, Delhivery followed by Blue Dart stand out as the preferred partner by brands looking for superior tech, quick and reliable delivery across a larger set of pin codes. Players like Shadowfax and Xpressbees are used by brands where low-cost shipping is a primary criterion, with Shadowfax's reach being more metro focused.

Indian Footwear Industry Likely to witness 7-8% growth in FY24: ICRA



NEW DELHI: India's footwear industry is expected to register a moderate growth of 7-8 per cent in the current fiscal against 28 per cent in FY23, according to a report by ICRA. The report added that the footwear industry witnessed a muted revenue growth in the first half of FY24, mainly on account of factors like sluggish volume growth and no significant increase in average selling price. The mass segment faces headwinds, and demand is unlikely to improve significantly in the near term, though sales recovery during the festive and wedding season in H2 FY2024 could "partially offset muted revenue growth in H1". "While some recovery is expected in H2 FY2024, overall revenue growth is likely to moderate sharply to around 7-8 per cent in FY24, with companies focusing on the premium segment expected to perform well," said ICRA. On the input side, softening raw material (RM) prices are estimated to support the operating margin (OPM) in H1 FY2024. However, increasing RM prices since August 2023 are likely to impact the margins in H2 FY2024. "Consequently, the OPM is likely to

remain flat at 18.5 per cent in FY2024," it added. Over the government's quality control order (QCO) pertaining to around 24 footwear and related products, which became applicable from July 1, 2023, for the large and medium scale entities, ICRA said it would have an impact on the industry. "However, for some products, where the standards have been recently amended, the applicability was revised to December 31, 2023. Since a significant portion of the revenues of the organised footwear entities are concentrated around those products, the major impact of the QCO implementation would be visible from January 2024," it said. The agency said it believes the standards are expected to "result in a supply disruption in the near term" as the players adjust to the new regulatory regime. There was a significant increase of 35 per cent in the import of footwear products during April-June 2023 in anticipation of the supply disruption, resulting in front-loading of inventory on entities' books. "While the imports moderated in July 2023 following the deferred implementation of QCO guidelines for major products, the working capital requirements are likely to remain high in the near term. In the long run, however, the regulation is expected to increase the formalisation of the footwear industry," the report said.

INTERNATIONAL

Canada evacuates diplomats from Delhi to Southeast Asia: Report

NEW DELHI: India asking Canada to withdraw 41 out of its 62 diplomats in India by October 10 to achieve a parity in the number of diplomatic staff in each country, Ottawa has reportedly evacuated its staff from its High Commission to Southeast Asia, according to a media report.

The CTV report said that Canada has evacuated the majority of its diplomatic staff from India and shifted them to either Kuala Lumpur (Malaysia) or Singapore. But there was no official word on their evacuation from New Delhi. The news comes amid claims by Canadian Foreign Affairs Minister



Melanie Joly on Tuesday that the government was engaged diplomatically with India on the issue of staff reduction.

"We are in contact with the government of India. We take Canadian diplomats' safety very seriously, and we will continue

to engage privately because we think that diplomatic conversations are best when they remain private," Jolie had said.

Amid the worsening bilateral ties, India has asked Canada to withdraw the 41 diplomats from the country by October 10

and failing to comply with the deadline will see them lose their diplomatic immunity.

There are more than 60 Canadian diplomats posted in India. Meanwhile on Thursday, the External Affairs Ministry said that a parity has been sought in diplomatic presence.

"On discussions on parity, given the much higher presence of diplomats or diplomatic presence here and their interference in our internal matters, we have sought parity in our respective diplomatic presence," External Affairs Ministry spokesperson Arindam Bagchi told mediapersons in response to a question on the issue. He further informed

that discussions are ongoing to achieve parity.

"Given that Canadian diplomatic presence is higher, we would assume that there would be a reduction," he said. Last month, after Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau had alleged in Parliament that Indian intelligence agents may have been involved in the murder of Sikh pro-Khalistan hardliner Hardeep Singh Nijjar, the diplomatic relations have hit an all time low between the two nations. Following Trudeau's allegations, the two nations have expelled a diplomat each. India had also termed Canada's allegations as "politically driven".

After G20, India is ready to hold P20, Canada to attend G20 Parliament Speakers' Summit; Germany, Argentina will skip



MEENAKSHI BHATTACHARYA
New Delhi

Lok Sabha speaker Om Birla on Friday said Canada has confirmed its participation in the upcoming G20 Parliamentary Speakers' Summit (P20) which will be held at 'Yashobhumi' in Delhi from October 12 to 14. Birla said the key narrative of the P20 meeting is titled 'India as the mother of democracy'. According to the statement released by the Lok Sabha secretariat, Germany and Argentina will not be present for the event for "internal reasons". Canada's participation in the P20 summit comes at a time when bilateral ties between New Delhi and Ottawa have strained following Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau's statement alleging India's link to the killing of Khalistani leader Hardeep Singh Nijjar.

The P20 is a forum of Speakers and Presidents of Parliaments from G20 countries that provide a platform for parliamentary leaders to discuss and share best prac-

tics on issues of global importance. Addressing media persons Lok Sabha Speaker Om Birla said, "All countries have been invited, and Canada's Senate Speaker has sent confirmation about attending the event that will have 50 members of Parliament, 14 general secretaries including 26 Presidents and 10 Vice-Presidents participating. The President of the Pan African Parliament will attend the P-20 event after G20 in India for the first time". The two-day event that will be inaugurated by Prime Minister Narendra Modi on October 13 and will have four sessions where participants will discuss issues including transformation in people's lives through public digital platforms, women-led development, accelerating sustainable development goals, and sustainable energy transition. Birla said, the key narrative of the P20 meeting is titled 'India as the mother of democracy' and will have participants weighing, both formally and informally on a clutch of issues concerning stakeholders.

6.2 quake jolts Nepal, strong tremors felt in Delhi-NCR



NEW DELHI: Strong tremors were felt in Delhi-NCR on Tuesday at 2:51 p.m., after an earthquake measuring 6.2 on the Richter scale struck Nepal, said the National Centre for Seismology (NCS). The epicentre was in Nepal and the depth was five kms, said NCS. "Earthquake of Magnitude:6.2, Occurred on 03-10-2023, 14:51:04 IST, Lat: 29.39 & Long: 81.23, Depth: 5 Km, Location:Nepal," NCS tweeted. Delhi and its peripherals felt strong tremors, lasting for several seconds. Videos on social media showed people running out of their residential premises and offices.

Indian-origin man sentenced along with 6 others for role in \$20 mn Covid relief fraud



A 54-year-old Indian-origin man and six other co-conspirators have been sentenced to prison for their role in a multimillion-dollar Covid-19 relief fraud and misusing public funds to buy houses and expensive cars like Lamborghini and Porsche during pandemic.

Pardeep Basra was sentenced on Tuesday to three years and five months in prison after he pleaded guilty to his role in "one of the largest" Paycheck Protection Program (PPP) fraud ring led by Amir Aqeel.

Aqeel, 54, received the maximum sentence of 15 years in prison for fraudulently obtaining more than \$20 million in forgivable PPP loans that the Small Business Administration (SBA) guaranteed under the Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act.

He was ordered to forfeit \$5, 583, 111.48 for leading the conspiracy, and for conspiring with at least 14 other individuals to submit 75 fraudulent PPP loan applications in 2020.

In the applications, Basra, Aqeel and other defendants falsified the number of employees and the average monthly payroll expenses of the applicant businesses and submitted fraudulent bank records and fake federal tax forms in support of the PPP loan applications.

Aqeel paid Basra and others large kickbacks in exchange for their assistance with the false and fraudulent PPP loan applications.

US Attorney Alandor S Hamdani for the Southern District of Texas said Aqeel, Basra and others stole millions from the public fund, and used that money to buy houses, a Porsche, even a Lamborghini, all while taking advantage of programs intended to help those struggling during the pandemic.

Federal agents executed 45 seizure warrants in conjunction with the case, which according to the Justice Department is one of the largest PPP fraud cases prosecuted by it.

The other defendants include Khalid Abbas and Richard Reuth, who were sentenced to two-and-a-half years in prison, and Siddiq Azeemuddin and Rifat Bajwa, who will serve two and three years in prison, respectively. In February, a federal jury convicted Abdul Fatani of one count of conspiracy to commit wire fraud, and one count of money laundering. He was sentenced to three years in prison. The defendants also laundered a portion of the fraudulent proceeds by writing checks from companies that received PPP loans to fake employees, according to a Department of Justice release.

The defendants cashed these fake paychecks at Farscare International Inc, dba Almeda Discount Store (Almeda) -- a company that Azeemuddin owned. In total, the defendants cashed more than 1, 100 fake paychecks for more than three million dollars in fraudulent PPP loan proceeds at Almeda.

Khalsa Aids services in Maraco



FW DESK

On 8th September, a devastating 6.8 magnitude earthquake struck Morocco's Marrakech-Safi region. The earthquake's epicentre was located 73.4km (46 miles) southwest of Marrakech, high in the Atlas Mountains. The earthquake caused widespread damage and loss of life, with the death toll surpassing 2,000 people and over 1,800 injured.

Responding swiftly, Khalsa Aid immediately deployed a team to Morocco to help with relief efforts. The team conducted initial assessments to understand the needs of the locals. Families displaced by the earthquake received vital supplies, including food, cooking utensils, clean drinking water, and tents. Many of these affected communities were located in remote, mountainous regions.

Justin Trudeau trying to crush free speech which is shameful says Elon Musk

Tesla and SpaceX CEO Elon Musk on Monday slammed Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau for trying to crush free speech in his country, saying this is "shameful".

He reacted after the Canadian government made it compulsory for online streaming platforms to register with the government for "regulatory controls".

Author-Journalist Glenn Greenwald posted on X: "The Canadian government, armed with one of the world's most repressive online censorship



schemes, announces that all online streaming services that offer podcasts must formally register with the government to permit regulatory controls".

Musk reacted: "Trudeau is trying to crush free speech in Canada. Shameful." When one of his followers

posted that Trudeau should change his name to "False-deau", the tech billionaire reacted with a crying face emoji.

Meanwhile, External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar said that India's diplomatic row with Canada was discussed in his meeting with top US officials -- Secretary of State Antony Blinken and National Security Adviser Jake Sullivan -- and he gave them both an exhaustive account of India's case, which included its assessment of "a very permissive Canadian attitude towards

terrorists".

The US has been supportive of Canada's allegation that India was behind the killing of Khalistani activist Hardeep Singh Nijjar in British Columbia in June. The US has publicly and privately urged India to cooperate with the investigation. New Delhi has dismissed the allegations as "absurd" but has said that if Canada has anything, it would take a look at it.

But Ottawa has not provided any evidence to India or presented it publicly.

Two Indian-origin men plead guilty to multimillion-dollar Covid fraud in US

Two Indian-origin men have pleaded guilty to their role in a scheme to fraudulently obtain and launder millions of dollars in forgivable Paycheck Protection Program (PPP) loans that the Small Business Administration guaranteed under the Coronavirus Aid, Relief and Economic Security (CARES) Act.

Nishant Patel, 41, Harjeet Singh, 49, and three others engaged in a conspiracy to defraud the SBA and certain SBA-approved PPP lenders by submitting false and fraudulent PPP loan applications, a Department of Justice statement said on Monday.

All five defendants also assisted in laundering the fraudulently obtained PPP loan funds by supplying the co-conspirators with blank, endorsed checks,



which were made payable to people posing as employees of the companies that received the PPP loan, but who were in fact not employees.

These fake paychecks were then cashed at the check cashing stores that other members of the conspiracy controlled, according to court documents.

As part of the scheme, Patel obtained a false and fraudulent PPP loan in the amount of nearly \$474, 993 and Singh obtained two false and fraudulent PPP loans for a total of nearly \$937, 379.

Family demands probe into UK Sikh leader Avtar Singh Khanda's death

LONDON: The family of Avtar Singh Khanda -- the principal orchestrator of the violence at the Indian High Commission in London who died this year -- has sought a formal inquest into his death from the chief coroner for England and Wales.

The request by the family, as well as the Sikh Federation UK, came just as Khalistan supporters staged an anti-India protest outside the Indian High Commission in London on Monday.

It also corresponds with a bitter diplomatic spat between New Delhi and Ottawa, fuelled by Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau's recent allegations of India's involvement in the death of pro-Khalistan hardliner Hardeep Singh Nijjar. Both Nijjar and Khanda were associated with Khalistani organisations banned



as terror groups in India.

According to the Guardian, the call for an inquest is being led by the barrister Michael Polak, who alleged that the British police should have understood that Khanda was potentially in danger.

Polak said he could not definitively state that India was behind Khanda's death, but that the circumstances clearly called for an investigation.

"If it was happening in a vacuum and we believed India

was a law-abiding country, we would say that it is unlucky. But there were threats against him and he was named as enemy No 1 (in the media). At the very least it is suspicious," Polak told the Guardian.

Khanda died on June 15 this year after he was admitted to a hospital in Birmingham due to sudden illness.

The official cause of death, which was declared post-mortem, was acute myeloid leukaemia (blood cancer).

Historic NITI Women-Led Development workshop held in Goa

"BILL & MELINDA GATES FOUNDATION, RELIANCE FOUNDATION AMONG PARTICIPANTS"

DOMINICK RODRIGUES
Panjim

Goa Chief Minister, Dr Pramod Sawant affirmed the Goa Government's commitment to collaborate with NITI Aayog in pursuit of the 'Developed India 2047' vision when he delivered his keynote address at the NITI Aayog-organised First-Ever Workshop on Women-Led Development in Goa recently.

This historic event marked a significant step towards realizing the goal of 'Developed India 2047' set forth by Prime Minister Narendra Modi. NITI Aayog plans to organize 40 to 50 such workshops across India by March, underscoring its dedication to women-led development and the nation's overall progress.

The Chief Minister Sawant shared insights and perspectives on women-led development in the region, while addressing Women Business Leaders from Western India during the NITI-State Workshop that highlighted 'Enabling Women-Led Development' on enabling women-led development and reaching the last mile.

Highlighting significant progress in various sectors through the 'Swayampurna Goa' initiative, Sawant also announced the upcoming launch of 'Swayampurna e-Bazar' by Dussehra to facilitate sale of products by women entrepreneurs, including food items and also handloom products.

The Women Entrepreneurship Platform (WEP) had incu-



bated in NITI Aayog, and then into a public-private partnership as a one-stop solution for information and services relevant to women entrepreneurs, offering a wide range of resources, including the +SmartMatch+ feature for government schemes and private sector initiatives, a knowledge base, a community page, and a mentorship module.

This speakerslineup included Goa Chief Minister, Dr VK Saraswat, Member NITI Aayog, B.V.R Subrahmanyam, CEO, NITI Aayog, Sulakshana Sawant, President, Goa state women SHGs, besides representatives of organizations like the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, Reliance Foundation, Piramal Foundation, ICAI (Institute of Chartered Accountants of India), SIDBI, Ola Foundation, and others.

The inaugural workshop witnessed Dr Chintan Vaishnav, Chair of +Startup20 India+ and Mission Director at +Atal Innovation Mission+,

delivering a "TED Talk" focusing on importance of inclusion and diversity within the "global startup ecosystem, particularly within the Group of Twenty (G20) nations."

Dr VK Saraswat, a Member of NITI Aayog, delivered the inaugural address, emphasizing the Government of India's initiative towards balanced growth through women-led development.

Several significant initiatives announced during the session, included "Udyam Uplift" by CAXpert, the AIC-GIM-WEP collaboration known as "We Nurture," and the ATR program for Goa entrepreneurs, besides launch of a partnership between ICAI and NITI Aayog.

The State Support Mission, an umbrella initiative by NITI Aayog, is strategically designed to support states and union territories in achieving their socioeconomic goals by 2047. Under the State Support Mission, a series of workshops are being conducted to provide a platform for Centre-State

exchanges and forging partnerships.

This workshop marks the commencement of the WEP State Workshop series with primary goal being augmentation of awareness regarding the Women Entrepreneurship Platform (WEP) and unveiling a range of pioneering initiatives that WEP has embarked upon including introduction of support cohorts tailored for green women entrepreneurs.

The workshop witnessed engaging fireside chats and deep dive discussions exploring topics such as mentoring, skill development, access to finance, and compliance.

Highlighting India's position as the world's fifth-largest economy+, NITI Aayog CEO BVR Subrahmanian urged all stakeholders to work diligently towards achieving the goal of a developed India and assured NITI Aayog's assistance to states through financial support and infrastructure development.

Dr. VK Saraswat, Member of NITI Aayog, emphasized three key priorities: maintaining the employment-to-education ratio, promoting women's entrepreneurship, and restructuring the workforce.

The workshop witnessed Memorandums of Understanding (MoUs) being signed between NITI Aayog and prominent institutions, including the Institute of Chartered Accountants of India, Goa Institute of Management, Small Industries Development Bank of India (SIDBI), and Microsave Consulting.

Nuvei opens new office in China as it continues to expand its footprint in APAC

Nuvei's increased presence in the region is enabling eCommerce businesses to reach local and cross-border customers

FW DESK
Montreal

Nuvei Corporation, the Canadian fintech company, announces today it has opened its latest operational hub in China as it continues to expand its presence in the Asia-Pacific (APAC) region.

Philip Fayer, Nuvei Chair and CEO, commented on the announcement: "We're thrilled to add an office in China to our global footprint as we continue to build our services in APAC. Ecommerce businesses rely on payments partners with global reach as well as local market expertise when they scale internationally. Our increased presence will enable businesses in APAC to enter new markets as we build on our existing regional expertise."

Nuvei is already providing cross-border payment services to many Chinese businesses as they scale internationally, including Geekbuying, Vakatrip, and Cupshe. With its new increased footprint in the region, Nuvei is extending its global reach, as well as servicing current and future clients with an enhanced local expertise and customer service.

Launching an office in China is only the latest announcement from Nuvei as it continues to demonstrate its commitment to supporting businesses with accelerating their growth through payments in APAC. Recently,



"We're thrilled to add an office in China to our global footprint as we continue to build our services in APAC. Ecommerce businesses rely on payments partners with global reach as well as local market expertise when they scale internationally"

Nuvei announced that it had extended its global reach in the region by obtaining its local acquiring license in Australia, following the announcement that it had obtained local acquiring licenses in Singapore and Hong Kong in 2022. Nuvei also enables businesses in APAC to connect with customers across the region by offering all the relevant alternative payment methods (APMs) to every customer from its suite of 634 APMs.

Last month Nuvei also an-

nounced that it had partnered with Mastercard to enable businesses, including trading platforms, to offer customers instant payouts to bank cards. Already available to Nuvei customers in Singapore, the Mastercard Send™ service -- which powers rapid payments for merchants, acquirers, governments, consumers and more, wherever they interact worldwide -- will also be available in Australia and Hong Kong SAR, starting later this year.

Nuvei is the Canadian fintech company accelerating the business of clients around the world. Nuvei's modular, flexible and scalable technology allows leading companies to accept next-gen payments, offer all payout options and benefit from card issuing, banking, risk and fraud management services. Connecting businesses to their customers in more than 200 markets, with local acquiring in 47+ markets, 150 currencies and 634 alternative payment methods, Nuvei provides the technology and insights for customers and partners to succeed locally and globally with one integration.



Congress party leader Rahul Gandhi performs 'SEWA' during a visit at the Sri Harmandir Sahib.

PHOTOS: PRABHJOT GILL

'I have got justice in Reel Life but not Real' : Dr Kafeel Khan



KAVITA SHARMA

Shahrukh Khan's recent release JAWAN Film has already done wonders at the Box office. After doing the business of RS 1100 Crore in India and overseas Jawan has become the highest grossing Hindi movie of all times. The Big star cast of Atlee directed film Jawan is surrounded with many female characters including Deepika Padukone, Nayanthara, Sanya Malhotra, Ridhi Dogra, Lehar Khan, Girija Oak, Sanjeeta Bhattacharya and some others but the character played by Sanya Malhotra

is most discussed ever since the film is released. She is receiving positive reviews for playing a role of Doctor Eeram, a female Doctor whose role is inspired by a real life Gorkhpur tragedy in a hospital in 2017 involving Dr Kafeel Khan.

The Dangal Movie fame actress Sanya Malhotra is receiving laurels from her fans and friends for beautifully portraying the role of Dr Kafeel Khan in the film. Though Sanya has denied in her interviews that she was not aware of the real life tragedy role she is playing in the film but that role was an emotional challenge for her. On the other side Dr Kafeel Khan is receiving praises and calls from his friends and relatives. To gather more information on this we decided to meet Dr Kafeel and hear the facts from the Horse's Mouth. "Yes I am very happy that Shahrukh Khan sir and Director Atlee has made such a good film that is receiving laurels from India and abroad. I am receiving calls from the very first day that Sanya Malhotra had played a role inspired from my tragedy in the film. I am very thankful to SRK and Director Atlee for taking many real life incidents in the film including mine."



Kite maker Jagmohan Kanojia displays kites decorated with a collage of various cricket team captains, ahead of the 2023 ICC men's cricket World Cup, at his home workshop in Amritsar on Wednesday. PHOTO: PRABHJOT GILL

Tabu's thumbs up: 'No one has explored Shakespeare better than Vishal Bhardwaj'

MUMBAI: Tabu, who is soon going to be seen in Vishal Bhardwaj's 'Khufiya', said in an interaction with the media that there is no one in the Industry who has explored Shakespeare better than Vishal Bhardwaj. Tabu and Vishal have together given us some really great films. When this director-actor duo teams up, the audience certainly knows they have a hit on its way. Vishal

Bhardwaj's next film 'Khufiya' is going to release soon which stars Tabu in the leading role. In a candid conversation, she opened up about working with Vishal Bhardwaj, her character in Khufiya and much more.

Talking about working with Vishal Bhardwaj, she said: "His language of film making is very different and unique and very unique to him, that is what makes him who he is. He is



Activists of the Dal Khalsa Sikh organisation, a pro-Khalistan group, stage a demonstration demanding justice for Sikh separatist Hardeep Singh Nijjar, who was killed in June 2023 near Vancouver, after offering prayers at the Akal Takht Sahib. PHOTO: PRABHJOT GILL

Hailey frustrated over husband Justin Bieber's childish behaviour

Singer Justin Bieber and his wife Hailey Bieber's marriage is reportedly in trouble.

If a new report is to be believed, the Canadian pop star's immature behaviour leads to his model wife's growing frustration. According to National Enquirer, via Radar Online, Hailey is tired of the 'Sorry' hitmaker's teen tantrums and childish behaviour. An insider spills to the news outlet, "He acts like a needy kid all the time and she's constantly having to apologise for him and try to get him to act like an adult," reports aceshowbiz.com.

The source also notes, "This is a marriage based on Justin's childish needs and it's doomed." As if Justin's "needy kid" isn't enough, Hailey reportedly is "mortified" by Justin at a product

launch event for her beauty line, Rhode Skin, back in late August. At the time, Justin dressed down in a hoodie and gym shorts for the event. He completed his look with yellow Crocs and a pink trucker hat that he wore backwards.

The musician's laid-back fashion choice totally contrasted the catwalk beauty's glam look in a red bustier mini dress from Ermanno Scervino that she paired with Maison Martin Margiela's nest heels and a Ferragamo bag. Fans quickly blasted Justin for his lackluster outfit. "You look beautiful! But girl, why was your husband dressed for a Sunday morning hangover coffee run?" one fan commented on Hailey's Instagram post. Someone else said, "Justin seemed like he didn't even want to be at your launch."



one director who has explored all possible subjects, from romance to the underworld to Shakespeare. No one has explored Shakespeare better than him. The way he sees things, his vision, his language, his storytelling, what he has brought with him make him stand out from the rest." Tabu will be seen playing the role of an operative at Research & Wing Analysis in the film.

"Rose Rosy te Gulab" begins the Shoot; scheduled to release on 24th May 2024 promising a New Era in Punjabi Cinema

KULBIR SINGH KALSI Chandigarh

The much-anticipated Punjabi film, "Rose Rosy te Gulab", has officially begun shooting. The movie promises to be a unique blend of romance and drama that is sure to captivate audiences to be produced under the banners Omjee's Cine World and Diamondstar Worldwide by Aashu Munish Sahni and Gurnam Bhullar.

The announcement of the film's commencement has created a buzz in the industry, with fans eagerly awaiting updates as they hint at the plot between a trio, Gurnam Bhullar, Mahi Sharma and



Pranjal Dahiya. Gurnam Bhullar, known for his impactful performances, is expected to bring a fresh perspective to his character. On the other hand, with her expressive acting skills, Mahi Sharma is set to add depth to her role,

whereas, Pranjal Dahiya the singing sensation of Haryana marks her debut with the film in the Punjabi industry.

Directed by Manvir Brar and written by Preet Sangheri, "Rose Rosy te Gulab" will certainly mark a significant

milestone in Punjabi cinema, reflecting the industry's growth and ability to produce diverse content including other super talented actors of the Punjabi industry, Karamjit Anmol and Harby Sangha. The film is expected to offer a compelling narrative that resonates with the audience while showcasing the rich culture of Punjab.

As the cameras start rolling, the excitement is palpable on and off the set. The cast and crew are committed to bringing their best to the table, ensuring that "Rose Rosy te Gulab" will be a memorable addition to Punjabi cinema. Stay tuned for more updates as this exciting project unfolds on 24th May 2024!

Birds in India and Conservation Efforts: A Feathered Legacy Worth Protecting



BIVASH RANJAN, India is a land of unparalleled



Slender billed vulture

SAHADRI NISARGA MITRA

Great Indian Bustard.

S.K. ARUN

avian diversity, boasting a kaleidoscope of bird species that call its diverse landscapes home. From the snow-capped Himalayas in the north to the pristine forests of the Western Ghats in the south, and from the arid deserts of Rajasthan in the west to the lush wetlands of the northeast, India's avian inhabitants are as varied as its geography. The State of India's Birds (SoIB) 2023 Report reveals that the nation is home to more than 1,300 bird species, which represents approximately 12.40% of global bird diversity. Of these 1,353 bird species, 78 (5%) are endemic to the country. However, this vibrant flock faces an increasingly perilous future, as habitat destruction, pollution, and climate change threaten their very existence.

Birds in the region are currently confronted with many threats, the most important of which are habitat loss and degradation, followed by human wildlife conflict. Root causes of damage to and loss of habitats are complex and interlinked. These include urbanization, infrastructural development, current agricultural practices, threat to natural forest cover due to over exploitation, high overseas demand for resources,

and inadequate legal enforcement of pro-conservation policies. Climate change is another looming threat - changing weather patterns, altered migration routes, and disruptions in food availability impact the survival of many bird species. Rising temperatures affect breeding and nesting patterns, making it challenging for some birds to adapt. The introduction and spread of invasive species can also negatively impact native bird populations by competing for resources and altering ecosystems.

To combat these threats, India has taken significant steps in avian conservation. A 10-year plan proposed by the Indian government - the "Visionary Perspective Plan (2020-2030) for the conservation of avian diversity, their ecosystems, habitats and landscapes in the country" hopes to advance action on the conservation of birds and their habitats in India. This is an addition to India's National Wildlife Action Plan (2017 to 2031) which too has several conservation actions for the protection of birds and their habitats. The plan proposes

a series of short, medium and long-term plans to protect the rare and endangered species of birds, start species recovery programmes of critically endangered ones, introduce landscape approach to control their declining population. The plan also notes that anthropogenic activities leading to increased levels of GHG emissions are also impacting the environment on a global scale and thus, and urges scientific interventions to minimise and mitigate such impacts on avifauna.

India has forever prioritized efforts to protect critical habitats. The restoration of wetlands, reforestation initiatives, and the promotion of organic farming practices are some strategies being employed. Furthermore, strict laws against poaching and the illegal wildlife trade are essential for safeguarding their future. Through protected areas, legal measures, habitat restoration, and public awareness, India is working tirelessly to protect its feathered legacy. Every individual can contribute by supporting and participating in these efforts, ensuring that India's skies continue to be filled with the colors and songs of its precious birds for generations to come.

ing to climate change impact on wildlife and stressed on integrating actions that need to be taken for its mitigation and adaptation into wildlife management planning processes. The plan adopts a "landscape approach" in conservation of all wildlife that have an ecological value.

India's diverse avian population is a testament to the country's natural richness. However, these beautiful birds face multiple threats, ranging from habitat loss to climate change. Conservation efforts are essential to safeguard their future. Through protected areas, legal measures, habitat restoration, and public awareness, India is working tirelessly to protect its feathered legacy. Every individual can contribute by supporting and participating in these efforts, ensuring that India's skies continue to be filled with the colors and songs of its precious birds for generations to come.

Bivash Ranjan, Additional Director General of Forests (Wildlife), Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change

POTPOURRI

Tanisha Mehta ON 'Ikk Kudi Punjab Di': 'Heer is an inspiration for me'



CHANDIGARH: Known for her work in 'Lag Ja Gale' and 'Shubh Laabh Aapkey Ghar Mein', actress Tanisha Mehta, is excited to star as lead in the upcoming show 'Ikk Kudi Punjab Di', calling it a gripping tale of love and resilience.

'Ikk Kudi Punjab Di' is a high-octane drama that promises to captivate audiences with its powerful storyline and well-written characters. Produced by Dome Entertainment, the show is set to deliver a riveting narrative that will be filled with unexpected twists and turns.

Based in the princely state of Kapurthala, Punjab, the show follows the journey of Heer Grewal, a beautiful, vibrant young woman born into a Jatt landlord family. Her biggest priority is the well-being of her family.

However, her life takes an unexpected turn when she marries into the Atwal family, making everyone wonder "Jisne maangi sabki khair... Waqt ne kiya hai... kyun us se bair?" After a life-altering

incident, Heer is compelled to draw upon her inner strength, confront injustice, and assert the truth.

Throughout this tumultuous journey, she finds unwavering support from her childhood friend, Ranjha, also known as Ranjeet. Ranjha will be played by Avinesh Rekhi, and Heer will be portrayed by Tanisha Mehta.

Talking about the show, Tanisha said: "I am excited to be a part of Ikk Kudi Punjab Di and bring Heer's character to life. It's a gripping tale of love, resilience and the unbreakable bond of friendship." Speaking about her character, the beautiful diva shared: "To me, Heer is definitely an inspiration, and I am sure when the viewers watch her, they will feel the same. I recently shot for our promo in Amritsar along with Avinesh and the rest of the cast and we even had a few workshops which helped me understand the character in depth."