

REGION **2** CORPORATES & INDUSTRY **5** POTPOURRI **8**



**PUNJAB CHIEF MINISTER VEHEMENTLY RAISES ISSUES OF STATE BEFORE AMIT SHAH IN NZC MEET**



**NETHERLANDS CRICKET TEAM ROPES IN NORDEK AS ITS TITLE SPONSOR FOR UPCOMING ICC WORLD CUP**



**'JUST MARRIED' RAGHAV-PARINEETI'S FIRST PICTURE AS HUSBAND-WIFE GOES VIRAL**

## India emerging as alternative supply source: Hardeep Puri

**NEW DELHI:** As the global supply chains are realigning, India is emerging as an alternative supply source given its raw materials, low labour costs, growing manufacturing knowhow, and entrepreneurial ability, Petroleum Minister Hardeep Puri said on Friday.

Addressing the annual meeting of industry chamber PHDCCI, Puri said that with the transition witnessed by energy sector in recent years, India is simultaneously pursuing both traditional fuel



exploration and energy transition.

The minister said that India aims to increase its net geographic area under exploration from 8 per cent (0.25 million square km) to 15 per cent (0.5 million sq. kms) by 2025.

India is a global exporter of petroleum products, and boasts the fourth-largest refining capacity globally, he added.

Referring to the significant milestones achieved in biofuel revolution, he noted that the ethanol blending that has increased from 1.53 per cent in 2013-14 to 11 per cent in 2023.

About India's manufacturing aspirations, Puri said that the manufacturing sector currently comprises 17 per cent of the nation's GDP and over 27.3 million workers. The minister said that economic reforms and policies such as GST, IBC, asset monetisation, labour law reforms, PLI, National Infrastructure Pipeline, and Gati Shakti mission for multimodal connectivity, have fixed many structural deficits.

## Punjab's Business Blasters program on to the next stage

**FW DESK**  
SAS Nagar (Mohali)

With 7,000 teachers from 2,000 schools across 23 districts of Punjab attending a two-day training program - Business Blasters - has entered the next stage of its implementation.

Punjab School Education Department conducted this special training. This is a first of its kind ambitious project of the Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) government in Punjab where the party had promised to bring about revolutionary changes in the education field in its election campaign in 2022.

Business Blasters is a student entrepreneurship program first launched in 2021 by the AAP-run Delhi government with seed capital of Rs.60 crore. Chief Minister



Bhagwant Mann-led government planned to replicate this in Punjab under 'Punjab Young Entrepreneurs Program Scheme'. It aims at cultivating the entrepreneurial mindset of 11th-grade students in the state's 2,000 Government Senior Secondary Schools. Initially, it was launched as a pilot project in November 2022 in 32 Government Senior Secondary Schools of 9 districts of state. Total 11,000

students of 11<sup>th</sup>-grade participated and over 3000 of them received the seed money of Rs. 2000 per student to try their business ideas in a real-world situation. In Delhi government schools, 3 lakh students of 11<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> grade had been provided the same amount.

Based on the success of the pilot program, the Punjab government decided to launch the full-fledged program. Notably, Vocational Education stream was introduced in Punjab schools in 1975 and has since been continuing. From the government point of view, the Business Blasters program will give Punjab's younger generation vision and purpose of life by preparing it mentally to tackle challenges of unemployment, drug addiction and migration by opening entrepreneurial avenues from the school stage.

## SGPC hands over a memorandum of demand to Union Home Secretary Ajay Kumar Bhalla



**JAGMOHAN SINGH**  
Amritsar

Union Home Secretary Ajay Kumar Bhalla today paid obeisance at Sachkhand Sri Harmandir Sahib. Later he was honoured at Sikh shrine's information office with a photo of Sri Harmandir Sahib and a book by SGPC member Advocate Bhagwant Singh Sialka and Secretary Partap Singh.

On behalf of the SGPC President Advocate Harjinder Singh Dhama, SGPC member and secretary handed over a memorandum of demand in the name of Union Home Minister Amit Shah to the Union Home Secretary regarding the clemency case

of Balwant Singh Rajoana and sought his release from jail. It has been said in the demand that following its notification issued on the occasion of 550th Prakash Gurburb of Sri Guru Nanak Dev Ji in 2019, the Ministry of Home Affairs, Government of India should commute the death sentence of Rajoana to life imprisonment and also order his release as he has already served more jail term than the life i.e. about 28 years.

The Home Secretary listened seriously to the grievances raised by the SGPC delegates and gave an assurance of necessary proceedings, said the SGPC spokesperson in a statement.

## Punjab Mandi Board notifies 1854 purchase centres for smooth paddy procurement operations from October 1

**CHANDIGARH:** In order to ensure procurement of every single grain of the paddy crop as desired by Chief Minister Bhagwant Singh Mann, Punjab Mandi Board has notified 1854 purchase centres to ensure hassle-free procurement operations, beginning from October 1, said Agriculture and Farmers Welfare Minister Gurmeet Singh Khudian.

Khudian, along with Punjab Mandi Board Chairman Harchand Singh Bartsat and Special Chief Secretary Mr. KAP Sinha, was holding threadbare deliberations with the representatives of Arthiya Associations and



Mandi Mazdoor Unions here at Kisan Bhawan to address their demands and issues being faced by them. He assured them that the Punjab Government will consider their all legitimate demands sympathetically and their interests would not get hampered. "CM Bhagwant Singh Mann led Punjab Government is fully committed for the welfare of labourers and farmers. All the arrangements are in place to ensure smooth paddy procurement," he said. Agriculture Minister informed that the state government has already revised the labour rates for the grain

market workers by increasing it 1.04% as per consumer price index on September 20, 2023.

Apart from notifying the purchase centres, the Agriculture Minister said that all the arrangements have been made at grain markets for the farmers and labourers. He emphasised that the government will not let the farmers face any hardships.

He also urged the farmers to bring the fully ripened crop to the mandis so that they do not have to face any problem in selling their crop. Secretary Punjab Mandi Board Amrit Kaur Gill and other senior officials were also present in the meeting.

## Congress tears into Modi's lies on women reservation



**KAVITA SHARMA**  
New Delhi

Congress party tore into the lies of the Prime Minister Narendra Modi for alleging in Madhya Pradesh that the party (Congress) was against women's reservation.

Congress Spokesperson and Chairman of the Media and Publicity Pawan Khera described Modi as a certified liar for speaking such blunt lies. Narendra Modi is the only Prime Minister who has identified himself as a "certified liar", he alleged.

Addressing a press conference at the AICC headquarters here today, Pawan Khera referred to Modi's election speech in Bhopal, where he falsely accused Congress of being against the women reservation.

He said, nothing can be far from the truth than what the PM alleged. He pointed out, it was the Congress which had started the process of reservation for women in local bodies way back in 1989 when the then Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi had brought a law for this. He said, while the bill was passed in the Lok Sabha, it couldn't be passed in the Rajya Sabha as the BJP had then opposed it and its vet-

eran leaders like Atal Bihari Vajpayee, LK Advani, Ram Jethmalani and Jaswant Singh had voted against it in the Rajya Sabha.

Taking a dig at the Prime Minister, Pawan Khera said, wherever Modi sets his feet, the Congress wins. In states like Himachal Pradesh and Karnataka, where the PM had campaigned, Congress had won hands down. That way he is proving to be our 'star campaigner', he remarked tauntingly, while pointing out that how in Madhya Pradesh yesterday the PM only spoke about the Congress and did not mention a single achievement of his party's government during last 18 years. He said, only if the PM starts speaking some truth he can become the 'star campaigner' of the Congress party.

Replying to a question about BJP releasing the list of candidates, Khera said, the BJP probably was trying to copy Congress in Karnataka as it released the list early, hoping that might fetch victory. He said no matter how early you release the list, field whosoever you want to field, but what is going to happen is obvious. He said, it is being seen in all surveys by the television channels and BJP's own survey.

To another question on Enforcement Directorate (ED) raids on Rajasthan Minister, Khera remarked, it would be surprising if there were no such raids. He said, the ED was conducting special recruitment for five states, going to polls this year, for another three months. He said, they had made a joke of the CBI and ED.

## Arvind Kejriwal and Bhagwant Mann to inaugurate the special ward of Mata Kaushalya Hospital Patiala on Oct 2

**CHANDIGARH:** The Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) national convener and Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal and Punjab Chief Minister Bhagwant Mann will inaugurate a new district level special ward at Mata Kaushalya Hospital in Patiala on October 2.

AAP Aadmi Party Punjab leader and Mandi Board Chairman Harchand Singh Bartsat informed about this program of both CMs through a statement from the party headquarters on Friday. He said that after the inauguration, Arvind Kejriwal and Bhagwant Mann will also address a party rally at New Apollo Ground of Patiala.

Bartsat said that testing machines and other health equipment with latest technology have been installed in the new special ward built in Mata Kaushalya Hospital. All types of tests and treatment facilities will be available here. He said that in the coming time, the Punjab government is planning to build more hospitals all over Punjab.

## Diplomatic Tensions Worry Punjab Amid Visa Suspension for Canada

**CHHAVI BHATIA**  
New Delhi

Diplomatic tensions between India and Canada have unleashed a wave of unease, particularly among students aspiring to study in Canada. The recent suspension of visa services for Canadians by India, effective September 21, has left many eagerly awaiting their visas in a state of anxiety.

Harvinder Brar, an immigration consultant based in Bath-



inda, voiced the collective apprehension gripping students and their families. He stated, "Today, over a dozen parents visited me to know about the impact

of the tension between the two nations. They are worried that visas will be rejected. As of now, there's nothing much to worry about for students. However, if Canada retaliates and issues restrictions on visas, then there would be a huge impact, especially on students in Punjab."

For parents whose children are already pursuing studies in Canada, there is a growing concern about their safety in the midst of reports of gang

## 111 ultras active in J&K, 71 of them foreigners

**FW DESK**

A total of 31 terrorists have been killed in the Kashmir Valley so far this year through a series of successful joint operations involving the Army, Police, and paramilitary forces, according to Jammu and Kashmir Police.

Official sources reported that, as of September 26, a total of 47 terrorists have been eliminated by security forces in the J&K Union Territory. These statistics include 38 foreign terrorists and nine local militants.

In 2022, a total of 187 terrorists were neutralized, comprising 57 foreign and 130 local insurgents. The data further reveals that from January 1 to September 26, 204 terrorists were apprehended. Presently, Jammu and Kashmir has 111 active terrorists, with 71 being foreign and 40 local combatants, marking a significant decrease from the 137 active terrorists recorded the previous year.

## NIA court rejects bail plea of 10 Hurriyat activists

**FW DESK**

A special NIA court in Srinagar has denied bail to ten second-rung separatist leaders and activists. These individuals were arrested earlier this year in connection with a case involving the revival of the banned outfit JKLF.

The arrests took place on July 9 when the police detained 43 individuals at Habib Restaurant in Srinagar. Subsequently, 33 of them, including 32 adults and one juvenile, were released after furnishing bonds as no incriminating evidence was found against them. However, the remaining ten accused were arrested and have been facing legal proceedings. The Additional Sessions Judge, designated under the NIA Act, Sandeep Gandotra, rejected the bail applications of these ten individu-



als, expressing concerns that their release at this stage could pose a risk to public and state interests. The accused had been charged under various sections of the UAP Act, but the court noted that it had not reached a stage where it could confirm the truthfulness of these allegations.

The court stressed that serious allegations had been made against the accused, and objectionable and incriminating materials, including letters written by Yaseen Malik advocating for the freedom of Jammu and Kashmir and photographs promoting "Kashmir Banega Pakistan," were seized from some of them. Additionally, it was alleged that some of the accused had been in contact with terrorists across the border in Pakistan. The court also mentioned that investigations were ongoing, with reports from

the Forensic Science Laboratory (FSL) pending, including CCTV and DVR footage from Habib Restaurant and electronic gadget analysis. One of the accused, Mohammad Yaseen Bhat, had a report spanning 55,000 pages related to his case.

As a result, the court ruled that the accused individuals were not entitled to bail at this stage. It cited section 43(D) proviso 5, suggesting that their release could jeopardize public and state interests. The denied bail applications pertain to Firdous Ahmad Shah, Jahangir Ahmad Bhat, Saheel alias Suhail Ahmad Mir, Khurshed Ahmad Bhat, Syed Rehman Shams alias Shams-u-din Rehmani, Sajad Hussain Gul, Mohammad Rafiq Phaloo alias Salim Nanaji, Ghulam Hassan Parray alias Firdousi, Mohammed Yaseen Bhat, and Shabir Ahmad Dar.

**JAGMOHAN SINGH**  
Amritsar

Union Home Minister and Minister of Cooperation Amit Shah chaired the 31st meeting of the Northern Zonal Council at Amritsar, Punjab, today. Chief Ministers of Punjab, Haryana & Himachal Pradesh, Lt. Governors of Delhi, Jammu Kashmir & Ladakh, Administrator of Chandigarh, Senior Ministers from member States, Union Home Secretary, Secretary, Inter State Council Secretariat, Chief Secretaries from the member States in the Northern Zone and other senior officers from the States and UTs and Central Ministries & Departments participated in the meeting.

In an official release issued here, Amit Shah said that in the last 5 years, under the leadership of Prime Minister Narendra Modi,

## Union Home Minister Amit Shah chairs 31st meeting of the NZ Council at Amritsar



the role of zonal councils has changed from advisory nature to action platforms. He said that Northern Zonal Council has an important place from the point of view of development and security of the country, with 21% of the country's land and 13% of the population, more than 35% of the food grains are produced in the Northern region. Shri Shah said that the majority of personnel in the Central Armed Police Forces (CAPFs) and Army, guarding the country's borders, come from the states and Union Territories in the Northern Zonal Council.

Union Home Minister said that under the leadership of Prime Minister Narendra Modi, the government has been successful in cracking down on narcotics and terrorism. He said that the Modi government is committed towards strengthening the security system on the border, soon anti-drone system will be deployed on our country's borders.



# Punjab CM vehemently raises issues of state before Amit Shah in NZC meet

**AMRITSAR:** Reiterating firm commitment of state government to safeguard the interests of the state, the Punjab Chief Minister Bhagwant Singh Mann on Tuesday vehemently raised the issues of the state during the 31st meeting of the Northern Zonal Council (NZC) meeting chaired by the Union Home Minister Amit Shah.

At the very outset the Chief Minister welcomed the Union Home Minister and the Chief Ministers of the other states on behalf of the Government and the people of Punjab. Profusely thanking the Ministry of Home Affairs for choosing this sacred land to organize the 31st meeting of the Northern Zonal Council, he said that this is a sacred city, which is deeply revered by one and all, in the annals of history, where more than one lakh devotees from all over the world pay homage daily to seek peace and solace. Bhagwant Singh Mann said that the city was a trade hub in the past and with the concerted



efforts of the state government it will be very soon our gateway to the markets of Central Asia and beyond.

The Chief Minister said that the hardworking and brave Punjabis had closely witnessed numerous pages of history unfolding on this sacred land of five rivers. He said that besides being the nation's food bowl, Punjab also has a distinction of being the sword arm of the country and its people are well known all over the world for their courage, resilience and

spirit of enterprise. Bhagwant Singh Mann said that NZC is an excellent platform to raise the level of interstate cooperation for our economic development as it is in our interest to sit together and explore the best possibilities of socio-economic development in the region, which is otherwise geographically disadvantaged, being landlocked and with hostile borders.

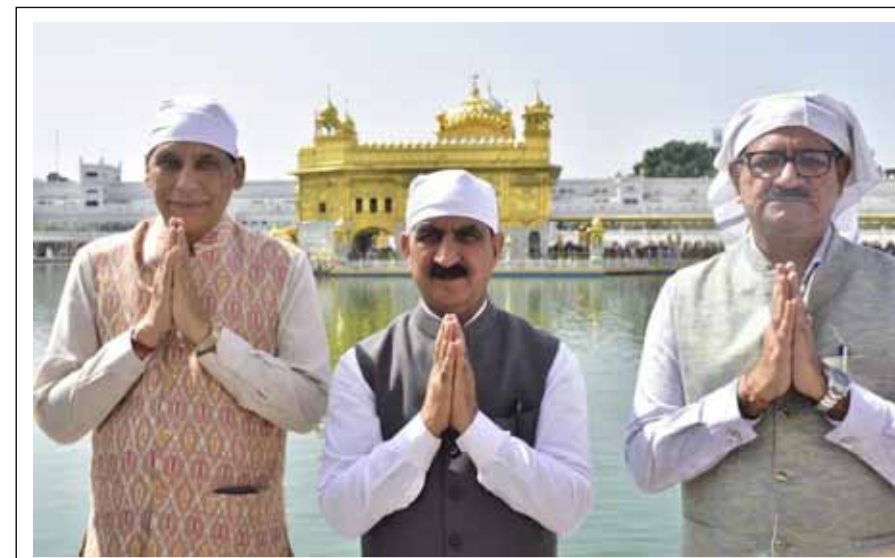
Battling for need of a genuine federal structure in the country, the Chief Minister said that the need of more fi-

nancial arid political power to the states has been felt across the entire spectrum of political opinion. He said that there is a wide consensus, cutting across party lines, that the state governments need to be given much greater operational freedom in choosing and financing their developmental priorities. Bhagwant Singh Mann said that federalism remains one of the basic pillars of our Constitution but unfortunately, there has been a trend towards centralization of authority during the past 75 years. "Everybody knows that the state governments are in a much better position to understand, address and solve the problems of their people, at the cutting edge" he added.

Strongly opposing the demand of Rajasthan for member in Bhakra Beas Management Board (BBMB), the Chief Minister said that BBMB is a body constituted under the provisions of the Punjab Reorganisation Act 1966, which primarily deals with the successor States

of Punjab and Haryana. He said that the state of Rajasthan and Himachal Pradesh or any other State for that matter is not concerned at all under provisions of the above said Act. Bhagwant Singh Mann therefore, strongly opposed the proposal of having a third member in the BBMB from the State of Rajasthan or Himachal Pradesh.

Flagging the issue of Shanan Power House, the Chief Minister lamented that the issue that has been unnecessarily raised by Himachal Pradesh regarding transfer of Shanan Power House in Jogindernagar on the ground that the 99 year lease of land given by the Raja of Mandi in 1925 is expiring in 2024. He said that it is sad that this issue has been raised notwithstanding that this project was given to Punjab State Electricity Board (PSEB) under the provisions of Punjab Reorganisation Act, 1966 which is the Act of Parliament that created the successor states of Punjab, Haryana and Himachal Pradesh.



Himachal Pradesh Chief Minister Sukhvinder Singh Sukhu pays respect at Sri Harmandir Sahib on Tuesday. PHOTO-PRABHJOT GILL

# Punjab not releasing relief for crop loss in floods, says Sukhbir Badal

**CHANDIGARH:** Shiromani Akali Dal (SAD) President Sukhbir Badal on Friday said the Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) government in Punjab was not only discriminating against farmers by refusing to release compensation for losses suffered in the floods, but was also suppressing social activists and whistleblowers to hide the loot of the state exchequer at the instance of AAP convener Arvind Kejriwal.

Accusing Chief Minister Bhagwant Mann of betraying the farming community by not releasing even the Rs 6, 800 per acre compensation sent by the Centre, the SAD leader said at a gathering here that "the AAP government has deliberately delayed release of this compensation by delaying the assessment of the crop damage through the 'girdawari' which has not been completed till now".

He said even as farmers in this district had suffered losses of a few hundred crores after an AAP Member of Parliament forcibly got all 32 gates of the Harike barrage opened, the government had earmarked a



compensation of Rs 8.5 crore for the district. "This is a cruel joke on our hard working farmers who were promised compensation for even loss of their hens and goats but have been left high and dry now," he said. Badal also condemned the manner in which social activists were being threatened if they exposed the misdeeds of the AAP government. Citing the example of activist Manik Goyal, he said the activist had received an open threat from the Punjab Police to delete a tweet giving information regarding a bid invited by the government to hire a 10-seater jet for six months. "It is clear that the jet plane is being hired to facilitate the campaign of AAP

convener Arvind Kejriwal in the forthcoming Assembly elections in several states at the cost of the Punjab exchequer," he said.

Asserting that such acts of suppression were condemnable, Badal said SAD would oppose the move to hire plane for the air travel of Kejriwal tooth and nail. "This same money can be easily given to farmers to offset the losses suffered by them," he added. The SAD President also condemned the manner in which AAP legislators were forcing the state police not to take action against drug smugglers and illegal sand miners.

He said the Tarn Taran district police chief had been shunted out because he had arrested the AAP legislator's brother-in-law for indulging in illegal mining. He said similarly AAP legislators were also providing political protection to drug smugglers by taking money from them. "This is why the drug menace has increased manifold during the AAP regime," he said while also giving the example of police brutality against a lawyer in Muktsar.

# Lookout notice against former Punjab FM

**FW DESK Chandigarh**

Former Punjab Finance Minister Manpreet Singh Badal's troubles have increased with issuing of Look Out Circular (LoC) against him on Tuesday by Vigilance Bureau, Punjab.

The development comes in the wake of searches at his Bhatinda residence Monday where the VB teams had gone to arrest him after booking him and five others in a case of alleged cheating and forgery in a purchase of two plots of land at a prime location in Bhatinda. Officials said his whereabouts were not known. All airports have been put on alert as the VB suspects

# Punjab Congress leaders not allowed to meet arrested MLA

**CHANDIGARH:** After arrest of Congress leader Sukhpal Khaira in a 2015 drug smuggling case in Punjab, Congress leaders comprising state party chief Amarinder Singh Raja Warring and Leader of Opposition Partap Singh Bajwa were stopped on Friday from meeting the arrested leader in police custody.

The Congress has accused the AAP government of doing "vendetta politics".

"We went to meet our MLA Sukhpal Khaira in Fazilka today with senior leadership of the Punjab Congress," Bajwa told the media.

"The police stopped us from meeting him. We will fight this vendetta of the AAP party legally and on the streets. We won't be cowed down by such pressure tactics," he added.

Sensing a law and order problem with the gather-



ing of a large number of the Congress workers, the local administration has deployed a heavy security force.

A Jalalabad court on Thursday granted a two-day police remand to Khaira and he has been kept at the CIA staff office in Fazilka. The police were asking for a seven-day remand.

Soon after his arrest, a delegation of the Congress comprising Warring and Bajwa

called upon Governor Banwarilal Purohit and apprised him about the vindictive action of the AAP government against their legislator Khaira, an AAP rebel, and sought his intervention.

Responding to the arrest of the Congress leader, AAP MP Sushil Gupta said, "Khaira joined the Congress for political protection so that he doesn't get arrested."

# Woman drug smuggler arrested with nearly 52 gm heroine from her undergarments at Ambala

**SATISH HANDA**

Haryana state Naecotics Control Bureau team on a clue that a woman drug smuggler carrying heroine for supply at the Automobile Market Ambala City situated on G.T. Road driving on her Activa two-wheeler on Tuesday late evening was arrested. Police team held a barrier near the Jandi Mandir close to the motor market and after sometime saw a woman driving on a scooter when she tried to run away seeing police standing accompanied by a female police constable near G.T. Road, but she was caught by the police team.

# Three days Rail Roko protests beings by 16 farmers outfit in Punjab



**JAGMOHAN SINGH Amritsar**

As many as sixteen farmer organizations in Punjab are jointly staging Rail Roko (blockade) protests in DevidasPura falling in the Amritsar, the main Railway line connecting the city with the national capital Delhi.

Confirming the Rail Roko program against the Centre Government SKM (Samyukt-KisanMorcha) Spokesperson Gurbhaan Singh Chhaba said today sixteen farmers outfit would not allow entry or leave the train in Amritsar from today 12.00. p.m onwards till September 30.

Chhaba further informed that

thousand crore rupees for North India besides setting up a high-level investigation committee to investigate the causes of the flood and action should be taken against the culprits by investigating unnatural factors such as building constructions in drainage channels, tampering with the natural flow of rivers, etc.

A guarantee law should be made on the purchase of all crops MSP and the rate of all crops should as per the recommendation of the Dr.Swaminathan Commission report, it should be given with a formula of C2+50%. The entire debt of farmers and laborers should be waived off. Telling more about their demands he said that drugs like heroin smack should strictly be curbed in the whole of North India and rehabilitation should be arranged in the society by providing free treatment and employment to the youth addicted to drugs. All the police cases slapped during the Delhi march (protest) be canceled, justice should be done in the LakhimpurKhiri murder case and Central Minister Ajay Mishra should be lodged behind the bars as per law, he said.



Himachal Pradesh Chief Minister Sukhvinder Singh Sukhu meets Punjab Chief Minister Bhagwant Mann ahead of the 31st Meeting of the Northern Zonal Council, in Amritsar on September 26. PHOTO-PRABHJOT GILL

# Bhagwant said can't spare a drop of water, whereas Khattar blames Punjab for creating confusion over SYL canal project

**SATISH HANDA**

During recent North Zone Council meeting presided by the Union Home Minister Amit Shah in Amritsar, Haryana Chief Minister Manohar Lal Khattar raised prime issue of interstate water disputes over the SYL canal water project. In this meeting Khattar also raised an issue as regard Punjab University's affiliation for colleges in



Panchkula, Ambala and Yamunanagar in Haryana state. Khattar also raised the issue of the Sutlej-Yamuna Link (SYL) Canal project that is meant to connect the Sutlej and Yamuna rivers

and pointed fingers at Punjab for creating confusion on this important issue, stressing the issue legal distribution of water between the both states. The Haryana CM said that when we raised the issue of construction of the SYL Canal, Punjab raised the issue that availability of water has reduced, whereas the issue of construction of the SYL canal and quantity of water are two separate issues.

# TDSAT organises Seminar on Consumer Grievances & Dispute Resolution in Telecom, Broadcasting & Cyber Sectors" in Amritsar

**JAGMOHAN SINGH Amritsar**

The Telecom Disputes Settlement & Appellate Tribunal (TDSAT) organised a seminar on "Consumer Grievances & Dispute Resolution in Telecom, Broadcasting & Cyber Sectors" here today.

In a official release, Justice Surya Kant, Judge, Supreme Court of India was the Chief Guest. In his address Chief Guest applauded the delivery system of TDSAT and appreciated that it has held Court at Amritsar to facilitate local litigants and Advocates. He underlined the need for establishing permanent Benches of TDSAT at different places and strengthening its infrastructure. He emphasised that the Tribunals in the country are a necessity and are required to be strengthened. He very emphatically declared that TDSAT has been the outstanding Tribunal in the country keeping in view the jurisdiction handled by it and its delivery system.

Justice ArunPalli, Judge, Punjab and Haryana High Court was the Guest of Honour.



Justice Palli emphasised the importance of Dispute resolution by TDSAT. He credited the Tribunal and its Chairperson for reaching out to litigants at their doorsteps by holding Courts at different places. He highlighted the need for regulating OTT platforms.

Justice D.N. Patel, Chairperson, TDSAT delivered the welcome address. He described the jurisdiction, delivery system etc. of the TDSAT. He informed the gathering that TDSAT has been resolving disputes pertaining to Telecom, Broadcasting, Cyber, AERA matters as expeditiously as possible and the disposal rate is catching up with the filing rate. He also informed that TDSAT has also held Court at Amritsar on 22.09.2023 to hear the local matters to facilitate the litigants of hearing the matters at their door steps.

# "Awareness Drives, Legacy Waste Cleanup, and a Cycle Rally Spearhead Swachhata Campaign in District Rupnagar"

**FW DESK Rupnagar (Punjab)**

In a remarkable display of community-driven efforts and environmental consciousness, District Rupnagar has taken significant strides towards a cleaner and greener future as part of the Swachhata Hi Seva (SHS)-2023 campaign. Spearheaded by the Deputy Commissioner and air pollution experts, a series of impactful initiatives have left an indelible mark on the district's commitment to combatting pollution and fostering cleanliness.



were conducted across the district to enlighten farmers about the grave consequences of stubble burning. Furthermore, valuable knowledge about paddy straw-based biogas plants was shared with them. An impressive gathering of approximately 1,386 Gram Panchayat members, IEC specialists, Communi-

ty Development Specialists, and Block Resource Coordinators actively participated in these enlightening sessions.

Cleaning of Legacy Waste Site- Taking a hands-on approach to ensure a pristine environment, sanitation workers, Sub Divisional Engineers, and Junior Engineers from the Department of Water Supply & Sanitation undertook the noble task of clearing legacy waste sites. Through a collective effort involving 85 sanitation workers, dedicated youth volunteers, DWSS officials, IEC specialists, Community Development Specialists, and Block Resource Coordinators, open areas were transformed, giving a fresh lease of life to these spaces.

Cycle Rally for Swachhata- The youth and citizens of District Rupnagar united in a spirited "Cycle Rally" organized

to champion the cause of cleanliness. Volunteer teams from Nehru Yuva Kendra led the charge, covering an impressive 10-kilometer radius to sensitize approximately 2,312 citizens. The rally served as a powerful platform to educate participants on waste segregation, the harmful effects of single-use plastics, and the paramount importance of cleanliness. This event was made possible with the support of IEC specialists, Community Development Specialists, and Block Resource Coordinators.

The resounding success of these initiatives underscores the Government's unwavering commitment to a sustainable and cleaner future. The district continues to set an inspiring example for communities everywhere, as it strives to make the world a better place, one step at a time.

# Bhoomi Pujan of the Civil Enclave for Ambala Airport will be performed by C M Manohar Lal on October 15 : Anil Vij

**SATISH HANDA Ambala**

Haryana Home and Health Minister Anil Vij said that the Bhoomi Pujan of the Civil Enclave to be constructed in Ambala Cantonment will be performed by Chief Minister Manohar Lal on October 15, 2023 (first Navratni). He said that today under the RCS (Regional Connectivity Scheme) UDAN scheme, 20 acres of land has now been registered in the GLR (General Land Register) records in the name of "Civil Enclave".

He said that the land has been registered in GLR for the construction of Civil Enclave by the Defence Estate Officer of the Defence Ministry. Earlier, this land was registered in the name of "Military Dairy Farm". Due to the efforts of



Home Minister Anil Vij, this land has now become available through the Airport Authority of India for establishing the Civil Enclave under the UDAN scheme.

Vij said that the process of construction of Civil Enclave on 20 acres of land adjacent to Ambala Air Force Station will start soon and the technical bid for construction at a cost of Rs 16 crore has been opened in which three firms have been applied. On the other hand, on Thursday, boards and flags of RCS Udan Scheme were also installed by the administrative team on the land proposed

for Civil Enclave on Air Force Station Road. It is noteworthy that due to the tireless efforts of Home Minister Anil Vij, Civil Enclave is being established under the RCS Udan Scheme. Recently, an amount of Rs 133 crores was transferred to the Defence Estate Officer in exchange of 20 acres of land.

Home Minister Anil Vij said that when a Civil Enclave is built along with Ambala Air Force Station, passengers will check-in and check-out from here for security check. After this, they will be taken via bus/Taxi to the aircraft inside the Air Force station near the airstrip. The airstrip of Ambala Air Force Station will be used for take-off and landing the flight. He said that the Civil Enclave will initially be operated on an adhoc basis, later its operations will be expanded.

# Guest Lecture on South Asia: A Region Between Hope and Despair at KCA

**FW DESK Amritsar**

The P.G. Department of Political and Public Administration under the patronage of Dr. Mehal Singh, Principal, Khalsa College, Amritsar (KCA) organized a Guest Lecture on South Asia: A Region Between Hope and Despair. Dr.DhananjayTripathi, Chairperson and Associate Professor, Department of International Relations, South Asian University, New Delhi was the resource person who spoke on the broader theme of the South Asia in the contemporary context. Dr. Devender Singh, Registrar of the college welcomed the esteemed speaker. Dr.Tirpathi in his lecture said that a discussion on contemporary South Asia is incomplete without a mention of Amritsar. It is important because South Asia is not only a post-colonial but also a post-partitioned region.



## Women's Reservation Bill has now become law, President Draupadi Murmu approved

MEENAKSHI BHATTACHARYA  
New Delhi

The Women's Reservation Bill passed recently during the special session of Parliament has got the approval of the President. President Draupadi Murmu has signed this bill, after which it has taken the form of law. As soon as President Draupadi Murmu's consent was received, the Government of India has issued a gazette notification for the Women's Reservation Bill. With this, PM Narendra Modi's government has fulfilled its promise to half the country's population. Let us tell you that this bill was introduced in the Parliament under the name of 'Nari Shakti Vandan Bill', which has now become a law.

After the enactment of the Women's Reservation Act, now 33 percent seats have been reserved for women in both the houses of the country's Parliament - Lok Sabha and Rajya



Sabha. Besides, women have got the right to 33 percent reservation in the legislative assemblies of all the states of the country. Now one-third seats have been reserved for women in all the assemblies including the Parliament of the country. Earlier in the all-party meeting, many leaders of political parties had strongly advocated for reservation for women.

This bill was stuck for almost 27 years. It is known that the Women's Reservation Bill has been hanging in the balance since 1996.

## One country one election: The Law Commission could not take a decision in the meeting

MEENAKSHI BHATTACHARYA  
New Delhi

The Law Commission held a meeting on Wednesday to prepare the final report on 'One Country One Election'. However, after the meeting, the commission said they needed more time. The Law Commission said that more detailed discussion is needed on the matter.

The Law Commission could not reach any decision on one country one election. The Law Commission held a meeting on Wednesday to prepare the final report on One Country One Election. However, after the meeting, the commission said they needed more time. The Law Commission said that more detailed discussion is needed on the matter.

No final decision was taken in Wednesday's meeting chaired by Chairman Rituraj Avasthi. The commission may report next week. Similarly, the Law Commission may give a report on the POCSCO Act very soon. The law commission is supposed to prepare a report on



increasing the age limit for the enforcement of the POCSO Act from 18 to 16. A third matter is also pending before the Law Commission. That is to amend the law to make filing of FIRs online. The Law Commission has said that constitutional amendment is necessary to make 'one country one election'. Also, the Law Commission wants to discuss the issue with the recognized regional and national parties in the state government, MPs and other parties.

On the other hand, the central government has formed a committee under the leader-

ship of former President Ram Nath Kovind to recommend 'one country, one election'. Two other retired judges are also on the committee with him. This new committee is going to look into whether the policy of 'one country one vote' can be implemented in the country at present.

According to sources, BJP's All India President JP Nadda reached Ramnath Kovind's house with a wreath as soon as the name of the new committee chief was announced. However, it is not known what was the discussion between the two big shots.

## Textiles Ministry approves 18 R&D projects

FW DESK  
New Delhi

Ministry of Textiles has approved 18 R&D projects worth Rs. 46.74 crore across key strategic areas of Geotech, Protech, Indutech, Sustainable Textiles, Sportech, Smart E-Textiles, Meditech segments during the 7<sup>th</sup> meeting of Mission Steering Group (MSG) of National Technical Textiles Mission Thursday in New Delhi.

Chairing the meeting Union Minister Piyush Goyal emphasized that Industry and Institute's pro-active and robust engagement was essential for the indigenous development of technical textiles in India.

Among these 18 R&D projects, 14 are high value Projects, 3 are Prototype Grant projects and 1 is Ideation Grant project. The projects cover different application areas of technical textiles including 1 Projects from Geotech, 2 of Protech, 2 Indutech, 2 Sportech, 5 Sustainable Textiles, 3 Meditech, 3 Smart & E-Textiles and 1 Geotextiles were approved. The approved projects were led by institutes and research bodies including BTRA, ATIRA, IIT Delhi, IIT Jammu, NIT Jalandhar, IIT Kharagpur, CSIR New Delhi, IIT Madras, among



others. Union Minister reviewed the progress of different components of National Technical Textiles Mission including review of sanctioned R&D products, R&D projects in Mission mode, Formation of a committee for Startups in Technical Textiles under GREAT Guidelines, Outreach activities and events including 6th Edition of MOT-FICCI-BIS National conclave on Standards & Regulations and Meditech conference in July and September 2023, respectively.

Emphasis should be on R&D for globally highly imported technical textiles items, apart from import-dependent technical textiles items and specialty fibres in India, he further added. Besides, the progress on the education, training & skill development front was also reviewed by the Union Minister wherein 26 applications from 15 Public and 11 Private institutes valuing Rs. 151.02 crore were approved for introducing papers, procuring laboratory infrastructure and training of trainers across different application areas of technical textiles.

## I challenge Rahul Gandhi to contest against me in Hyderabad: Owaisi



HYDERABAD: AIMIM Chief Asaduddin Owaisi has challenged Congress MP Rahul Gandhi to contest the 2024 Lok Sabha elections against him from Hyderabad and not from Wayanad.

Participating in a rally on Monday, Owaisi said, "Is baar Wayanad se nahi Hyderabad mein muqabla karo" ("This time fight from Hyderabad and not Wayanad). I am challenging you (Rahul Gandhi) don't go to Wayanad, come to Hyderabad and contest elections."

"You keep giving big statements, come to the ground and let's have a contest. People from Congress will say a lot of things, but I am ready. Come and face this man with beard and sherwani, you will know what a contest means," he stated.

"Babri Masjid and Secretariat's mosque were demolished under the Congress regime," he charged.

## PM pays tributes to Jan Sangh leader Deen Dayal Upadhyaya on birth anniversary



NEW DELHI: Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Monday paid tributes to Jan Sangh leader Deen Dayal Upadhyaya on his birth anniversary.

Modi, in a post on X (formerly Twitter), said that the personality and work of Pandit Deendayal Upadhyaya, the founder of Antyodaya, who dedicated his entire life to the service of Mother India, will always remain a source of inspiration for the countrymen.

The prime minister also shared his thoughts on Deendayal Upadhyaya.

Upadhyaya was a Jan Sangh leader, who was born on September 25, 1916. Jan Sangh was the forerunner of the BJP.

## Manipur Violence: Massive protests even reach Chief Minister's Home Turf

ARIBAM BISHWAJIT  
Imphal

The atmosphere in Manipur has grown tense, marked by the unmistakable and increasingly frequent sounds of tear gas canisters being fired. This underscores the state government's mounting challenges in maintaining order. Highlighting the severity of the situation, a large crowd believed to be from various valley districts made a significant move by attempting to besiege the residence of Chief Minister N Biren Singh in Luwangsangbam on Thursday evening.

This mobilization was not merely an impulsive act of unrest. The crowd was an integral part of a broader protest movement, demanding that the state administration apprehend those responsible for the tragic deaths of two students from the Meitei community - Hijam Linthoingambi and Phijam Hemjit. Images capturing the harrowing



final moments of these young individuals, as well as haunting shots of their lifeless bodies, rapidly spread across social media platforms. The profound grief and indignation evoked by these images have struck a particularly poignant chord with those residing in the valley districts, especially among members of the Meitei community. Their collective call for justice and accountability grows louder with each passing day.

Following the escalation at Chief Minister N Biren Singh's residence, valley areas have become a hotspot for clashes between protesters and security

forces. The state has borne witness to numerous demonstrations, resulting in swift and often heavy-handed reactions from the authorities. These confrontations have left many injured in their wake.

In a particularly intense episode from yesterday's late-night protest, participants denounced the alleged overuse of force by security personnel during a demonstration led by the student community on September 27. This specific incident, which resulted in multiple student injuries, has ignited a series of similar confrontations across the region. The standoff that transpired

last night persisted well into the early hours of today. Beginning around 8 p.m., it reached its peak intensity at around 1.30 a.m. From northern and southern vantage points, determined protesters sought to converge on the chief minister's residence. Despite stern warnings from the security forces, the crowd's palpable frustration and anger towards perceived governmental shortcomings overpowered their sense of restraint. Their relentless march was met with an equally unyielding response, as security forces deployed tear gas and smoke bombs to disperse the swelling ranks of protesters.

## Speaker Om Birla referred complaints to Privileges Committee of Ramesh Bidhuri's Unparliamentary remarks case

MEENAKSHI BHATTACHARYA  
New Delhi

Days after several opposition MPs wrote to Lok Sabha Speaker Om Birla regarding BJP MP Ramesh Bidhuri's unparliamentary remarks against BSP MP Kunwar Danish Ali, he has forwarded the complaints to the Privileges Committee. According to sources, Speaker Birla has sent the complaints against Bidhuri, Lok Sabha MP from South Delhi Parliamentary Constituency, to the Privileges Committee. Chairman of Privileges Committee is BJP MP Sunil Kumar Singh. BJP MP Nishikant Dubey thanked Birla for handing over the matter to the Privileges Committee.

BJP MP Nishikant Dubey said that today it was possible because BJP has majority in Lok Sabha. Otherwise, in the first Lok Sabha in 2006, RJD-JD(U)-Congress fought over shoes and uprooted microphones. In 2012 Sonia Gandhi's attack, in 2014 during the formation of Telangana many MPs were injured. At that time neither committees were formed nor anyone was punished. It is



significant that BJP MP Bidhuri had used insulting words against Danish Ali during the special session of Parliament. After which the controversy started.

After BJP MP Ramesh Bidhuri's unparliamentary remarks, BSP MP Danish Ali wrote to Speaker Birla asking him to hand over his case to the Privileges Committee and also requested him to order an inquiry into the matter. BJP has even issued show cause notice to party MP Bidhuri for using unparliamentary words against BSP MP in Lok Sabha. Bidhuri's unparliamentary remarks sparked outrage and opposition leaders demanded strict action against her. Congress leader Adhir Ranjan Choudhary and MPs from other opposition

parties, the then Speaker on the chair, K Suresh, including DMK's Kanimozhi, NCP's Supriya Sule, demanded Bidhuri's suspension from Parliament, saying the words he used were such as could not be uttered by anyone inside or outside the Parliament. Speaker Om Birla "seriously noted" the objectionable comments made by Bidhuri in the House and warned him of "stern action" against repeating such conduct in future. Meanwhile, 11 BJP MPs including Nishikant Dubey, Ravi Kishan and Harmath Singh Yadav wrote to the Speaker and accused Danish Ali of incitement. So, there is a discussion in the political circles whether Danish Ali will get justice from the said committee or not.

## Bengaluru bandh called to protest release of Cauvery water to Tamil Nadu

ARUN KUMAR RAO  
BENGALURU:

The dawn-to-dusk Bengaluru bandh called to protest release of Cauvery water to Tamil Nadu had all parties showing a support for Farmer groups that had called for bandh hailed it as complete success and the government thanked people for the peaceful protest. However, normal life wasn't exactly crippled as public transport remaining operational but without many passengers to travel.

Anticipating disruption in transport services, Many IT and other establishments, schools had declared a holiday. Most of IT firms switched to the work from home option with a few schools choosing to engage kids through web classes. BMTC, KSRTC buses and Metro services were available, but they reported poor occupancy. Auto rickshaws stayed off the roads through App based cabs and bike taxis were available. Private vehicles moved about on near empty roads. While many hotels downed their shutters, they yet operated for food delivery platforms.

As near total bandh observed in Bengaluru over Cauvery water sharing controversy, the Cauvery Water Regulatory Committee (CWRC) recommended release of 3,000 cusecs of water to TN daily for 18 days from Sept 28 against the demand of TN of 12,500 cusecs daily. The Cauvery Water Management Authority (CWMA), which is expected to meet shortly, will take a call on the committee's recommendation. Karnataka is expected to seek further reduction in the water to be shared with Tamil Nadu.



Karnataka CM Siddaramaiah said, he would consult the state's legal team to decide on the next course of action. This has come as a minor relief to the state government, which is facing widespread protest in the Karnataka capital over release of Cauvery water to TN. Besides Bengaluru shutdown on Tuesday, another bandh this time across Karnataka is being planned for Friday. Siddaramaiah, while pointing out the supreme court had banned bandhs, he admitted that people also have the right to protest in a democracy. On call for state-wide bandh on Friday, Siddaramaiah said government "will not obstruct the protest. Meantime Siddaramaiah endorsed the demand of Former PM and JD(S) supreme HD Deve Gowda to setup an independent agency to study the dispute and make appropriate remonations. He said, "It is welcome step. We hope the newfound friendship between BJP and JD(S) will help the state."

Taking a strong objection to police arresting people protesting the release of Cauvery water to Tamil Nadu, former CM and JDS(S) leader HD

Kumaraswamy criticised the government and called the state Congress unit the 'B' team of the DMK government in Tamil Nadu.

South interior Karnataka, which hosts Cauvery basin districts and is looking at a 27% deficit in rainfall so far, is very unlikely to receive any relief from the southwest monsoon, which will withdraw by month end. The crisis is acute in Cauvery basin districts with deficit ballooning to a whopping 32% --or, the region hasn't received a third of its quota of rainfall. Karnataka is reeling under an overall 19% deficit.

According to IMD, THE Cauvery catchment area in Karnataka should have received 47.5cm of rainfall till date. It has received only 32.2 cm so far, creating a 32% deficit. Given that monsoon will officially draw to close over Karnataka in a week, the deficit over Cauvery catchment will continue. IMD also stated that southwest monsoon has nothing much to improve the bleak scenario. The only hope is the retreating monsoon. From the first to the second week of October, the Cauvery catchment may receive 8cm Rainfall, they added.

## PM Modi, Kharge, Rahul, Stalin greet ex-PM Manmohan Singh on his birthday

NEW DELHI: Prime Minister Narendra Modi, Congress President Mallikarjun Kharge, party leader Rahul Gandhi on Tuesday greeted former Prime Minister Manmohan Singh on his 91st birthday and recalled his achievements.

In a post on X, PM Modi said, "Birthday wishes to former PM Dr. Manmohan Singh Ji. I pray for his long life and good health."

Kharge in a post on X, formerly Twitter, said, "On his birthday, I extend my best wishes to Former Prime Minister, Dr Manmohan Singh Ji. He is a rare example of simplicity, dignity and grace in politics. A true statesman Prime Minister, whose actions spoke more than his words, we are forever grateful for his tremendous contribution to the nation. Wishing him good health, happiness and a long life ahead."

Rahul Gandhi in a post on X said, "Former Prime Minister, Dr Manmohan Singh ji's integrity, unwavering commitment to nation-building and economic upliftment of the masses will always be an inspiration to me. Wishing



him good health and happiness on his birthday." Congress General Secretary Priyanka Gandhi Vadra greeted Singh on his birthday and said, "Wishing Manmohan Singh Ji a very very Happy Birthday."

"As a leader, he showed us the value of patience and humility in politics. As a Prime Minister, his honesty, courage, vision and wisdom paved the way for our country to forge ahead into the 21st century with self assurance and pride. Deepest respect always," she said in a post on X.

Tamil Nadu Chief Minister and DMK leader M.K. Stalin greeted Manmohan Singh on his birthday and said, "Birthday greetings to former Prime Minister Dr. Manmohan Singh! As PM, his leadership during the global financial crisis and commitment to inclusive policies reshaped India's future."

## Centre introduces amendments to cable television network rules

FW DESK  
New Delhi

Ministry of Information and Broadcasting, Government of India has issued a notification amending the Cable Television Network Rules, 1994, thereby introducing a procedure for the renewal of Multi-System Operator (MSO) Registrations.

In addition, an enabling provision has been inserted in the Rules for the sharing of infrastructure by the Cable Operators with Broadband Service providers to promote internet penetration to the last mile. Salient features of the amended Rules for MSO Reg-

istration are :- MSOs shall apply for the registration or renewal of registration online at the Broadcast Seva Portal of MIB. MSO registrations shall be granted or renewed for a period of ten years; The processing fee of Rs. One lakh is kept for the renewal of registration also; The application for renewal of registration shall be within a window of seven to two months before the expiry of the registration.

The renewal procedure is in line with the Government's commitment to ease of doing business as it will provide certainty to cable operators to continue their services without interruption

## Despite allocation of funds by Modi Government, No speed in work for river front development

MEENAKSHI BHATTACHARYA  
New Delhi

The Center has already started development of drainage infrastructure in several states. This work is being done under the 'Namami Gange' programme. In the same program, the development work of various riverside areas has also started. The name of which has been given as 'River Front Development Project'. But the Modi government is struggling to complete the work of this development project. At least the latest report by the Ministry of Water Resources says so.

It appears that out of the seven projects of this project, only one has been completed by the central government so far. Out of the money given to the states for the implementation of those seven projects



under the respective central government programs, about five and a half crore rupees have not been spent so far. In this regard, the report cards of the two BJP-ruled states Madhya Pradesh and Uttarakhand are the worst.

The latest report has been published by the Ministry of Water Resources based on the data received till August 31.

From that report, it is seen that initially three states have been selected for the development of different areas along the river banks. They are Bihar, Madhya Pradesh and Uttarakhand. Only Bihar's project has been implemented. Work is still pending in Madhya Pradesh and Uttarakhand. However, each project was approved 1-2 years ago.



and therefore make the sector attractive for foreign investment. IB Ministry has further said that MSOs whose registration is expiring within 7 months are re-

quired to apply online through the BroadcastSeva Portal. In case any assistance is required, the helpline number available on the portal may be contacted, or an email

may be sent to sodas-moiab@gov.in. Earlier, only fresh MSO registrations were granted under the Cable Television Networks Rules, 1994. The Rules did not specify the period of validity for MSO registrations, nor did they recognize the mandatory filing of online applications.

The inclusion of a provision related to the sharing of infrastructure by cable operators with broadband service providers will provide the twin benefit of enhanced internet penetration and efficient utilization of resources. It will also reduce the need for additional infrastructure for broadband services.





## Aadhaar blends progress with privacy concerns

A recent report by Moody's Investors Service on "Decentralized Finance and Digital Assets" has brought to the fore some pressing concerns about India's Aadhaar, the world's largest digital ID programme. While Aadhaar's scale is undeniably impressive, encompassing biometric and demographic details of over a billion residents, Moody's cautionary note on the potential security and privacy risks of such "centralised" systems cannot be ignored. Aadhaar, controlled by a single entity, presents vulnerabilities that decentralized ID systems might mitigate. These decentralized systems, as proposed by Moody's, would offer users greater autonomy over their personal data. Furthermore, the report underscores the challenges of Aadhaar's biometric authentication, particularly its reliability in adverse climates and for manual labourers. The current government's enthusiastic endorsement has seen the 12-digit ID become almost ubiquitous, essential for a plethora of services from welfare benefits to tax remittances. While the integration of Aadhaar with banking and mobile services has streamlined benefit transfers, eliminating fraudulent beneficiaries, it has not been without its pitfalls. There are numerous accounts of individuals, particularly the elderly and manual labourers, facing exclusion due to biometric verification failures. Last year's audit of the UIDAI by the Comptroller and Auditor General of India further highlighted issues that could compromise data security and privacy. The report also pointed out inconsistencies in the enrolment process, leading to potential data duplication. India's advocacy for digital public infrastructure, modelled on Aadhaar, for G-20 nations is commendable. However, before further expansion, especially in critical areas like electoral rolls or MGNREGA payments, a comprehensive review is imperative. The recent appointment of a part-time chief to the UIDAI after a four-year hiatus is a step, but what's needed is a thorough evaluation and recalibration of the Aadhaar programme to ensure it serves its purpose without compromising the rights and privacy of its billion-plus users.

### LETTERBOX

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**"DON'T LET ANYONE STEAL YOUR DREAM. IT'S YOUR DREAM, NOT THEIRS."**

-Dan Zadra

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RITWIKA SHARMA BELIEVES ROBUST DELIMITATION DISCUSSION NEEDED SOON TO AVOID SEAT ALLOCATION DELAY

## Back to the drawing board



Its political motivations aside, the Constitution (One Hundred and Twenty-Eighth Amendment) Bill, 2023, which promises 33 percent reservation for women in the Lok Sabha, and in the Legislative Assemblies of States and the National Capital Territory of Delhi, sheds the spotlight on another crucial aspect of representative democracy — the delimitation of electoral constituencies. The exercise of carving electoral constituencies and fixing their boundaries is referred to as delimitation.

Given their almost festive nature in India, elections are traditionally considered to be the primary site where democracy translates into action. Equally significant is the carving out of the boundaries of electoral constituencies, an issue that has implications for adequate representation of voters' interests as well as the number of members from each State who find space in the Parliament.

Since the 1970s, there has been no change in the number of Lok Sabha seats. The Constitution (Forty-Second Amendment) Act, 1976 froze the delimitation of Lok Sabha constituencies as per the Census of 1971, up to the Census which was to be conducted in 2001. However, in 2001, the day of reckoning was pushed further to 2026. This was done through an amendment to Article 82 by the Constitution (Eighty-Fourth Amendment) Act. While the boundaries of electoral constituencies were redrawn in 2002, there was no change in the number of seats in the Lok Sabha. Only after 2026 will we consider changing the number of seats in the Lok Sabha. Strictly speaking, the relevant numbers as to population (and its distribution) are expected to come from the 2031 Census, which will be the first census after 2026.

### Delimitation as of now

Article 81 of the Constitution says that each

State gets seats in the Lok Sabha in proportion to its population. The freeze on delimitation effected in 1976 was to allay the concerns of States which took a lead in population control and which were faced with the prospect of reduction of their number of seats in the Lok Sabha. The practical consequences, however, of the 1976 freeze is that the allocation done on the basis of the 1971 Census continues to hold good for the present population figures. India's population has, of course, increased significantly since then. Using figures from 1971 to represent today's population runs contrary to the grain of the Constitution besides obviously distorting what representative democracy stands for.

The exercise of delimitation also implicates the constitutional values of federalism and representation of States as consolidated units. In the preceding decades, the population of the north has increased at a faster pace as compared with the south. In practical terms, this means that MPs in States in north India represent more voters than MPs in the south. Given this context, the ques-

tion of delimitation necessarily has serious implications for both the individual voter as well as the States. The southern States run the risk of losing some of their seats in Parliament once the delimitation exercise is completed based on current population figures.

### Delimitation in the near future

The new Parliament building appears ready to house over 800 MPs in the Lok Sabha. How these MPs will be spread out across India's electoral constituencies, and how many people each MP will represent, are questions that beg urgent answers. The freeze in 1976 was necessitated by States' apprehensions embedded in the consequences of their population control measures and widely differing fertility rates. Such concerns hold good even today.

The delimitation of constituencies will need answers to certain vexed questions. The first question might seem more logistical than anything else, where should the population figures come from to inform the exercise of delimitation? The 2021 Census was pushed

courtesy of the COVID-19 pandemic, and the Union Home Minister has indicated that the next Census and subsequent delimitation will be conducted after the 2024 Lok Sabha polls. Interestingly, if the next Census were to be actually conducted in 2031 (which is when it is due), the population figures from 1971 would have informed the distribution of seats in the Lok Sabha for more than half a century. Let us also not forget that upon completion of the Census and the redrawing of electoral boundaries, the change in the numerical composition of the Lok Sabha will have to be reflected in the Constitution through an amendment.

Even more vexed are the qualitative concerns that will determine how boundaries of electoral constituencies will be redrawn. If done entirely in terms of proportion of population, the redrawing of constituencies would yield more seats to States in the north, given their higher population. Besides concerns around representation, this will also lead to distrust on the part of States in the south.

The recently concluded delimitation in Assam, ahead of the 2024 Assembly elections, witnessed widespread concerns around how altering the boundaries of certain districts and renaming certain constituencies can have a potentially acute impact on the representation of specific communities. That is all the indication needed to start a robust conversation around delimitation sooner than later, so that lifting of the freeze on allocation of Lok Sabha seats does not have to be pushed ahead further. That will be a stop-gap solution to an imminent concern, one that cannot be wished away.

Ritwika Sharma is a Senior Resident Fellow at the Vidhi Centre for Legal Policy and team lead, Charkha, Vidhi's constitutional law centre. Views are personal.



ARUN CHAWLA EXPLAINS HOW MEDIATION ACT 2023 CONNECTS MEDIATION AND ARBITRATION TO EASE COURTS' LOAD

## A clear message to industry on dispute resolution

Any conversation about the Indian litigation system eventually veers toward the term Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR). ADR refers to a bouquet of mechanisms that enables disputing parties to resolve their differences amicably, without the intervention of courts. Given the delays in Indian court proceedings and increasing cost of litigation, the significance of ADR in India cannot be understated. Until recently, these discussions largely focussed on arbitration or conciliation of disputes under the Arbitration and Conciliation Act, 1996 (A&C Act). But mediation of disputes is finally getting its due.

In the recent monsoon session of Parliament, both Houses passed The Mediation Bill, 2023, and upon receiving the assent of the President of India, is referred to as the Mediation Act, 2023 ("the Act"). The Indian legal framework already encourages courts to refer the disputing parties to ADR procedures, including mediation, if there were elements of settlement which the parties may accept. The Act will take this encouragement a step forward. Irrespective of a prior mediation agreement, it will obligate each party to take steps to settle their dispute through pre-litigation mediation before approaching an Indian court. To facilitate this process, the Act will also require courts and relevant institutions to maintain a panel of mediators.

### Many benefits

The potential benefits are several. This requirement is expected to reduce the filing of frivolous claims before Indian courts. Owing to the confidentiality of a mediation, it may also mitigate the risk of deterioration of the parties' relationship



due to a publicly fought dispute. Yet, at the same time, concerns are raised about the feasibility of a mediation conducted under the sword of an obligation as opposed to a sincere desire to arrive at an amicable resolution. In the latter scenario, this may empower a recalcitrant defendant to delay a genuine claim. Fortunately, the Act will provide some safeguards against these concerns. On the one hand, it will require the mediation to ordinarily be conducted by an empanelled mediator, who must always be neutral and have uncompromising expertise.

Subject to an extension by the parties, they must also complete the mediation within 180 days from the parties' first appearance. On the other hand, the Act will not remove the refuge of Indian courts entirely. A party may, in exceptional circumstances, seek urgent interim reliefs from a court before the commencement or during the continuation of a mediation. These provisions prioritise expertise and efficiency, while ensuring that the obligation of pre-litigation mediation is

not weaponised. The aim is to create a balanced framework which encourages the parties to focus more on their commercial dealings and less on their disputes.

The aspect of mediation and arbitration In these discussions, however, one aspect has gone unnoticed. The Act will effectively position mediation similar to commercial arbitration in India. The similarities between their respective supporting pieces of legislation are obvious. Both pieces of legislation impose stringent timelines for the conduct of proceedings, mandate confidentiality, obligate Indian courts to refer the parties to mediation or arbitration, provide a default mechanism for the appointment of a mediator or arbitrator, and prescribe the procedure for the termination of their mandate. Likewise, both ensure the enforceability of a mediated settlement agreement and an arbitral award, respectively. The establishment of a Mediation Council of India equally mirrors the proposal in 2019 to establish an Arbitration Council of India (that is yet to be implemented).

Mediation and commercial arbitration are thus made allies, albeit at different stages of the same journey.

Parliament's message to Indian industry is clear — in commercial matters, courts must no longer be the default venue for dispute resolution. Parties are expected to resolve their dispute amicably through mediation, and, alternatively, through commercial arbitration. While the doors of Indian courts are open if required, this access must be perceived as a matter of last resort. To this extent, the Act will foster camaraderie between the mediation and arbitration of commercial disputes, and reduce the burden on Indian courts.

### Service providers

In this context, a final key parallel emerges. Similar to how the recent amendments to the A&C Act prioritised institutional arbitration of disputes, the Act also places emphasis on institutional mediation in India. It envisages "mediation service providers" to provide not only the services of a mediator but also all the facilities, secretarial assistance, and infrastructure for the efficient conduct of mediation. A mediation service provider is synonymous with arbitration institutions. India is already home to experienced arbitration institutions, some of which provide mediation services that are on a par with global best practices. These institutions are, therefore, expected to play a meaningful role in India's mediation journey. Only then would India become a global hub not only for arbitration but also for all aspects of commercial dispute resolution.

Arun Chawla is Director General, Indian Council of Arbitration. Views are personal.



### BOOKS: REVIEW

## Resilient tale of navigating life in quest for connection

Elaine Feeney's "How to Build a Boat" is a poignant exploration of grief, identity, and the complexities of human relationships. As one of the four Irish writers longlisted for the Booker Prize this year, Feeney's narrative is both intimate and universal, delving deep into the intricacies of parenting in a world that often feels like it's on the brink of collapse.

The story revolves around Jamie O'Neill, a 13-year-old boy with a neurodiverse condition that the author deliberately leaves unnamed. Drawing inspiration from her own son's hyperlexia, Feeney crafts Jamie as a bright, sensitive soul who finds solace in the natural world, literature, and patterns. His affinities — from the mathematical drawings of Maryam Mirzakhani to the writings of Edgar Allan Poe — paint a vivid picture of a young mind seeking understanding and connection.

The heart of the story lies in Ja-

mie's relationship with his father, Eoin. Both are grappling with the loss of Jamie's mother, Noelle, who died during childbirth. Their individual griefs, though stemming from the same tragedy, manifest differently. While Eoin is consumed by a rage he can't shake off, Jamie feels an emptiness, a void where maternal love should reside.

Feeney's portrayal of Noelle as a champion swimmer whose life and career were tragically cut short adds another layer to the narrative. Jamie's obsession with water, possibly a connection to his mother, leads him on a quest to invent a 'Perpetual Motion Machine'. This journey introduces him to Tess Mahon and Tadgh Foley, two teachers battling their own personal demons, who become instrumental in guiding Jamie towards building a boat, his interpretation of the perpetual motion machine.

The novel shines brightest in its moments of introspection. Whether it's Jamie and Eoin's attempts to

**The novel's research-driven approach can be a double-edged sword. While it provides a comprehensive backdrop**

navigate their grief-stricken world or Tess and Foley's endeavors to find meaning, Feeney captures the essence of human vulnerability and resilience. Her reflections on parental anxiety, as she mentioned in an interview, resonate deeply, touching upon the universal fears and hopes that parents harbor for their children.

Feeney's rich descriptions of western Ireland, from its socio-economic dynamics to its post-colonial influences, add depth to the narrative. Her concerns about the oppressive church regime and



How to Build a Boat  
By Elaine Feeney  
Harvill Secker,  
256 pages; Rs 799

its lingering impacts on the culture are thought-provoking, offering readers a glimpse into Ireland's tumultuous history.

However, the novel's research-driven approach can be a double-edged sword. While it provides a comprehensive backdrop, it occasionally feels like an information overload, potentially distancing some readers from the emotional core of the story.

Elaine Feeney's choice to leave Jamie's neurodiverse condition unnamed is a bold narrative decision that speaks volumes. It challenges the reader to see Jamie as an individual first, rather than through the lens of a diagnosis. This choice underscores the novel's broader themes of acceptance and understanding. In a world quick to label and categorize, Feeney prompts us

to question: do we truly see the person beneath the labels we assign?

The setting of western Ireland is not just a backdrop but a character in its own right. Feeney's intricate descriptions paint a vivid picture of a land steeped in history, tradition, and change. The juxtaposition of pagan and Christian traditions, the influence of colonialism, and the evolving socio-economic landscape provide a rich tapestry against which Jamie's story unfolds. This setting serves as a mirror to Jamie's own journey, reflecting the tensions between the old and the new, tradition and progress, and the known and the unknown.

Lastly, the title "How to Build a Boat" is metaphorically resonant. Just as a boat navigates the unpredictable waters, each character in the novel is trying to find their way through the turbulent seas of life. The boat, symbolic of Jamie's quest for understanding and connection, also represents each individual's journey to find solid ground amidst life's uncertainties. In building this boat, Jamie is not just constructing a physical vessel, but he's also piecing together the fragmented parts of his identity, history, and future.



# Haryana turning as industry hub: CM Khattar

SATISH HANDA

Haryana Chief Minister Manohar Lal Khattar and deputy CM Dushyant Chautala a couple of days ago in a function laid the foundation stone for Flipkart's regional distribution centre in Manesar. Khattar said that the Flipkart is making substantial investments in Haryana including this regional distribution centre in Manesar, spread across 140 acres area with the investment of Rs 1389 crores, which will also provide employment opportunities to large number of youths in the state. While addressing CM Khattar said that Haryana has been offering a favourable environment for investors and industries in the state, highlighting the state as an emerging manufacturing hub in the country. CM said, this distribution centre is poised to become Asia's largest centre likely to create direct and indirect employment opportuni-



ties for approximately 10,000 individuals.

Khattar said that the 'Global City' being developed in Gurugram district will add a new chapter in the development of the area as well the state due to the state's investor-friendly policies and services. He said, Haryana is strategically developing the National Capital Region (NCR) as a robust warehousing and logistics hub where multiple projects are underway to

enhance logistics connectivity including the expressways, railways and national highways. The chief minister said that the Flipkart has become as a key player in Haryana's economic landscape, having created over 95,000 jobs and providing market access to sellers through its extensive supply chain network, as such Haryana is marching ahead towards industrial growth, job creation and economic development

as a result not only within the country manufacturers from abroad are willing to set up their manufacturing industry in Haryana state.

Khattar said he suggested that Flipkart help 5 lakh women associated with 55,000 self-help groups in Haryana by including their products as such farmers' products should be delivered to the consumers through farmer-producer organisations, and also include small shopkeepers in their chain for which the Haryana government will support them. Meanwhile, Haryana Energy Minister Ch. Ranjit Singh Chautala said that industrial units in the state will now get express delivery of electricity. Under this, power corporations will ensure 24-hour power supply to industries, which will make industries generator free. He said, a policy in this regard has been prepared and it will be finalized in the next 6 months.

# Netherlands Cricket Team ropes in Nordek as its title sponsor for upcoming ICC World Cup

ARUN KUMAR RAO  
Bengaluru

Ahead of the much awaited ODI Cricket World Cup 2023, Netherlands Cricket Team ropes in Global blockchain and Web3 Payments company Nordek as its title sponsor for the upcoming ICC World Cup Cricket 2023 announced during press conference in Bengaluru.

Nordek's sponsorship of Team Netherlands (nicknamed 'The Flying Dutchmen') comes after a slew of major fintech and edutech players have become title sponsors in past few years of major Cricket teams including that of Team India. Founded by Blockchain entrepreneurs Kashyap and Kishor, the company aims to capitalize its presence in European blockchain market.

The European blockchain market is anticipated to witness remarkable growth, expanding from a valuation of US\$ 1.2 billion in 2021 to a substantial US\$ 59.1 billion by 2028.

Speaking on the occasion, Nordek's Founder & Promoter, Kishor and Kashyap said, "This is a great period of boom in sports especially in India, which is the fastest growing economy. With venturing into Cricket, we aim to reach out to the Global Sports Fans and students who can explore more opportunities in blockchain. Nordek strives to be the most business and consumer-friendly blockchain ecosystem for mainstream adoption of web3 payments. And, our target audiences are the ones who understand the length, breadth and depth of agility, just like their understanding of Cricket. We believe, the Cricket fans would also fall in love with the fast and most EVM-compatible Network Blockchain, i.e., Nordek."

To this, Monica Visser, CEO of Netherlands Cricket reiterated that, "With growing business of blockchain across the world and the

revolutionizing of fintech industry, we are happy to on-board Nordek as the Title Sponsor. The partnership will not only build trust in the ever evolving fintech industry but will also open new market avenues in tandem with sporting events for learning as well as growing, together" she said.

With venturing into the world of Cricket, Nordek is planning to make its brand presence felt across countries where blockchain is gaining traction, including the Middle East where blockchain and technology in fintech is taking a tenfold increase. Nordek also provides education to universities and colleges on the subject called 'blockchain'. The company is providing free of cost education to more than 100 universities and colleges. The global blockchain market is expected to reach \$56 billion by 2026, growing at a CAGR of 56.9% forecast and Nordek plans to be a major player in the market.

Team Netherlands has arrived in India to have an acclimatization camp in Bengaluru, where they will play a couple of local sides. Following that, they will face India and Australia in the pre-tournament warm-up matches at Thiruvananthapuram. The Dutchmen qualified for the World Cup earlier in July ahead of teams like two-time champions West Indies.

# India May Ban Sugar Exports From October



**NEW DELHI:** India is likely to ban sugar exports in the new season, starting October 1, government officials told Moneycontrol on Thursday.

A notification in this regard can be expected in the first week of November, they added.

The sugar season starts in October of a year and ends in September the next year. After selling a record 11 million tonnes (MT) of sugar in 2021-22, India restricted the amount of exports during 2022-23 to ensure supply in domestic markets and keep a lid on prices.

"In the beginning of the 2022-23 sugar year, the government restricted sugar exports to around 6 MT. Even this quota is being eliminated with rising prices. Our main priority is to keep domestic prices low," an official told Moneycontrol.

Below-normal showers in the top cane-growing districts in the western state of Maharashtra and the southern state of Karnataka, both of which account for more than half of India's total sugar output, had been as much as 50 percent below average till August this year.

While the rainfall situation has since improved with the all-India deficit coming down from 10 percent on August 31 to 5 percent on September 25, fears of a fall in production cannot be erased.

# Freshworks Report Reveals Massive Opportunity for IT Leaders Leveraging AI

**SAN MATEO:** Freshworks Inc. released the findings of its second annual "State of Workplace Technology" report, which found a 71% increase in the number of software applications on IT teams' work computers over the last year. To manage this spiraling complexity, the report found that IT pros—especially senior leaders and younger generations—are embracing AI to automate workflows and boost efficiency with 86% of IT pros reporting that their organizations are already using AI.

AI is poised to save companies time and money - While IT departments are expected to grow this year, it doesn't mean they need to spend more. Freshworks found that companies in the U.S. could save over \$15,000 per IT employee each year using AI to eliminate time wasted on repetitive tasks. This means that an enterprise-sized company with at least 5,000 employees and an average of 200 IT professionals on staff could save at least \$3 million annually using AI. The survey also revealed:

IT professionals are managing more software than ever and see an opportunity to simplify. The number of software applications on IT teams' work computers increased 71% over the last year. Despite this, IT professionals only use one-third of the applications available to them daily (just eight out of 24), compared to half in 2022. IT teams put efficiency first. They rank ease of use and efficiency as top attributes of business software, ahead of feature suite, reliability and cost-effectiveness.

AI eliminates repetitive tasks. IT pros agree AI frees up time otherwise spent on repetitive tasks (49%) and allows them to do more complex, meaningful work (45%). Moreover, IT pros estimate they could save more than five hours per week by using AI to complete repetitive tasks.

# Central Railway Mumbai division invites Tender for Cine Dome at Dombivli, Khopoli, Juchandra and Igatpuri stations

MANMOHAN SINGH NAULA

An open online tender has been published and will be closed on 12/10/2023 at 15.00 hrs. It will be under Non-Fare Revenue (NFR) Earning model, for Setting up & Operating Pre-Fabricated Cine Dome at Dombivli, Khopoli, Juchandra and Igatpuri stations for a period of Ten years.

The proposed Cine Dome will be a full-fledged cinema for showcasing movies including latest movie releases



& documentaries and other content etc. along with meals/snacks/beverages for customers/visitors/Guests. However, no permanent structure will be allowed to be constructed. The Cine Dome will be manned by the tenderers own operators. Crowd

management shall be the sole responsibility of the party

Setting up, Operation, Maintenance & Management of Pre-Fabricated Cine Dome shall be the sole responsibility of the licensee and the cost for the same is to be borne by the licensee (it includes cost of erecting structures, Pre-Fabricated Cine Dome related items, safety & security, necessary amenities, laying cables, electrical connection, electricity consumption charges, electricity deposit & other incidental expenses etc.).

# Lumina Datamaticswins Prestigious Operational Excellence through Digital Transformation Award

FW DESK  
Mumbai

Lumina Datamatics, a strategic partner to global publishers providing content, analytics, and technology solutions, is thrilled to announce that its innovative publishing platform, BluPencil, has been honored with the esteemed "Operational Excellence through Digital Transformation Award" at the 5th Edition of the Confederation of Indian Industry's (CII) DX Awards 2023. The award ceremony concluded at Le Meridien, New Delhi, on September 26, 2023.

BluPencil, Lumina Datamatics' online author-proofing platform, has redefined how authors collaborate, edit, and review their work. This platform allows authors to

instantaneously enhance their content, leveraging the platform's intuitive UI and auto-validations, while maintaining the XML integrity of the content. BluPencil's recommendations and notification capabilities simplifies editing and facilitates seamless communication between authors and editors

during the submission and proof review process. There are over 6,000 authors across the world using BluPencil.

The DX Awards recognize the innovative, resilient, and sustainable strategies for introducing or adopting digital technologies and serve as a benchmark for other industries in their journey for Digital Transformation. Speaking about the win, Sameer L. Kanodia, Managing Director & C.E.O., Lumina Datamatics, said, "We are honored to receive the DX Award for BluPencil. This recognition reaffirms our commitment to technology innovation and excellence within the publishing industry. Lumina Datamatics remains steadfast in our dedication to crafting solutions that empower organizations to excel in the digital era."

Lumina Datamatics is a strategic partner to global publishers providing content, analytics, and technology solutions. Lumina Datamatics enables publishers and aggregators to be at the forefront of content workflows by managing the entire publishing process - from content creation to product delivery.

# Aluminium Industry claims 2-3 per cent profit drop due to delayed RODTEP rates for SEZs and EOUs

**CHENNAI:** The aluminium industry is witnessing a 2 to 3 per cent decline in its profits because the government has not yet released the rates for the Remission of Duties or Taxes on Export Product (RODTEP) scheme for special economic zones (SEZs) and export-oriented units (EOUs).

India exported 2.5 million tonne of aluminium in FY23 worth USD 5 billion. With the scrapping of the earlier Merchandise Exports from India Scheme (MEIS), aluminium exporters are feeling the squeeze, Aluminium Association of India (AAI) member governing council Himanshu Singh said.

"The AAI has already submitted a representation to the Union ministry of commerce and industry seeking urgent intervention for notification of rates under the scheme as this would help boost exports," he added.

In FY23, India produced 4.1 million tonne of aluminium and also imported 2.5 million tonne of which 1.7 million tonne was



scrap import. With over USD 20 billion invested, India is today the second largest aluminium producer in the world.

However, the AAI pointed out that while RODTEP rates for aluminium products manufactured in domestic tariff areas (DTAs) have been notified, the rates for those manufactured within SEZs and EOUs are yet to be informed even through SEZs and EOUs cumulatively represent the source of over 30 per cent of all aluminium

exports from India.

At present, unremitted taxes and duties comprise anywhere between 5 per cent and 10 per cent of aluminium production costs for SEZ-based operations.

"But with MEIS scheme already withdrawn and the beneficial rates under RODTEP yet to be extended to this segment, the domestic aluminium industry is struggling to remain competitive in global markets against foreign producers, especially from China," he added.

# KISNA renowned jewellery brand launches its first store in Karnataka

ARUN KUMAR RAO  
Bangalore

KISNA, a renowned jewellery brand under the Hari Krishna Group, Launches first-ever franchise showroom in Bengaluru, Karnataka. Over 18 years of expertise in jewellery designing, manufacturing and sales. With innovative "Mines to Market" setup, continually adapt to evolving consumer preferences, offering exquisite collections for every occasion and budget.

Latest showroom in Bangalore is a testament to dedication to serving local tastes and preferences. This exclusive showroom is meticulously designed to provide an extensive range of high-quality and trendsetting designs, perfect for everyday wear and the festive season.

The opening of Bangalore showroom in presence of Ghaneshyam Dholakia, Founder & Managing Director of KISNA, Tulsi Dholakia, Founder & Director Hari Krishna Group and Parag Shah, Director of KISNA.

KISNA, which was established in 2005, has adopted a distribution-driven model and has expanded its footprint to



over 3500 showrooms across India. Prior to the Bangalore showroom, KISNA had launched stores in various cities, including Siliguri, Hyderabad, Hisar, Ayodhya, Bareilly, Raipur, Delhi, Mumbai, Jammu, and now Bangalore.

Expressing his thoughts during showroom launch, Ghaneshyam Dholakia said, "We are elated to establish KISNA's first showroom in Bangalore and introduce our latest designs to the city. Our goal is to make diamonds accessible to every woman in the country, and our expansion plans aim to reach every household across India. At the new showroom, we want consumers to experience the expertise of the Hari Krishna Group and provide them with a variety of diamond and gold jewellery options suitable for any occasion."

# Manipal Hospital launches SOS QR Code and CPR to save critical patient during "Golden Hour"

ARUN KUMAR RAO  
Bangalore

On occasion of "World Heart Day", Manipal Hospital, Bangalore, launched an advanced SOS QR code, and cardiopulmonary resuscitation (CPR) Education program aimed at saving lives during medical emergencies. The main objective of the launch was to ensure every critical patient receives timely assistance during the "Golden Hour". QR Code and CPR Launched by Dr. G. Parameshwara, Karnataka Home Minister and Dinesh Gundu Rao, Minister of Health and Family Welfare, along with Dr. Sudarshan Ballal, Chairman of Manipal Hospitals. This groundbreaking service of detecting the



accurate location of the patient in need and providing ambulance service underscores the hospital's dedication to transforming Bengaluru into a Heart Smart City. In a symbolic gesture, Manipal Hospital has also transformed traffic signals into heart-shaped symbols, underlining their commitment to heart health awareness.

The trend that was set by branding red heart signals last

year at key traffic junctions is reinitiated at 37 traffic signals this year as well, with the support of Bangalore City Traffic Police and BBMP. These signals have SOS QR codes stationed for easy access to the ambulance service. The heart-shaped signal at the traffic junction is a sign of reminder to everyone that every life counts and not to neglect their own hearts.

As per data from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), almost 47% of cardiac arrest fatalities occur prior to a patient's arrival at the hospital. The key to saving lives during heart attacks lies in delivering prompt assistance such as CPR during the golden hour.

# Uptick in Microsoft Teams adoption among Freshservice customers helps businesses of all sizes speed up employee service management with the AI-enabled integration

FW DESK  
San Mateo [Calif]

Freshworks Inc announced a significant increase in Microsoft Teams usage by Freshservice customers to improve the employee experience through more efficient AI-powered virtual agent support. Microsoft Teams adoption among Freshservice customers has seen an average increase of 42% over the past three years. As a result, businesses using Freshservice are now able to amplify productivity for more than 250,000 users.

The generative-AI-powered Virtual Agent within Freshservice, an IT service management (ITSM) solution, along with Microsoft Teams' ServiceBot, gives employees round-the-clock support and can facilitate



rapid resolution of their needs within Microsoft Teams. The integrated solution also enables IT and other business teams to deflect tickets that helps save clicks and streamline work. In a July 2023 study commissioned by Freshworks, Forrester estimated a mid-sized company could save \$2.1 million in three years by improving user productivity with the Freshservice Virtual Agent.

"Microsoft Teams has rapidly grown as the hub for collaboration," said Sridhi Raghavan, VP of Microsoft Teams Ecosystem. "Through our work with companies like Freshworks that share our vision for AI, we aim to enable teams across multiple channels to solve employee issues swiftly, ultimately saving

money and driving efficiency with next-generation AI for customers of all sizes."

Using Freshservice, which is built natively on the Freshworks Neo platform, with Microsoft Teams, companies of all sizes can increase user productivity. Using AI-powered virtual agents, they can improve collaboration across business teams during critical incidents, and enhance the employee experience with faster resolution to allow for:

Automated conversational support that boosts employee experience with faster resolution. Automation eliminates the constraints of working hours, giving employees access to conversational support from virtual agents within Microsoft Teams

to speed up issue resolution whenever they need it.

Increase agent productivity through AI-powered virtual agents. Freddy AI-powered Freshservice virtual agents empower business departments to focus on high-value tasks, allowing the virtual agent to handle common and mundane issues that often bog down humans. Agents can more quickly handle ticket updates and approvals.

Improve collaboration during critical incidents. Freshservice notifies on-call agents directly in Microsoft Teams. IT operations teams can swiftly communicate to resolve major incidents, maximizing service availability and minimizing downtime all without leaving a single app.

Customers like A&E Networks and Haynes International are using Microsoft Teams with Freshservice to improve employee service management. Haynes International, a US-based materials manufacturer, increased business user productivity by 50% since using Freshservice integrated with Microsoft Teams.

Lyle Snyder, Senior Support Analyst at Haynes International said, "Traditional support chan-

nels for employees typically have complicated portals, which slow down support and are no longer acceptable for the modern workforce. The Freshworks and Microsoft Teams' integration helps us deliver a simple and modern employee experience, all on one platform. We've already seen impressive productivity increases and expect both apps to scale with our evolving business and employee needs."

The Office for Students, the independent regulator of higher education in England, was able to decrease its average resolution time by 67% with the Freshservice virtual agent integrated with Microsoft Teams. "Our goal was to move away from employees emailing the service desk, and instead use Teams as a channel," said Karen Spray, IT Service Support Manager at Office for Students. "Adopting the Freshservice Virtual Agent was easy, and the technical rollout took us about 10 minutes. Easy access to the Virtual Agent within Microsoft Teams made it all the more convenient and helped our employees solve many issues on their own thanks to powerful self-service features."



# RBI reviews flow of credit to MSME sector

**MUMBAI:** The RBI's Standing Advisory Committee (SAC) reviewed the flow of credit to Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises on Friday at its meeting held in Lucknow, a central bank said in a release.

The 28th meeting of SAC was chaired by RBI Deputy Governor Swaminathan J, and attended by senior officials from ministries of MSME and finance.

"During the meeting, the SAC reviewed the flow of credit to MSMEs and deliberated on issues related to assessing and bridging the credit gap for the sector, exploring digital solutions for improved credit linkage, accelerating adoption of TReDS, credit support to women entrepreneurs, revival



and rehabilitation of stressed MSMEs, and credit guarantee schemes, among others," the RBI said.

The deputy governor in his keynote address emphasised the significant role of the MSME sector, particularly in the context of the goal of

attaining developed economy status by 2047.

He stressed the need for collaborative efforts on the part of all stakeholders to unlock the full potential of MSMEs.

Swaminathan highlighted various initiatives taken by the RBI such as the Account Ag-

gregator (AA) framework, the digital Public Tech Platform to enable delivery of frictionless credit and the regulatory sandbox on MSME lending.

He also dwelt on the important role of industry associations in information dissemination and capacity building among MSMEs, the RBI said.

Chairman of SIDBI, Executive Director of RBI, senior management of major banks and NABARD, senior executives of credit guarantee fund trust for micro and small enterprises, National Credit Guarantee Trustee Company Limited, Khadi and Village Industries Commission, Indian Banks' Association and MSME Associations, too participated in the meeting.

## PM Vishwakarma gets over 1.40 lakh applications within 10 days of its launch



**NEW DELHI:** The PM Vishwakarma scheme has received more than 1.40 lakh applications within a period of ten days, said Narayan Rane, Union Minister for Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises (MSME) on Wednesday.

Providing information on the success of the PM Vishwakarma Scheme, through his post on X (formerly Twitter), he wrote that PM Vishwakarma Yojna is a result of Prime Minister Narendra Modi's farsighted vision.

"Receiving of such high numbers of applications within ten days of the launch of the scheme is a testament to the success and the paramount importance of the scheme," he added.

The Union Minister further stated that the PM Vishwakarma Scheme, will be a milestone for the comprehensive development of our socially and economically underprivileged Vishwakarma brothers and sisters and it will restore their lost identity which has been long awaited.

Through this scheme Vishwakarma brothers and sisters will be provided training, tool kits, and collateral free loans.

After successfully verifying the received applications, all the scheme's benefits will be extended to our Vishwakarma brothers and sisters.

The Union Minister said that this scheme aims to enhance traditional artisans and craftspersons production capacity and take their products to domestic and global markets.

Under the scheme, 18 types of artisans and craftsmen will be benefited.

# Rs 256 Cr granted to MSMEs under 'Vivad se Vishwas-I'

**NEW DELHI:** The Ministry of Finance announced on September 26 that over 10,000 claims of Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs) under Vivad se Vishwas - I scheme have been accepted since its launch.

This has led to grant of more than Rs 256 crore to MSMEs and increased flow of bank credit through freeing up of guarantees, said the Ministry.

The highest relief of Rs 116.47 crore has been granted by the Ministry of Petroleum and Natural Gas (MoPNG).

This includes the claims settled and amount paid by the agencies under the administrative control of the MoPNG.

Ministry of Railways is the second highest relief granter with Rs 79.16 crore amount paid and 2,090 number of claims accepted.

This is followed by Ministry



of Defence, Ministry of Steel and Ministry of Power, as per the data released by Ministry of Finance.

The Vivad se Vishwas I - Relief for MSMEs scheme was announced by the Union Finance Minister in the Budget Speech 2023-24.

The scheme was launched by

Ministry of Finance through Government e-Marketplace (GeM) portal on 17 April, 2023.

The last date for submission of claims for relief, on the GeM portal, under the scheme was 31 July, 2023. GeM had developed a dedicated portal for the purpose of this scheme.

# Bank Credit Growth likely to slip at 13-13.5% in FY23-24 : CRISIL

**NEW DELHI:** Credit growth is seen at 13-13.5% year-on-year (y-o-y) in 2023-24 (April-March), lower than nearly 16% y-o-y in 2022-23, CRISIL Ratings said in a report on Thursday.

The growth numbers do not account for the merged entity of Housing Development Finance Corporation and HDFC Bank. As per media reports the rating agency expects the credit growth to improve to 13.5-14% y-o-y in 2024-25 as the economic growth picks up.

While on the basis of the broad-based economic recovery the credit growth had hit 16% y-o-y in 2022-23, the moderation in credit in 2023-24 can be attributed to an expected decline in gross domestic product (GDP) growth in 2023-24, which will impact overall credit growth.

A significant part of growth in wholesale credit in 2022-23 was driven by higher working capital demand in a high-inflation environment. The easing of inflation in 2023-24 will have a bearing on the



demand for working capital from corporates and hence, impact overall loan growth. With the rise in interest rates, corporates have been tapping the bond market for their financing requirements.

Bank credit's substitution of debt capital markets, which also supported wholesale credit growth in 2022-23, is unlikely to play out to the same extent this year, the credit rating agency said.

A higher base in the second half of the previous financial year is also expected to reflect in credit growth numbers in the current financial year. "In fiscal 2025, overall

credit growth trends should see a turnaround and start inching up on the back of an expected improvement in GDP growth to 6.9%," said Krishnan Sitaraman, Senior Director and Chief Ratings Officer, CRISIL Ratings.

Overall loan growth in 2024-25 is expected to be lifted by higher capacity utilisation levels and capital expenditure announcements. On the services side, demand from non-banks should continue to support corporate credit growth as they are themselves seeing decent growth tailwinds, the report said.

# Short-term additional surveillance measure on SME Stocks to be effective from Oct 3

**NEW DELHI:** Exchanges have extended the short-term additional surveillance measure (ST-ASM) framework to SME stocks to enhance market integrity and safeguard the interest of investors. The framework for SME stocks would be effective from 3 October, 2023.

The move was taken after a joint surveillance meeting with market regulator the Securities and Exchange Board of India (SEBI). Market players said the curbs will clamp down on speculative activity and attract serious buyers. However this latest curbs imposed on companies that are traded on the small and medium enterprises (SME) platform could apply brakes on rising volumes. The average daily turnover (ADTV) for BSE's SME segment has shot up three times from Rs 28.4 crore in February to Rs 85.2 crore last month, indicating growing investor and trader interest. Similarly, NSE's Emerge platform for SME companies has witnessed over 3x year-on-year growth in ADTV to Rs 67 crore for the fourth month ending July 2023.

# Uttarakhand CM inks Investment MOUs worth Rs 4,800 cr during London visit

**DEHRADUN:** The Uttarakhand chief minister Pushkar Singh Dhama signed investment MoUs worth Rs 4,800 crore with different companies in London.

The minister was in London to attend a roadshow for the Global Investors Summit which will be held in Uttarakhand this December.

As per reports, MoU worth Rs 380 crore were signed with Kayan Jet, while investment agreements totalling Rs 100 crore were signed with Usha Breco.



Up to 80 business houses from various fields like education, tourism, IT, and health sectors of London participated in the main event organized in London.

During the visit, the delegation had the opportunity to tour India House and Parliament House. At India House, the state government delegation engaged in extensive discussions with representatives from major travel and tourism companies in London. Chief Minister Dhama invited all investors to join the forthcoming Global Investor Summit. The Indian High Commissioner, Vikram Doraiswami, commended the Uttarakhand government for its diverse policies and optimistic vision.

# Money laundering via illicit trade hovering at 5% of India's GDP: FICCI

**NEW DELHI:** India Inc. is worried over the staggering growth in illicit trade and views it as a threat to the economy and security of the country that needs to be tackled on a war footing.

A report released by the FICCI on Thursday based on data from international agencies states that the impact of India's illicit financial flows works out to around 5 per cent of the country's GDP. "Trade-based money laundering in India soared to a whopping \$674.9 billion for the 10-year period from 2009 to 2018 which reflects the magnitude of illicit trade that has emerged as a major threat to the country's economy and security," the report said.

"Based on UNDOC estimates, when the Indian economy surpassed the \$3 trillion mark in 2021, the quantum of money laundering in India can be es-



timated at \$159 billion which is around 5 per cent of GDP. This accentuates the magnitude of the problem driven by the rise in illicit markets (trade, illegal drugs, arms etc.) and non-market actors." It cites recent data provided by the Directorate of Revenue Intelligence (DRI) to illustrate India's substantial trade gap due to mis-invoicing and highlights the growing illicit trade. Smuggling in India report 2021-22 identified 437 instances of duty evasion totalling Rs 3,924 crore, which was a 40 per cent jump

from the corresponding figure of Rs 2,810 crore in 2020-21.

Currently India's illicit trade gap as estimated by Global Financial Integrity (GFI) is 20 per cent, which will translate into nearly \$300 billion when the country's economy reaches the 5 trillion-dollar mark. FICCI has flagged this as a major concern as its study shows that illicit trade is directly linked with organized crime and terrorism. The study also cites the examples of various countries worldwide in this regard. "The convergence of trade-based money laundering with terrorism raises significant concerns for our national security," the report observes. Counterfeiting and illicit goods in India pose significant risks, including financial risks, public health threats in the case of fake pharma products and intellectual property issues as well, the report points out.

# Indo-Pacific Chamber of Commerce Launched in Kolkata

**KOLKATA:** The Indo-Pacific Chamber of Commerce was launched on Thursday during the Indo Pacific Economic Conclave 2023 organized by the Bengal Chamber of Commerce and Industry in association with the Ministry of External Affairs.

Through the Indo-Pacific Economic Conclave 2023, the Bengal Chamber aims to foster economic cooperation, regional integration, and sustainable development across the Indo-Pacific region, the release said.

The Conclave brought together Chambers of Commerce, leaders representing industry, diplomats and trade agency experts from 11 Indo-Pacific countries for the formation of the Indo-Pacific Chamber of Commerce.

As per reports, after discussions with the delegates of 11 participating countries, a Charter was also released.

"Indo-Pacific is an important framework and we are already beginning to build the financial, physical, economic, and commercial architecture by concrete step-by-step measures," Prime Minister's Economic Advisory Council Member Sanjeev Sanyal who



was the Guest of Honour of the Conclave said in his address.

Emphasizing that the Indo-Pacific Framework is a maritime concept, Sanyal said, "The maritime aspect of this is absolutely critical because without taking this into account much of the conversation is meaningless but once you go into a maritime framework then the way you look at the world changes. So once you begin to think in maritime terms you begin to have a far more flexible world view than when you have a landlocked view of the world."

Speaking about the financial aspect of this framework,

he said, "Instead of having rigid financing systems we need to have a globally fluid network of financing. Indo-Pacific region also has some serious finance hubs. Example: Singapore, Tokyo, Mumbai. Interlinking all of these is the key."

"We intend to internationalize the Indian Rupee over the next decade or so for it to be much more widely used. India aspires to be like other hard currencies like Yen, Pound, Singapore Dollar, and Euro. We do expect that the Indian bonds will be more widely used. India is becoming a more prominent part of the international financial network,"

he added.

He also mentioned that ESG (environmental, social and governance) is becoming more and more popular. However, Sanyal cautioned that the way norms are defined or the way these norms are monitored is still being worked out in the North Atlantic which is problematic.

"Many of the global frameworks and ranks are still almost done exclusively by institutions that are in the North Atlantic. So, if there is to be Indo Pacific Framework and if ESG are to be a part of this at all, then this must be redefined otherwise it will not work," he said.

Bengal Chamber of Commerce and Industry President and Managing Director and CEO of Exide Industries Ltd Subir Chakraborty said that the theme for the first day of the Indo-Pacific Economic Conclave is 'Collaboration and Cooperation towards Common Goals in the Indo-Pacific'.

As the global economic landscape continues to evolve, the Indo-Pacific region holds immense potential and significance, making it a focal point for international economic discussions.

# SIDBI to Launch GST Sahay, App for Invoice Financing Loans for MSMEs

**NEW DELHI:** The Small Industries Development Bank of India (SIDBI) will soon launch an app-based based invoice financing loans platform for MSMEs called GST Sahay, an official said.

The aim is to enhance the economic and financial sustainability of micro, small and medium enterprises (MSME), said the SIDBI official.

SIDBI, Chief General Manager (CGM), Rahul Priyadarshi announced this at a customer outreach programme on Wednesday.

"The MSMEs are vital for the economic growth and development of India. They create jobs and contribute enormously to the socio-economic development of the country. Although several measures for the MSMEs have been taken in the past few years by the government, the crunch in working capital credit is one of the major issues for them. Now, SIDBI is in the process of launching an app-based 'invoice financing' loans platform for them," he said.

"The new invoice platform-GST Sahay will reduce the problem of delayed pay-



ments and consequential cash flows mismatches for the MSMEs. The GST Sahay will be an invoice-financing marketplace where MSMEs can use their unpaid invoices to get quick working capital loans," said Priyadarshi.

While speaking about industrial growth in Bihar, the CGM said, "There is no doubt that the industrial growth is taking place in the state, but SIDBI wants to take this region at a greater height. There is a lot of scope for agro-processing, medical and agri tourism in the state. We are always focused on such businesses and SIDBI

wants this region to prosper further."

SIDBI wants to enhance its loan assistance further in the state, he said, adding the loan book of SIDBI's Patna region has grown at 35 per cent (from March 2023 till the date).

"The jump of 35 per cent in lending (of the Patna region), which is at Rs 232 crore now, is quite satisfactory. We want to increase it further. Now the acceleration of growth is on in this region," he said.

Transparency and trust is the principle on which SIDBI does its businesses, he said.

Anubha Prasad, Regional Head of SIDBI Patna, speaking at the event said, "SIDBI is dedicated to fostering strong relationships with its valued customers. SIDBI hopes to aid the development of the two states (Bihar and Jharkhand) through its credit-plus approach, and create stronger footprints for enterprise development at the grassroots level, creating employment and empowering entrepreneurs, as well as work with the two state governments to add value to their initiatives."

SIDBI has appraised 17 proposals involving assistance of approximately Rs 196 crore under Micro and Small Enterprises - Cluster Development Programme (MSE-CDP) for Bihar Industrial Area Development Authority (BIADA) clusters in the state, she added.

Highlighting the bank's comprehensive range of offerings, Prasad said, "SIDBI is also providing financial assistance and support for green projects in the MSME sector as aligned to the nation's commitment to reduce the Green House Gas (GHG) emissions."

# Upcoming Festive Season to witness 75% rise in online advertising by small sellers on E-Commerce Platforms

**NEW DELHI:** This festive season, the small sellers on e-commerce platforms are looking to spend 75 percent more than they did in the year on online advertising to drive sales, according to a latest report by management consulting firm Redseer.

Mrigank Gutgutia, Partner at Redseer, said, "The festival period would likely enable sellers, especially the smaller ones, to come out of the challenging sales environment and they were optimistic of strong growth." "Accordingly, they are willing to significantly ramp up their advertising spending on the e-commerce platforms during this festive period," Gutgutia said.

The festival season typically runs from late September or mid-October to December when consumer spending sees a spike.



Overall, across different-sized sellers, the report anticipates a 15 percent spending growth in online ads from the previous year's festive season and a 50 percent growth versus business-as-usual periods of this year.

Flipkart and Amazon, the biggest e-commerce platforms in the country, have announced their flagship season sales in the second week of October, which will build up to Diwali in the second week of November, reported Money

control.

Online retailers expect festive season sales to rise up to 20 percent from the year-ago period to over Rs 90,000 crore as consumer spending normalises and margins improve due to rising ticket sizes of purchases.

The first online festive season sales were held in the country in 2014. Over these 10 years, the ecommerce market has grown almost 20 times from a gross merchandise

value (GMV) of Rs 27,000 crore in the fall of 2014 to an expected level of Rs 5,25,000 crore in 2023.

The number of annual transacting users has jumped 15 times to hit 230 million this year. The festive season is expected to see a minimum of 140 million shoppers doing transactions online.

This year could see increased contributions from higher margin categories like beauty & personal care (BPC), home & general merchandise, fashion, etc, the report said.

"Over the last several quarters, we are seeing enhanced GMV contributions from categories beyond electronics. While electronics sell a lot in the festive period, looking at the bigger picture and comparing the festive sale periods over the last several years, there is a clear trend of category diversification," Gutgutia said.



# INTERNATIONAL

## US provided Canada with intelligence on Nijjar's killing: NYT

**NEW YORK:** US intelligence agencies provided information that led Canada to hold India responsible for Khalistan leader Hardeep Singh Nijjar's killing, according to Western-allied officials, The New York Times reported.

Following Nijjar's killing on June 18 outside a Sikh temple in British Columbia, "American spy agencies offered their Canadian counterparts context that helped Canada conclude that India had been involved." However, the two allied officials, who spoke to the newspaper on the condition of anonymity, said the "most definitive intelligence" on the killing was collected by Canada.

The report coincides with US Ambassador to Canada David Cohen's claims that Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau's allegation against India was based on "shared intelligence



among Five Eyes partners". Other than Canada, the five eyes intelligence sharing network is made up of the US, the UK, Australia and New Zealand, and was founded in 1946.

The US remained unaware of the plot, or evidence linking India's involvement in it, until

the target of an Indian government plot".

"The United States routinely, and automatically, shares huge amounts of intercepted communications with its closest intelligence partners, including Canada. But the contextual information about the killing was shared deliberately as part of a package of various intelligence streams," The Times report said. The NYT reached out to a White House spokesman who declined to comment. According to the report, the US officials were reluctant to discuss the killing because America wants to maintain a fine balance between both its allies.

US Secretary of State Antony Blinken has urged India to cooperate with Canada and ensure "accountability" over Nijjar's killing. Speaking to reporters on the sidelines of the UN General

Assembly on Friday, Blinken said the US has been in touch with India, with which it has warming ties, and Canada, a close ally. "We want to see accountability. And it's important that the investigation runs its course and leads to that result," Blinken said.

After claiming that Indian agents played a role in the murder of Canadian citizen Nijjar on Canadian soil, Trudeau on Thursday called on India to cooperate on the investigation. He said that Canada shared evidence on Nijjar's killing with India "many weeks ago".

Trudeau's accusation has led to a diplomatic spat between India and Canada with New Delhi rejecting Ottawa's claims as "absurd and motivated", followed by tit-for-tat expulsions of senior diplomats and travel advisories.

## On behalf of Canada, Trudeau apologises for honouring Nazi veteran



On behalf of Canada, Prime Minister Justin Trudeau has apologised for honouring a Ukrainian man in Parliament who fought for a Nazi unit during the Second World War.

In a statement on Wednesday, Trudeau said: "This is a mistake that deeply embarrassed parliament and Canada," the BBC reported.

"All of us who were in this House on Friday regret deeply having stood and clapped even though we did so unaware of the context... It was a horrendous violation of the memory of the millions of people who died in the Holocaust." He said what happened was "deeply, deeply painful" to Jewish people and the many millions who were targeted by the Nazi genocide.

Trudeau also apologised directly to Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy, who was visiting Canada and present in Parliament at the time of the incident on September 22, saying: "Canada is deeply sorry."

Zelenskyy was among those pictured applauding the 98-year-old Yaroslav Hunka, who had served in the 14th Waffen-SS Grenadier Division, a voluntary unit made

up mostly of ethnic Ukrainians under Nazi command. The Division members have been accused of killing Polish and Jewish civilians, although the unit has not been found guilty of any war crimes by a tribunal.

In the Canadian Parliament, Hunka got a standing ovation and was praised as a Ukrainian and Canadian "hero".

Trudeau's apology comes a day after Parliament Speaker Anthony Rota, who has assumed responsibility for inviting the veteran, resigned, saying he was not aware of Hunka's Nazi ties. "The Speaker was solely responsible for the invitation and recognition of this man, and has wholly accepted that responsibility and stepped down," the BBC quoted the Prime Minister as saying in his statement on Wednesday. The incident has drawn widespread condemnation.

Pierre Poilievre, leader of Canada's opposition Conservative Party, called the incident the "biggest single diplomatic embarrassment" in Canada's history.

Canadian Jewish organisation Friends of Simon Wiesenthal Center for Holocaust Studies has said "questions remain as to how this debacle occurred". The debacle has also played into Russia's accusations that Ukraine is run by neo-Nazis, even though Zelenskyy is himself Jewish.

Kremlin spokesperson Dmitry Peskov expressed outrage about the Canadian honour and said: "Many Western countries, including Canada, have raised a young generation that does not know who fought whom or what happened during the Second World War."

## British Indian MP, 21 others urge UK to halt FTA talks over Manipur violence

**LONDON:** Indian-origin British MP Nadia Whittome has tabled an early day motion in the House of Commons calling the UK to halt its Free Trade Agreement (FTA) talks with India in the wake of the ethnic violence in Manipur.

The motion, signed by 21 other MPs, also urged the government to raise the issue of human rights violations in Manipur with the Indian government.

"While the Tories are negotiating a free trade agreement with India, minorities face persecution under BJP rule. I tabled a motion highlighting the campaign of violence against the Kuki-Zo people in Manipur," Whittome wrote on X (formerly Twitter) recently. "FTA talks must be halted while this continues," the Labour MP for Nottingham East added.

The motion tabled earlier this month notes "the ongoing, grave human rights violations in Manipur, India, including acts of sexual violence, extrajudicial killings, home destruction, forced displacement, torture and ill-treatment, predominantly targeting the Kuki-Zo people, a tribal community who are largely Christian". Highlighting that UN experts have raised serious concerns about the slow and inadequate response by India, the motion stated that it "recognises that these human rights violations occur as part of wider attacks on religious and ethnic minorities across India, many of which public officials have been accused of aiding and abetting".

## Fisheries Development Oman Participates in Russia's Global Fishery Forum & Seafood Expo 2023

Muscat (Oman) Fisheries Development Oman (FDO) participated in the sixth Global Fishery Forum & Seafood Expo 2023 from 27th to 29th September 2023 in St. Petersburg, Russia, as part of its commitment to sustainable growth and global expansion.

The Expo featured over 400 companies from 34 Russian regions and 14 countries, sprawling over 26,000 square meters of exhibition space. With 139 speakers on the roster, the event promises a convergence of industry leaders, traders, and retailers.

Badar Said Al Naabi, Group Director - Business Development, remarked, "As a key player in Oman's fisheries and aquaculture sector, FDO's involvement underscores Oman's position as a large fish producer in the GCC region, in addition to its role as a net exporter of fish and fish products. To elevate this position, Oman is working to expand its seafood exports and access new markets. This involves complying with market requirements and best practices, focusing on food safety, and sustainability, and maintaining an environmentally friendly approach. In addition, the Sultanate of Oman offers attractive business incentives and ensures a clear business environment, alongside continuous improvements in fisheries infrastructure and regulation of the value chain".

## Pro-Khalistani protests held outside Indian diplomatic missions in Canada

**TORONTO:** Several Khalistan supporters rallied outside Indian diplomatic missions in the Canadian cities of Vancouver, Ottawa and Toronto following Prime Minister Justin Trudeau's allegation of India's involvement in the murder of radical Sikh leader Hardeep Singh Nijjar.

Nijjar, a designated terrorist in India, was gunned down outside a Sikh temple in Surrey on June 18 this year with Khalistanis across Canada holding Indian diplomats responsible for his death.

In downtown Vancouver, around 75 people gathered outside the Consul General of India on Monday chanting pro-Khalistani slogans, where demonstration was staged atop a large flag of India placed on the wet ground, the CBC news



outlet reported. Vancouver police closed the 300 block of Howe Street in anticipation of the event -- called by Khalistani outfit Sikhs For Justice (SFJ) -- which came amid a heavy police presence.

Meera Bains, a Sikh-Canadian journalist posted a video of the protest on X, which showed a poster of Prime Minister Narendra Modi garlanded with slippers.

She wrote: "Protest in front of the Indian consulate underway on Howe Street in Vancouver. So far a few dozen people but very organised with flags, signs, loud speakers, and PM Modi image on cardboard."

## 'US economy headed China's way as debt outpaces growth'

**WASHINGTON:** The US economy seems to be heading the China way with a burgeoning debt outweighing slow growth as the spurt in federal spending since 2021 touches a whopping \$8 trillion. Also, the dollar's reign as the unipolar global currency is threatened with regional blocs in Asia and Europe wanting to trade in local currencies.

The US economy could face a "long, slow grind" as huge debts take their toll. There has been \$8 trillion in new federal spending since 2021. "Many nations have come to regret massive stimulus campaigns, as the resulting debts weighed on growth," UK's Financial Times reported. America's "mini growth miracle" spurred by trillions of dollars in government spend may turn

after 2008 global meltdown, but it has experienced slow growth since then.

"Post-miracle, the US will face similar headwinds. When the stimulus and other temporary boosts wear off, the American economy could settle into a long, slow grind," the Times observed. An anti-dollar drive spearheaded by Asia has spread to Europe, with France growing sour on the greenback's dominance.

Economic experts feel the emergence of regional groups such as BRICS, SCO, ASEAN, pose a great threat to the US greenback as trading within the groups start rising. The dollar's supremacy in global trade faces fresh challenges as several countries float plans to use local currencies

in commerce. Russia and Iran are working to create a gold-backed stable coin, while France has pursued a trade deal with China in Yuan, US media reports said. More and more countries draft plans to boost the use of alternative currencies. Nations from China and Russia to India and Brazil increasingly want to trade in non-dollar units -- with projects ranging from the use of local currencies to a gold-backed stablecoin and a new BRICS reserve currency.

Now, even Europe appears to be jumping on the anti-dollar bandwagon, with French president Emmanuel Macron recently warning against the continent's dependence on the greenback, the Business Insider noted.

## Indian agencies discuss threats to Sikhs, Hindus in Canada from Khalistani supporters

**NEW DELHI:** A meeting of Indian intelligence agencies discussed how Canada-based Khalistani terrorists are now openly threatening local Hindus and pro-India Sikhs and defacing temples there, sources said.

Pro-India Sikh leader Ripudaman Singh Malik was killed in Canada's Surrey in 2022 and sources said his murder was orchestrated by Hardeep Singh Nijjar, who was recently killed by rivals. However, Canadian agencies never initiated any probe against Nijjar or any Khalistani operatives, they said.

Incidents of defacing of temples in the recent past were also discussed in the meeting. The officials also discussed

Intelligence agencies' records indicated that Punjab was currently facing significant challenges due to extortion schemes originating from Canada. "Gang members based in Canada employ drones to transport drugs from Pakistan, which are then distributed throughout Punjab. A portion of the proceeds from these illegal activities is funneled back to Khalistani extremists operating in Canada. It is also affecting Punjab," a source said.

After 2016, Punjab witnessed target killings of Sikhs and Hindus and Nijjar was behind this. It was discussed in the meeting that Canadian agencies, instead of doing a fair probe, were giving shelter to Khalistani extremists.

## India's Headache Since 1971

PAKISTANI ARMY'S OPERATIONS IN KPK REMINDS GENOCIDE OF BANGLADESH

Imran Khan's party, Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI), has been ruling the province for several years, is not opposed to TTP. Similarly, Jamiat Ulema-e-Islam (F), which is running hundreds of schools or madarasas has students supporting TTP. Another influential political outfit in KPK is Awami National Party of Wali Khan, son of the legendary Abdul Gaffar Khan or Frontier Gandhi. It means that the Pakistani army does not have adequate political ground support in the region, where the TTP continues to occupy vast territories of Chitral.

Political Solution

Unless fresh polls are held and the two former prime ministers, Nawaz Sharif of Pakistan Muslim League - Noon and Imran Khan are allowed to contest, the army does not have adequate political support to deal with the strife. There is a trust deficit between Kakar and the people of KPK. He had initiated his political career in the Muslim League of the army dictator, General Pervez Musharraf. Earlier, he was groomed by the GHQ known for having closed door sessions with

the country's policy makers, briefings to the country's political and military elite, sessions on building anti-Baluchistan narrative. Born in 1971, he is a post-graduate in political science and has been closely associated with the National Defence University, Islamabad.

Earlier, with a view to accommodate the regional aspirations of the people of the region, Islamabad had conceded the erstwhile territories of the FATA in to the existing province of KPK. With this it has become multiethnic comprising Pashtuns, Hindkowan, Saraikis and Chitralis.

Indian Concerns - Earlier, KPK was a part of the all-inclusive Indian culture and was known as Gandhara. The ruins of its ancient capital, Pushkalvati still narrate its glorious past. It has frequently been mentioned in Vedic epics, including Rig Veda, Ramayana, and Mahabharata, and its valiant people had repulsed the invading army of Alexander. Before the colonial rule, it was under the secular regime of Maharaja Ranajit Singh, though British called him a Sikh ruler.

The region has always been a part of India. During the Mughal rule as

well as under the British regime, the people from Afghanistan could freely move in the undivided India. It may also be noted that during the country's freedom movement, the people of the region were on the forefront of the freedom struggle. Abdul Gaffar Khan, who is also remembered as Seemant Gandhi or Frontier Gandhi, one of the confidants of Mahatma Gandhi, had vehemently opposed India's partition in 1947.

It may be recalled that on January 20, 1988, much against the advice of the then Pakistani dictator, Zia-ul-Haq, Indian PM Rajiv Gandhi had flown to Peshawar to pay last respect to the Frontier Gandhi. He was accompanied by Sonia, and several Indian ministers. Late Abdul Wali Khan, son of the Frontier Gandhi, had launched the National Awami Party. Its current president is Asfandyar Khan, one of the grandsons of the Frontier Gandhi.

Tens of thousands of mourners attended his funeral including Afghan President Mohammad Najibullah, marching through the Khyber Pass from Peshawar towards Jalalabad, where he was later buried as per his wishes. He had never accepted divi-

# India's Headache Since 1971

## PAKISTANI ARMY'S OPERATIONS IN KPK REMINDS GENOCIDE OF BANGLADESH

**GOPAL MISRA**

**T**he on-going clashes since September 6 on the Afghan-Pakistan borders have caused worries in New Delhi, if not anxiety, that how are they going to impact the already fragile security environment in the region. The situation appears to be heading towards a worst scenario following the reports of a large scale military crackdown on the Afghan refugees in Karachi. India through diplomatic channels has been pleading with the democratic world that the repression of the hapless Afghan refugees should immediately be stopped. It should also be examined from a larger perspective, especially the confrontation between the Pakistani army and Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP), which might lead to a large scale repercussion.

The Taliban Government in Kabul has not only denied the Pakistani allegation that the TTP is being backed by the Afghan Government, it has also been countered and have accused Islamabad for indulging in lies and double-speak. Therefore, the sudden eruption of the Khalistan issue having full support of Pakistan needs to be examined from a larger security perspective of the region, point out Indian strategic affairs experts. It is also being stated that following the exit of the USA from Kabul, China's influence in the region has further increased.

The trust deficit between Afghanistan and Pakistan has further caused anxiety in the region. In this context, the biography of the Pakistani

military dictator, General Pervez Musharraf, is being frequently quoted that much funds in dollars had been raised by Pakistan from America by handing over the underground Taliban leaders to the Americans in lieu of millions of US dollars. The case of Abdul Salam Zaeef, the Taliban ambassador to Pakistan, was handed over to American agents, just after the September 11th attacks on New York.

With a large number of the Afghan refugees in India, the deteriorating Pak-Afghan relationship would also be impacting India. Islamabad's open support to Khalistanis could be an effort to divert the world's attention from the bigger crisis brewing between the two countries. The recent crack-down by the army on the Afghan refugees in Karachi might become human tragedy. It is estimated and also according to a UN report, the numbers of the Afghan refugees are being estimated to be about 15000, but the actual figures could be in lakhs. Many among them might seek asylum in India. Already a large number of them are staying in India on emergency visas.

**Pakistani Army's Hard-line**

For the Indian strategic affairs experts, the grim situation is getting further alarming with the each passing day, especially following the adoption of the hard-line against Kabul being adopted by the generals in Rawalpindi, the headquarters of the army. Earlier, it was hoped that the new army chief, Asif Munir, would finally succeed in winning back the confidence of the Afghan Taliban and a permanent truce might finally

be arrived at between Islamabad and Kabul.

It appears that Asif Munir is busy in asserting his political role. He has already succeeded in installing Anwar-ul-Haq Kakar, as caretaker PM. However, according to the watchers of the political and military developments in Pakistan, he has so far not been able to win confidence of army's powerful factions once the erstwhile army chief, Jawed Qamar Bajwa and Faize Hamid. These two top military officers had always been enjoying confidence of the Taliban. If Bajwa is remembered as one of the most influential chiefs, Faize Hamid was one of the most effective chief of the Inter Services Intelligence (ISI). Both Bajwa and Faize Hamid are known to be having excellent ties with Kabul, while the present incumbent in the ISI, Nadeem Ahmed Anjum, does not enjoy the proximity his predecessor have had with the Taliban.

Similarly, Kakar's elevation as PM, who is from Baluchistan and a first-time senator, could not obtain much support from the strife-torn province, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KPK), where the TTP has emerged as a major political force. The former PM

of Paktoon territories by the Durand Line, and the issue continues to haunt Pakistan-Afghan relations.

The failure of the 20-year US-led military operations in Afghanistan finally leading to the exit of the western power could not force the people of the war-ravaged country to succumb. It, however, led to a large number of refugees being poured into Pakistan. They are estimated to be in millions during decades of successive wars facing unprecedented hardships. Many among these refugees are reported to be living in peace in the aid camps with restricted access to education, healthcare and employment. It is estimated that 1.3 million are registered refugees and 880,000 more have legal status to remain in Pakistan, according to the latest United Nations figures.

The ongoing crackdown against the Afghan refugees, many among them living since two generations, in and around Karachi, are being implicated in false cases as drug trafficking or for smuggling in weapons. The crisis, according to the observers in New Delhi, might further deepen leading to a much-bigger eruption of violence. It is being apprehended that any large scale confrontation between Afghanistan and Pakistan might not only disrupt the fragile peace in the region, it would adversely be affecting India too.

Gopal Misra has been associated with national and international media. His books on journalism and geo-politics have been well-appreciated. Views are personal.

## US UAW to add strike targets against 'Big Three' automakers



The US United Auto Workers (UAW) union has planned to add strike targets against the 'Big Three' American auto giants -- Ford, GM Stellantis -- on Friday if there was no major progress in their contract negotiation, a source told the media.

The list of potential strike targets in the next stage involves engine and transmission facilities, as well as large pickup trucks and SUV factories, Xinhua news agency quoted the UAW source as saying to The Detroit News on Wednesday.

Like last week, the new locations for strike would be announced at 10 a.m. on a Facebook livestream hosted by the union, and the strike will begin at noon on Friday. The UAW's unprecedented strike against the Big Three is now on its 13th day. The UAW went on strike on September 15 at three select facilities of Ford, GM and Stellantis, and expanded the strike to 38 General Motors (GM) and Stellantis facilities on September 22.

Nationwide, 18, 300 UAW autoworkers at 41 Ford Motor Co, GM and Stellantis NV facilities in 20 states are on strike, asking for higher wages, pensions for all workers and elimination of the tiered wage systems.



