

REGION

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DELHI GOVERNMENT NOTIFIES MOTOR VEHICLES SCHEMES AIMED AT TRANSITION TO EVS

AAP initiates 20 days 'Mai bhi Kejriwal' campaign; to decide if CM should resign or run government from jail

YOGESH KANT
New Delhi

The Aam Aadmi Party initiates a 20 days signature campaign called "Mai bhi Kejriwal", seeking public opinion on whether Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal should resign or govern from jail if arrested in a purported "fake" case by the BJP. Gopal Rai, AAP's Delhi state convener, announced the 'Mai Bhi Kejriwal' signature campaign, scheduled to commence, covering 2,600 polling booths across the city.

Addressing a press conference along with party MP Raghav Chadha, Rai alleged the BJP has hatched a conspiracy to get Kejriwal arrested under the "fake" liquor scam case with the hope of finishing the Aam Aadmi Party.

Delhi BJP president Virendra Sachdeva hit back, saying Kejriwal should train his volunteers to answer when people ask them about the "corruption" and "failure" of his government to develop the city.

"AAP leaders are free to go home to home to carry out a

signature campaign, but when they go to people they should be prepared to answer people's questions on how party leaders did the liquor scam, jal board scam, tanker scam, panic button scam, school room scam and how they have played with the livelihoods of contractual workers like civil defence volunteers, guest teachers, para medical staff," he said.

Under the "Mai Bhi Kejriwal" campaign from Friday, AAP volunteers will carry pamphlets to get the signatures of people at all the 2,600 polling stations across the city, asking for their opinion on whether Kejriwal

should step down as Delhi chief minister if he is arrested, he said. Rai said Kejriwal had met AAP MLAs and councillors seeking their opinion on the issue and there was a consensus that he should not resign and run the government from jail.

He said from December 21 to December 24, AAP will hold 'Jan Samvad' in every ward of the city to discuss the alleged liquor scam with people as well as the BJP's "conspiracy" to get Kejriwal arrested and seek their opinion if he should resign as Delhi chief minister if he gets arrested.

Even after imprisoning Man-

ish Sisodia, Satyendar Jain, and Sanjay Singh in "fake" cases, the BJP couldn't break AAP and now they want to get Kejriwal arrested, Rai alleged.

"The preparations are underway to arrest Delhi's CM Arvind Kejriwal. BJP's motive behind this is that if Kejriwal is arrested, then the Delhi government might collapse, and they can finish off AAP," charged Rai. Chadha likened the BJP to the mythical character of "Kansa" alleging it wanted to finish AAP and saw Kejriwal as its only challenge throughout the country.

"Just as Kansa knew that Lord Krishna would bring about his end, the BJP also knows well that its dirty politics will come to an end through Kejriwal. Kansa made every effort to stop Lord Krishna. Likewise, the BJP is doing everything possible to weaken and eliminate AAP," charged Chadha.

AAP workers and leaders have appealed to Kejriwal that even if he gets arrested, he should not resign and run the government from jail.

BANKING & FINANCE

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INDIAN ECONOMY TO END FISCAL YEAR WITH 6.7 PER CENT GROWTH: ECONOMISTS

India achieved emission intensity-related target 11 years ago: PM Modi at COP28

NEW DELHI: Firmly stating that climate action must be based on equality, Prime Minister Narendra Modi said on Friday that India achieved emission intensity-related targets 11 years ago.

Speaking at the inaugural session of a high-level segment of the United Nations Climate Change Conference (COP28) in Dubai, Modi said, "India aims to reduce the emissions intensity of its GDP by 45 per cent by 2030. We have decided to increase the share of non-fossil fuels to 50 per cent."

"Today, India has presented an excellent example of the balance between ecology and economy before the world. Despite India being home to 17 per cent of the world's population, its contribution to global carbon emissions is less than 4 per cent. India is one of the few economies which is on the path to meet NDC (Nationally Determined Contribution) targets.

"India is committed to the UN Framework for Climate Change process, and that is



why, from this stage, I propose to host the COP33 summit in India in 2028," Modi said.

Modi, who also participated in group photo session with other world leaders at the COP28 summit, in his address in Hindi expressed gratitude for the continuous support to issues like climate justice, climate finance and green credit raised by him.

Earlier, Modi was received at the venue of the COP28 summit by UAE President Sheikh Mohammed bin Zayed Al Nahyan and United Nations Secretary-General Antonio Guterres. During the sum-

mit, Modi met UK Foreign Secretary David Cameron and former Britain Prime Minister Tony Blair and admired their passion to work towards sustainable development.

Interacting with Ethiopia Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed Ali on the sidelines of COP28, Modi wrote on X, "India values the longstanding friendship with Ethiopia, a relationship enriched by strong mutual cooperation." The two-week United Nations Climate Change Conference opened on Thursday with a resounding call to accelerate collective climate action.

POTPOURRI

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FIRING OUTSIDE GIPPY GREWAL'S CANADA HOME SUSPECTED TO BE EXTORTION BID BY BISHNOI GANG

GST collections jump 15 pc to Rs 1.68 lakh cr in Nov 2023



NEW DELHI : GST collections jumped 15 per cent to nearly Rs 1.68 lakh crore in November on increased domestic activity and festive season buying, the finance ministry said on Friday.

Goods and Services Tax (GST) mop-up was over Rs 1.45 lakh crore in November 2022.

"The gross GST revenue collected in the month of November 2023 is Rs 1,67,929 crore, out of which CGST is Rs 30,420 crore, SGST is Rs 38,226 crore, IGST is Rs 87,009 crore (including Rs 39,198 crore collected on import of goods) and cess is Rs 12,274 crore (including Rs 1,036 crore collected on import of goods)," the ministry said in a statement. The November 2023 collections are, however, lower than Rs 1.72 lakh crore mopped up in October -- the second-highest collection ever since the GST rollout.

Revenues for November 2023 are 15 per cent higher than the GST revenues in the same month last year and the highest for any month year-on-year during 2023-24, up to November 2023, the ministry said.

J&K to bring law to criminalize social media posts on terrorism, separatism



FW DESK

Jammu and Kashmir will take a strict action against the misuse of social media to propagate content that could disrupt communal harmony or threaten the security of the region, the Director General of Police, RR Swain, said on Thursday. This means that sharing any material on social media promoting separatism, terrorism, or communal tensions will soon be considered a criminal offense. The decision follows an incident involving a student accused of posting offensive content on social media which triggered protests across colleges in Srinagar. Swain emphasized that stringent action will be taken against individuals found sharing such content, utilizing a new law under Section 144 of the Code of Criminal Procedure.

Govt listed 18 bills for winter session of Parliament



MEENAKSHI BHATTACHARYA
New Delhi

According to the bulletin issued by the Lok Sabha Secretariat, the government has plan to bring a bill that seeks to increase the strength of the Jammu and Kashmir Assembly from 107 to 114 in a bid to provide representation to Kashmiri migrants, displaced persons from Pakistan-occupied Jammu and Kashmir and Scheduled Tribes. The government, in its meeting on November 29, listed 18 bills including two to extend provisions of the women's reservation act to Jammu and Kashmir and Puducherry and three to replace the criminal laws, during the Winter Session of Parliament beginning first week of December. According to a bulletin issued by the Lok Sabha Secretariat, the government has also plans to bring a bill that seeks to increase the strength of the Jammu and Kashmir Assembly from 107 to 114 in a bid to provide representation to Kashmiri migrants, displaced persons from Pakistan-occupied Jammu and Kashmir and Scheduled Tribes.

All 41 workers rescued from collapsed Silkyara tunnel

UTTARKASHI: Rescue workers pulled out all 41 workers trapped in Uttarakhand's Silkyara tunnel in a multi-agency rescue operation that hovered between hope and despair over almost 17 days.

Union minister V K Singh and Uttarakhand Chief Minister Pushkar Singh Dhami welcomed the workers as National Disaster Response Force men brought them out through a steel chute that lined a 60-metre escape passage. An ambulance with the first of the 41 workers left the mouth of the tunnel around 8 pm, about an hour after a group of rat-hole mining experts dug through the last stretch of rubble.

There was hugging and cheers as the ordeal ended.



Outside the tunnel some people chanted "Har Har Mahadev" and "Bharat Mata ki Jai" Ambulances which had lined up at the tunnel ferried the workers to a community health centre where a special 41-bed ward had been set up. Before this, the workers were given a quick medical checkup as they emerged out of

the steel pipe. A portion of the tunnel collapsed on November 12, blocking the exit for the workers who were inside.

Food, medicines and other essentials were sent to them through a six-inch pipe pushed through the rubble of the collapsed portion. ALK ALM RC. CM Dhami said no worker was

in a critical situation. But the labourers will be kept under medical observation for some time before being sent home, he said. He said the youngest of the worker was rescued first. Relief was felt far and wide. Over the phone, Jharkhand's Sunil, who was camping in Silkyara, spoke to PTI agency on the rescue of his brother Anil.

"Finally, God heard us. My brother could be rescued. I am with him in an ambulance on the way to hospital," he said in a choked voice. As the rescue appeared imminent earlier in the day, families stationed in Silkyara were allowed inside the tunnel with their belongings -- so that they could travel with their loved ones to the medical centre.

Delhi CM Kejriwal to meet rat-hole miners who helped rescue 41 tunnel workers

NEWDELHI: Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal will on Friday meet the 'rat-hole miners' at his residence, who played a crucial part in the rescue of 41 trapped workers from Silkyara tunnel in Uttarakhand.

According to the Chief Minister's Office, Kejriwal will be meeting the miners at his residence in the evening.

The officials said that the rat-hole miners, who were part of the rescue operations work in Uttarakhand's Uttarkashi collapsed tunnel also worked for the Delhi Jal Board (DJB).



The rat-hole miners played a key role in the rescue operation

of the trapped workers in the Silkyara tunnel.

PM Modi speaks to rescued Uttarakhand tunnel workers

NEW DELHI: Prime Minister Narendra Modi spoke to the workers who were pulled out from Uttarakhand's Silkyara tunnel after a marathon rescue operation which lasted for 17 days and enquired about their health and well-being.

The Prime Minister on late Tuesday evening spoke to the rescued construction workers over the phone and encouraged them, officials said.

Earlier on Tuesday, Modi spoke to Uttarakhand Chief Minister Pushkar Singh Dhami and received information about the requisite arrangements for all construction workers after they were evacuated out of the tunnel.

The Prime Minister also lauded the spirit of the whole team associated with this rescue operation, calling the safe evacuation of all 41 labourers

trapped in the Silkyara tunnel of Uttarakhand and the success of the rescue operation as an emotional moment for the people of the country.

Praising the people involved with the rescue operation, Modi said, "Their bravery and determination have given new life to our worker brothers. Everyone involved in this mission has set an amazing example of humanity and teamwork."

The Prime Minister wrote on X, "The success of the rescue operation of our worker brothers in Uttarkashi is going to make everyone emotional. I want to say to the comrades (workers) who were trapped in the tunnel that your courage and patience will inspire everyone. I wish you all well and good health."

Death sentence to 4 criminals raped and killed 2 minor sisters in front of their mother

SATISH HANDA
Sonipat

Additional District and Session Judge Suruchi Atreja Singh of Fast Track Court in Sonipat sentenced death penalty along with fine Rs 30000 each to four criminals allegedly raped and murdered two minor sisters in front of their mother at Sonipat. The court convicted four accused in the much-discussed case of gang rape of two minor sisters in front of their mother and later killed them by forcing them to drink pesticide about two years ago. The court termed their crime as heinous and said death penalty was appropriate for the culprits.

According to the information, the woman a widow originally hailing from Bihar, had made a complaint to the Kundli police station in Haryana on August 9, 2021 that she was living in a rented house along with her two daughters and three sons in which four other youths from



Bihar also lived on rent in a separate room in the same premises. In her statement the woman said that was sleeping in the room along with her 13 and 15 year old daughters on the night of August 5, 2021, whereas her sons were sleeping on the terrace when at around 12 o'clock in the night, the four youths living on rent in the adjoining room identified as Arun Pandit resident of Majgahi village of Darbhanga district of Bihar, Phool Chand resident of Masahori village, Dukhan Pandit resident of Jhakei and Ramsu-

hag resident of Bada village of Samastipur entered her room and caught her daughters in the room.

In her complaint to police, the woman said that Arun and Phool Chand forcibly gang-raped her elder daughter, whereas Dukhan Pandit and Ram Suhag had gang-raped her younger daughter. She blamed that when they protested, her both daughters were forcibly given a drink containing insecticide. As a result the condition of both minor girls started worsening, when both started vomiting,

Supreme Court backs Centre's decision to extend Delhi chief secretary tenure by six months

FW CORRESPONDENT
New Delhi

In a major setback to the AAP government, the Supreme Court on Wednesday permitted the Centre to extend the tenure of Delhi Chief Secretary Naresh Kumar, a day before he was set to demit office on November 30, for six months, holding that the union government's decision did not violate law or the Constitution.

A bench comprising Chief Justice D Y Chandrachud and justices J B Pardiwala and Manoj Misra held, prima facie, the Centre has the power to appoint and extend the tenure of the chief secretary of the national capital territory of Delhi as the officer deals with the entire administration including police, public order and land, which fall beyond the legislative and executive powers of the Delhi government.

"We come to the conclusion



that at this stage, bearing in mind the provisions of the judgement of this court in Constitution Bench 2 (2023 judgement on Centre-Delhi government services row) and the subsequent developments which have taken place resulting in the enactment of the amendment to the GNCTD Act 1991, the decision of the Union Government to extend the services of the incumbent chief secretary for a period of six months cannot be construed to be violative of law or the constitutional distribution of powers

between the Union and the government of the GNCTD," the bench said in its order.

The bid to extend the tenure of the present chief secretary is the latest bone of contention between the Arvind Kejriwal government and Lieutenant Governor (LG) V K Saxena, who have been involved in a series of run-ins over various issues. Significantly, the current chief secretary, whose tenure will now be extended, is reportedly not on good terms with the Delhi government owing to allegations against his son in a case related to acquisition of 19 acres by the National Highways Authority of India in 2018 for construction of the Dwarka Expressway.

"It will be farfetched to postulate that the central government is divested of the power to appoint the chief secretary. We clarify that this is on the basis of a prima facie evaluation," the bench said.

Delhi government notifies motor vehicles schemes aimed at transition to EVs

FW CORRESPONDENT
New Delhi

Addressing a press conference, Transport Minister Kailash Gahlot said the Delhi Motor Vehicles Aggregator and Delivery Service Provider Scheme 2023 is "a first-of-its-kind step" in moving towards an environment-friendly option.

The scheme was announced in May with the intention of bringing app-based aggregator platforms under the government's ambit to ensure the safety of commuters and to curb vehicular pollution. It specifies timelines as per which aggregators must adopt EVs in a staggered manner and completely phase out fossil fuel-based vehicles by 2030.

According to the scheme, 10% of three-wheelers and 5%



of four-wheelers in an aggregator's fleet must be EVs. All three-wheelers must be electrified within four years and all four-wheelers within five years. With respect to bike taxis, aggregators must change their entire fleet to EVs by the time the scheme is implemented. "The scheme targets passenger transport, delivery service providers, and e-commerce services with a holistic approach to fight pollution," said Mr. Gahlot.

However, the plan has found opposition from various stakeholders. Recently, nearly 1,500 bike taxi drivers wrote to the L-G demanding that they be given the same timeline for conversion to EVs as their counterparts in delivery services.

NCRTC bags IGBC award for Ghaziabad RSS and Sahibabad RRTS station

FW CORRESPONDENT
New Delhi

The NCRTC has been honoured with the highest rating of the prestigious 'Project Award for IGBC', Platinum Rating for the Ghaziabad Receiving Substation (RSS) and Sahibabad RRTS station, of India's first Regional Rapid Transit System (RRTS) being implemented between Delhi-Ghaziabad-Meerut. The IGBC Platinum Rating was given at the Green Building Congress 2023, hosted by the Indian Green Building Council (IGBC) in Chennai. Platinum certification is the highest recognition from the various categories of awards of IGBC.

This accolade underscores NCRTC's unwavering commitment to sustainable development, since its inception. The organization has taken a number of eco-friendly initiatives within the RRTS project, striving for environmental conservation. All



major establishments, including depots, stations, Receiving Substations (RSS), and residential complexes, have been registered with the IGBC, aligning with NCRTC's mission to uphold the highest environmental sustainability standards. From the project's conceptualization to its implementation, NCRTC has consistently embraced environmentally friendly practices. Beginning at the pre-design stage, the adoption of low-carbon concepts has been integral to every construction phase. Initiatives such as the use of fly ash bricks, effective disposal of construction and demolition waste, creation of airy and com-

fortable interiors, energy-efficient designs, implementation of rainwater harvesting systems, and extensive utilization of solar energy exemplify NCRTC's commitment to sustainability. Elaborate landscaping efforts at Sahibabad and Ghaziabad RSS, along with the space beneath the RRTS viaduct, further contribute to a holistic approach that significantly reduces energy consumption and carbon footprint throughout the project's construction and operational phases. NCRTC has set a target to meet approximately 70% of its total energy requirement from renewable sources. In line with this goal, the organization has adopted a solar policy, aiming to generate around 11 MW peak in-house solar power on the rooftops of stations, depots, and other buildings. Apart from this, it will optimize the energy mix to increase the share of renewable energy for traction purposes as well.

Rain in Delhi eases pollution levels, air quality still 'very poor'



NEW DELHI: Rain in the national capital has brought temporary relief as pollution levels have ease, but the air quality in the national capital continued to remain under the "very poor" category on Tuesday morning. According to the India Meteorological Department minimum temperature in the national capital was registered at 14.2 degrees Celsius, surpassing the season's average by four notches. Meanwhile, the weatherman has predicted a generally cloudy sky on Tuesday with light rain, while the maximum temperature is expected to hover around 26 degrees.

On Monday the maximum temperature had reached 24.2 degree Celsius, two notches below the normal. Moreover, the relative humidity at 8.30 a.m on Tuesday was recorded at 96 per cent. In the last 24 hours, the national capital recorded 7 mm of rainfall till 8.30 a.m on Tuesday, according to the IMD. Due to the downpour, the air quality witnessed a slight improvement but was still in the "very poor" category at several

AQI monitoring stations. Anand Vihar entered the "very poor" category with PM 2.5 at 346 and PM 10 at 228, in the "poor" category, while the CO reached 57, in the "satisfactory" category while NO2 was at 41 or "good", as per the Central Pollution Control Board (CPCB). The Bawana station recorded PM 2.5 at 379, in the very poor category while the PM 10 reached at 245, in the "poor" category, while the CO reached 75, or "satisfactory". At Aya Nagar, the PM 2.5 reached 328, in the "very poor" category and PM 10 was at 183, under the "moderate" category. The CO was recorded at 67, under the "satisfactory" category. However, the AQI monitoring station at Dwarka sector 8 recorded PM 2.5 at 401, in the "severe category", while PM 10 was at 268 or "poor" while the CO was at 75, in "satisfactory" levels. The AQI at the Indira Gandhi International (IGI) airport station was in the "very poor" category with PM 2.5 at 326 and PM 10 at 169, in the "moderate" category, while the CO was at 88, in the "satisfactory" level.

ED conducts raids at six locations in Jammu and Kashmir



FW DESK

The Enforcement Directorate (ED) conducted searches at six locations in Jammu and Kashmir on Thursday, pertaining to a case involving a bank fraud amounting to over Rs 250 Crore associated with the fictitious River Jhelum Cooperative House Building Society.

According to an ED spokesperson, these raids were carried out in connection with a 'Money Laundering Case,' which included premises linked to the former Chairperson of Jammu & Kashmir Bank.

"The Srinagar ED office is presently conducting a search under section 17 of PMLA (Prevention of Money Laundering Act) in the context of money laundering linked to the J&K Bank Fraud exceeding Rs 250 Crore through the fictitious entity River Jhelum Cooperative House Building Society," the statement elaborated.

It's significant to note that the Anti-Corruption Bureau (ACB) had previously filed a chargesheet against individuals, including Mohd Shafi Dar, Hilal A Mir (Chairman of the Society), and others, for allegedly committing offenses under IPC Sections and the Corruption Act.

Those who turned Indians into beggars are now labeling TMC thieves: Mamata



KOLKATA: At a time when Union Home Minister Amit Shah was launching a scathing attack on the Trinamool Congress and the West Bengal Government during a BJP rally in central Kolkata on Wednesday, the state's Chief Minister, Mamata Banerjee made a counterclaim in the Assembly. She said that those who turned the people of the country into beggars are now labeling her party leaders as thieves.

"The BJP has purchased everything. They have sold a number of Public Sector Units. They are denying legitimate funds to the state government for the various centrally-sponsored schemes. The Union Government is accumulating huge amounts in the form of the Goods and Services Tax from West Bengal and still they are denying our dues.

"Before the elections, the BJP sends central teams alleging political violence and after the polls it sends central agencies to the houses of Trinamool Congress legislators," the Chief Minister said.

13% fall in stubble burning cases recorded in Haryana as compared to Last year: Dy Director Agriculture



SATISH HANDA
Ambala

Addressing a press conference here, Deputy Director Agriculture Jasvinder Singh said that 13% fall in the stubble burning cases in open have been recorded this year as compared to previous year, and till 30th November 2023 state government has registered 195 cases in the state as compared to 225 cases of burning crop waste in open registered last year. He said, Rs 2.75 lakh fine has been recovered from the farmers burnt crop wastes in the open this year allegedly violated directions not to burn crop wastes in open, which not only harm environment but also harmful for the health of people as well as destroy the quality of soil of the land.

Jaswant Singh said that the agriculture department availing the services of a private organization Delite India to bring awareness among farmers about the ill effects of burning stubble in the open and create logistical problems faced by farmers. The firm educating the farmers about use of crop wastes (Parali) in industry as well using

as fuel in brick kilns and also to prepare CNG, assisting farmers to earn handsome money. According to the Union Environment Ministry report, stubble burning in Punjab and Haryana has declined by 27 per cent and 37 per cent respectively as against last year. According to a spokesperson of the Ministry, from 83,002 fires in 2020, the count in Punjab dropped to 71,304 in 2021, 49,922 in 2022 and further to 36,663 in 2023. He said, In comparison to 2022, there was a 27 per cent reduction in farm fires in 2023. The reduction was even higher, standing at 49 per cent and 56 per cent respectively, when compared to 2021 and 2020.

The report revealed that In 2020, the farm fire count in Haryana was 4,202 which increased to 6,987 in 2021, then reduced to 3,661 in 2022 and further decreased to 2,303 in 2023. This marks a 37 per cent reduction in 2023 compared to 2022, with reductions of 67 per cent compared to 2021 and 45 per cent compared to 2020. The Ministry said, four districts in Punjab saw over 50 per cent fewer fires in 2023 as compared to 2022.

School Principal sexually assaulted over 140 girls jailed in Haryana

SATISH HANDA

The 56-year-old principal Kartar Singh was arrested on November 4 and lodged in Jind jail. He was blamed sexually harassing at least 142 girl students in a school at Jind in Haryana. The district's deputy commissioner also intervened in the matter in this case by getting complaints against him from the victim girl students as well as the parents of the students who also applied lock at the school gate. Police investigation revealed the principal of the school sexually assaulted at least 142 girl

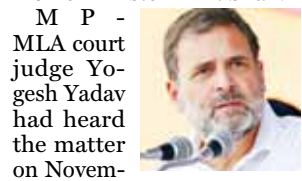


students. Investigation revealed that at least 142 girl students had testified against the principal of the government girls school, in front of a committee headed by a sub divisional magistrate. The committee which conducted a preliminary inquiry found principal prima facie guilty. The committee interacted

with 390 girl students of different classes from 9th to 12th. Out of these, 142 students have directly or indirectly confirmed the allegations levelled against the principal, the deputy commissioner said. The Jind district police had registered a case against Kartar Singh on October 30 under Section 8: the sexual assault of the Protection of Children from Sexual Offences of PoCo Act and Section 354 (molestation) of the Indian Penal Code, after which he was placed under suspension by the education department of state government.

Rahul Gandhi summoned by UP court in defamation case

An MP-MLA court on Monday summoned Congress leader Rahul Gandhi on December 16 in a defamation case lodged by a BJP leader for allegedly making objectionable comments against party Union Home Minister Amit Shah.



M P - MLA court judge Yogesh Yadav had heard the matter on November 18 and had fixed Monday as the next date for the hearing. According to Santosh Pandey, lawyer of the petitioner Vijay Mishra, Judge Yadav has summoned Rahul Gandhi on December 16 in the matter.

The case of defamation was filed by BJP leader Vijay Mishra in 2018. He had alleged that Gandhi made objectionable comments against Shah at a press conference in Bengaluru.

Bengal's corruption has given the country a bad name: Amit Shah

KOLKATA: The Trinamool Congress and the current state government in West Bengal have not just shamed the state but the entire country by indulging in and encouraging corruption, Union Home Minister Amit Shah said here on Wednesday.

"The numerous cases of corruption like school jobs, ration distribution, coal and cattle smuggling encouraged by the ruling party and the state government has not only shamed West Bengal but is also a matter of shame for the country. Besides the cases of corruption, political violence and illegal infiltration in West Bengal has also skyrocketed during the Trinamool Congress' regime," Amit Shah said while addressing a rally of BJP workers in central Kolkata.

The rally was held as a mark of protest against the irregularities in the implementa-



tion of the 100-day job scheme under MGNREGA. He also accused the state government of encouraging illegal infiltration from across the borders to enrich its vote bank.

"Once, Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee, as the erstwhile Opposition leader, used to be extremely vocal about her stand against illegal infiltration. Now her government is not only encouraging illegal infiltration, but also helping them in getting identity proofs like voters' ID and Aadhaar cards," Shah said. He also challenged the chief minister to suspend Bengal ministers, legislators and Trinamool

Congress leaders arrested in connection with scams. "Can she dare to suspend Jyotipriya Mallick, Anubrata Mondal and Partha Chatterjee? She cannot dare to do that. She is now constantly praying to Devi Durga so that they do not name the 'nephew' in the matter," Shah said.

According to him, if the BJP government has to come to power in West Bengal after the 2026 state Assembly elections, its seeds have to be sown in the 2024 Lok Sabha polls.

"So I give a call to the people of West Bengal to ensure the victory of the maximum number of BJP candidates in West Bengal in 2024 and make Narendra Modi the Prime Minister of the country again for the third-consecutive term. Remember, the development of West Bengal is the prime focus of the Prime Minister," he said.

Respect and honor of Indians has increased in the world in the leadership of Modi: OP Dhankhar



SATISH HANDA
Ambala

Bharatiya Janata Party National Secretary OP Dhankhar said that under the able leadership of Prime Minister Modi, unprecedented change has taken place in the country and India's image has been strengthened on the world level. It is a miracle of the leadership ability of Prime Minister Modi that today the respect and honor of Indians has increased in the world. Dhankhar was addressing the Panna Pramukh workers and other office bearers of BJP present in large numbers in the Panna Pramukh Sammelan of Ambala Cantonment Assembly on Sunday. He was warmly welcomed by Cantonment MLA and Haryana's Home and Health Minister Anil Vij and other BJP workers. OP Dhankhar said that the credit goes to the Home and Health Minister Vij for starting Dial 112 service in Haryana and taking forward the Ayushman Bharat Yojana launched by Prime Minister, making it easier for the common man to get his treatment free in hospitals.

Both Dhankhar and Vij wished Constitution Day and also wished Guru Nanak Dev Jayanti, and inaugurated the sammelan by lighting the lamp in front of the pictures of Bharat Mata, Pandit Deendayal Upadhyay and Shyama Prasad Mukherjee. Addressing the gathering Dhankhar said that the credit for the martyrdom memorial being built in Ambala Cantonment goes to Anil Vij with this the identity of Ambala will emerge not only in India but also on the world map. He said, organizing Janata Darbar to solve people's problems and steps taken by Shri Vij to prevent corruption are praiseworthy. He said that Pandit Deendayal Upadhyay ji's thinking was that the last person standing in the queue should be uplifted i.e. Antyodaya. Keeping this in mind, the BJP government at the Center and the Haryana government are working.

1263 cases of commercial drug smuggling cases registered in Haryana in 10 months

SATISH HANDA

In spite of all efforts by Haryana State Narcotic Bureau there is no relief in drug smuggling cases in the state, blame Punjab responsible for increasing cases of smuggling narcotics and psychotropic substances in commercial quantity in Haryana state, especially in seven of its districts bordering Punjab state, the official data has revealed. This year, in the first 10 months up to 31 October as many as 1263 NDPS Act cases involving commercial quantities of drugs cases registered by Haryana police reached the courts in Haryana, of these, 631 cases were registered in Fatehabad, Sirsa, Jind, Kaithal, Kurukshetra, Ambala and Panchkula, the seven Haryana districts that share borders with Punjab's Sri Muktsar Sahib, Bathinda, Mansa, Sangrur, Patiala and SAS Nagar.

The district-wise commercial drugs smuggling cases cases which were registered in Haryana state include 206 cases in Fatehabad, 162 cases in Sirsa, 123 cases in Faridabad, 70 cases in Jind, 69 cases in Kaithal, 63 cases in Panipat, 58 cases in Ambala, 57 cases in Rohtak, 53 cases in Karnal, 51 cases in Hisar, 44 cases in Kurukshetra, 43 cases in Kurukshetra,



41 cases in Jhajjar, 36 cases in Hansi, 30 cases in Nuh, 27 cases in Gurugram, 26 cases each in Yamunanagar and Bhiwani, 22 cases in Panchkula, 18 cases in Sonapat, 16 cases in Charkhi Dabri, 8 cases in Mahendergarh and 3 cases in Rewari. Eleven such cases are registered by GRP Ambala and are under trial.

Haryana State Narcotics Control Bureau (HSNCB), which is actively pursuing all these cases, is aiming to secure minimum 10 years imprisonment for all the accused. Information reveals that the majority of drug addicts in the country as well as in Haryana and Punjab are youths, a cause for rising crimes: Punjab and Haryana. According to the available data, the highest

206 such cases pertaining to seizure of commercial quantity of drugs are under trial in Fatehabad, followed by 162 in Sirsa. Haryana State Narcotic Control Bureau is also focusing on synthetic drugs. In the recent past it has come to fore that smugglers were using private courier companies to send synthetic drugs to various parts of the country.

The Gurugram unit bureau arrested three persons including two from Rajasthan and one from Himachal Pradesh for illegally smuggling Amphetamine, a central nervous system stimulant used in treatment of attention deficit hyperactivity disorder, narcolepsy and obesity - out of the country through a private courier company.

Haryana Govt launched, tackling global concern of drug addiction: Khattar

SATISH HANDA

Drug addiction among youths is a burning issue not only in Haryana but across the country and Haryana state government has decided to wipe out this evil from the state and has decided an action mode in a comprehensive manner through three multifaceted initiatives: raising public awareness, rescuing and rehabilitating youths trapped in the cycle of addiction and actively dismantling the drug supply chain in the state. This was stated by the Chief Minister Manohar Lal Khattar while speaking as chief guest sometime ago at the 11th annual function of Gyan Mansarovar of Prajapita Brahma Kumari Ishwariya Vishwavidyalaya in Panipat and also launched the Drug-Free Haryana campaign recently in the state as part of the larger Drug-Free India Campaign and also flagged off the Drug-Free Campaign Awareness Bus. Apart from laying the foundation stone of Manmohini Bhawan being built at a cost of about Rs 3 crore in Gyan Mansarovar. Khattar also inaugurated Dadi Chandramani Universal Peace Auditorium established at a cost of about Rs 3 crore in Gyan Mansarovar.

Addressing the gathering, the Chief Minister affirmed the gov-



ernment's strict actions against individuals involved in drug trade and anti-national activities. He said that the provision of stringent penalties for such illicit collaborations has already been made by the government. CM said, Sanskar and Meditation are key solutions to combat drug addiction. He urged parents to instill positive values in their children and encourage them to focus on devotion to God. Khattar highlighted the collaborative efforts of Sant Samaj as well as other social welfare organizations also has assured to join hands in the Anti-Drug campaign, inspiring youth to combat substance Abuse. Manohar Lal highlighted the collaborative efforts of Sant Samaj and other organizations. He underscored the drug-free campaign as a source of inspiration and said that the association with the theme of Lokaarth-Paramarth enhances the importance of every event.

Information reveals that Jind,

Rajanath lauds Indian Coast Guard for ensuring maritime security

NEWDELHI: Defence Minister Rajanath Singh on Thursday inaugurated the three-day 40th Commanders conference of the Indian Coast Guard and hailed it for ensuring the coastal security of the country. In his address, Rajanath Singh complimented ICG for ensuring maritime security by being in the vanguard in the field of search & rescue and pollution response. He called upon the ICG to continue working with dedication and professionalism towards bolstering the coastal defences and maritime capabilities of the country. The ICG, since its inception, has rendered a yeoman service to the seafarers by ensuring their safety and



security in all circumstances," he said. He stressed on the need to continue the drive against contraband and drug trafficking. The conference, aimed at addressing contemporary maritime challenges

and fortifying the country's coastal surveillance mechanisms, is being attended by senior officers of the Ministry of Defence and the ICG. During the conference, the Defence Minister was given an overview

of the ongoing development projects, operational readiness and future expansion plans of the ICG by Director General Rakesh Pal. The conference agenda encompasses a wide spectrum of

crucial topics, including enhancing maritime safety and security such as search and rescue operations, maritime pollution response, drive against contraband, drug trafficking, safety of fishermen, seafarers at sea, optimising coastal security measures, fostering inter-agency coordination, and promoting Maritime Domain Awareness, the official added. The conference is held annually, where all the officers put forth the roadmap for the future and discuss various policy and strategic issues. It aims to carve out a futuristic vision for the service and to determine the modalities to overcome the challenges efficiently, the official added.

Sonia Gandhi releases book on Kharge's life

LAUDS HIS INTEGRITY, HARDWORK, AND IDEOLOGICAL COMMITMENT

KAVITA SHARMA
New Delhi



Chairperson of the Congress Parliamentary Party, Ms Sonia Gandhi today led a galaxy of dignitaries in praising and lauding the integrity, hardwork and ideological commitment of the Congress President Mallikarjun Kharge. 'Mallikarjun Kharge - Political Engagement with Compassion, Justice and Inclusive Development', a book on the life, political journey, struggles and travails of Congress President, was launched by Ms Gandhi at Jawahar Bhawan, in New Delhi. A short film showcasing the journey of Mr Kharge was also screened. Prof Sukhadeo Thorat is the Editor of the book with Chetan Shinde as the Co-Editor. The book delves into Mr Kharge's over half a century long outstanding political journey as closely observed by his political colleagues and friends from all walks of life. The book unveils Mr Kharge's identity as a social activist deeply committed to the welfare of labourers and marginalized individuals, an institution builder in the field of education and a person profoundly driven by a vision to transform and reconstruct the caste-ridden inequities in society. Speaking on the occasion, Ms Gandhi said, fifty years is a long time in politics and Mr Kharge didn't just survive

its unpredictable course, he continued to rise higher and higher throughout his political career. "Not once did Kharge Ji compromise on his ideology, not once did he drift away from the cause of the poor, not once did he compromise on dignity and work exemplifies the values that the founders and architects of modern India espoused. Embodying the indomitable Indian spirit, he has overcome multiple adversities in his long journey". "Leading by example, he symbolises the belief that no matter who you are or where you come from, you can rise to ever greater heights in the service of the nation. That is, and will continue to be an inspiration to millions of Indians drawn to be in public service", Mrs Gandhi observed. Highlighting the role of the Congress party in building the nation, she said, "this was the party which has shaped Kharge Ji. Faced with communalism and discrimination at a tender age, he consciously chose to be secular and liberal. Faced with poverty and discrimination, he courageously embraced compassion towards all beings". Praising Mr Kharge's commitment to public service, she said, this is what drove him, consciously, to choose to work for the public good, to empower the weakest and most vulnerable sections of our society, and to free them from the shackles and hurdles he himself had known closely at first hand. "To me personally, Kharge Ji has been a wise companion and a pillar of strength. He has shared many of my burdens with stoic courage, unwavering kindness and a sharp wit", she said on a personal note.

Ladakh to have South East Asia's first Night Sky Sanctuary soon



RAJU WILLIAM Hanle (Ladakh)

Ladakh will soon have South East Asia's first Night Sky Sanctuary being set up with the help of Indian Institute of Astrophysics, Bengaluru affiliated to the Department of Science & Technology, Government of India (GoI).

This Night Sky Reserve will be located at Hanle village in Eastern Ladakh as a part of Changthang Wildlife Sanctuary. It will boost Astro-tourism in India and will be one of the world's highest-located sites for optical, infra-red, and gamma-ray telescopes. Union Minister of State (Independent Charge) Science & Technology; MoS PMO, Personnel, Public Grievances, Pensions, Atomic Energy and Space disclosed this while addressing the gathering after inaugurating the exhibition 'Ladakh's Pride' being held here. The exhibition is being held here to mark the fourth anniversary of the establishment of the Union Territory of Ladakh. Prime Minister Narendra Modi will be requested to inaugurate this first-of-its-kind venture in India, said the minister. Spread over 1,073 square kilometres, the Night Sky Reserve is located within the Changthang Wildlife Sanctuary and adjacent to the Indian Astronomical Observatory, the second-highest optical telescope in the world, of Indian Institute of Astrophysics at Hanle at an elevation of 4500 metres.

PM Modi offers prayers at Tirumala temple

NEWDELHI: Prime Minister Narendra Modi prayed at Sri Venkateswara Swamy Temple in Tirumala, Andhra Pradesh on Monday and also sought blessings of lord Venkateswara Swamy for the good health, well-being and prosperity of 140 crore Indians. Sharing glimpses from Venkateswara Swamy Temple in Tirumala, the Prime Minister posted on X: "At the Sri Venkateswara Swamy Temple in Tirumala, prayed for the good health, well-being and



prosperity of 140 crore Indians."

Modi also greeted the nation on the auspicious occasion of the Parkash Purab of Guru Nanak Dev Ji.

He also shared a video clip from yesterday's Mann Ki Baat in which he had paid tributes to the Sikh Guru. The Prime Minister posted on X: "Greetings on the auspicious occasion of the Parkash Purab of Sri Guru Nanak Dev Ji. His emphasis on serving others and furthering brotherhood give strength to millions around the world. Had also paid tributes to him during #MannKiBaat yesterday."

PM Narendra Modi takes sortie on Tejas aircraft in Bengaluru

ARUN KUMAR RAO
Bengaluru

Prime Minister Narendra Modi co-piloted and undertook sortie the indigenous trainer version of light combat aircraft (LCA) Tejas. The PM was in Bengaluru visiting the Hindustan Aeronautics Limited site, during his visit to state-run Hindustan Aeronautics Limited. Modi arrived in the city earlier today and visited Defence PSU Hindustan Aeronautics Limited to review the ongoing work at its manufacturing facilities, officials said. After the flight, which took from HAL Airport lasted several minutes, Prime Minister said in a post on X, "Successfully completed a sortie on the Tejas. The experience was incredibly enriching, significantly bolstering my confidence in our country's indigenous capabilities, and leaving me with a renewed sense of pride and optimism about our national potential. Flying in Tejas today, I can say with



immense pride that due to our hard work and dedication, we are no less than anyone in the world in the field of self-reliance. Heartiest congratulations to the Indian Air Force, DRDO and HAL as well as all Indians," he added. Several countries have evinced interest in buying Tejas, a light combat aircraft, and US defence giant GE Aerospace had inked a pact with HAL to jointly produce engines for the Mk-II-Tejas during the Prime Minister's recent state visit to the US. According to sources here, Under the Narendra Modi

government, an order of Rs 36,468 crore for the delivery of 83 LCA Mk 1A Tejas aircraft has been placed with Hindustan Aeronautics Limited. The delivery of these Tejas aircraft is scheduled to begin by February 2024, they said, asserting that the government has taken giant steps for increasing India's defence preparedness and indigenisation, which includes Tejas fighter aircraft. "The LCA Tejas twin-seater is a light-weight, all-weather, multi-role 4.5 generation aircraft. It is designed to support training requirements of the IAF and augment itself to the role of a fighter in case of necessity," HAL said about the LCA in which the PM flew.

BRS, Cong, BJP in a free-for-all over freebies to woo Telangana voters

NEW DELHI: It's free for all over freebies in Telangana Assembly elections with the main contenders for power vying with each other to promise the moon to the voters.

While it was Congress which made a headstart with its six guarantees, the ruling Bharat Rashtra Samithi (BRS) tried to surpass that and not to be left behind, while the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) dodged its anti-freebies policy to offer sops to the electorate. The Congress pulled out all the stops to woo various sections, especially women, youth, farmers and different caste groups. The party had started the exercise last year with farmers' declaration. Since May this year, it has come out with declarations for youth, Backward Classes, Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes, and minorities. However, it was the launch of six guarantees on September 17 which set the ball rolling. Senior Congress leader Sonia Gandhi unveiled the six guarantees at a



mega rally in Hyderabad which coincided with the Congress Working Committee (CWC) meeting. Upbeat over its victory in Karnataka, Congress drafted six guarantees on the lines of five guarantees given in the neighbouring state of Karnataka. After failing to capture power in Telangana twice despite claiming credit for carving out the state, Congress expects the six guarantees to give it a maiden victory in the country's youngest state, which goes to the polls on November 30. Financial assistance of Rs 2,500 for every woman, free bus travel for women in TSRTC buses across Telangana, and

cooking gas cylinder for Rs 500 are among the six guarantees. Under Rythu Bharosa, it promised annual financial assistance of Rs15,000 per acre for farmers, including tenant farmers. For agriculture labourers, it promised Rs 12,000 per year. Farmers will also get Rs 500 bonus per quintal for paddy crop above the Minimum Support Price (MSP). If voted to power, Congress will give house sites and Rs 5 lakh for the homeless. It will also give 250 square yard plots to the Telangana movement fighters. Under Gruha Jyothi, all households will get 200 units of free electricity. Under Yuva Vikasam, the Congress prom-

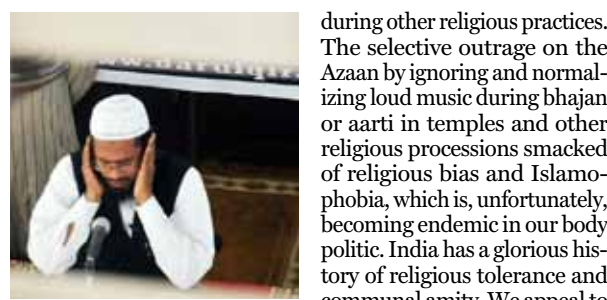
ised Vidya Bharosa Card worth Rs 5 lakh each for students and Telangana international schools in all mandals. Under Cheyutha, the party promised Rs 4,000 monthly pension and Rs 10 lakh health insurance. Going beyond the six guarantees, Congress released its manifesto on November 17, offering a plethora of sops. Waiver of farm loans up to Rs 2 lakh, interest-free farm loans up to Rs 3 lakh, a comprehensive crop insurance scheme for all major crops, Rs 1,00,000 and 10 grams of gold as Indiramma gift to the Hindu and Rs 1,60,000 for the minority girls at the time of their marriage, financial assistance of Rs 12,000 per year to every auto-rickshaw driver and social security to unorganised workers are among the promises announced in the 42-page manifesto titled 'Abhaya Hastam'. For unemployed youth, it promised annual job calendars and filling of 2 lakh vacant posts within a specified time period.

Jamaat-e-Islami Hind welcomes Gujarat HC verdict dismissing PIL seeking ban on Azaan on loudspeakers

KAVITA SHARMA
New Delhi

The Vice President of Jamaat-e-Islami Hind, Malik Mohtashim Khan has welcomed the Gujarat High Court's dismissal of a Public Interest Litigation (PIL) seeking a ban on Azaan through loudspeakers. In a statement to the media, the JIH Vice-President said, "We welcome the judgment by the division bench of Chief Justice Sunita Agarwal and Justice Aniruddha Mayee of the Gujarat

High Court that dismissed a PIL seeking a ban on Azaan through loudspeakers. We completely concur with the views of the Hon'ble Chief Justice of the Gujarat High Court that the plea was "wholly misconceived" and it was difficult to "understand as to how the human voice making Azaan through loudspeakers could achieve the decibels to the extent of creating noise pollution causing health hazard for the public at large." Khan further added, "Jamaat feels that there was an apparent



contradiction in the complaint about noise disturbance and health hazard due to Azaan compared to the noise generated

during other religious practices. The selective outrage on the Azaan by ignoring and normalizing loud music during bhajan or aarti in temples and other religious processions smacked of religious bias and Islamophobia, which is, unfortunately, becoming endemic in our body politic. India has a glorious history of religious tolerance and communal amity. We appeal to the people of India not to fall prey to those who wish to incite hatred and misuse religion for their political agenda."

Congress will fulfill guarantees made to people of Telangana: Priyanka Gandhi

A day ahead of the crucial Telangana Assembly elections, Congress general secretary Priyanka Gandhi Vadra on Wednesday hailed the women power saying that her party will fulfill the guarantees made to the people of the state. In a post on X, Priyanka Gandhi said, "When women take a resolution, they die only after completing it. We will come to Telangana and fulfill the guarantees. We will create history by following the path of truth, honesty and righteousness with the public." She also attached over 38 seconds long video in which she is heard saying "When I was speaking to my mother Sonia Gandhi, and she asked me what do I speak in my public meetings in Telangana and I replied I speak the truth". Priyanka Gandhi in the video said that as a mother Sonia Gandhi told her that the promises made to the people must be honoured. "I told her that all the party leaders have taken a pledge to complete the guarantees made to the people in the state," she said.

Congress delegation meets Election Commission over code violation



KAVITA SHARMA
New Delhi

The Congress today sought action against the Prime Minister Narendra Modi and the union Home Minister Amit Shah over violation of the Election Code of Conduct. The party also flagged for the attention of the Election Commission the tampering of postal ballots by the District Electoral Officer in Pallaghat in Madhya Pradesh seeking immediate action against the concerned officer. The party sought preventive action in Telangana where it apprehended the ruling Bharat Rashtra Samithi circumventing the restriction on campaigning during the 'Silence Period' that began at 5 pm today. A delegation of the party comprising senior leader and CWC member Dr Abhishek Manu Singhvi, Salman Khurshid, Gurdeep Singh Sappal, Pranav Jha, Vineet Punia and

others met the Election Commission here today. Ajay Maken and Dr. Ajoy Kumar joined the meeting virtually. Briefing reporters after the meeting, Dr Singhvi said, the delegation complained on three specific violations, one by the Prime Minister and other two by the Home Minister with video recordings without any ambiguity. The delegation told the commission that the complaint had been filed on November 24 and still no action had been taken. Dr Singhvi observed that it was a matter of the credibility of the Election Commission that it should not be seen as not taking action against the mighty and powerful. About the tampering of postal ballots in Madhya Pradesh, the Congress delegation demanded immediate action against the concerned officer. "Who will guard the guardian?" Dr Singhvi remarked.

Unemployment rate dips in India's urban areas during July-Sept



NEW DELHI: The unemployment rate in India's urban areas has declined to 6.6 per cent during the July-September quarter this year from 7.2 per cent in the same period of the previous year, according to the quarterly bulletin released by the Ministry of Statistics. The unemployment rate covers persons of age 15 years and above. In the case of male workers, the unemployment rate in urban areas was 6 per cent in July - September 2023 while for female workers the unemployment rate decreased from 9.4 per cent in July - September 2022 to 8.6 per cent in July - September 2023, figures compiled in the periodic labour force survey (PLFS) showed. Other indicators which include the Labour Force Participation Rate (LFPR) Worker Population Ratio (WPR) also reflected a decline in unemployment. LFPR, which is defined as the percentage of persons in labour force (i.e. working or seeking or available for work) in the population went up to 49.3 per cent during the period.

'Became a national party despite govt targeting us', says Kejriwal on AAP's 11th foundation day

Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal on Sunday greeted the party workers on AAP's 11th foundation day and said that despite "targeting by the government", it became a national party. Addressing a press conference, Kejriwal, who is also the national convener of the party said, "Today, on this day in 2012, AAP was formed and it became a national party in 11 years. Due to hard work by the party, it formed government in two states, and in two states its MLAs were elected and people are talking about

it across the country." "People used to ask us at Rameela Maidan that if you too will become corrupt," he said. "In the history of India, no other political party has been targeted as much as AAP has been targeted in the last 11 years. They filed more than 250 false cases against us in 11 years," the Chief Minister said.

On the occasion, Kejriwal said that he misses party leaders Manish Sisodia, Satyendra Jain, Sanjay Singh and Vijay Nair, who are in jail in "false cases". He said that his heart is heavy, as this is the first foundation day when party leaders Sisodia, Jain, Singh and Nair are not here with us. "They have been jailed under false cases. BJP knows to make leaders of other parties bend through false cases but they don't know how to do that to AAP. It is a matter of pride for us that none of our MLAs sold themselves or broke," Kejriwal added.



"All agencies of the country were put after AAP but they never found any evidence to this day," he claimed. "This is the biggest certificate of our honesty," the AAP leader said.



Rescue operation shines light on deeper issues

The recent rescue of 41 workers trapped for 17 days in a collapsed tunnel in Silkyara, Uttarakhand, is nothing short of a testament to human resilience and the effectiveness of India's National Disaster Management Authority. On the evening of November 28, after extensive and painstaking efforts, rescue personnel successfully evacuated the workers, marking the end of a harrowing ordeal. The rescue operation was remarkable not only for its successful outcome but also for the rapid mobilization of resources. Within a day of the tunnel collapse, officials managed to provide the trapped workers with essential supplies like oxygen and food. The subsequent deployment of an auger drill from Delhi and the meticulous efforts to navigate through the challenges posed by the unstable terrain underscore the dedication and expertise of the rescue teams. President Draupadi Murmu lauded the rescue as "one of the greatest" in history. While the praise is well-deserved, the incident also casts a spotlight on broader issues concerning worker safety and infrastructure development in India. This incident, along with the July tragedy on the Nagpur-Mumbai Samruddhi Expressway, where a crane collapse killed 20 workers, both involving Navayuga Engineering Company Ltd., raises serious questions about the safety standards in infrastructure projects. The government's response should not only involve a thorough investigation into these incidents but also a broader reassessment of safety protocols and working conditions on such sites. Moreover, the Char Dham highway project, where this incident occurred, has been a subject of concern among experts who question the geological viability of the terrain for such extensive construction. The Silkyara tunnel rescue operation should serve as a wake-up call. It highlights the need for preemptive measures to ensure the safety of workers and future users of these infrastructures. Ensuring that such heroic rescue operations are not needed in the first place requires a commitment to safe working environments and adherence to geological and environmental wisdom in infrastructure development.

LETTERBOX

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"IF YOUR DREAMS DON'T SCARE YOU, THEY ARE TOO SMALL"
— Richard Branson

THE FINANCIAL WORLD

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VIBODH PARTHASARATHI BELIEVES THE BILL MUST SAFEGUARD PRESS FREEDOM AND DIVERSITY IN BROADCASTING

Press freedom at a crossroads

The Broadcasting Services (Regulation) Bill released in November by the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting (MIB) is part of an arc of endeavours to regulate broadcasting in an integrated manner. The last initiative to take on this ambitious task was back in 2007, in the form of the Broadcasting Services Regulation Bill. Ten years before that, when cable and satellite broadcasting was in its infancy, the Broadcasting Bill of 1997 scripted the first effort to visualise an integrated regulatory framework for this sector. The recent third rendition of a Broadcasting Bill comes on the heels of a pre-consultation paper on 'National Broadcasting Policy' by the Telecom Regulatory Authority of India (TRAI), a document initiated following a reference from the MIB.

There appear to be three positive propositions in the current Bill, albeit each requiring crucial refinements. First, it obliges broadcasting network operators and broadcasters to maintain records of subscriber data, and subject this to periodic external audits, as is the international norm. Second, the Bill seeks to stipulate a methodology for audience measurement, and the sale of ratings data. Both mechanisms will bring the much-needed transparency in the opaque value chain of the cable and satellite television business in our country. That said, the Bill completely lacks any guardrails to shield the privacy of subscribers and audiences in such practices of data collection. Third, the provision to permit private actors in terrestrial broadcasting will encourage competition to Doordarshan, the state broadcaster, as is in many G-20 countries. Back in 2016, TRAI had initiated consultations on this. At that time, there was an opinion about terrestrial broadcasting proving viable only for large players, including those already in cable and satellite broadcasting; consequently, such a move, it could be argued, is likely to diminish the diversity of suppliers in broadcasting as a whole. This anxiety can be pacified if the



an internal body to self-certify news programming. The issue is not only of feasibility and costs but also of desirability. Since the role of an internal oversight mechanism is to maintain the accuracy of news and quality of journalism, its design is best left to individual news outlets. They could decide whether to design this along the lines of an ombudsman, as some newspapers attempted in the past, or akin to a 'Readers' Editor', as practised by few online news outlets.

On ownership and a regulator

Now, the two crucial silences in the Bill. Like the TRAI paper, the Bill is mum on issues of ownership. While the Bill is keen to stipulate a methodology for audience measurement, there is no desire to measure the extent of cross-media and vertical ownership. Both these forms of media power thwart the diversity of suppliers, and perhaps, consequently, that of viewpoints, in the marketplace of news. In fact, just last year, TRAI itself had drawn attention to extensive cross-media ownership between newspapers and news broadcasters through indirectly owned affiliates, and the need to evolve a system to capture this.

Amusingly, one such news outlet with cross-media interests was apprehensive about inroads by telecom companies into broadcasting. They rightly feel such inroads add another dimension to vertical integration, since some cable and DTH distributors also own, in a roundabout manner, news broadcasters. Both renditions of vertical integration risk the ability of the audience to access, avail, and/or afford news from a diverse range of suppliers.

The Bill is equally silent on creating an independent broadcast regulator, as hinted in TRAI's paper. This was first mooted in the 'airwaves' judgment of 1995, subsequently in

the 1997 Broadcasting Bill, and reiterated in the 2007 iteration of the Bill. Instead, this Bill plans a 'Broadcast Advisory Council' to examine viewers' grievances and violations of the Programme Code and Advertisement Code. This raises two concerns: first, the capacity of such a Council to track and address grievances, genuine or motivated, raised by over 800 million TV viewers; and second, the lack of autonomy accorded to this body, since the Bill empowers the Central government to ultimately decide on the Council's advice.

Leeway to the government

In addition, the Bill empowers the government to inspect broadcasters without intimating them in advance, and to impound their equipment, presumably including those issued to their employees.

Furthermore, violations of the Programme Code and Advertisement Code attract deleting or modifying content, in addition to existing measures such as ceasing transmissions for particular durations. Finally, the Bill grants tremendous leeway to government to curtail broadcasting and its distribution in "public interest", a term that is distressingly left undefined. All these intrusive mechanisms augment the vulnerabilities of professional news suppliers to external pressure groups. This should worry those who will deliberate over legislating the Bill, irrespective of which benches they occupy in Parliament. As the latest extension of the arc of endeavours to devise an integrated regulatory framework for broadcasting, this Bill must not lose the opportunity to protect press freedom and diversity. To do so, it has to will its way to incorporate some startling omissions, review its intrusive commissions, and fine-tune potentially positive provisions.

Vibodh Parthasarathi teaches media policy at the Centre for Culture, Media and Governance, Jamia Millia Islamia, New Delhi. Views are personal.



MAMIDALA JAGADESH KUMAR EXPLAINS WHY EFFECTIVE INDUSTRY-ACADEMIA COLLABORATION NEEDS A DIVERSE, MULTI-FACETED STRATEGY

Overcoming barriers to industry-academia partnerships

It is well known that collaborations between industry and academia can be mutually beneficial. However, most Indian higher education institutions (HEIs) have not focused on such collaborations or on intellectual property (IP) and technology transfers. While universities conduct and encourage basic research, many of them do not capitalise on the same research by commercialising their IP; they miss out on likely gains from patents, licensing, or start-up companies. Determining and managing impediments to collaborations between industry and academia requires a multi-pronged approach.

The hurdles

First, HEIs and industry can only collaborate if they evolve shared goals. HEIs predominantly seek to educate students and conduct research. They often focus on creating theoretical knowledge. On the other hand, industries are profit-driven and pursue practical applications of knowledge to enhance productivity and innovation. They may require a clear articulation of the applicability of academic research. An industrial company might be sceptical about funding a research project if it believes that the outcomes do not translate into prompt saleable applications. But HEIs may feel uneasy about the short-term focus of industrial projects. To resolve these issues, the two parties must engage in an open dialogue, develop a flexible attitude, and find common ground where theoretical knowledge and practical applications can coexist.

Second, there are cultural differences between how HEIs and industrial partners ap-



proach the issue of collaboration. Let us say an HEI is collaborating with an industrial partner (a renewable energy company) on a research project associated with sustainable energy. When researchers at the HEI scrutinise the data furnished by the company, they may find that it needs more academic rigour and theoretical profundity. Consequently, they might suppose that the data is of restricted use for publishing in a prestigious academic journal.

Conversely, the company will focus more on practical outcomes. It may not have the time or expertise to have theoretical discussions since its immediate concern is to implement solutions in the real world by improving processes or by devising new products. So, both sides must find a middle path to bridge this cultural gap. HEI researchers could refine their findings into practical recommendations that the industrial partner can understand and implement, while the industrial partner could provide more context to the data.

Third, Indian HEIs must establish good

communication channels with the industry. If a research team from a university is partnering with a pharmaceutical company, it needs to be acquainted with the industry's regulatory processes. Training programmes could be implemented so that researchers and industry professionals get familiar with the other's language and expectations.

Fourth, Indian HEIs must focus on building trust. Let us suppose a university and a tech company are collaborating to develop a new software application. A professor may be an expert in developing algorithms, but the industrial partner may want solutions that can be implemented in real-world products. Both parties can work out a mutually agreeable IP arrangement to address this. Such an arrangement will also help alleviate certain fears. For instance, the university might agree to fast-track the development of a prototype software application that the company can use and refine for commercial purposes. But the industrial partner may fear that the university researchers will publish the research results without considering the commercial implications of their research. To overcome this, the university and the industrial partner can sign non-disclosure agreements to ensure that sensitive information shared during collaboration remains confidential. Both parties can also agree on which results may be earmarked for academic publications and which may be kept confidential or jointly published. Clear agreements ensure transparency and help build trust.

Types of collaborations

Colleges or universities with minimal

research facilities can focus on short-term collaborations with local manufacturing companies facing technical problems in their production line that need a quick resolution. A team of students and faculty members from a college can provide a tangible solution that benefits the industry and brings returns to the college.

On the other hand, universities with good research facilities and faculty expertise can partner with an industry for long-term research collaborations that aim to develop cutting-edge technologies. The additional benefit of such long-term collaborations is that students can work as interns on research projects. They will then learn to handle deadlines, navigate failures, and collaborate with colleagues in the industry.

HEIs and industries should, therefore, work on developing a symbiotic relationship. Industries in specific domains should collaborate with research groups across different universities in the same domain to keep themselves abreast of new research developments. All this will become easier if government funding agencies announce suitable research grants and call for joint project proposals from HEIs and industry partners. There should also be critical annual reviews by a team of experts appointed by the funding agency to examine the deliverables promised by the stakeholders.

Mamidala Jagadesh Kumar is Chairman, University Grants Commission, and the 12th Vice-Chancellor of Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi

BOOKS: REVIEW

New book digs deep into role of AI in shaping our future

In "The Coming Wave," authors Mustafa Suleyman and Michael Bhaskar delve into the profound impact of Artificial Intelligence on the future of humanity. This 300-page book is not just a theoretical exploration but a pressing warning about the rapid evolution of AI and its potential to reshape every aspect of our lives.

Suleyman, a notable figure in the AI industry as the founder of DeepMind and a subsequent startup, brings an insider's perspective to the narrative. The book, while touching upon advances in biotech, primarily focuses on the burgeoning capabilities and decreasing costs of AI technologies. Suleyman's central thesis is alarming yet straightforward: the real danger lies not in AI achieving sentience but in becoming more efficient and accessible.

One of the book's most striking arguments is the democratization of power through AI, leading to

potential chaos through deepfakes, engineered pathogens, and sophisticated cyber warfare. Suleyman emphasizes the urgency of these developments, arguing that the window for regulating AI is rapidly closing.

"The Coming Wave" is compelling in its call for containment, yet Suleyman's policy recommendations are ambitious, if not daunting. He advocates for global collaboration on AI standards, public involvement in AI development, and significant taxation on corporations benefiting from AI at the expense of human intellectual capital. These solutions, while challenging, are presented as necessary steps to harness AI's potential without succumbing to its perils.

Suleyman's vision is grounded in realism, acknowledging the challenges in implementing these policies swiftly. The book avoids the trap of techno-optimism, recognizing that while technological breakthroughs are inevitable, hu-

manity must be prepared to adapt. "The Coming Wave" is a captivating read, offering a concise yet profound analysis of AI's rapid evolution. It serves as both a cautionary tale and a roadmap for navigating the AI-dominated future. Whether Suleyman's predictions come to pass or not, his book is an essential read for anyone interested in understanding and shaping the role of AI in our world.

Continuing the review, "The Coming Wave" also delves into the societal and ethical implications of AI. Suleyman and Bhaskar explore



The Coming Wave: Technology, Power, and the 21st Century's Greatest Dilemma
By Mustafa Suleyman & Michael Bhaskar
352 pages; Rs 799

how AI could exacerbate existing inequalities and challenge democratic institutions. They argue that unchecked AI development could lead to a concentration of power in the hands of a few tech giants, undermining democratic processes and widening the gap between the haves and have-nots. This perspective is particularly relevant in today's world, where technology increasingly influences political, social, and economic landscapes.

The book is not all doom and gloom, however. Suleyman and Bhaskar also discuss the potential benefits of AI, such as its ability to solve complex global challenges, including climate change and healthcare. They emphasize that if harnessed responsibly, AI could be a force for good, driving innovation and efficiency in various

sectors. The authors advocate for a balanced approach to AI, one that harnesses its positive potential while mitigating its risks.

In the final chapters, "The Coming Wave" offers a glimpse into the future, speculating on how AI might evolve and the ways societies might adapt to these changes. The authors suggest that as AI becomes more integrated into our daily lives, we will need to rethink our relationship with technology. They call for a new social contract, one that ensures the benefits of AI are shared equitably and that protects individuals' rights in an increasingly digital world.

In conclusion, "The Coming Wave" is a thought-provoking and timely book that provides a comprehensive overview of the challenges and opportunities presented by AI. It is a must-read for policymakers, tech professionals, and anyone interested in the future of technology and society. Suleyman and Bhaskar have crafted a compelling narrative that is both informative and accessible, making complex topics understandable to a broad audience.

AMD Inaugurates its Largest Global Design Center in India

AMD Technostar R&D campus in Bengaluru is part of the \$400 million India investment announced by the company at Semicon 2023. 500,000-square-foot campus plans to host approximately 3000 engineers

ARUN KUMAR RAO
Bengaluru

AMD inaugurated its largest global design center in Bengaluru, marking a milestone in the company's commitment to expand research, development, and engineering operations in India. The state-of-the-art campus plans to host approximately 3,000 AMD engineers in the coming years, focused on the design and development of semiconductor technology including 3D stacking, artificial intelligence, machine learning, and more.

The campus was inaugu-

rated by Ashwini Vaishnav, Union Cabinet Minister for Railways, Telecommunications, Electronics and Information Technology, Government of India. AMD executive leaders including Mark Papermaster, executive vice president and chief technology officer; David Wang, senior vice president of GPU technologies and engineering; Brian Amick, senior vice president of central engineering; and Andrej Zdravkovic, chief software officer and senior vice president of GPU technologies along with the AMD India leadership team were present.

The AMD Technostar campus is part of the company's \$400 million investment in India over the next five years, announced at Semicon India 2023. The campus will serve as a centre of excellence for the development of leadership products across high-performance CPUs for the data cen-



ter and PCs, data center and gaming GPUs, and adaptive SoCs and FPGAs for embedded devices. The 500,000-square-foot campus and office space celebrates Indian art and craft, with huddle spaces and conference rooms designed to foster collaboration and creativity. The space features modern R&D labs spread over 60,000-square-feet and a large demo centre for visitors to experience AMD products and solutions. The campus also in-

cludes a cafeteria acoustically engineered to host gatherings of more than 2000 employees and a gym and a yoga centre to promote the holistic health and well-being of AMD employees.

Ashwini Vaishnav, Minister for Railways, Communications, Electronics and Information Technology, said, "India's semiconductor program launched under the leadership of Honourable Prime Minister Narendra Modi lays strong emphasis on supporting the

design and talent ecosystem for semiconductors. AMD setting up its largest design center in Bengaluru is a testament to the confidence global companies have in India." He added.

Mark Papermaster, Executive Vice President and Chief Technology Officer, AMD said, "We are pleased to inaugurate our largest global design center in Bengaluru today. This investment strengthens our relationship with India and showcases our confidence in the exceptional engineering talent that the country has to offer. The relentless pursuit of engineering excellence and innovation is the cornerstone of our success. This new design center will help propel technology and product development across the AMD portfolio, fuelling the next generation of high performance, adaptive and AI computing solutions for our customers around the world." He added.

"26th Edition of Bengaluru Tech Summit 2023" inaugurated based on theme "Breaking Boundaries"

ARUN KUMAR RAO
Bengaluru

Karnataka Chief Minister inaugurated prestigious "26th Edition of Bengaluru Tech Summit 2023". The three-day summit based on the theme Breaking Boundaries has set the state for convergence of tech leaders, start-ups, investors and research labs from the over 30 countries, to deliberate upon emerging technologies, ideas powering newer digital imperatives and how companies are navigating the future, embracing AI as the game changer.

Addressing delegates CM Siddaramaiah said "The digital divide is reality we must address, ensuring that the benefits of technology reach every citizen, regardless of their background. We aid to bridge this gap utilising the power of data and analytics to drive informed decision-making in governance. Beyond Bengaluru is a unique initiative in that direction with the primary focus of developing and enhancing ecosystems in regions beyond Bengaluru and bridging the digital divide". He added.

Karnataka IT minister Priyank Kharge said, Karnataka IT exports grew a whopping 27% to Rs 3.2 lakh crore in the 2022-23 financial year, taking the state's share in



India's IT exports to 42%. Karnataka is home to 14,000 startups contributing to an ecosystems valuation of \$164 billion. We are home to around 40 unicorns and the promise of upcoming unicorns on the horizon solidifies our position as global innovation hub" he stated.

Rishab Premji, chairman, Wipro, said, when I joined Wipro in 2007, the IT industry was valued at about \$47 billion. And last year, it reached almost \$245 billion, which means the industry has grown almost five times in last 16 years, the IT industry contributes nearly 8% of the GDP compared to 1% of the GDP about 30 years ago it employs more than 5 million people, with more than 40% of this talent in Karnataka.

Kiran Mazumdar-Shaw, Executive chairman, Biocon

said, The Indian biotech sector is poised to become a \$150 billion industry by 2030. Karnataka itself contributes to 40% of India's biotech sector, which is now approaching \$80 billion.

Kris Gopalkrishnan, Co-Founder Infosys, said, "The Indian IT industry is poised to grow to \$350 billion by 2030 from over \$200 billion currently. This is a high-growth industry. The global economy is going through a slowdown, these are cycles. I am confident that in the medium to long term, we will reach the \$350 billion mark, he added.

BTS The grand annual affair offered a buffet of innovative delight for delegates and visitors at the three day event. The myriad stalls spread out at the venue gave glimpse of the country's and especially Karnataka's growing tech might.

Punjab Submits 18 MSME project proposals to centre

CHANDIGARH: Punjab government has submitted over 18 projects with total worth of Rs 710 crore to the Union MSME Ministry. DPS Kharbanda, CEO of Invest Punjab, said they had presented project proposals, which included projects like setting up of MSME wing, capacity building of MSMEs.

The proposals also include creating an export cell, testing labs and roof-top solarisation among others, before the evaluation committee. Appreciating the efforts made by Punjab, the evaluating committee found the projects appropriate to the challenges being faced by MSMEs to remain competitive in the global supply chain. Kharbanda said they were hopeful that projects worth over Rs 500 crore would get approval from the Centre, which will help Punjab MSMEs in a big way.



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Maruti Suzuki to hike car prices in January



NEW DELHI: Maruti Suzuki announced on Monday that it will hike the prices of its cars from January 2024. The country's leading carmaker has informed the stock exchanges that it has decided to increase car prices due to increased input costs. "While the company makes maximum efforts to reduce costs and offset the increase, it may have to pass on some increase to the market," Maruti said in its regulatory filing. The price increase will vary across models, the company said. However, it did not specify the exact amount of the hike that is on the cards. Earlier in April this year, Maruti Suzuki had gone for a price hike across all models.

Maruti Suzuki to start battery manufacturing unit at Kharkhoda in 400 acre area

SATISH HANDA

Maruti Udyog earlier having its manufacturing units at Manesar and the cyber and millennium city now going to start another unit to manufacture cars in 800 acre area in the Industrial Modern Town (IMT) at Kharkhoda in Sonapat district sometime back, and the construction work for this project is going on the war footing basis. Production is likely to start in 2025-26. Maruti also took possession of another 100 acre area in this complex this year to start production of motorcycles and work for the construction for



the same have yet to start. According to information, in view of heavy demand of electric driven vehicles in future Maruti has decided to start another unit to manufacture batteries and has demanded a 400 acres area from Haryana State Industrial Development Corporation (HSIDC) in IMT at Kharkhoda.

Information reveals that

Haryana state government has started search to acquire nearly 5800 acre land from the farmers in 10 villages in surrounding areas of Barona, kirol, Prahladpur, Pai, Sohti, Jasirkhedi, Kanoda, Khedi Aasir, Kailasi and Nilotha villages on land pooling basis for which either good compensation or an alternate plots in developed area will be provided by the government as per buyers' choice. According to an officer of HSIDC after the arrival of Maruti Suzuki at Kharkhoda large number of manufacturers are willing to start their automobile ancillary units in IMT Kharkhoda.

India to host 35-nation cotton advisory committee meet from Dec 2 to 5



NEW DELHI: The Ministry of Textiles will host the 81st plenary meeting of the International Cotton Advisory Committee (ICAC) in Mumbai from December 2-5 which is likely to be attended by over 400 delegates from 35 countries. "It is a matter of honour and pride for India to host this event after nearly 8 years," the Ministry of Textiles said.

The four-day conference to be inaugurated by Union Minister of Textiles and Commerce & Industry Piyush Goyal will be attended by government representatives from various cotton growing and consuming countries/regions, reputed industrialists, important business delegates, eminent scientists, and researchers. The ICAC is an intergovernmental body covering cotton that is recognised by the United Nations. Formed in 1939, it has 28 member countries at present. India, along with Brazil, Egypt, France, Sudan, and the US, is one of the founder members of this forum.

In addition, other countries which are not ICAC members are also participating in the conference. The previous event was hosted by India in 2015 with the theme "From Farm to Fabric: The Many Faces of Cotton" focusing on value addition. Moving forward the conference will take the agenda from economics to ecology. This is also the 5th time that the ICAC Plenary Meeting is being held in India in the last 6 decades.

The Plenary Meetings of the ICAC provide a forum for discussions on international issues of importance to the World Cotton industry, and provides an opportunity for the industry and the government leaders from cotton producing, consuming and trading countries to deliberate on matters of mutual concern.

Jagadhri metal industry witnesses Rs 8 cr retail sale in a day

SATISH HANDA
Yamunanagar

Pilgrims from distant places visit Kapalmochan fair at Yamunanagar every year to have a holy dip in 'Sarovar' and according to a tradition use it to buy new utensils before leaving the festival. As such Jagadhri Metal Industry enjoyed bumper sale of utensils manufactured by them on Monday like past years and did business worth between rupees eight and nine crore. The town was full of display stalls installed in the area including at the place of fair. According to information, visitors from different states including Punjab, Himachal, Uttarakhand, Rajasthan, Delhi and within the state was an attraction this year.

Utensil manufacturers in Jagadhri: a metal town in Haryana that is well-known for its stainless steel, aluminium, brass and copper products not only in India but all over world well-known for its stainless steel, aluminium, brass and copper products. The industry, a majority of them in micro, small and medium category, is not only facing stiff competition from units located in other states but inverted duty structure post GST implementation has reduced their margins. Veterans of the industry said a few decades ago Jagadhri was the sole hub for utensil manufacturing. Its production was enough to meet



70-75% of domestic market demand. With other utensils hubs such as Jodhpur, Ahmedabad, Chennai, Maharashtra and Orissa having come up with their respective state government's support over the years, Jagadhri metal industry's share has come down drastically.

The manufacturers said that many manufacturing units have been closed in the past few years because of lack of support from the government. Information revealed that currently, the city comprises around 1,000 units engaged in stainless steel, aluminium, brass and copper utensils manufacturing in the micro, small and medium enterprises category. Most of the manufacturers said as there is no hand-holding from the state government like other states our share has come down drastically in past few years and now it is less than 15%, one of office

bearer of an association APS Bhatti said, as the industry has a limited market access, it's not expanding and the capital investment in this sector is almost stagnant here for many years as the market is not growing in accordance with manufacturing capabilities.

Tarun Goel, a former president of All India Aluminium Utensils Manufacturing Association said, logistics cost makes them unviable to market their products in other parts of the country as such over the years, new units have been set up across the country giving stiff competition to Jagadhri utensil manufacturers restricted to North India only, especially in Punjab, Haryana and Uttar Pradesh because the logistics costs make our products costlier than the products manufactured locally there and as a result they have a limited market access.

Empower India: Best practices of e-commerce companies helping reduce plastics in packaging

KULBIR SINGH KALSI
New Delhi

Empower India, leading public policy think-tank, studied best practices of the retail industry including e-commerce to reduce usage of plastics in packaging. While retail and e-commerce companies have taken measures to reduce single-use plastics - Amazon is ahead of the saving curve with Flipkart a close second followed by BigBasket.

The disposal of non-recyclable or non-biodegradable packaging materials contributes to landfills, pollution, and resource depletion. According to experts, 94% of plastics are recyclable where India only recycles about 60% and the rest is discarded into landfills and water bodies. As a result, sustainability in packaging is becoming increasingly crucial.

According to data online, Amazon is making steady progress in delivering products safely while continuing to

reduce packaging and increase recyclability. The company has eliminated 100% single-use, thin-film plastic packaging originating from its India fulfillment network since 2020, and introduced packing paper and paper cushions in its fulfillment network to replace plastic air pillows and bubble wraps. Paper cushions are used to fill the void space inside packages to ensure that the product is well protected in transit.

In the same year, Amazon also introduced 100% biodegradable paper tape to seal and secure outbound customer shipments. Flipkart on other hand introduced scalable sustainable alternatives such as eco-friendly paper shreds, replacing poly pouches with recycled paper bags, replacing bubble wraps with carton waste shredded material and 2 Ply roll to name a few. Amazon uses machine learning algorithms to determine the suitability of flexible packaging, resulting in packaging that is up to 90% lighter than similar-sized boxes. These algorithms have reduced the use of corrugated boxes by over 35% in North America and Europe in the past five years. Flipkart's Smart Packaging approach also focuses on right-sizing and minimizing packaging waste.



To address these challenges, the incubator will offer support from AWS, Crayon, and its partners, in realising their business ideas using the cloud and scaling their solutions for customers faster. This includes training on building a cloud business strategy - from understanding customer demographics to infrastructure migration, software-as-a-service (SaaS) solution development, leveraging advanced cloud capabilities like machine learning (ML), and artificial intelligence, and go-to-market strategies," Crayon said.

"India has the world's third largest startup hub, and local ISVs and startups have groundbreaking ideas that solve meaningful public sector challenges and drive positive citizen outcomes," said Vikas Bhonsle, CEO at Crayon Software Experts India.

A recent report by Accenture, commissioned by AWS, had noted that small businesses with cloud-enabled technologies in India's education, healthcare, and agriculture sectors alone could unlock up to Rs 1.6 trillion in annual productivity gains by 2030 - a 152 per cent increase on current levels. "The scale and the diversity of demographics in India present a unique opportunity for digital technology innovation, and it's important to nurture local businesses to develop solutions directly addressing these problem statements," said Sunil PP, Lead - Education, Space, Non-profits, Channels and Alliances, AWS India Private Limited.

Kickstart FC inks partnership deal with English Premier League club Tottenham Hotspur

ARUN KUMAR RAO
Bengaluru

Indian football, Kickstart FC, a premier football club and academy based in Karnataka, announces during Press conference a strategic partnership with renowned English Premier League side, Tottenham Hotspur Football Club. Graced by Tottenham ambassadors Ledley King & Osvaldo (Ossie) Ardiles, the historic unveil marks a pivotal moment in Karnataka & Indian football development.

Through the partnership, Kickstart FC will avail technical support from Tottenham Hotspur's Global Football Coaching Team - who will shape the club's training, curriculum, and footballing aspects. Additionally, Tottenham Hotspur will also have their technical staff stationed in Bengaluru itself, to assist Kickstart FC in aligning their training methods with the



English powerhouse. Already boasting an impressive record - The club's Women's team, finished Runner's Up in the recently concluded Indian Women's League Tournament - Kickstart FC has always placed impetus on player development across categories. This partnership will therefore assist in cementing and further aligning the club's efforts in the state of Karnataka.

Beneficial to both clubs, the

partnership also places keen motivation in strengthening the youth teams through competitive competition. Creating synergies for talent development, Kickstart FC's youth team will also be provided the opportunity to travel to the U.K, to train with Tottenham Hotspur's youth teams.

The affiliation with Tottenham Hotspur, catapults Kickstart FC onto the international stage, providing unparalleled exposure and recognition.

Games 24x7 joins forces with Karnataka Govt for GameTech Accelerate Programme

ARUN KUMAR RAO
Bengaluru

Games24x7, India's leading online skill gaming company, today joined forces with the Government of Karnataka, to launch the gaming industry's first-of-its-kind accelerator programme, "GameTech Accelerate - The Future of Gaming". This initiative, announced at the on-going Bengaluru Tech Summit 2023, aims to foster innovation and catalyse growth within the dynamic realm of online gaming. Through the accelerator programme, Games24x7 will help identify and mentor ventures offering innovative and viable solutions, bridging them to investors who are keen to back the sector.

Speaking on the occasion Priyank Kharge, Karnataka minister for IT and BT said, "Karnataka boasts one of the



most vibrant technology startup ecosystems in the nation, and we are dedicated to nurturing innovation and entrepreneurship through initiatives like these. The online gaming sector in India is rapidly evolving, and it is crucial to support this industry, which not only generates employment opportunities but also fosters innovation, contributing significantly to our digital economy. We are delighted to collaborate with Games24x7, who shares our commitment to responsible innovation, empowering aspiring entrepreneurs on their journey toward success." "In collaboration with the

Government of Karnataka, we aspire to foster entrepreneurship and innovation within the gaming industry, which has shown remarkable growth. Games24x7's accelerator programme represents our firm commitment to unlock the gaming industry's full potential. Our winners won't just receive accolades and mentorship; they'll pitch to potential investors, gaining crucial support to transform their visionary ideas into reality. We are also collaborating with AWS for this initiative, and are positive that their expertise will further bolster this programme," said Rajat Bansal, Chief Technology Officer, Games24x7.

In recognition of the multi-faceted nature of the gaming industry, the accelerator programme will revolve around four key focus areas: New Games (Real Money, Casual, Hyper

Casual, Educational, Simulation, Strategy, and MMO); Real-Time Analytics, Telemetry & Personalization; Security and Anti-Cheating Measures; and Community and Social Integration. These carefully selected themes encapsulate the core challenges and opportunities in the evolving gaming industry, with the intention of guiding and supporting participating startups to pioneer transformative solutions. The shortlist will be revealed at the forthcoming GAFEX event in Bangalore scheduled for January 2024. Following the accelerator programme, the upcoming month will host mentoring sessions empowering select startups to receive valuable guidance from Games24x7 and AWS experts, along with AWS credits. The programme will culminate with an exclusive investor session in the first week of March.

Indian Economy to End Fiscal Year with 6.7 pc Growth: Economists

NEW DELHI: The Indian economy is estimated to grow at a 6.7 per cent to 7 per cent rate in the financial year ending March 31, 2024, several economists said.

Their projections have increased after the country blew past growth estimates for the July-September quarter.

The country's economy expanded 7.6 per cent in the July-September quarter, trouncing estimates of a 6.8 per cent rise, data released on Thursday showed.

Stronger-than-expected growth in the first half of the year, along with continued government spending and some revival in private investment has prompted economists to raise their growth forecast to higher than the government's estimate of 6.5 per cent.

"With 7.7 per cent real GDP growth in the first half of 2023-24, the overall growth for full fiscal



year would be around 7 per cent... though there are chances that it may cross the 7 per cent mark," said Saumya Kanti Ghosh, chief economist at State Bank of India. He had an earlier forecast growth at 6.7 per cent.

The government stuck to its 6.5 per cent growth forecast for the year, but chief economic advisor V. Anantha Nageswaran said he was "more comfortable with an upside to this projection than before".

Citigroup revised its growth forecast for the financial year upwards by 50 basis points to 6.7 per cent citing a pick-up in investment activity.

Gross fixed capital formation, an indicator of investment, rose 11 per cent in the July-September quarter.

"This reaffirms our view of sustained investment recovery," the Wall Street bank's chief India economist Samiran Chakraborty said in a note.

Union Cabinet approves for Rs 1,261 crore scheme to provide drones to 15,000 women SHGs for 2 years

NEW DELHI: The Union Cabinet has approved a central scheme for providing drones to 15,000 women Self Help Groups (SHGs), with an outlay of Rs 1,261 crore for two years beginning 2024-25 fiscal year.

A decision in this regard was taken at the Cabinet meeting chaired by Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Tuesday, Information and Broadcasting Minister Anurag Thakur told reporters on Wednesday.

"The scheme aims to provide drones to 15,000 selected women SHGs during the period 2024-25 to 2025-2026 for providing rental services to farmers for agriculture purpose," Thakur said.

The approved initiatives under the scheme will provide sustainable business and livelihood support to 15,000 SHGs and they would be able to earn additional income of at least Rs 1,00,000 per annum, an official release said.

Gold has potential to re-sync global economic order and India can be the fulcrum in global economic corridor : MD, SBI

FW DESK New Delhi

"Today we have a more nuanced understanding of gold and the multi-faceted potential of gold to re-sync the global economic order. We have also seen how India can be the fulcrum in setting up global economic corridor," said Alok Kumar Choudhary, Managing Director, State Bank of India (SBI) at the 15th International Gold Economic Forum organised by ASSOCHAM.

"India's rich culture and traditions has a deep-rooted affinity for gold that transcends economic worth, it is a symbol of prosperity, tradition and auspices making it an integral part of social-economic landscape. Gold has played a crucial role in India's economic history, while the gold standard might not be in place anymore, several banks including the RBI continue to hold gold reserves as a staple component of their overall reserves," he added.

"In an interconnected world, economic ties transcend borders and gold's role as common accepted asset can foster a sense of



stability and potentially contribute to a more integrated, co-operative global economic system. Banks as critical stakeholders in the financial ecosystem play an important role in formalising gold to ensure the integrity of the financial system," he added.

Addressing the gathering, Dr. C. Rangarajan, Former Chairman - Economic Advisory Council to the Prime Minister of India & Former Governor - RBI said, "Gold has been a tangible asset since ancient times, in all cultures and across all periods of history. While held as reserve by central banks, it no longer plays the role

of intermediary in circulation. As the second largest consumer of gold, India accounts for one-fourth of the global demand. India's import of gold was 394 tons in 2000 and 774 tons in 2022 or 135 million USD. In 2022-23, gold imports accounted for 52.2% of the current account deficit. The current level of import duty on gold is reasonable and is among the lowest among commodities."

Somasundaram PR Regional CEO India World gold council, said "Gold is a very good diversifier, it de-risks your portfolio and enables you to take more risk in other financial asset classes. India, as a gold consumer, can also be proud to have HUID technology through which every piece of jewellery hallmarked can be traced to its origins, which is aspirational in other markets."

Suvanker Sen Co-Chairman, National council on commodity markets ASSOCHAM, said "Consumer behaviour over the years in India has proven that in gold we trust. The various initiatives undertaken by all stakeholders has achieved a lot but a lot more

can be done. The growth of the country is closely linked with the rise of gold as an asset. The 25,000 tons of gold that is embedded in our economy is one major driver of our growth."

Mrugank Paranjpe, Chairman, National council on commodity markets ASSOCHAM, in his address said, "Gold always glitters in every aspects of the commodities market in India. It is the best hedge and has proven to be the best way of creating value."

S C Aggarwal Senior Member Managing Committee ASSOCHAM, said "Gold has multiple usage, as an ornament, it is a status symbol and an investment as well. India needs around 800 tons of gold every year necessitating imports which increases our fiscal deficit."

Arvind Kumar Former Senior Economic Advisor, Govt. of India addressing the gathering at the forum said, "Gold is both an item of consumption and investment. Demand is driven by jewellery fabrication as well as gold bars for investment. It is a misconception that the import of gold impacts exchange rates."

Focus on Infrastructure Empowering Indian Economy: Union Minister

NEW DELHI: Union Minister for Commerce & Industry Piyush Goyal said that India's focus on infrastructure is empowering the economy and giving it a fillip.

Addressing the Inaugural session of third India Debt Capital Market Summit 2023 - Onwards & Upwards', Goyal said that massive investments both from the government and from the private sector, directed towards infrastructure is boosting the infrastructural capabilities of the country.

He said competitive source of financing is attracting investments from those who are looking for greater safety. Goyal added that the stock market is also hitting a 4 trillion mark for the first time and India being amongst the top five global markets has huge opportunities.

The union minister pointed out that the country is the fifth largest economy in the world and the fastest growing economy at 7.6 per cent, this quarter.

"A resilient debt capital market will be the catalyst for innovation, entrepreneurship and infrastructure develop-



ment," he said.

He noted that massive urbanization will happen over the next few decades even as Tier 2 cities are also going to become metropolitan cities. Rural Areas incomes are rising, raising spending power across the country. "Futuristic sectors like AI, semiconductors, electric vehicles, will be powering our future. Green and sustainable energy will be the way forward and the capital markets and debt markets are playing their role in our energy transition to a low carbon economy," the minister added.

Goyal said that India has been able to increase exports of goods and services, almost 55 per cent from 500 billion in 2021 to 776 billion last year. He said that with two conflicts going on around the world and there is a prospect of recession in the developed economies.

Federal Bank Announces Strategic Collaboration with NeML for Enhanced eProcurement and eAuction Integration

FW DESK New Delhi

Federal Bank is pleased to announce a pivotal collaboration with NCDEX e Markets Limited (NeML) to fortify the integration of eProcurement and eAuction systems. NeML, a wholly owned subsidiary of National Commodity & Derivatives Exchange Limited (NCDEX), holds a commanding market share in transparent price discovery across more than 90 commodities.

This strategic alliance is set to facilitate an advanced eProcurement solution, streamlining the processes for Central and State Government organizations. Under this initiative, farmers can seamlessly list crop details on NeML's platform, and the government will subsequently purchase them at the approved Minimum Support Price (MSP). The integration of Federal Bank's Host-to-Host with NeML's eProcurement platform ensures a seamless and efficient payment processing system for these critical government transactions. In addition, NeML's eAuction



solution brings significant benefits to the Government of India by providing a robust price-discovery mechanism for various commodities.

The key advantages of this system include nationwide participation, improved price discovery, and safeguarding against possible cartel formations, ensuring a fair chance for participants to enhance their bid value as per market scenarios.

Salient Features of the Collaborative Endeavor:

End-to-end digital execution of payments and collections.

A plug-and-play solution tailored for government clients.

Simplified one-time documentation process with clients.

Automated reconciliation of each remittance within NeML's web portal.

Customizable payment advice to each beneficiary against the

payment.

No additional charges or costs involved.

Delegates Signing the Memorandum of Understanding (MOU): Mr. Indraneel Pandit (Senior Vice President & Zonal Business Head Federal Bank, CIB West), Mr. Vikas Mulya (Deputy Vice President - I & Head - GIB West), Mr. Sagar Deshpande (Senior Manager & Circle Business Head, GIB) and Mr. Dhawal Shah (Chief Operating Officer, NeML), Mr. Anand Ganapathy (Assistant Vice President - Special Projects, NeML)

This collaborative effort underscores Federal Bank's unwavering commitment to innovation and transparency in financial services, aligning seamlessly with NeML's stringent governance and compliance standards.

India Shining in Economic Parameters

SATISH SINGH

According to the data released

by the National Statistical Office (NSO) on November 30, the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) grew at the rate of 7.6 percent in the second quarter of the current financial year, while the GDP growth rate in the same period of the last financial year was 6.3 percent. This growth rate is more than the Monetary Policy Committee's estimate of 6.5 percent. Even in the first quarter of the financial year 2023-24, the GDP growth rate was 7.8 percent. It is noteworthy that in the September quarter, real GDP was Rs.41.75 lakh crore, while nominal GDP was Rs.74.66 lakh crore.

In the last 5 years i.e., in the financial year 2018-19, GDP grew at the rate of 6.80 percent, while in the financial year 2019-20 it was 3.70 percent, in the financial year 2020-21 it was minus 6.60 percent, in the financial year 2021-22 it was 8.70 percent and in the financial year 2022-23, GDP growth was recorded at the rate of 7.2 percent.

The GDP growth rate in the June quarter of FY 2023 was 13.1 percent, while it was 6.3 percent in the September quarter, 4.4 percent in the December quarter and 6.1 percent in the March quarter. The growth rate in Gross Value Added (GVA) in the September quarter of the current financial year was 7.4 percent, whereas it was expected to grow at the rate of 6.8 percent. In the first quarter it had grown at the rate of 7.8 percent, whereas in the same period last year it had grown at the rate of 5.4 percent. GVA



reflects economic activities related to the supply of products, while GDP reflects economic activities related to demand.

Urban consumption, manufacturing and government expenditure have contributed significantly to the growth of GDP. The growth rate in the manufacturing sector was 13.9 percent, while the growth rate in the construction sector was 13.3 percent. At the same time, the growth rate of mining sector was 10 percent, while the growth rate of electricity-water sector was 0.1 percent, defence sector was 7.6 percent, finance and property sector were 6 percent and business and transportation sector was 4.3 percent. However, the agriculture sector grew at just 1.2 percent in the second quarter of FY24.

The infrastructure or core sector grew at the rate of 12.1 percent in the month of October, whereas this sector had grown at the rate of 0.7 percent in the last financial year. In the month of October, except fertilizer, all other sectors have registered a growth, while in the month of September, an average growth of 9.2 percent was recorded in the sectors of coal, crude oil, steel, cement, refinery, natural gas and electricity. The production growth rate of 8

major sectors during April to October was 8.6 percent, which was 8.4 percent a year ago.

According to the Governor of Reserve Bank of India, Shri Shaktikanta Das, the GDP growth rate may also see a rise in the next quarter, because the inflation in the month of October was 4.87 percent, which was 5.02 percent in the month of September and 6.83 percent in the month of August and all the sectors of the economy are improving. Key economy related parameters also remain strong.

India's fiscal deficit in October stood at Rs.8.03 trillion, 45 percent of the full-year budget estimate of Rs.17.86 trillion. In the same period last year, this deficit was 45.6 percent of the budget estimate for the financial year 2022-23. Thus, a reduction of 0.06 percent has been recorded in the fiscal deficit. Fiscal deficit refers to the difference between expenditure and revenue.

According to the data released by NSO, the urban unemployment rate remained stable at 6.6 percent in the September quarter of the current financial year. The unemployment rate among men increased to 6 percent in the September quarter from 5.9 percent in the June quarter, while the unem-

ployment rate among women declined to 8.6 percent in the September quarter from 9.1 percent in the June quarter.

Women's participation in the labour force was 20.4 percent in the March quarter of 2022, which increased to 20.9 percent in the June quarter, 21.7 percent in the September quarter, 22.3 percent in the December quarter and 22.7 percent in the March quarter of 2023. It was 23.2 percent in the June quarter of 2023 and 24.0 percent in the September quarter.

The unemployment rate among youth above 15 years of age has been the lowest in the last 5 years. At the same time, the unemployment rate among youth aged 15 to 29 years was 17.6 percent in the June quarter, which came down to 17.3 percent in the September quarter. It may be noted that after the high unemployment rate of 12.6 percent recorded in the June quarter of 2022, there is a continuous decline in the unemployment rate in urban areas.

The unemployment rate in the urban sector was 8.2 percent in the March quarter of 2022, which declined to 7.6 percent in the June quarter, 7.2 percent in the September quarter, 7.2 percent in the December quarter, 6.8 percent in the March quarter of 2023, 6.6 percent in the June quarter and 6.6 percent in the September quarter.

Standard & Poor's Global (S&P Global) has increased the GDP growth forecast for the financial year 2023-24 from 6 percent to 6.4 percent. According to the agency, the reason for this is the strengthening of economic standards in the domestic market. However, S&P Global has reduced its GDP growth forecast for fiscal year

2024-25 to 6.4 percent from 6.9 percent. The agency feels that economic activity in India may weaken in the second half of fiscal year 2024.

According to S&P Global, apart from India, the economies of Indonesia, Malaysia and Philippines are also growing strongly, while China's economy, which is ranked second in the world, is expected to grow at the rate of 4.6 percent in the financial year 2024.

It is clear from the increase in both GDP and GVA that the demand and supply of various products remains strong, due to which all economic activities are also gaining momentum. Reduction in fiscal deficit indicates that revenue collection exceeds expenditure, which is an indicator of a strong economy. Core sectors remain strong. The stable unemployment rate indicates that our economy is strong and has completely emerged from the ill effects of the Corona pandemic. The increase in participation of half the population in the labour force speaks of a positive change in the country.

Due to the continued strength of the Indian economy, S&P Global has increased the GDP growth forecast for the financial year 2023-24 from 6 percent to 6.4 percent, while the GDP of China, the world's second largest economy is estimated to grow at a rate of 4.6 percent in FY24, which is much lower than India's GDP growth rate estimate. Today, when many countries of the world are struggling with the negative effects of global recession, India's growth rate is continuously mounting.

Satish Singh, Ahmedabad based Senior Columnist, Views are personal

Capital outlay of top 18 states to increase by 18-20% in FY24 : CRISIL Ratings

NEW DELHI: The capital outlay of India's top 18 states has increased by 18-20 per cent this fiscal as against about 14 per cent in fiscal 2023, said CRISIL Ratings Ltd in a report.

According to CRISIL Ratings, the 18 states account for about 90 per cent of the aggregate gross state domestic product of all states.

The states studied by CRISIL Ratings are: Maharashtra, Gujarat, Karnataka, Tamil Nadu, Uttar Pradesh, Telangana, Rajasthan, West Bengal, Madhya Pradesh, Andhra Pradesh, Kerala, Odisha, Punjab, Bihar, Chhat-



tisgarh, Haryana, Jharkhand and Goa.

The increase in spending will be supported by healthy goods and services tax (GST) collection, stable and upfront devolution from the central government (share in central taxes, or SICT), and allocation of Rs 1.3 lakh crore (Rs 1 lakh crore budgeted last fiscal) in the form of interest-free

loans to all the states for capital expenditure (capex).

This fiscal, states have budgeted a strong approximately 43 per cent increase

In their capital outlays from fiscal 2023 levels. If actual spending continues at past averages of 82-85% of the budgeted outlay, it would translate to 18-20 per cent growth this fiscal, said Anuj Sethi, Senior Director, CRISIL Ratings Here, we expect elections in some states, funding support from the Centre in the form of advance payment of SICT, and strong GST collection to provide the impetus.

SAMCO Mutual Fund Launching DAAF in "TRANSFORMER" model

DOMINICK RODRIGUES Mumbai

Samco Mutual Fund announced the launch of its 'Dynamic Asset Allocation Fund' (DAAF) offering unmatched investment stability and growth potential. The NFO opens December 7 and closes on December 21, 2023.

Viraj Gandhi, CEO, SAMCO Mutual Fund, told media here recently that understanding the mindset of investors seeking to invest in the hybrid category was important as investors today sought FD-plus returns, limited risk and Return of Capital in unforeseen events.

He said that the DAAF has been designed to provide investors an unparalleled blend of stability, growth potential and downside protection in today's dynamic market environment. "This is India's first DAAF

that follows the momentum model with capability to move to debt entirely in tough times, and has focus on reducing volatility and drawdowns while optimizing returns," he said, adding that this fund will redefine investment experiences and set new benchmarks in the industry. Describing SAMCO Mutual Fund as a "predominantly equity-dominant fund" which featured the game-changing DAAF Scheme's dynamic "TRANSFORMER" model that enabled investors to navigate market fluctuations with confidence, Umeshkumar Mehta, CIO, SAMCO Mutual Fund, said that in the "Bull or Bear" market, this model highlighted "Transformation" to adjust strategic equity allocation according to core trends identification via: regression models, time series, momentum indicators and so on.



MODIFI targets \$4.5 bn in SME Cross Border Finance in 5 years

NEW DELHI: Fintech firm MODIFI has set an aim to increase its small and medium-sized enterprises (SME) cross border finance book to USD 4.5 billion in next five years, from USD 2 billion currently, co-founder and CEO Nelson Holzner told to media.

Confident to triple the business in next five years, he further said, "Obviously situations like Covid-19 can derail plans but we would like to triple the business to USD 4.5 billion."

The Amsterdam headquartered fintech provides digital financing options to SMEs for cross-border payments. Through the platform, SME exporters can get instant finance from the fintech against their invoices and the buyer can experience the "Buy Now Pay Later" model wherein they have the option to pay back the fintech within 30-120 days.

INTERNATIONAL

Inflation, high interest rates & war may drag Global Economic Growth to 2.7% in 2024: OECD

NEW DELHI: Despite the global economy being resilient this year it is likely to slow down next year because of wars, still-elevated inflation and continued high interest rates.

The Paris-based Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development estimated on Wednesday that international growth would slow to 2.7% in 2024 from an expected 2.9% pace this year. That would amount to the slowest calendar-year growth since the pandemic year of 2020. Regardless of the gloomier outlook, the organization is "projecting that recessions will be avoided almost everywhere," OECD Secretary-General Mathias Cormann said at a news conference. However, he added, there are risks that inflation will stay persistently high and that the Israel-Hamas conflict and Russia's war in Ukraine could affect prices for commodities, such as oil or grain.

One of the significant aspects in the slowdown is that the OECD expects the world's two biggest economies, the United States and China, to decelerate next year. The U.S. economy is forecast to expand just 1.5% in 2024, from 2.4% in 2023, as the



Federal Reserve's interest rate increases — 11 of them since March 2022 — continue to restrain growth. The Fed's higher rates have made borrowing far more expensive for consumers and businesses and, in the process, have helped slow inflation from its four-decade peak in 2022. The OECD foresees U.S. inflation dropping from 3.9% this year to 2.8% in 2024 and 2.2% in 2025, just above the Fed's 2% target level.

For now, the American economy looks strong: The Commerce Department reported Wednesday that U.S. economic growth came in at a brisk 5.2% annual pace from July through

September, helped by strong consumer spending and an uptick in private investment.

The Chinese economy, beset by a destructive real estate crisis, rising unemployment and slowing exports, is expected to expand 4.7% in 2024, down from 5.2% this year. China's "consumption growth will likely remain subdued due to increased precautionary savings, gloomier prospects for employment creation and heightened uncertainty," the OECD said.

Also likely to contribute to a global slowdown are the 20 countries in the European Union that share the euro currency. They have been hurt by

heightened interest rates and by the jump in energy prices that followed Russia's invasion of Ukraine. The OECD expects the collective growth of the eurozone to amount to 0.9% next year — weak but still an improvement over a predicted 0.6% growth in 2023.

"A key takeaway today is the stronger outlook for the U.S., which we've revised up for 2024, but a weaker outlook for Europe, which we've revised down," OECD chief economist Clare Lombardelli told reporters. She pointed to the impact on Europe from the spike in energy prices last year after Russia cut off most of its natural gas to the continent. That sent costs soaring for households and businesses, driving a cost-of-living crisis and hurting factories in places like Germany.

The world economy has endured one shock after another since early 2020 — the eruption of COVID-19, a resurgence of inflation as the rebound from the pandemic showed unexpected strength, the war in Ukraine and painfully high borrowing rates as central banks acted aggressively to combat the acceleration of consumer prices.

India backs UNGA resolution demanding Israel to withdraw from Golan Heights



India has backed a UN General Assembly (UNGA) resolution demanding that Israel withdraw from the occupied Golan Heights, a territory the Jewish nation captured from Syria in the Six-Day War of 1967.

India was among the 91 countries that voted on Tuesday for the resolution that declared Israel's occupation of the territory a "stumbling block" to a "just, comprehensive and lasting peace in the region".

New Delhi's vote for the resolution reaffirmed its support for the Arab cause in the conflicts involving Israel, after having abstained — likely for the time — on a resolution backed by Palestine.

It cited its failure to condemn the massacre inflicted on Israel by Hamas on

October 7 as the reason for abstaining.

The Golan Heights resolution on Tuesday co-sponsored by Bangladesh, demanded that "Israel withdraw from all the occupied Syrian Golan to the line of 4 June 1967" before the start of the Six-Day War during which Israel captured the Golan Heights as well as Gaza.

It rejected Israel's de facto annexation of the Golan Heights and the imposition of its laws.

The members of the European Union, several other European countries and Japan were among the nations that abstained.

The US and its allies, Britain, Australia, Canada and Israel, as well as a few Pacific Island states, voted against it.

15% of US population is now foreign-born: Study



WASHINGTON: The total foreign-born population in the US, legal and illegal, was 49.5 million in October 2023, — a record 4.5 million increase since President Joe Biden took office in 2021, a study by a Washington-based think tank found.

At 15 per cent, the immigrant or foreign-born share of the US population is also the highest ever recorded in American history, the Center for Immigration Studies said, citing an October 2023 survey by the Census Bureau.

As a debate rages in the country over the ongoing border crisis, the study showed that the 4.5 million increase is larger than the individual populations of 25 US states.

The foreign-born population has grown on average by 137,000 a month since Biden took office, compared to 42,000 a month during Donald Trump's presidency before Covid-19 hit, and 68,000 a month during Barack Obama's two terms.

Based on the think tank's prior estimates of illegal immigrants, more than half of the 4.5 million increase in the foreign-born population since January 2021 is likely due to illegal immigration.

From January 2021 to October 2023, there have been roughly eight million "encounters" at US borders, according to Customs and Border Protection.

Court records and other information on the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) websites indicate that

about 2.6 million (possibly 2.7 million) inadmissible aliens have been released into the country since the start of the Biden administration.

While a large share of the recent foreign-born growth is attributed to illegal immigration, legal immigrants still account for three-fourths of the total foreign-born population.

A significant number of new illegal immigrants, and perhaps a majority before the current border surge, were admitted legally on a temporary visa or under the visa waiver program and then did not leave the country when the time limit expired, the study said.

The Department of Homeland Security for FY 2022 showed 850, 000 foreign visitors overstayed their authorized stay in that year.

The largest percentage increases since January 2021 were for immigrants from South America (up 28 per cent); Central America (up 25 per cent); Sub-Saharan Africa (up 21 per cent); the Caribbean (up 20 per cent); and the Middle East (up 14 per cent).

Immigrants from all of Latin America increased by 2.9 million since January 2021, accounting for 63 per cent of the total increase in the foreign-born. The foreign-born in Census Bureau data included all persons who were not US citizens at birth, mainly naturalised citizens, lawful permanent residents, long-term temporary visitors, and illegal immigrants.

Freshworks Appoints Mika Yamamoto as Chief Customer and Marketing Officer



SAN MATEO: Freshworks Inc. today announced the appointment of Mika Yamamoto as the company's Chief Customer and Marketing Officer. She will be responsible for leading the company's global marketing and customer experience teams. Yamamoto comes to Freshworks from F5 (NASDAQ: FFIV) where she most recently served as the Executive Vice President and the Chief Marketing and Customer Engagement Officer, and led the company's data, marketing, digital transformation, and customer experience efforts across all products, segments, channels, and geographies.

"Mika's combined CMO and CXO roles have given her a unique perspective that has ultimately led to innovative, measurable changes for employees, customers, and prospects," said Dennis Woodside, President at Freshworks. "She has a long-standing track record of leading global and diverse customer experience teams and delivering exceptional go-to-market results at large public technology companies with multi-domain businesses serving customers big and small. Her know-how and desire to build and scale a large enduring company makes her a great addition to our Freshworks leadership team."

Indian-origin man among 12 arrested in Canada auto theft ring bust

TORONTO: A 25-year-old Indian-origin man is among 12 people who have been arrested in connection with an auto theft and insurance fraud ring in and around the Greater Toronto Area, police said.

The Peel Regional Police said on Wednesday that nine stolen vehicles, valued at over \$1.2 million, were seized and more than 81 charges were laid in the investigation, called Project Memphis.

Rahul Bedi from Mississauga was charged for committing fraud worth \$5, 000 and trafficking stolen goods, and along with other accused, he attempted to defraud multiple financial and insurance



institutions.

"Project Memphis was a complex and multi-faceted investigation that required incredible investigative efforts," said Nishan Duraipaham,

Chief, Peel Regional Police.

"The success of this investigation was a testament to effective collaboration and the shared goal of disrupting criminality of all kind."

Teledyne's Contact Image Sensors for high-speed, high-resolution line scan are now in production

Investigators said that the project "prevented \$350, 000 in insurance fraud", and the vehicles seized during the investigation include BMWs, Range Rovers, Bentley Bentayga, Porsche Panamera and Jeep Wrangler.

The project began in March 2023 when Peel Regional Police were provided information of a possible re-vinned vehicle.

In re-vinning, the original identification number, or VIN, of the vehicle is removed and replaced with a forged number. Investigators determined some of the stolen vehicles were being re-vinned, fraudulently re-registered and sold in Mississauga.

Fluence Named An Official UN Global Compact Signatory Member

FLUENCE: Teledyne DALSA is pleased to announce that its Ax-CIS family of high-speed and high-resolution fully integrated line scan imaging modules are in production. These easy-to-use Contact Image Sensors (CIS) combine sensors, lenses, and lights all-in-one, offering a lower cost inspection system for many demanding machine vision applications. Powered by Teledyne's multilayer CMOS image sensors, Ax-CIS delivers superior image quality, up to 120 kHz line rates for mono, or 60 kHz x 2 for HDR imaging, at a pixel size of 28 µm or 900 dpi resolution, so that defects can be detected with unprecedented precision.

"Coil on Module" enables ultra-thin electronic data page for Turkish passports with exceptional document durability and protection against forgery

ARUN KUMAR RAO
Munich (Germany)

Türkiye has issued nearly five million next-generation electronic passports with contactless Coil on Module (CoM CL) solution from Infineon Technologies AG, a company press statement said. The passport includes a polycarbonate (PC) data page with an integrated security chip, which is embedded in a contactless module based on the reliable CoM technology. The data page contains sensitive personal data of the holder.

Due to the security-critical nature of this information, official travel documents must be designed to highest security standards in order to provide reliable protection against tampering and fraud. Infineon's contactless CoM solution not



only increases the robustness of the ePassport, but also enables enhanced security.

Statement said, "At Infineon, we are delighted to continue our role as a trusted partner to Türkiye by consistently integrating our security components into the new government identity eDocuments," said Maurizio Skerlj, Vice President Authentication & Identity Solutions at Infineon's Connected Secure Systems Division. "Enabled by embedded Infineon components, the new eDatapage is

only 630 µm thick, making it one of the thinnest in the world. We are very proud of this attractive and reliable product that represents the next level of document security and design." Coil on Module technology for enhanced security and reliability Innovative Coil on Module contactless packaging technology is designed for highly robust and flexible contactless government ID and passport documents. These travel documents require appropriate security and robustness over their lifetime, which is typically up to ten years. This packaging solution is based on inductive coupling technology, which uses a radio frequency link to wirelessly connect the module to the antenna embedded in the document, similar to the link between a card and a contactless card reader.

UK-India Business Council conference highlights investment opportunities 'India at 2047'

FW DESK
Mumbai

The Consumer Story' highlights investment opportunities and the link between consumer empowerment and India's economic prosperity in the run up to 2047

UK India Business Council (UKIBC) hosted an 'India by 2047' Consumer Conference on Wednesday, November 29 in Mumbai to bring together Indian and UK business, government and academia to examine India's growth story and how, as we approach India at 100 in 2047, rising prosperity will substantially change consumption and investment patterns in India.

The event, which heard from distinguished speakers: His Majesty's Trade Commissioner for South Asia, Harjinder Kang; Chairman and Managing Director, Raymond Ltd, Gautam Hari Singhania; CEO - Lifestyle Business, Raymond Ltd, Sunil Kataria; Group CEO, UKIBC, Richard McCallum, and UK and Indian businesses invested in India, underlined the enormous opportunities coming from India's rising middle class and growing purchasing power. UK

After marrying Pakistani man Anju back in India to visit her previous husband

JAGMOHAN SINGH
Amritsar

Indian woman Anju Thomas alias Fatima the 34-year-old Indian mother of two children, had travelled to Pakistan to marry her social media friend in July, returned to India through Attari/Wagah border here today.

Anju alias Fatima mother of two children, had traveled to a remote village in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province of Pakistan to marry her Facebook (social media) love Nasrullah and had even left her children behind in India.

Earlier Nov 29, at Pakistani side, she was accompanied by her Pakistani husband Nasrullah accompanied her to the Wagah border to see her off.

On reaching India at Attari border from Pakistan, was not allowed to interact with the media as she straightway went to Airport to catch a flight for Delhi.

At Shri Guru Ramdas International Airport, she was spotted wearing BURKA (Cladding) intercepted by the media, and

Celebrite Showcases Innovations in Digital Intelligence at Milipol 2023

TYSONS CORNER: Celebrite DI Ltd. a global leader in Digital Intelligence (DI) solutions for the public and private sectors, continued its commitment to accelerating justice around the globe with a leading presence at Milipol, the preeminent global law enforcement and homeland security event held November 14-17, 2023 in Paris.

In addition to serving as one of the show's sponsors, Celebrite's senior leadership, sales and service teams engaged with law enforcement professionals from more than 100 countries to discuss industry best practices and showcase recent innovations and emerging digital solutions. Highlights of Celebrite's show presence include:

EMEA Senior Leadership convening with dozens of law enforcement professionals to discuss best practices and explore opportunities to streamline and modernize the handling of digital data from time of extraction to prosecution; Center-floor exhibition booth space with demonstrations, including an interactive "Solve Suite" where law enforcement could attempt to solve a crime using Celebrite's powerful digital intelligence solution, Pathfinder; A range of Celebrite panel presentations around the role of AI in investigations, data extraction, results of Celebrite's 2024 Industry Trends Survey and our latest innovation: Smart Search which leverages public data to inform investigations, device triage to uncover the strongest evidence.

"Milipol is a can't-miss opportunity for our team to nurture relationships with a diverse range of law enforcement professionals from all corners of the globe," said Ori Nurick, EVP Portfolio Strategy of Celebrite. "By meeting with our current customers and meeting new prospects who are considering adopting digital intelligence into their workflows, we are actively delivering on our mission to accelerate justice in the global community."



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businesses highlighted their ongoing commitment to supporting India's growth going forward and partnering with Indian business to the benefit of both countries.

Experts identified the innovative ways that businesses are supporting the expanding demand across multiple segments of consumer-driven opportunities. The conference further highlighted the imperative for companies to align their strategies with consumer-centric approaches to drive innovation.

Held one week after the Indian economy passed the USD 4 trillion mark — making India the fifth country to pass the mark —

experts shared futuristic insights on the exciting, transformative consumer trends happening in the country, including the mass rollout and benefits of new technologies, rising purchase power, and spending habits, to identify the role that business can play to supercharge such trends and spur economic growth. As the Indian economy continues to grow at around 7 percent yoy and forecast to continue at such pace in coming decades, speakers highlighted the impact on incomes per capita, which are expected to top USD 10,000 by 2047, and the rising demand for more and new products as

a result. An impactful industry panel featuring speakers from UKIBC, Mahindra, Pearson, Niva Bupa, HSBC India and PwC India was also held on "Trends and Prospects: Consumers in India" to discuss a range of changing trends and patterns of consumer preferences and purchasing choice in India, the impact of digital penetration and innovative technological tools on consumer interactions, business opportunities and consumer-focused products and solutions.

The development and utilization of new technologies in India emerged as a clear theme in India's success in recent years, with Indian and UK businesses committed to expanding on collaborative R&D, innovation, technology, and manufacture and rollout of new technologies to support consumers. Currently, around 700 million people in India are using the internet regularly and expected to rise to 900 million by 2025. The UK and India are both leaders in digital payments and fintech innovations.

Richard McCallum, Group CEO, UKIBC, delivering the welcome address, said: "The revolution in digitisation has played an incredible role in unlocking latent demand across India — enabling consumer purchases at the click of a button. Together, our countries and the businesses within them are collaborating, partnering, and learning from each other to further this transformation. UKIBC convenes business and government to help address this growing demand and foster ever greater, deeper partnerships that support consumers across the country and India's USD 5 trillion ambition."

Gautam Hari Singhania, CMD, Raymond, during the conversation stated that: "India as a consumer market is booming with opportunity. The Indian consumer today is well exposed to global trends and the rapid proliferation of brands in smaller markets, be it through traditional retail as well as e-commerce is spurring growth. It is exciting to see the expansion in categories and new segments within the fashion and lifestyle which reflect the soaring aspirations of new age India. As a traditional homegrown brand with 98 year lineage it's heartening to see this consumer evolution."

NARGIS FAKHRI

says her 'TatluBaaz' character uses sensuality to her advantage



MUMBAI: Actress Nargis Fakhri, who is known for 'Rockstar', 'Madras Cafe', 'Dishoom' and other films, has shared that her character in the streaming show 'TatluBaaz' uses her sensuality to her advantage.

The series, which marks her webseries debut, follows the story of Bulbul Tyagi (played by Dheeraj Dhooper), India's most notorious scamster and con-artist.

He sets out to perform his greatest scam yet -- conning the influential figure of

Benaras. The plot thickens when Bulbul crosses paths with the attractive but not-so-simple Isabelle Tripathi (Nargis Fakhri) and Disha (Divya Agarwal), leading to their involvement in the biggest scandal of all time.

Expressing her enthusiasm for her webseries debut, Nargis Fakhri quipped, "The story is incredibly thrilling, and my character, Isabelle, is unlike any role I've played before, and she is cunning and uses her sensuality and adds spice to the show. I can't wait for the audience to experience the show."

Excited about his OTT debut, Dheeraj Dhooper said, "I was thrilled when offered this role, a complete departure from the characters I portrayed on television. The challenges of multiple disguise looks made it extremely exciting and satisfying. I can't wait for my fans to experience this fun con drama with unexpected twists and turns. I'm confident they'll be craving more at the end of the show, perhaps a hint for 'TatluBaaz 2.'"

Documentary 'Kanpur Files' provides a strong base to secure Justice for 1984 Sikh Genocide Victims across India

KULBIR SINGH KALSI
Chandigarh

A documentary titled "Kanpur Files", created by production house Global Middas Capital (GMC), in association with Global Middas Foundation (GMF), is based on the real life events of 127 Sikhs Massacred in Kanpur, Uttar Pradesh in 1984. The genocide was carried out across different states in the country after the assassination of the then Prime Minister of India Mrs. Indira Gandhi. 1 hour & 25 minutes long Documentary would be launched on GMF & SADDA KHIRDA PUNJAB YouTube channel.

Where do the victims stand in terms of getting legal justice for the killings, loot & compensation for damaging personal properties & businesses, inhuman acts of shame against women, girls & children? What have been the key issues and struggle faced by the victims and their families? What are the challenges being faced by the Sikhs in securing justice for the victims for almost 40 years? What all these families from Uttar Pradesh's Kan-



pur district went through during 1984 Sikh genocide has been showcased in the documentary. The objective of the documentary is to put before the world facts for the 1st time based on True Facts, Evidences, Legal Trials details, Loopholes & Hurdles in conducting Investigation, Mob Lynching & Instigation of Genocide by targeting specific Community Worldwide to see



& Sardar Kuldip Singh Bhogal, President of the All India Riot Victims Relief Committee, 1984 and his team in this documentary. Jasdeep Kaur has written & Directed the Documentary.

Sardar Inder Preet Singh Founder, GMF & GMC has appealed to all the Sikhs in India & Internationally from various Religious & Political Institutions/Organizations, Institutions working to safeguard Human Rights, Democratic Rights, Minorities Rights, Civil Liberties, Interfaith Belief Institutions, Mob Lynching & Instigation of Genocide by targeting specific Community Worldwide to see

the documentary and promote it's shows in Colleges, Universities, Gurdwaras and do a special screening for General Public & those associated with above institutions to create mass level awareness & to appeal to them to support and seek justice on humanitarian grounds. This incident was very unfortunate but it is a matter of regret that even after about four decades, no concrete action was taken against the main culprits, prime accused and the mastermind behind this massacre who is still absconding and whose involvement is clearly established in 127 Sikh Killings & other criminal violent activities across Kanpur which is exposed in this Documentary with proof. This is the very first time that the entire journey of 39 years till now since 1984 has been covered with minute detail. This will further assist in getting the United Nations & international coordinated support for getting the long awaited justice and rehabilitation of those who lost everything during nationwide 1984 Sikh Genocide. The documentary was released on 26th November 2023 on Global Middas Group's GMF and Sadda Khirda Punjab YouTube channels.

POTPOURRI

Firing outside Gippy Grewal's Canada home suspected to be extortion bid by Bishnoi gang

NEW DELHI: The firing incident outside the residence of Punjabi singer Gippy Grewal in Canada is suspected to be an extortion bid, said sources in Delhi Police's Special Cell.

Earlier, Lawrence Bishnoi gang had claimed responsibility for the gunshots fired outside Grewal's home in the White Rock neighbourhood of Vancouver on November 25.

Taking to Facebook, an account named 'Lawrence Bishnoi' had announced the infamous group's involvement in the orchestrated attack.

"While you may regard Salman Khan as a brother, it is now imperative for your 'brother' to step in and rescue you. This message extends to Salman Khan as well - do not harbour the illusion that Da-wood or anyone can save you from us.

"Your reaction on the demise of Sidhu Moose Wala did not escape our notice. We are well aware of the kind of person he was and the illicit connections he maintained," read the post addressed to Grewal.



"You closely associated with Vicky during his time in Mid-dukhera, and subsequently, you even expressed great sorrow for Sidhu. You are now under our scrutiny. Consider this a teaser... Feel free to seek refuge in any country, but bear in mind, death does not require a visa," it added.

It is suspected that the firing incident was an extortion bid orchestrated by Bishnoi gang aides, as the gangsters are targeting singers to extort money, which is evident through the recent arrests in India,

Jammu & Kashmir police arrest 7 Kashmiri students for backing Pak in World Cup

FW DESK

Jammu and Kashmir Police arrested seven Kashmiri students from the regional agricultural university following allegations of harassment by a non-local student during the cricket World Cup final on November 19.

The incident, which occurred at a veterinary college in Ganderbal, led to the arrest of these students under the Unlawful Activities Prevention Act (UAPA) and certain sections of the Indian Penal Code related to public mischief and criminal intimidation. The arrests were



made on November 20 but were initially kept confidential to prevent any potential escalation of tensions. The complaint, filed by a non-local student from Punjab, accused the Kashmiri students of verbal abuse, raising pro-Pakistan slogans, and threatening him for supporting the Indian team during the

match. While the university officials confirmed that there was no violence on the campus, they mentioned that the complainant submitted a video to the police showing some students allegedly raising slogans in the dark. These students were in their fourth year and were close to completing their degrees.

The students remain in custody, and investigations into the case are ongoing. The university authorities have urged the government to reconsider the severity of the charges against the students, citing concerns about their future prospects.

Ranveer pays tribute to his 'screen idol' Johnny Depp at Red Sea Film Fest



Bollywood actor Ranveer Singh, who was honoured with the prestigious Yusr Award at the Red Sea International Festival by actress Sharon Stone, paid a tribute to his "screen idol" Johnny Depp and called him the "master of transformation."

Ranveer, during his acceptance speech, thanked Depp.

He said: "Wow! One of my screen idols is in the house, ladies and gentlemen, Mr Johnny Depp. My good Sir, I've followed your work since Edward Scissorhands and What's Eating Gilbert Grape. What an honour to be receiving this in your presence."

"Thank you for everything that you unknowingly taught me about the craft. Master of transformation, versatility, something that I am inspired by you."

He also posed with Depp or a picture together. The picture was posted by Red Sea Film Festival's official Instagram handle.

On the work front, Ranveer will be seen in 'Singham Again' and 'Don 3'.

Randeep Hooda, Lin Laishram drop wedding clicks; say 'We are one'

MUMBAI: Bollywood actor Randeep Hooda and Lin Laishram have shared their official wedding pictures, leaving the fans in awe of their traditional nuptial ceremony.

The lovebirds had tied the nuptial knot in Imphal on Wednesday. They got married in a traditional Meitei ceremony in the presence of family members and a few friends. The couple took their wedding vows in the Shannapung resort. Randeep took to the social media and shared the clicks from his dreamy wedding with Lin. The 'Sarbjit' actor wore a plain white kurta, dhoti and a matching shawl wrapped around himself. He also



wore a white and golden pagdi on his head. On the other hand, Lin looked like a princess in a traditional Manipuri Potloi dress, which is a cylindrical skirt made up of thick fabric and bamboo. It

had red satin cloth adorned on it with heavy embellished work on it. She opted for a black and golden embellished blouse, and completed the wedding look with traditional gold jewellery.

Unauthorized Drone Flights, Even for Weddings Photography, May Put You Behind the Bars



KULBIR SINGH KALSI
Chandigarh

In a significant development, the Indian government has cracked down on the unauthorised operation of drones, including those used for photography and blogging. It has been clarified that every drone, regardless of its size or purpose, must obtain official permission before taking to the skies. This recent move comes in response to growing national security and public safety concerns.

Many individuals, especially photographers and bloggers, have been operating small drones to capture stunning aerial footage or take breathtaking pictures, believing that they do not need permission for such recreational activities. However, this assumption is incorrect, and the new regulations underscore the importance of adhering to the established guidelines.

Ankit Kumar, CEO of Skye Air Mobility, one of the leading UTM providers in India, stated, «We have designed state-of-the-art UTM technology tailored to India's unique needs. We have successfully deployed this technology in many states, including Uttarakhand. It is the need of the hour to have a reliable UTM system in place, not only to protect national security but also to ensure that drone enthusiasts can enjoy their hobby without fear of breaking the law.»

Five-month-old Baby Triumphs Over Leukocyte Adhesion Deficiency: A rare condition with an incidence of 1 per million live births

In an exceptional and fortunate case, the infant's genetic compatibility (HLA) match with the mother proved to be a lifesaver

ARUN KUMAR RAO
Bangalore

Aster CMI Hospital bengaluru treated a 5-month-old infant weighing less than 5 kg for a rare congenital immune disorder Leukocyte Adhesion Deficiency (LAD). The infant's early days were marred by recurrent severe infections reminiscent of the tragic loss of her elder brother to a similar infection during infancy. Due to low immunity and being underweight, her condition started deteriorating when she was 2 months old, which was when comprehensive immunological and genetic testing confirmed LAD, a rare condition with an incidence of 1 per million live births.



tance of early detection and intervention. The only curative treatment for LAD is Bone Marrow Transplantation (BMT) from a healthy donor. Fortunately, the mother emerged as a beacon of hope as she was human leukocyte antigen (HLA) compatible with the baby. Despite the inherent complications, doctors decided to go ahead with the BMT. Thus, it paved the way for the mother to give birth to her child twice.

Commenting on the transplantation procedure Dr.

Anoop P, Sr. Consultant - Haematology, Paediatric Haemato-Oncology & BMT, said, "Due to the complications involved, most treatment centers even in affluent countries may prefer to perform BMT after a baby weighs at least 10 kgs and is completely free of active infection. In this baby's case, this was clearly not an option as she would have succumbed to the disease. Our team chose to proceed with transplantation regardless of the baby's age or weight, since it was the only hope for her survival. The procedure was challenging, however, our team went ahead with transplantation with cautious optimism. We are delighted that the procedure was successful, the infant is now recovering well, her immune system is healthy, and she is expected to lead a normal life." He added.

Bulgarian folk dance artists pay tribute to the World War Heroes at village Sultanwind

PRABHJOT GILL
AMRITSAR

The dance troupe from Bulgaria led by Alex Alexandrov and his 12 members team under 'Folkpalitra Bulgaria', on a tour to Amritsar, on Wednesday visited Sultarwind village to pay homage to the Sikh martyrs of World War I, who lost their lives fighting for the British. The delegation visited the historic plaque installed by the British, in the middle of the village, which honours the sacrifice and attempts to preserve their legacy. They saluted the plaque in turn garlanded it, paying rich tributes to the martyrs.

The plaque, of which even the locals were unaware, was



brought to light by the Sikh historian Sardar Bhupinder Singh Holland. A society named Vishav Yudh I and II Shaheed Welfare Society came into existence after that and also organised today's visit with a perspective of cultural exchange between

the Bulgarians and Punjabis. The Bulgarian delegation was briefed about the significance of the plaque, the village from where 135 soldiers went to the first World War. Seven soldiers were martyred in the first war and one was martyred in World War II.

Turkish Sensation 'Selahaddin Eyyubi' to Hit Indian Screens in January with Stellar Cast

FW DESK

New Delhi

Much-awaited Turkish series Selahaddin Eyyubi series is finally set to release in India in January. The dubbed Hindi version promises a visual and narrative spectacle that will captivate the Indian audience. Leading the charge is Turkish actor Uur Güne, renowned for his charismatic performances in "Ertugul," who takes on the pivotal role of the warrior king.

The Turkish magnum opus which is also likely to star famous Pakistani actors Fawad Khan, Adnan Siddiqui and Humayun Saeed in coming episodes, is set to redefine historical storytelling for audiences across the subcontinent. The series, shot on an expansive set in Turkey spanning 200 acres, offers a meticulously crafted journey through time, complete with mosques, bazaars, palaces, and houses.

Selahaddin Eyyubi, a collaborative masterpiece between Turkish production house Akli Films and US-based Ansari and Shah Films, will be presented to a diverse Indian audience in a dubbed version in Hindi. This strategic move ensures



accessibility for a broader spectrum of viewers eager to delve into the historical saga of the legendary king.

Who next after Rohit and Virat

SUNIL THAPLIYAL
New Delhi

Indian cricket is all set to move ahead after losing the ODI World Cup cricket final. The team management is eyeing the upcoming T-20 World Cup to be held in the West Indies and USA next year, and speculation on the future of both Rohit and Virat is in the air. Though it is to be considered that Rohit and Virat have been serving the national team for over a decade and have achieved several milestones for the country, it would be a tough task for the selectors to ignore their calibre, contribution, and achievements, especially in the ICC events, be it the T-20 World Cup or ODI World Cup. Their success in the red and white ball is unparalleled, and Team India needs their experience specifically for the next two and three years until the young players nurture more to take the responsibility onto their shoulders, as Rohit and Virat did after the retirement of Sachin, Dravid, Ganguly, Sehwag, and Laxman.

This ODI World Cup has shown their might. Still, our team heavily depends on them. While Virat's highest run streaked with a total run of 765, Rohit followed with 597 runs, far ahead of



any other Indian batter. And aside from this World Cup, their performances were tested and trusted earlier, be it the 2015 ODI World Cup, the 2019 ODI World Cup, or even 2023; these two were the biggest run-getters for India. Now the question is: who will replace them? It was Virat who performed better for Team India in the T-20 World Cup held in 2022. And Rohit is still one of the best white-ball players.

Rohit made 45 centuries in all three formats and 18,237 runs, while Virat made 77 centuries and 25,582 runs in all three formats. Both Virat and Rohit had contributed a lot and were the backbone of Team India. They have seen the highs and lows of Team India for over a decade, but apart from emotion, this is a bitter truth: every great player has to hang their boots

so that the next generation can take it up.

Rohit is now 36 years old, and Virat is 35. Though they both look fit and are at their peak, they can still play for the next two years easily, but here the BCCI is looking for future prospects. No doubt both Virat and Rohit should be a part of the Champion Trophy, which is scheduled to happen in Pakistan in 2025, but beyond that, there is the least possibility that these two greats will be part of the next ODI World Cup anymore. But as the saying goes, age is just a number, so if they wish to continue to play beyond the 2025 championship, then if they are fit and performing better, then there must be equal opportunity for them to be selected for Team India; they should not be excluded just because of their age.

Qatar beat India; FIFA world cup qualification race narrows

SUNIL THAPLIYAL
New Delhi

Qatar thrashed India 3-0 in a FIFA World Cup qualifier at the Kalinga Stadium in Bhubaneswar on Tuesday, giving India a reality check on their 2026 World Cup campaign. India was on a high after beating Kuwait in their first match. Qatar hosted the last FIFA World Cup and was considered to be a strong team in Group A. In such a situation, it was not easy for the Indian team to win this match. However, the Indian team can still qualify for the 2026 FIFA World Cup.

Although the Indian team has never reached the third round of FIFA World Cup qualifying, it would be a historic record if they make it this time. Apart from Qatar, Kuwait and Afghanistan are also in Group A. The Indian team defeated Kuwait 1-0 in their first match. The Indian team's next match in this group will be against Afghanistan on 31 March next year and they must win this match to keep their hopes of qualifying for the World Cup alive.

Apart from that, there are 1-1 matches to be played against the other three teams in the group, after which the ranking of the group will be determined. After the completion of all matches,



the top two teams from this group will secure their place at the 2027 AFC Asian Cup with the third round of FIFA World Cup qualifying. Either Qatar beats Kuwait in the last game of their group. If that does not happen, it could come down to goal difference again.

The problem of goal difference can arise if India and Kuwait have the same number of points. If Kuwait has lost both their matches against Afghanistan and Qatar, India simply have to win the match against Afghanistan. In this scenario, the 2 best teams from the group of 4 qualify for the next round. If the Blue Tigers had also won this game in this situation, they would have come closer to qualifying for the next round of the World Cup qualifiers. But that did not happen.