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## Delhi chief secretary must follow the directions of elected government: SC

OUR CORRESPONDENT  
New Delhi

The actions or inactions of a chief secretary must not put the elected government at a "standstill", the Supreme Court has said while holding that the Centre's decision to extend the services of the top-most bureaucrat in the Delhi government for six months cannot be construed as violative of law.

"The chief secretary performs functions which fall both within and outside the executive competence of the GNCTD (The Government of National Capital Territory of Delhi). The chief secretary though appointed by the central government, must comply with the directions of the elected government over matters on which their executive competence extends," a bench headed by Chief Justice D Y Chandrachud said.

The bench, also comprising Justices J B Pardiwala and Manoj Misra, had delivered the



verdict on November 29 and it was uploaded on the apex court website later. The apex court verdict came on a plea filed by the Delhi government against any move by the Centre to appoint, without any consultation with it, a new chief secretary or extend the tenure of the incumbent top civil servant Naresh Kumar, who was set to demit office on November 30.

In its 28-page verdict, the bench referred to a 1973 judgement of the apex court and said it was observed that the chief secretary's post was a "post of

great confidence - a lynchpin in the administration".

The top court referred to the May 11 judgement of a five-judge constitution bench this year which held that the Delhi government has legislative and executive powers over administration of services except for public order, police and land. The verdict was touted as a big victory for the AAP government.

The bench also noted the subsequent developments such as promulgation of an ordinance by the Centre that took back full control over services, and

the passage of the Government of NCT of Delhi (Amendment) Act 2023 in Parliament.

"This court in the 2023 constitution bench judgment observed that civil servants are required to be politically neutral and must abide by the directions of the elected arm to give effect to the principle underlying the tripartite chain of collective responsibility. The post of a chief secretary is uniquely placed," the bench said.

"The actions (or inactions) of the chief secretary must not put the elected government at a standstill," the bench said.

It further said, "... we have come to the conclusion that at this stage, bearing in mind the principles which have been enumerated in the judgment of this court in 2023 constitution bench judgment, 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." The bench clarified that the analysis in its current order was confined to the evaluation of the case at the present stage without entering into any conclusive determination of the issues which are pending adjudication before the constitution bench.

It 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.

"Once it emerges that the chief secretary performs important functions, among other things, in relation to the excluded subjects as well, it would be farfetched to postulate that the Central Government is divested of the power to appoint the chief secretary," the bench noted.

## RBI retains repo rate at 6.5%, GDP growth at 7%, inflation at 5.4 pc



**NEW DELHI:** As predicted by economists, the Reserve Bank of India's Monetary Policy Committee (MPC) did not change the repo rate from 6.5 per cent.

Announcing the decision of the MPC after its three-day deliberations, RBI Governor Shaktikanta Das said on Friday that the committee unanimously decided to keep the repo rate at 6.5 per cent.

He also said that five out of six MPC members voted for the continued stance of withdrawal of accommodation.

Das said taking into account the economic factors, the MPC has predicted GDP growth at 7 per cent in FY24.

As regards the inflation rate, the MPC forecast was 5.4 per cent for 2023-24 taking into account the various domestic issues, including potential agricultural produce. Das also said uncertainty exists due to the geopolitical situation.

The MPC is alert and prepared to take necessary actions that are needed, he said.

The MPC met on December 6-8.

## CM Kejriwal directs CAG audit of Delhi Jal Board amid allegations of financial bungling

OUR CORRESPONDENT  
New Delhi

Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal on Wednesday said an audit of the Delhi Jal Board's records by the Comptroller and Auditor General (CAG) has been ordered to ascertain whether there has been any irregularity. Interacting with reporters, he warned that there could be a water and sewage crisis in Delhi in the coming days owing to the non-release of funds.

A couple of weeks ago, Delhi Water Minister Atishi had claimed the national capital was starting at a 'man-made water crisis' due to the stoppage of funds to the Delhi Jal Board by the finance department and demanded Lt Governor V K Saxena's immediate intervention in the matter.

Kejriwal, on Wednesday, said, "We have ordered a CAG audit of the last 15 years of records of the Delhi Jal Board. CAG is a third party and the biggest agency in the country. Things will become clearer now." "If someone has committed irregularities, they should be punished. If no irregularities have been committed, then those who level baseless allegations will get to know," he added.

About the fund crisis in Delhi Jal Board and its possible impact on the ongoing works, the chief minister said, "If bureaucracy will not be answerable to the government, it will be impossible to run the government. There could be a water crisis and sewer crisis due to non-release of funds." Delhi Jal Board vice-chairman Somnath Bharti welcomed the government's decision to order an audit. "There cannot be a better thing than this. This reflects the transparency of the Delhi government that the chief minister himself opted to order a CAG audit. This proves the honesty of the AAP government and our leader Arvind Kejriwal."

## NCRB report on atrocities against Dalits, tribals expose BJP-RSS's conspiratorial agenda to divide society: Kharge

**NEW DELHI:** Congress President Mallikarjun Kharge on Friday took a swipe at the government over crimes against Dalits, SC, ST communities saying that it exposes the BJP-RSS's conspiratorial agenda to divide the society.

In a post on X, Kharge said: "According to the National Crime Record Bureau (NCRB) report, it is the BJP's black letter to make the life of SC, ST communities unsafe. Injustice, atrocities and oppression have been BJP's conspiratorial agenda for a decade to divide the society."

"The regular atrocities on Dalits and tribals exposes the BJP-RSS's hypocrisy of its 'sabka saath', " Kharge said attaching the graphics of the NCRB report. In the graphics he posted that as compared to 2013 there has been an increase of 46.11 per cent crime against Dalit communities while there has been an increase of 48.15 per cent growth in crime against Tribal communities.

## Democracy in India ends where Jammu and Kashmir begins: Omar Abdullah

FW DESK

Former Jammu and Kashmir Chief Minister Omar Abdullah said on Sunday that democracy in India ends where J&K begins.

Addressing a zonal workers' convention at Tikri in Jammu's Udhampur district, Omar lamented the absence of elections in Jammu and Kashmir. He highlighted the discrepancy between the democratic process witnessed in other states and the lack thereof in J&K, stating, "We can only witness the spectacle in other states, not here. Democracy ends where J&K begins."

Abdullah criticized the actions of central government, suggesting a deliberate suppression of democratic institutions within Jammu and Kashmir. He expressed dismay over the union government's reluctance to involve locals in decisions affecting the region.

"They not only disdain the idea of an assembly but also disregard panchayats and ULBs. It wouldn't be surprising if they dismantle DDC councils too," Omar said. "What fault lies with the people of Jammu and Kashmir that they're denied their democratic rights, even the chance to elect their assembly?"

Abdullah further questioned



the government's narrative regarding Article 370, pointing out the lack of tangible benefits resulting from its revocation for the people of J&K. He highlighted the advantages the article had provided, including land rights and access to free education up to university level, particularly benefiting the marginalized sections of society.

"These individuals speak incessantly about the negatives of Article 370, yet its revocation brought no substantial change for the people of J&K," Omar said.

"Contrarily, Article 370 safeguarded our people's land rights and facilitated free education, benefiting numerous, including the landless, poor, and workers, regardless of their religious or regional affiliations. Its abrogation, however, has led to the people's suffering," he added.

## SC issues notice to LG office on Delhi govt plea seeking release of funds for 'Farishtey Dilli ke' scheme

FW CORRESPONDENT  
New Delhi

The Supreme Court on Friday sought a response from Delhi lieutenant governor's office and others on a plea filed by the AAP government seeking release of funds for its 'Farishtey Dilli Ke' scheme providing free treatment to accident victims.

A bench of Justices B R Gavai and Sudhanshu Dhulia issued notices to Lt Gov Vinai Kumar Saxena, the Delhi government's Director General of Health Services and others while seeking their replies on the plea. "We don't understand this one wing of the government is fighting with another wing of the government. Issue notice," the bench said.

Senior advocate Abhishek Singhvi, appearing for the



Delhi government, submitted that 23,000 road accidents have been covered under the scheme. "I keep on writing and begging. They stop payments. How is health under the LG? This is completely social welfare and no politics is involved," Singhvi said. The 'Farishtey Dilli Ke' scheme encourages people to rescue those who have met

with road accidents. Under it, the government foots the hospital bills of those who have met with accidents in the city.

What is the 'Farishtey Dilli Ke' scheme? The 'Farishtey Dilli Ke' scheme was launched by Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal in 2019. Earlier in 2017, it was launched in Delhi as a pilot project. The scheme is aimed at encouraging people to rescue those who have met with road accidents.

Under it, the government awards Rs 2,000 and a certificate to those taking accident victims to the hospital. They are not liable to answer any question by the police. The government also foots the hospital bills of those who have met with accidents in the city.

What does the Delhi government say about the scheme?

In October, Delhi Health Minister Saurabh Bharadwaj alleged a conspiracy was being hatched to stop the scheme. Bharadwaj alleged that payments were not being made to private hospitals for nearly a year. He said he had written a letter to Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal to act against the concerned officers.

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## Jan Vishwas Bill-2 in the works to Enhance Ease of Compliance for Industry: Piyush Goyal

FW DESK

**NEW DELHI:** The government is working on the Jan Vishwas Bill 2 with additional provisions to decriminalize and make compliance easier, said Union Minister for Commerce and Industry Piyush Goyal on Thursday.

"We are already working on it and urge the industry to come up with ideas as we plan to come up with Jan Vishwas Bill 2," he said.

Addressing the inaugural session of 'FICCI's 96th Annual General Meeting and Annual Convention' on the theme- 'The World's Growth Engine', he



emphasised that the incredible India is gradually converting into inevitable India and that is going to be the journey for next 25 years. "We are looking at a self-reliant and an Atmanirbhar Bharat - a Bharat that is not only vocal for local but a Bharat which goes global. The Bharat of today will indeed be the world's growth engine and collectively India is going to be powering the world economy for several decades to come. Our mission is clear to make India a developed nation with a 10x growth to become a \$35 trillion economy by 2047," he added.

## People, MPs don't have right to know the exact cost even though RTI on Central Vista & New Parliament Building

MEENAKSHI BHATTACHARYA  
New Delhi

The Center is legally bound to disclose the cost of construction of government properties. The RTI Act strengthened the hand of democracy on this issue during the UPA era. You can argue & wait but will not receive reply, that is what is happening nowadays. According to Urban Development Ministry and Parliament House sources, the government will avoid all questions on the Central Vista issue. This is not the end, the Center has adopted the formula of 'red tape loophole' in the case of RTIs filed seeking to know the detailed cost of the new Parliament Bhawan including Central Vista.

People do not have the right to know where people's tax money is being spent? This question is now gaining momentum around the Central Vista project including the new Parliament building. Because, the Modi government does not feel the need to inform the common people of any information regarding this expenditure. More precisely, the people or



public representatives do not seem to have that right in this age. Now, the full session has started for the first time in the New Parliament Building. And now, the debate about it is building up high. Because, no question related to this project was accepted by the Secretariat in the winter session. At least not on the list for the first five days. But the question is raised - the cost of the new parliament building, the cost of the new bungalow of the Prime Minister & Vice President, or the overall Central Vista project, how much money has the Modi government spent? If the public representatives put this question in front of the government, will there be much discomfort

? If not, what is the problem take such questions related to Central Vista on a new Parliament Building by the centers? So anger is growing high between the oppositions.

Manoranjan Roy, an expatriate Bengali in Mumbai, wants to know the account of every expense of the new parliament building built with public tax money. Manoranjan Roy has asked for an 'invoice' for everything from chairs and tables to microphones, national flags on Naya Bhavan, marble from Rajasthan, or other decorations. But the answer does not match. RTI letters regarding the cost of the new parliament building have been going on for more than a month now.

## Trinamool MP Mahua Moitra expelled from Lok Sabha over 'cash for query' charge

Speaker Om Birla said that MP Mahua Moitra's conduct was 'immoral and indecent' and therefore, it is not appropriate for her to continue as an MP



**NEW DELHI:** Trinamool MP Mahua Moitra was on Friday expelled from the Lok Sabha after a discussion on the report of the Ethics Committee in the 'cash for query' that was tabled in the Lower House today.

Mahua Moitra, who was not allowed to speak during the discussion inside the House, the Trinamool leader read out her statement outside the Lok Sabha. She said that the Ethics committee broke every rule. Opposition staged a walkout after the Lok Sabha adopted the motion to expel the TMC MP. The House was then adjourned till December 11. Speaker Om Birla said, "... This House accepts the conclusions of the Committee that MP Mahua Moitra's conduct was immoral and indecent as an MP. So, it is not appropriate for her to continue as an MP..."

The Ethics Committee report probing "Unethical Conduct" of the Trinamool Congress (TMC) MP had recommended that Moitra "may be expelled" from the Lok Sabha and called for an "intense, legal, institutional inquiry" by the central government in a "time-bound manner". "The serious misdemeanours on the part of Mahua Moitra calls for severe punishment. The Committee, therefore, recommend that Mahua Moitra, MP may be expelled from the Membership of the Seventeenth Lok Sabha," the report read.

Participating in the debate today over the Ethics Panel report in the lower house, Manish Tewari, who was nominated by the Congress to speak on the issue questioned whether the procedure of the Ethics Committee overrides the fundamental principle of Natural Justice.

## Informed advocacy essential to address the challenges of equality paradox and ensure human rights for all humans

FW DESK  
Delhi

Prominent women from different fields expressed their solidarity to the victims of human rights violation across the globe and raised their concerns on the paradoxes and challenges surrounding the application of human rights principles and laws in the context of Human Rights Day at a National Seminar organized by the Women's Wing of Jamaat e Islami Hind under the caption: Human Rights and the Equality Paradox.

Rahamathunissa, the national secretary of Jamaat e Islami Hind in her inaugural address said that informed advocacy is essential to address the challenges of equality paradox and ensure human rights for all human beings. Citing the examples of the ongoing human onslaughts on the innocent children and women in Palestine and atrocities against certain selected groups and attempts of ethnic cleansing and genocide in different countries across the globe including India and the double stand taken by human rights and social activists, international organizations,

politicians across the world as well as the media; she urged that much has to be done by those who still believe in humanity and justice.

Jenny Rowena, Assistant Professor University of Delhi said that many are out of the boundary human and delegitimization of human rights is constantly happening. Explaining the way her husband Professor Hanie Babu was trapped into jail by purposely creating false evidence she stated that the real problem is structural. Around thirty thousand Adivasis are pushed into jail charging UAPA through this process.

Bhasha Singh, Journalist and writer opined that equality paradox and human rights have direct connection with democracy. The constitution of India assures equality for all but it depends upon who implements it. Politics decides human rights across the world and unless the voting power is not used properly, no change can be expected. She also said that the Media has now changed into an industry to create perception.

Nivedita Menon, Professor at Jawaharlal Nehru University said that the very preamble of

the constitution and every person of integrity has been criminalized in India. She threw light on the Islamophobic policies of the present government. Equality doesn't mean sameness or uniformity. Recognizing differences is also essential. Keep thinking, talking and debating alive, she urged.

Dr. Sabiha Khanam, a social activist explained the history of UDHR and the 30 articles and how each article has been getting violated in Palestine. She expressed her concern over the state sponsored violence in India and how spaces are shrinking in the country with denying permission even to protest. She advocated that if a better, safer and more liberated world is to be created we shouldn't stop trying for changing.

Nandini Sunder, a Sociologist expressed her strong opinion that whatever is happening in Palestine is against the Geneva Convention. We must boycott Israeli products and never forget that Palestine was there and will be there. Regarding India, she reminded the contribution of women also in the framing of the constitution and we should never lose hope.

# Excise policy case: Delhi court extends Sanjay Singh's judicial custody by 7 days

**NEW DELHI:** A Delhi court on Monday extended the judicial custody of AAP Rajya Sabha member Sanjay Singh by 7 days in connection with a money laundering case into the now-scrapped excise policy.



The AAP leader was produced before Special Judge M.K. Nagpal of Rouse Avenue Court on expiry of his previously granted 10-day judicial custody.

Last week, the court had issued notice to Enforcement Directorate (ED) on Singh's bail application in the case, and had asked the central probe agency to file a reply by December 6.

The financial probe agency on December 2 filed a supplementary charge sheet against Singh in the case. On Monday, the judge asked the ED to provide a copy of the supplementary charge sheet to Singh's lawyer.

As the ED moved an application stating that names of certain protected witnesses were mistakenly mentioned in the supplementary charge sheet, the court then granted permission to the agency to redact the sections containing these names.

It has directed the court staff to keep the file sealed. As Singh, the judge asked the ED to provide a copy of the supplementary charge sheet to Singh's lawyer.

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Singh and remarked that the information in the report was old. "There is nothing new in this report. Everything is from the papers that were filed by the agency earlier."

The judge has now put up the matter for arguments on December 6. Earlier, the judge had allowed Singh to sign some documents related to development work as a Member of Parliament. He had directed the authorities concerned to produce him before a court in Punjab after it was informed that a production warrant had been received from a court in Amritsar in a defama-

tion case there. Judge Nagpal had also allowed Singh to sign certain cheques as he requested to do so for his family expenses, and other work he is obliged to do as a Member of Parliament. The jail authorities concerned were directed to ensure proper treatment to Singh, including from his private doctor. "Court sees no reason to refuse private treatment to the accused. Hence, the jail superintendent concerned is directed to ensure the appropriate treatment," the judge had said.

Singh, who had moved the Delhi High Court against his arrest and remand, was denied any relief as Justice Swarna Kanta Sharma dismissed his plea calling it premature. Singh then moved the Supreme Court against the High Court order that upheld his arrest and remand by the ED.

The India Meteorological Department said that the minimum temperature was registered at 9.4 degrees Celsius, a seasonal average.

The weather department predicted that on Friday the maximum temperature is likely to hover around 25 degree Celsius while there will be clear sky.

On Friday morning, the air quality at Anand Vihar was in the 'very poor' category with PM 2.5 at 345 and PM 10 at 248 in the 'poor' category, while the NO2 reached 86 and CO was at 80 or 'satisfactory', as per

the Central Pollution Control Board (CPCB).

The Bawana station recorded PM 2.5 at 346 in the 'very poor' category while the PM 10 reached 228, in the 'poor' category, while the CO reached 68, or 'satisfactory' levels.

The air quality index (AQI) monitoring station at Dwarka Sector 8 recorded PM 2.5 at 335, in the 'very poor' category while PM 10 was at 216 or 'poor' while the CO was at 74, in 'satisfactory' levels.

The AQI at the ITO station was in the 'very poor' category with PM 2.5 at 339 and PM 10 at 190, in the 'moderate' category, while the carbon monoxide (CO) was at 58, in the 'satisfactory' level.

The PM 2.5 at Okhla Phase-II was recorded at 314, in the 'very poor' category and PM 10 at 174, the 'moderate' category. The NO2 was at 116 or 'moderate' and CO was at 42, in good levels.

# Air quality remains 'very poor', Delhi records min temp of 9.4



**NEW DELHI :** The air quality in the national capital continued to remain 'very poor' at several AQI stations across the city on Friday morning.

The India Meteorological Department said that the minimum temperature was registered at 9.4 degrees Celsius, a seasonal average.

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# ED raids at 13 places of Lawrence Bishnoi aide in Haryana & Rajasthan



**SATISH HANDA**

Lawrence Bishnoi one of the accused in the murder of Punjab singer Sidhu Moosewala and also involved in many cases reported for ransom demand including threatening to kill film star Salman Khan through his associate gangsters outside the jail. The Enforcement Directorate (ED) alongwith National Investigation (NIA) team on Tuesday had conducted raids at 13 premises in Haryana and Rajasthan as part of a money laundering investigation against an alleged members of his gang including Surender Singh Chiku and Kala Jathedi According to NIA information, these associates are having registered number of cases related to kidnapping, murder, extortion, ransom demand and Arms Act in Haryana state are having close links with Khalistani, besides having links with 'Khalistani' terror group in money laundering on directions by Lawrence Bishnoi lodged in the jail.

Information also reveals that the agency during raids seized electronic devices, "incriminating" documents, ledgers, property papers and Rs 5 lakh cash and also traced about 60 bank accounts and a large number of property related papers. Chiku had invested proceeds of crime in mining, liquor and toll businesses through his allies, identified as Satish Kumar and Vikash Kumar directors of a Private Limited Company incorporated on October 12, 2020, the ED discovered. The National Investigation Agency carried out searches at different places in Punjab, Haryana, Rajasthan, Chandigarh, Delhi and National Capital Region (NCR) in its ongoing case to dismantle gangster-terror nexus.

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# BJP's victory is an endorsement of Prime Minister Narendra Modi's policies : Vij

**SATISH HANDA Ambala**

Haryana Home and Health Minister Anil Vij congratulated the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) on its victory in the Madhya Pradesh, Chhattisgarh, and Rajasthan assembly elections. Vij said that the BJP's victory is an endorsement of Prime Minister Narendra Modi's policies.

While interacting to the media persons today, Haryana Home and Health Minister Anil Vij said that the BJP's victory is not only of three states but it is a sign of the entire country. Vij said that the people of India are accepting the policies of Prime Minister Narendra Modi.

# Punjab Police arrest lakhbir rode's associate Paramjit Singh Dhadi from Amritsar Airport

**JAGMOHAN SINGH Amritsar**

State Special Operation Cell (SSOC) Amritsar have busted a terrorist recruitment, funding and aiding module with the arrest of Pak-based terrorist Lakhbir Rode's close associate identified as Paramjit Singh alias Punjab Singh alias Dhadi from Sri Guru Ram Das Airport in Amritsar, said Director General of Police (DGP) Punjab Gaurav Yadav in a statement issued here on Tuesday.

Paramjit Singh, a British Citizen and a founder member of International Sikh Youth Federation (ISYF), was initially involved in terror activities in Punjab in early 90s and was later arrested in 2003 and was convicted in cases pertaining to terrorist activities. After completion of his sentence, the accused returned to the UK but continued his activities in ISYF by working as a motivator, recruiter and fund raiser for the organisation in the UK and other European countries.

# No farmer burns stubble happily, it is everyone's responsibility to deal with the problem of stubble: Sandeep Pathak

**NEWDELHI:** Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) Rajya Sabha MP from Punjab, Dr. Sandeep Pathak, raised the issue of stubble in Parliament on Thursday and appealed to the Central Government to cooperate with the Punjab Government for a solution.

Addressing Rajya Sabha, Dr. Pathak said that we often blame farmers for burning stubble, whereas some farmers burn stubble not out of hobby but out of compulsion. Governments are clearly responsible for this.

He said that the biggest solution to stop stubble burning is that the government should provide proper financial assistance to the farmers. The Punjab government has proposed to give Rs 1000 per acre to the farmers of the state for stubble and has appealed to the Center to give Rs 1500 per acre for this. If the Center agrees to the Punjab Government, then farmers will get Rs 2500 per acre and this problem will be solved soon.

Another solution to the stubble problem is crop diversification. He said that the MSP of other Kharif crops is very low compared to paddy, therefore farmers prefer to cultivate paddy only. The Punjab government has said that the difference between the MSP of other crops and paddy will be compensated by the state government. If the



Central Government also brings a plan to equalize MSP and implements it from this year itself, then good results will be seen.

Environment Minister Bhupendra Yadav answered the pathak's questions and rejected the Punjab government's demand of Rs 1500. Sandeep Pathak disagreed with his answer and said that we are not satisfied with the minister's answer.

# Kerala Muslim leader slams CPI-M for promoting interfaith marriages



Nasser Faizi, Secretary of Sunni Yuvajana Samgam (SYS) -- youth wing of Samastha Kerala Jem-iyathul Ulama -- on Wednesday alleged that the CPI-M is engaged in propagating interfaith marriages in the name of secularism.

"Muslim girls are being taken away and forced into marriages with Hindus. This is being done by organisations having links with CPI-M, SFI and DYFI. The CPI-M promotes Muslim girls to marry Hindus as they think it is secular in nature," Faizi said while addressing a function at Koolandy in Kozhikode.

He asked the Muslim religious bodies to keep watch on this new phenomenon which is becoming rampant in the state. Faizi has always remained in the news due to controversies. During last FIFA World Cup, he had opposed the game claiming that it is becoming addictive. "The restriction is only intended to prevent people from acting in ways that are against Islamic beliefs," he had said.

# Another case of sexual harassment in educational institutes in Haryana

**SATISH HANDA**

After the incident of sexual harassment by the principal of a government school, Uchana in Jind district few days ago in which school principal allegedly attempted sexual assault on more than 140 female students, in which the school principal was arrested and sent to the jail, now another similar sexual molestation case has been registered against another principal and a contractor in a government school in Guhla block of Kaithal district in Haryana state, when angry students as well the residents of the village not only applied lock at the school gate but also made a complaint against the principal to the police at dial 112 on Wednesday. The complaint was also made to the education department as well as to the State Women Commission whose Chairperson Renu Bhatia, expressing deep concern over the repeated incidents of sex molestation cases in Haryana schools, immediately contacted SP Kaithal to take action within

24 hours and arrest the alleged accused. Police took immediate action in the matter, registered a case against the principal and the contractor and arrested the prime accused identified as Ravi Kumar allegedly sexually harassing girl students in the school and sent to the jail, said Kaithal superintendent of police Upasana that the principal of the school in Guhla block of the district for allegedly sexually harassing four girl students on Thursday.

A five-member committee under block education officer was formed by the district education officer Ravinder Kumar after attempt was made by the principal and a contractor attempted sexual assault on four girls in the school. The village Sarpanch and the villagers levelled allegations against the principal, blaming the education department saving the alleged accuse, staged a protest and also locked the school gate after the staff was asked to leave. Then the village sarpanch along with a few villagers approached the Haryana State Commission for Women demanding immediate action. who assured action against the principal within 24 hours. Chairperson of the commission Renu Bhatia said, she contended the SP Kaithal after the villagers alleged that their complaint was not being registered by the police.

Meanwhile, another incident of an Associate Professor working in the Government PG College Ambala Cantt has been reported, in which he celebrated his birthday along with the few female students inside the college recently on December 6. Information reveals that sometime ago few female students in the college had accused this Associate Professor of allegedly attempting to sexually harass them and the matter was also handed over to the Sexual Assessment Investigation Committee to investigate the same.



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# Rahul Gandhi is a 'Panauti' for Congress, wherever he goes Congress faces losses, I-N-D-I-A alliance is completely finished: Anil Vij

**SATISH HANDA Ambala**

Haryana Home and Health Minister Anil Vij said that Rahul Gandhi is a 'Panauti' for Congress and wherever he goes, Congress faces losses. Vij was interacting with the media persons at his residence in Ambala. He said that Congress was not benefited from Rahul Gandhi's Bharat Jodo Yatra in three states. In response to a question asked by media persons in this regard, Haryana Home Minister Anil Vij sarcastically said that he had already said that Rahul Gandhi is a 'Panauti' for Congress, wherever he goes, Congress suffers losses. Ever since Rahul Gandhi started actively attending Congress programs, Congress has been in decline, he added.

At the same time, on the statement of Mamta Banerjee not attending the meeting of the I-N-D-I-A-alliance on December 6, Home Minister Anil Vij said that the I-N-D-I-A-alliance is now fully finished because it was not seen anywhere in the elections of five states and could not even register its presence. Besides, they have disputes among themselves and they do not feel that it should be resolved.

Before the winter session of Parliament, Prime Minister Narendra Modi said that anger over the defeat should not be expressed in the House. In response to a question, Anil Vij said that Modi ji is absolutely right. This is democracy, any kind of decision should be accepted and one should not show anger in any way, he said.

Similarly, Vij not organizing Janata Darbar these days, people are coming to his home with their problems. In this regard, Vij said that he is a worker, he works wherever



BJP has become winner in recent elections in three states with heavy margin of votes whereas AAP contestants have lost their candidates participated in recent polls"

he is and he tries to solve the problems of the people. On the question of re-organizing the Darbar, he said that its guidelines are yet to be prepared and only after that something will be decided.

In reply to media question as regard recent Vidhan Sabha polls in three states, Vij said that Aam Aadmi Party has become JJP that means 'Jamanat Jabt Party'. BJP has become winner in recent elections in three states with heavy margin of votes whereas Aam Aadmi Party contestants have lost securities wherever their candidates participated in recent polls.

In reply to another media question as regard Janhit Janta Party an alliance political party in Haryana to form government in the state, claiming to contest polls independently have not been able to save their security by any of their contestant in recent polls, Vij added.

# Accused in sexual crime cases in Haryana to be derived of all govt facilities

**SATISH HANDA**

In view of increasing sexual crimes against women and children, the state government Haryana has decided to withdraw all government facilities to them including every type of social pensions, scholarships and arms licences. According to National Crime Record Bureau, nearly 27% increase in crimes against women has been witnessed in past one year in the state. According to information, 3658 crime cases against females have been recorded in the state in past one year, which include 1716 rape cases registered under the Protection of Children from Sexual Offences (POSCO) Act during the year. According to state police record 772 cases of raping minors were reported in



the new domain -- hrycrime-wc.gov.com being started from Panchkula district on a pilot basis and would be replicated across the state in due course of time. He said that the data of the accused against whom charges had been framed in a court for a crime against women and children would be fed on the said domain from various stakeholder departments, including the police and prosecution, besides will be liable for suspend all facilities being offered by the government immediately after the filing of a chargesheet against the accused. On the basis of the data, the Social Justice, Empowerment, Welfare of SCs and BCs and Antyodaya (SEWA) Departments would immediately suspend benefits, including pension.

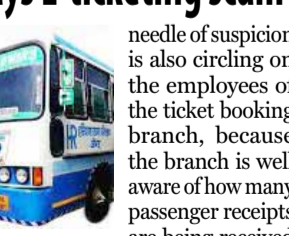
needle of suspicion is also circling on the employees of the ticket booking branch, because the branch is well aware of how many passenger receipts are being received on which route and which employee has not deposited the cash since then.

After the scam was exposed in Ambala City, there was a stir in Bhiwani depot also over the e-ticketing scam. Roadways Bhiwani Depot has suspended three operators. The name of operator Umesh is included for not depositing Rs 2 lakh 13 thousand for the collection of e-ticketing. Similarly, investigation has proved embezzlement of e-ticketing amount of Rs 48,400 against conductor Ravindra have already been suspended.

The amount collected by r-booking on after finishing their duty but directions were violated by them. According to the General Manager Ambala Roadways the accused bus conductors through e-booking personally instead of depositing soon after finishing their duties and during interrogation failed to provide a satisfactory reply. For which they are liable to be suspended or register FIRs against them. According to information, if the Roadways Administration officials investigate properly more than 24 employees may be punished. The



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# Anurag Thakur Fires Shots : Congress, Corruption and Cash – An Unbreakable Trio

**ED Raids Dheeraj Sahu's Premises, Unearths ₹200 Crore in Cash**  
FW DESK  
New Delhi



Congress, citing a history of scams – from defense to Bofors, and the more recent 2G, Commonwealth, Coal, and others. He quipped, "Congress has perfected the art of looting the nation since independence."

Congress and Corruption: An Inseparable Tale -Highlighting recent instances, Thakur pointed to Chhattisgarh's liquor scam and the Mahadev App scandal, followed by the staggering Rs 200 crore cash discovery in Jharkhand. He challenged Rahul Gandhi, asking why Congress is always linked to corruption and why the opposition leader opposes ED and CBI.

Nationwide Crackdown on Corruption - Thakur shed light on recent anti-corruption actions, revealing cash discoveries in Bengaluru, Uttar Pradesh, West Bengal, Chennai, and Delhi. He assured the public that every penny looted from the people would be reclaimed, emphasizing Prime Minister Narendra Modi's commitment to a corruption-free India.

Thakur concluded, "Investigating agencies will act independently, and the black money of Congress will be recovered. The promise to return every looted penny stands strong."

In a stunning revelation, Enforcement Directorate (ED) raids on Congress MP Dheeraj Sahu's premises have unearthed over Rs 200 crore in cash, with counting still underway.

Anurag Thakur, Union Minister for Information and Broadcasting and Youth Affairs and Sports, didn't hold back, declaring, "Modi ji is channeling every penny for the

greater good, while Congress is busy amassing black money." Thakur questioned the Gandhi duo, stating, "Rahul and Sonia Gandhi must explain why the name of Congress echoes wherever corruption lurks."

**CONGRESS: A Legacy of Scams** -Thakur lambasted

# Opposition members in parliament seek timeframe for Assembly polls in J&K



FW DESK

Opposition members in the Lok Sabha pressed for a clear timeline regarding assembly polls in Jammu and Kashmir during discussions on two bills related to the region on Tuesday.

Home Minister Amit Shah introduced the Jammu and Kashmir Reservation (Amendment) Bill, 2023, and the Jammu and Kashmir Reorganisation (Amendment) Bill, 2023 for consideration and passing in the Lok Sabha, where both bills were deliberated simultaneously.

In the debate, initiated by Congress member Amar Singh, opposition representatives criticized the government's delay in conducting elections in Jammu and Kashmir. They highlighted the government's emphasis on improved law and order in the region but expressed concern over the absence of

assembly elections.

Several members, including Saugata Roy from the Trinamool Congress, urged the government to announce a definitive timeframe for the forthcoming polls in Jammu and Kashmir. Roy emphasized the need to reinstate the statehood of Jammu and Kashmir and questioned the rationale behind making significant changes without a functioning Legislative Assembly in place.

He pointed out the unprecedented conversion of a state into a Union Territory under Home Minister Amit Shah's tenure and questioned the necessity of these changes without an elected legislative body. Roy urged the government to prioritize conducting elections in Jammu and Kashmir rather than hastily implementing alterations in the region. The Home Minister is expected to address these concerns and respond to the debate on Wednesday.

# Parliament Winter Session: Cong to seek discussion on unemployment, price rise and rich-poor gap



KAVITA SHARMA  
New Delhi

The Congress party will seek discussion on the prevailing issues like unemployment, rising prices, the widening gap between the rich and the poor in the country, border and foreign policy situation in the ongoing Winter Session of the parliament, which began today.

Briefing reporters in New Delhi, the AICC general secretary in charge of the Communications Department Jairam Ramesh said that the Chairperson of the Congress Parliamentary Party Ms Sonia Gandhi today chaired a meeting of the Congress Parliamentary Strategy Group, which was also attended by the Congress president Mallikarjun Kharge, to discuss the strategy for the Winter Session.

Besides, Jairam Ramesh added, since this is going to be the last substantive session ahead of the General Elections, the Congress party expects the government to discuss some issues of public concern like unemployment, rising prices, situation along the border and also the foreign policy. He also said that the Manipur situation was still cause of concern even after six months and the Prime Minister must break his silence. He said, this was not the demand of the Congress party alone, but all the INDIA parties.

Jairam Ramesh also announced that the Congress president Mallikarjun Kharge had called an informal meeting of the INDIA parties on December 6.

On the recently held Assembly elections, Ramesh said while the assembly election results were disappointing despite the victory in Telangana, but the Congress party was not dispirited or dejected.

# Cyclone Michaung: Kharge urges Centre to give assistance to state govts



**NEW DELHI:** Congress President Mallikarjun Kharge on Tuesday expressed grief over the loss of life due to the impact of Cyclone 'Michaung' in Tamil Nadu and urged the Centre to give every possible assistance to the states. In a post on X, Kharge said, "It is distressing to witness the impact of Cyclone Michaung in Tamil Nadu, where precious lives have been lost. The cyclone is expected to make its presence felt in Andhra Pradesh, Odisha and Puducherry, and may cause heavy rains in Jharkhand."

# JD(U) asks INDIA leaders to concentrate on 'one seat, one candidate' formula for 2024 LS polls



FW DESK

Former Chief Minister of Jammu and Kashmir and National Conference leader, Omar Abdullah, has reaffirmed his commitment to the political battle against the revocation of Article 370, regardless of the impending verdict by the Supreme Court.

"We were the first to move the Supreme Court challenging the revocation of Article 370," Abdullah said while addressing reporters in Kulgam. "Regardless of the eventual decision, our political fight will persist."



The Supreme Court is anticipated to announce its verdict on a series of petitions contesting the abrogation of Article 370 and Article 35-A, which granted

special constitutional provisions to Jammu and Kashmir.

Abdullah criticized the BJP-led Central government, accusing it of straining relations between Jammu and Kashmir residents and the rest of the country with the decision to revoke Article 370. "No one was content with the decision," he asserted during his media address. The contentious move to revoke the special status under Article 370 was executed by the Centre on August 5, 2019, during the BJP-led National Democratic Alliance government's second

term, headed by Prime Minister Narendra Modi.

Article 370, established on October 17, 1949, exempted the erstwhile state from the majority of the Constitution's provisions, allowing it to formulate its own Constitution. The prolonged case challenged the government's decision to annul Jammu and Kashmir's special status under Article 370, along with contesting the Jammu and Kashmir Reorganisation Act, which divided the state into two Union Territories – Jammu and Kashmir, and Ladakh.

# Union Sports Ministry ensures boost of medical facilities during the Khelo India Para Games

KAVITA SHARMA  
New Delhi



As the National Capital gets set to host the inaugural edition of the Khelo India Para Games from December 10 to 17, the medical facilities will be amped up to combat any unforeseen situation. Para athletes often require specialized and sensitive medical care due to their unique needs and challenges and therefore, the National Centre of Sports Science and Research (NCSSR) has deputed professionals who are trained in managing diverse medical conditions.

The NCSSR, a scheme implemented by the Ministry of Youth Affairs & Sports, Government of India and the Sports Authority of India (SAI), aims to support high level research, education and innovation in respect of high performance of elite athletes with focus on sports

sciences and sports medicine.

During the course of the Khelo India Para Games, set for a gala opening ceremony on Monday December 11, the competitors will receive comprehensive medical coverage as part of the event's organizational support. This coverage includes emergency medical services, on-site medical teams, and access to necessary healthcare facilities. "All possible measures have

been undertaken by NCSSR on behalf of the Khelo India division at the Sports Authority of India and the Ministry of Youth Affairs and Sports to ensure that all participating para athletes receive requisite medical support to compete safely and address any health concern that may arise during the games," mentioned Col Bibhu Nayak, Director-in-Charge, NCSSR.

# Election results show people have rejected negativity: Modi

**NEW DELHI:** A day after the results of Assembly elections in four states were announced, Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Monday said the results showed that "people have rejected negativity" and urged the opposition "not to vent the frustration of defeat" inside Parliament.

The Prime Minister was addressing the media ahead of the Winter Session of Parliament. He also said the results of the Assembly elections were very encouraging for those who are committed to the welfare of the common people. The Prime Minister said, "Political temperature is soaring." He said that on Sunday the results of the four-state elections came out.

"The results are very encouraging. Encouraging for those who are committed to the welfare of the common people of



the country and to the bright future of the country," PM Modi said. "After the election results, this session presents a golden opportunity for the opposition to progress with a positive mindset. I request all MPs to come to Parliament with preparation. They must shed the negativity they have been carrying for nine years and proceed with positivity. Please do not vent the frustration of defeat in Parliament,"

the Prime Minister said.

He also urged the opposition not to protest "for the sake of it." "This is for your benefit. The Opposition has a significant role in a democracy. Please understand it. The country does not want to halt on the road to development," the Prime Minister said. The Prime Minister also reiterated that there are only four "castes" in the country -- women, youngsters, farmers and the poor. "Those focused on the empowerment of these groups through proper policies and last-mile delivery get a lot of support," he said. The jibe at the opposition parties came a day after the BJP's thumping victories in the Assembly elections of Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan and Chhattisgarh.

Parliament's Winter Session is beginning on Monday and will conclude on December 22.

# 27 crore Ayushman Cards issued across India for healthcare facilities, says Dr Akshay Jain

**Outdoor Air Pollution Key determinant for lung cancer says health experts in lung cancer awareness month**

**NEW DELHI:** In a significant stride toward combating lung cancer, India is at the forefront of enabling advanced treatment and diagnosis options for patients. Recognizing the pressing need for comprehensive solutions, our commitment aims to revolutionize the landscape of cancer care with the right health facilities says Dr Akshay Jain, Joint Director, National Health Authority Government of India at the ASSOCHAM 2nd Conference on Lung Cancer- Enabling Innovations in Treatment Pathways held in New Delhi.

Dr. Jain emphasized Ayushman Bharat's goal to provide comprehensive, need-based healthcare instead of a sectoral, fragmented approach to health service delivery. The goal of this program is to implement ground-breaking interventions that address the healthcare system as a whole (encompassing preventive, promotion and ambulatory care). Ayushman Bharat is a continuum of care initiative that consists of two interconnected parts: the Pradhan Mantri Jan Arogya Yojana (PM-JAY) and Health and Wellness Centers (HWCs). There are 27000 health facilities

in India to foster healthcare and 27 crore Ayushman cards are issued across the country. Digital Ayushman Act is the key to move ahead with seamless transaction integration.

Dr. Yutaro Setoya, Team Lead, Non-Communicable Diseases, World Health Organisation, India, delivered a special address where he highlighted how 8.1% of cancer-related deaths are attributed to lung cancer. He mentioned annually, 1 lakh people are diagnosed with lung cancer and the disease significantly impacts the working-age population. WHO also commends India for its proactive ban on e-cigarettes, he added.

Dr. Dipjyoti Das, Head Medical Planning and operations, Assam Cancer care Foundation in his address talked about delivering equitable and affordable healthcare in backward regions. He further added, through partnerships with pharmaceutical companies and healthcare providers, we are working to reduce barriers to entry for groundbreaking lung cancer treatments, offering renewed hope to patients in Assam.

Padmeshri Prof Dr. D. S Rana Chairperson ASSOCHAM National Healthcare Council and Board of Trustees, Sir Ganga Ram Hospital how smoking is directly linked to lung cancer and how it acts as a barrier affecting lung health. Smoking is by far the leading risk factor

for lung cancer. About 80% of lung cancer deaths are thought to result from smoking.

Ms Neelima Dwivedi, Senior Director External Affairs MSD Pharmaceuticals Pvt Ltd stressed on India being the 2nd largest consumer in the world for tobacco and 28% of Indian population consume it. In this lung cancer awareness month, key stakeholders should join hands to curb the risk of most diagnosed cancer. A critical component of our strategy is to raise awareness about lung cancer, its risk factors, and the importance of early detection, she added.

There are environmental and occupational determinants of lung cancer said Dr. Abhishek Shankar Assistant Professor, Department of Radiation Oncology, All India Institute of Medical Sciences, Delhi mentioning the rise in incidence of lung cancer among non-smokers. Lung cancer screening implementation can be part of a larger effort to educate the population about preventive healthcare and the benefits of early screening.

By integrating advanced diagnostics, accessible treatments, education, research, and support services, we aim to empower both healthcare professionals and patients in their journey toward better lung health said Dr Sudhir Kallhan Chairperson ASSOCHAM National Digital Healthcare Taskforce.

# Modi's MPs are extremely disrespectful to the tribals of Bengal; Trinamool asking will PM support him

MEENAKSHI BHATTACHARYA  
New Delhi



The natives means 'Adivasis' of Bengal are marrying Bangladeshi intruders! BJP MP Nishikanta Dubey made this disrespectful comment while speaking in the Zero hour in Parliament and he directly alleged that Mamata Banerjee was condoning it. While talking about the welfare of tribals, the Lok Sabha house was turned into an uproar by the BJP MP's comments. Loksabha votes are very near. Before that, the opposition is well aware that the NRC issue will make the Saffron camp. But the Trinamool MPs

exploded because it was beyond imagination that the BJP would not stop disrespecting the tribal community in this way.

BJP MP from Godda, Jharkhand, Nishikanta said in Lok Sabha at 'Zero Hour', "once Mamata Banerjee said

that Bangladeshi infiltrators are coming to West Bengal and changing the map of Bengal. But she did not stop it after becoming the chief minister. Districts like Maldah, Murshidabad are filled with Bangladeshi infiltrators. Bangladeshis are coming and marrying tribal women and taking away the land. And that is why the population of the whole country is increasing but the tribals are not increasing. This incident is happening in districts of Jharkhand, Bengal, Bihar. Therefore, NRC (National Register of Citizens) should be introduced to chase Bangladeshis out of the country".

Opponents are raising ques-

tions, what do you want to say Nishikanta? Bangladeshis infiltrating, marrying tribals and occupying land, and then obtaining citizenship? Otherwise, he would not have raised the NRC issue. His allegation is that the Mamata Banerjee Hemant Soren government is aiding infiltration. According to a Trinamool MP, Nishikanta must have forgotten that he disrespected the tribal community while establishing the issue of infiltration. However, Kakali Ghosastidar joined the session in protest. Alongwith Sudeep Bandyopadhyay, Aparupa Poddar, Pratima Mandal are also joined in tune.

# Pandian's entry into BJD may end succession debate and speculation about dynastic politics

Aravinda Mohapatra  
Bhubaneswar

Pandian as his likely successor he has put a premium on merit.

The 2000-batch Tamil Nadu-born IAS officer proved his administrative acumen and excellence during the years that he served the state government before taking country retirement. Eversince being appointed private secretary to chief minister Naveen Patnaik in 2011 he has been acting like his eyes and ears and ensuring the implementation of government schemes with high degree of efficiency.

Many political observers believe that his entry into the ruling BJD is the best thing to have happened to Odisha politics in recent years. Irrespective of whether or not he holds any organisational post in the party he is expected to contribute im-

mensely to its growth and even guide the party's campaign in the next general elections. Till recently people only used to guess about the role he was playing in strengthening the



party which has emerged as the most successful regional party in the history of Odisha. Never before has a regional party in the state enjoyed such a strong cadre base nor functioned in

such an organised manner. Pandian, who was till recently private secretary to the chief minister, was easily the man behind BJD's success. In collaboration with chief minister Naveen Patnaik he turned the party into an election winning machine.

But all this while he never really stepped out of the line and embarrassed his boss. When things started getting difficult for him and Patnaik's political opponents began questioning his visits to districts, he took the conscious decision to give up his job as a highly successful and powerful bureaucrat so that he could don the political garbs formally. That transition is complete with his joining the BJD.



HARBANS MUKHIA BELIEVES PERIODISATION'S FLEETING NATURE WILL GROW CLEARER WITH DIVERSE HISTORICAL RESEARCH

## Problematising periodisation in history

The all-too-familiar triad of historical periodisation — ancient, medieval, modern — now universal, has rather specific provincial and temporal origins. All societies evolved their own modes of dividing their history into periods: dynastic and regnal was the one prevalent in India, Iran, the Turko-Mongol regions, besides Europe. The creation of eras, such as Vikrami, Shaka, and Ilahi or the era of piety in Islam coinciding with the Prophet and the first four caliphs and the steady decline afterwards were among many other modes.

The triad took birth in Europe around the 16th-17th centuries, first in the history of theology and steadily in society's history, finding its largely evolved form in 1688 at the hands of Cellarius, a German. This was the era when over the past few centuries, Europe had been creating its new self-image of rationality, science and progress, in short, modernity; to reinforce it, the inverse image of its immediate past, the medieval, was also created as one of irrationality, regression, and superstition which were constituted as the synonym of religion/religiosity — in short, the "Dark Age" from which Europe was progressing into Enlightenment.

With the expansion of Europe to the rest of the world during the 18th-20th centuries, besides its trade, arms and politics, its intellectual concepts also found entry into what were becoming its colonies. The indigenous notions of historical time and space were replaced by the European triad through what Jack Goody calls "The Theft of History" in an unequal power relationship. Thus, the Dark Age of Europe was transferred to the rest of the world from which Europe must rescue it by bringing it to Enlightenment through colonialism. A very "rational" legitimisation of colonial-



very notion of dividing history into tranches.

On the other hand, the notion of periodisation is premised on the very tranches, once characterised as stages of development, each self-contained and autonomous in a sequence of succession, indicating irreversible change or progress from the preceding stage. Change and continuity are envisaged here as dichotomous. Are they really? Historians have got round to witnessing much continuity in what is seen as change and change in continuity. The idea of stages of development has quietly disappeared from their horizon.

### The notion of modernity

At the heart of periodisation lies the notion of modernity, for the triad originated from the "modern" and travelled back to the medieval and the ancient; it thus created the image of history of a travel back from the present to the past instead of the other way round. It vested modernity with the attributes of what it saw as developments in Europe from the 17th-18th centuries onward, ones we have recounted above and much else besides, from where the rest of the world was obliged to emulate them mostly by force. The modern world that we inhabit was thus essentially the West's creation. This perception has held unquestioned sway for over a couple of centuries everywhere. It is only in the past three or four decades that the view has come under sharp scrutiny in the West as elsewhere. Today, it has become hard to speak of modernity in the singular; "modernities" has far

greater space in the academic discourse. Modernity that had for long been accepted as an objective reality "out there" in Chris Bayly's words has become subjective in each variant context.

Implied in this transformation is the premise that the modern world that we inhabit and its "modernity" are not the gift of any one region of the globe and any single segment of humanity nor confined to a given time bracket but rather the cumulative outcome of contributions of all societies and civilisations throughout the period of history known to us. Whether in terms of material objects such as crops, metals or technologies or ideas and concepts such as philosophies, sciences, religions, the fine arts, literature, economic systems, and state systems, all civilisations have at different times added to humanity's multi-faceted capital to give us the world we live in.

This calls for the treatment of history as a universal entity of which regions form constituents — a call made several times by historians in the past. It also implies history to be a continual process rather than an aggregate of disparate tranches.

The transience of the notion of periodisation is likely to become increasingly manifest as history embarks on exploring areas of research such as climate, and planetary history, and even what is increasingly being questioned as pre-history and to an extent archaeology. These are far less susceptible to getting tied up in temporal boxes than the history that is still the predominant norm. The question also is this: how long will this remain the predominant norm?

Harbans Mukhia taught history at Jawaharlal Nehru University. Views are personal.



SANJAY VALENTINE GATHIA SAYS PRO-DEMOCRACY FORCES REMAIN COMMITTED TO FIGHTING FOR A FEDERAL DEMOCRATIC UNION

## Myanmar's actual political unification begins

Indian think-tanks, analysts, writers and the media dub Myanmar's Spring Revolution as militant and militant action against Myanmar's military, but there are many developments which we in India should take into account.

In 2022, the parallel governance system set up by the National Unity Consultative Council (a decision-making political alliance of pro-democracy forces and ethnic armed organisations established with more than 400 diverse representatives on March 8, 2021) organised an online "People's Assembly convened in January 2022", which adopted the Federal Democracy Charter (FDC) declared on March 31, 2021 by the Committee Representing Pyidaungsu Hluttaw (CRPH), thereby leading to the formation of the National Unity Government (NUG) and in shaping "Myanmar's Spring Revolution".

### Charter, a political guideline

Events set in motion after the formation of the NUG, of having a historical FDC which underwent multiple processes of being drafted and approved by various representatives of the elected lawmakers, political parties, civil disobedience movement, protest/strike leaders, civil society organisations, women, gender and youth organisations/representatives and other political stakeholders, are a political milestone in Myanmar's post-colonial independence, nation formation process, with recognition of equality for diverse ethnic groups. The charter in itself is not a legal document and still needs to address many constitutional checks and balances. Yet, it has laid the ground for some negotiated and consensual constitutional framework, serving as a political guideline for any constitutional development in the future



of the country. Even with the existing shortcomings, the charter's consensual adoption cannot be questioned as a frivolous political exercise. It is the strongest reflection of the will of all the people of Myanmar, and their inclusive political aspirations for a federal democratic structure addressing basic human rights, non-discrimination, minority rights, women and gender equality.

The post-coup political developments in Myanmar need to be understood as a historical and a fantastic collective work of deliberations, negotiation and political consensus undertaken by the diverse pro-democratic groups in Myanmar.

Arriving at a pivotal political moment in the country's history, the diverse ethnic groups involved in the pro-democracy movement have proven that peace in Myanmar is possible and achievable without the political involvement of the military.

### NUG formation is a political feat

The composition of the NUG should not be seen by Indians to be just another NLD-led body (which many continue to identify it

as so). One needs to have a good look at the composition of the NUG which has representatives from the National League for Democracy, Kachin Political Interim Coordination Team, Chin National Front/Interim Chin National Consultative Council, New Mon State Party, Shan Nationalities League for Democracy, Karenni National People's Liberation Front, Ta'ang National Party, Kayan New Land Party, All Burma Federation of Trade Unions, and many individual representatives. It is a political feat while the country is still having an armed revolution and an active civil disobedience movement, and is also working on interim arrangements on a consensual basis ("a multi-ethnic governance structure").

Myanmar's military has been hit by the sliding morale of and defections in the armed forces, and also hammered by coordinated attacks across the socio-political landscape on every front, politically and militarily, even when the Spring Revolution is fought in a very asymmetrical manner. An article in November in the Irrawaddy (independent Myanmar media) said: "Operation 1027 is creating a new political template for Myanmar's future." The ongoing increased coordinated armed offences against the military have only proven that the decades-old notion of the Myanmar military being essential for the future of the country has been proven false.

In another article in the Irrawaddy in January 2023, "Reviewing Myanmar's Spring Revolution, 2 Years on From the Coup", Banyar Aung emphasised how Myanmar's military has always used the constitution and law as a tool for itself and for its own interests. The military went on to claim widespread fraud in the general elections in 2020, and used the pretext of a threat to sovereignty and

territorial integrity to stage a failed coup, while seizing power by force. In a few days, the whole country erupted in protest against the military coup, leading to widespread civil disobedience movement and a violent uprising once the military started its violent pogrom against its own people including Bamar people, irrespective of their ethnic background.

### Pushing back against the military

The ongoing ensemble of coordinated and collective efforts by the revolutionary pro-democracy forces is pushing the military out of many ethnic- and Bamar-dominated areas. Stakeholders have shown an unprecedented and unwavering strong politico-public commitment to fight against the military and build a long-lasting politically sound, federal and democratic union — something which was not seen during the 8888 revolution.

The process of Myanmar's actual unification has just begun. The collective effort of the NUG is set to ensure that it completes the incomplete process of nation and state building left after colonial rule and shattered after the military took over the country for seven decades, even after the 8888 revolution. Public fury has been unleashed since February 1, 2021, on an unprecedented scale.

"The revolution is here to stay, and we will not rest until the military is removed," my Burmese friends insist.

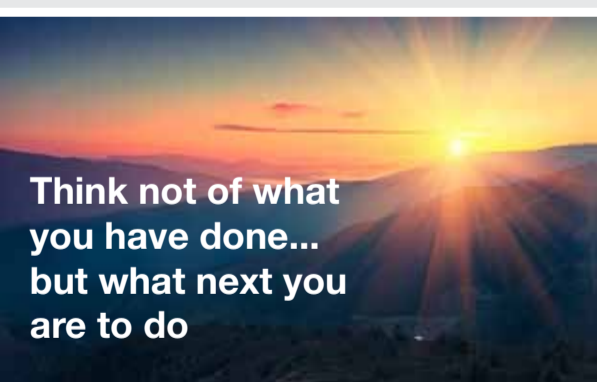
Sanjay Valentine Gathia is Founder and Director of Borders and Broader Conversations Initiative which organises P2P conversations and networking between India-Myanmar-Thailand (IMT), with a focus on India's Act East Policy and India's Neighbourhood Policy. Views are personal.

## GST at 6.5 years: A turning point in tax reform journey

As the Goods and Services Tax (GST) crosses six and a half years, India witnesses a notable financial milestone. The GST has amassed almost Rs 3.4 lakh crore in October and November, marking these months as some of the highest in monthly collections. October saw a 13.4% increase, while November witnessed a 15.1% rise in GST inflows, indicating a resurgence after a period of slowing gains. This uptick, likely fuelled by festive spending, places the average monthly collection for 2023-24 at a robust Rs 1.66 lakh crore. Economists even predict central GST receipts to exceed budget estimates, despite potential slow-downs in the year's final quarter. This financial buoyancy, partly due to stringent compliance and a crack-down on tax evasion, signals an opportune moment for the government to recalibrate its GST strategy. The tax system, initially promised to be 'good and simple', still grapples with complexities. Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman's recent acknowledgment of the GST's transition from "uncertainty to certainty" reflects the need for clarity and stability in India's tax regime. This journey towards certainty must encompass broader aspects to assure investors of a stable and predictable tax environment. Crucially, the backlog of taxpayer appeals against central GST levies, which surged to nearly 15,000 cases by October, calls for immediate operationalization of appellate tribunals. This move will not only reduce pendency but also establish clearer precedents for future tax disputes. With general elections looming, some hesitation in undertaking these reforms is expected. However, the GST Council must remain focused on its unfinished agenda, continuously deliberating on crucial reforms. Post-election, these discussions should rapidly translate into action, ensuring the GST evolves into the efficient, streamlined system it was envisioned to be. Such proactive measures will reinforce India's commitment to fiscal responsibility and economic transparency, fortifying investor confidence and contributing to the nation's sustained economic growth.

### LETTERBOX

Readers' feedback adds value to the newspaper. Please email comments on reports, features and columns to [fwletters@gmail.com](mailto:fwletters@gmail.com). We will publish them on this page.



Think not of what you have done... but what next you are to do

## THE FINANCIAL WORLD

RNI NO. DELENG/2011/38860  
PRINTED & PUBLISHED BY SWINDER BAJWA ON BEHALF OF FW MEDIA  
PRINTED AT JAGJIT PUBLISHING CO. PVT LTD D-12, INDUSTRIAL AREA, PHASE-1, MOHALI, PUNJAB 160059  
PRINTER & PUBLISHER SWINDER BAJWA  
OWNER : FW MEDIA  
PUBLISHED AT: BUILDING NO-23, NEHRU PLACE NEW DELHI 110019; PHONE: 9888040061  
EDITOR\* ABDUL WASEY  
(\*RESPONSIBLE FOR SELECTION OF NEWS UNDER THE PRB ACT)

### BOOKS: REVIEW

## New book unveils Indian cat's tale in art and poetry

In the world of literature, a book that starts with a confession often piques curiosity. "The Indian Cat" by B.N. Goswamy, a renowned art historian who passed away on November 17, begins with such a twist. Despite not being a cat lover, Goswamy's 27th and final book emerges as a whimsical yet scholarly tribute to the enigmatic feline, spanning 290 pages and priced at Rs 1,299 by Aleph.

At its heart, "The Indian Cat" is a three-part journey exploring the multifaceted presence of cats in Indian culture. The first part delves into ancient texts like the Panchatantra, Jataka Tales, and Anvar-i-Suhaili, where cats are depicted in varied roles - from holy figures to cunning creatures. Here, Goswamy offers a nuanced perspective, showing that despite the cat's reputation for deception, Indian mythology and history harbor no animosity towards these animals. The book's second part, which

Goswamy, as an art historian, meticulously curates, is perhaps the most engaging. He analyses 58 paintings, illustrating the understated coexistence of cats and humans in Indian art. These aren't mere portraits of cats but scenes of life where cats, often minuscule and easy to miss, make subtle appearances. Goswamy's keen eye and descriptive annotations breathe life into these images, whether it's a cat donning a gold collar or engaged in playful antics. A particular standout is the painting titled "Strange happenings in a sprawling household", which offers a humorous and chaotic snapshot of life, where cats play a discreet yet pivotal role.

In the final section, Goswamy traverses the realms of poetry. Transcending languages like Urdu, Persian, Hindi, and Bengali, he showcases how cats have been immortalized in verses as creatures of wonder and affection, far removed from any negative connotations.

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Poets like Mir Taqi Mir, Asadullah Khan Ghalib, and Jibananda Das are featured, celebrating the cat's noble and endearing qualities.

Goswamy's exploration arguably leads him to a silent admiration for cats, a sentiment that he subtly transfers to the reader. "The Indian Cat" stands not just as a historical or cultural study but as a testament to the transformative power of research and storytelling. Goswamy's



The Indian Cat  
By B.N. Goswamy  
Aleph: 240 pages; Rs 1,299.

narrative is both enlightening and entertaining, making the book an ideal bedside companion for nightly reading.

In essence, "The Indian Cat" does for cats what viral videos do on the internet - it spreads joy and an irresistible urge to share the love. Goswamy's final work, thus, is more than just a book; it's a celebration of an animal that has captivated humans through ages, across myths, arts, and poetry. It's a fitting legacy for a scholar of Goswamy's stature, ensuring that his insights and observations continue to inspire and educate long after his passing.

Continuing with the essence of "The Indian Cat," the book's charm lies not only in its content but also in the way Goswamy weaves cultural and historical narratives. He

doesn't just present facts; he invites readers on a journey through time and space, offering a window into the Indian subcontinent's rich cultural tapestry. The anecdotes and stories are carefully chosen to represent a broad spectrum of the cat's symbolic presence in Indian society. From the cat as a spiritual symbol in ancient texts to its role as a muse in the arts, Goswamy's study is comprehensive and insightful.

Goswamy's approach to the subject is particularly refreshing because of his initial ambivalence towards cats. This detachment allows him to explore the topic with an academic rigor and objectivity that might have been clouded by personal affection. Yet, as he delves deeper into his research, there is a subtle shift in tone. The scholarly distance gradually gives way to a gentle appreciation, mirrored in the increasingly warm and sometimes even playful descriptions as the book progresses. It is this transformation in the author's perspective that lends the book an additional layer of depth, making it a compelling read not just for cat lovers or art enthusiasts but for anyone interested in cultural studies.

## Tata planning Rs 40,000-crore semiconductor unit in Assam: CM

Himanta Biswa Sarma said the Tata Group held initial talks with the state government about the semiconductor assembly and packaging plant, and satisfied with the discussions here, they have approached the Centre

Guwahati : Tata Group is planning to set up a semiconductor processing plant in Assam at an investment of about Rs 40,000 crore, Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma said on Friday.

Addressing a function here, he said it has approached the Centre for the final nod after discussions with the state government, and the go-ahead is expected soon.

“There is a very good news for us. Tata Electronics Ltd has submitted an application for



setting up an electronic centre at Jagiroad,” Sarma said. “They have submitted a proposal to the Government of India with an outlay of about Rs 40,000 crore,” he added. Jagiroad, in Morigaon district, is about 55 km from the state’s largest city Guwahati.

Sarma said the Tata Group held initial talks with the state government about the semiconductor assembly and packaging plant, and satisfied with the discussions here, they have approached the Centre. “If all goes well, we will see a major investment in the state

which will create a positive environment for industrialisation. We are in touch with the Centre and hope that the final approval will be given in a month or two,” he said. The chief minister said that the conglomerate has also approached the state government to train 1,000 people for employment in the unit.

“We used to always ask why electronics and IT industry did not come to our state. Now it is changing,” Sarma said.

In a post on X, he thanked PM Narendra Modi “for his continuous guidance in transforming our State”.

The state cabinet had in August approved the Assam Semiconductor Manufacturing and Electronic Production Policy.

## India World's Second Most Coveted Manufacturing Hub, Says Finance minister Sitharaman

NEW DELHI: Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman on Thursday informed Rajya Sabha that India is the second most sought-after manufacturing destination in world.

“Manufacturing sector contributes significantly to economy on the back of various measures like PLI scheme,” she said. The union minister added that all sectors are growing significantly because of the Make in India programme and PM Modi’s schemes.

At present, the manufacturing sector is contributing 13.9 per cent to the economy. The Purchasing Managers Index (PMI) in November was 56. “Our second quarter growth has been very high and it is the highest in the world and we continuously maintained that momentum of being the fastest-growing economy,” she added. Sitharaman informed that the second quarter growth is the highest in the world and we continue to maintain the momentum of being the fastest growing economy.

“During the same same quarter-July to September, 2023, the third and fourth largest economies of the world contracted. For India to reach 7.6 per cent in the second quarter, it is a very significant number. In just last eight years, India has become the world’s fifth largest economy,” Sitharaman told the House.

## CDS to Inaugurate HAL’s Avionics Expo 2023 in Delhi; Focus on HAL Capabilities & Self-Reliance in Avionics

ARUN KUMAR RAO  
Bengaluru

Hindustan Aeronautics Limited (HAL) is all set to showcase its rich legacy in the design, development and production of a diverse range of avionics systems during Avionics Expo-2023 to be held at Dr Ambedkar International Centre, New Delhi on December 7-8, 2023. The Expo will be inaugurated by the Chief of Defence Staff, Press statement from HAL said.

“We will demonstrate HAL’s capabilities and contributions toward self-reliance in avionics, to our stakeholders, including the Indian Armed Forces, Ministry of Defence, Ministry of Civil Aviation, DRDO and other important institutions,” said C B Ananthkrishnan, CMD (Additional Charge), HAL.

“The event will serve as a hub for professionals, industry leaders and stakeholders from the aviation sector. They will have ample networking opportunities to establish meaningful connections, foster collaborations and explore potential business partnerships. It is a testament to HAL’s commitment to advancing aerospace technology in India,” said Dr D K Sunil, Director (Engineering and R&D).



Events Highlights are Avionics Product Displays: The expo will unveil a comprehensive range of avionics products designed and developed by HAL. Attendees will witness cutting-edge avionics systems deployed in various aircraft platforms, including advanced flight control systems, communication systems, navigation systems and more.

Panel Discussions: Engaging panel discussions will feature experts from the Indian Armed forces, HAL, partner organizations, and academia. Topics will span emerging trends in avionics, challenges in system integration, and the future of aviation electronics, providing a holistic view of the sector.

Live Demonstrations: ‘HAL Avionics Expo 2023’ will offer live demonstrations of avionics products and systems, providing a unique opportunity to experience their capabilities first hand.

## Sweets and Namkeen Manufacturers Raise Voice Against Inconsistent GST Charges

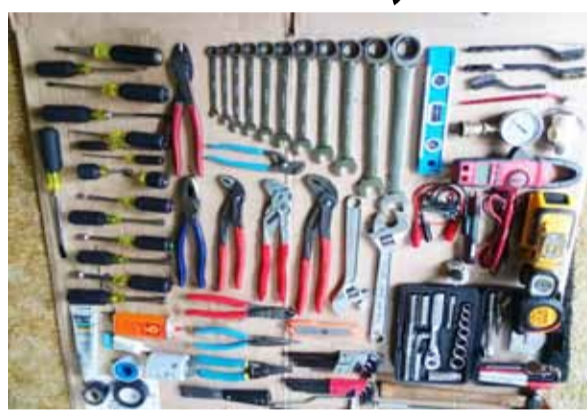
KOLKATA: Ahead of the World Mithai and Namkeen Convention 2023, sweets and namkeen manufacturers voiced concerns regarding inconsistent GST charges, distribution challenges and shortage of skilled labour.

The Federation of Sweets and Namkeen Manufacturers (FSNM) director, Firoz H Naqvi, said, “Consuming rasogolla at a retail sweet shop incurs a 5 per cent GST without input credit while the same incurs a 5 per cent GST when consumed at home. A uniform tax practice should be established.”

FSNM president, Virendra Jain, said, “Over 30,000 B2B visitors, with 5,500 industry members will be attending the expo.”

The Federation of Sweets and Namkeen Manufacturers (FSNM) is organising the sixth edition of the World Mithai and Namkeen Convention 2023 in Kolkata from December 17 to 19. The three-day event will host 300 representatives from 20 countries, showcasing modern machinery and high-quality raw materials.

## India’s Hand Tool Market to touch \$416.2Mn by 2029



MUMBAI: The hand tools market of India is estimated to reach USD 416.2 million by 2028 with a CAGR growth of 4.3 per cent, said R.K. Rai, Director, Office of the Development Commissioner, Ministry of MSME. Currently the market is valued at USD 342.8 million in 2022 and the projection is for 7 years.

Speaking at International Hardware Fair 2023 organised by Koelnmesse Pvt. Ltd., he said, “India is set to rival China in the Asia-Pacific hand tools market. Additionally, the industrial fasteners market is expected to hit Rs 460 billion by 2023, growing at a strong 9.6 per cent CAGR since 2018.”

“India’s Hardware & Building Materials market is also thriving, with a projected 1.68 per cent growth rate (CAGR 2023-28) globally, contributing a 1.2 per cent share in

global exports,” he added. Speaking at the event powered by EISENWARENMESSE - International Hardware Fair Cologne, Arun Kumar Garodia, Chairman of the Engineering Exports Promotion Council (EEPC), said for India to achieve a goal of USD 1 trillion in merchandise export by 2030, engineering exports must have a significant share of USD 300 billion.

“Despite facing global challenges like the pandemic and geopolitical conflicts, Moody’s projects India’s 2023 growth at 6.7 per cent the highest among G20 nations,” he emphasised.

The Indian engineering sector, particularly the hardware industry, is a rapidly growing and diverse segment, making a substantial contribution to the country’s development and manufacturing sector, experts said.

## Aver Audio Tracking Camera Takes Silver at Taiwan Excellence Awards

TAIPEI, TAIWAN: AVer Information Inc., an award-winning provider of video conferencing solutions, once again received nationwide recognition at the Taiwan Excellence Awards. Today, the AVer CAM570, a unique 4K dual-lens audio tracking camera, is honored with the Silver Award at the Taiwan Excellence Award Ceremony.

AVer Vice President Kings Wang announced: “We are delighted that the CAM570 has risen amongst the tough competition in this year’s Taiwan Excellence Awards, a testament to the efforts AVer has made for audio-visual research, development, and innovation. We will continue to raise our standards and provide our customers with the best audio-visual solutions we can.”

The CAM570 is AVer’s first 4K dual-lens audio tracking camera, incorporating top-level camera specifications. It has a PTZ camera boasting 36X total zoom and an AI lens with a 95° field of view. It utilizes its three pairs of built-in audio sensors that make beamforming possible, receiving human voices from up to 10 meters away. With the touch of a button, audio tracking allows the camera to track the speaker so that meeting attendees can focus on the presentation.

What truly stands out is the exclusive AI technology the device offers. AI functions include Dynamic Detection, which au-



tomatically adjusts the camera angle and zoom to capture every meeting participant. The 95° wide-angle AI lens provides a panoramic view of the conference room, detects meeting attendees at all times, and triggers the PTZ camera to automatically frame everyone when needed. Smart Gallery, a function that applies AI technology to frame each participant, presenting everyone equally on-screen in headshot or half-body frames. These features allow a clear view of each participant’s facial expressions and body language, creating an immersive virtual collaboration experience.

In the 32nd year of the Taiwan Excellence Awards, a total of 948 products have been submitted with only 30 products receiving the Gold and Silver Awards. Aside from the CAM570 audio tracking camera, AVer products that received the Taiwan Excellence Award include the VB350 dual-lens PTZ video bar, A30 all-purpose visualizer, PTZ310UNV2 Pro

AV PTZ camera, medical-grade MD120UI PTZ camera, and CS One.

Founded in 2008, AVer is an award-winning provider of education technology and video collaboration camera solutions that improve productivity and enrich learning. From accelerating learning in the classroom to increasing competitive advantage for businesses, AVer solutions leverage the power of technology to help people connect with one another to achieve great things. AVer’s product portfolio includes professional-grade artificial intelligence-enabled auto-tracking cameras, Zoom and Microsoft Teams Certified enterprise-grade USB cameras, document cameras, and mobile device charging solutions. AVer strives to provide industry-leading service and support that exceeds customer expectations. AVer is deeply committed to the community and the environment, and it employs stringent green processes.

## Apprenticeship Openings Jump By 75 per cent Across India, Engineering, Industrial Sectors Take Lead: TeamLease Report

NEW DELHI: There is an exceptional surge of 75% in apprenticeship opportunities across India which marks a 9% growth over the January-March, 2023 quarter, revealed by TeamLease Degree Apprenticeship Outlook Report.

According to the report, the Net Apprenticeship Outlook (NAO), a crucial indicator of employer sentiment, has reached an all-time high, signalling a remarkable 75% increase in employer intent for apprenticeship engagement during the upcoming October-March 2023-24 half-year.

NAO has seen significant Year-Over-Year (YOY) growth, rising from 41% in January-June, 2021 to 56% in January-June, 2022 and further to 66%



in January-March, 2023. The NAO has now reached an astounding 75% for the October-March, 2023-24 period.

This Compound Annual Growth Rate (CAGR) of nearly 30% reflects how organisations perceive apprenticeships as a pivotal talent development strategy, driving skill enhancement, workforce development and talent pipeline creation, the release mentioned.

The HY1 April-September, 2023 and HY2 October, 2023

preceding quarter. This trend indicates robust growth prospects for apprenticeships, affirming their pivotal role in shaping the workforce of the future, as per the release.

“The primary reasons driving the growth are real-time skill availability, cost effectiveness, and driving community engagement under CSR. Also, initiatives from the government such as PLI and Make in India are driving the employment opportunities for which employers are relying on apprenticeships to build a talent pipeline. 63% of employers have reported satisfactory performances of the apprentices, which is encouraging for employers to scale up the intake.”

Sumit Kumar, chief business officer, TeamLease Degree Apprenticeship, said.

to March, 2024 Apprenticeship Outlook Report highlights a compelling landscape, with Engineering and Industrial (96%), Electrical and Electronics (94%), Telecom (93%) and Ecom and Tech products (90%) leading as the sectors with the highest Net Apprenticeship Outlook (NAO).

Notably, these industries, along with five others, have witnessed a significant increase in NAO during the October-March, 2023-24 half-year compared to the

preceding quarter. This trend indicates robust growth prospects for apprenticeships, affirming their pivotal role in shaping the workforce of the future, as per the release.

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## Rajant wins IET Industry excellence platinum award 2023

UK-based Institute of Engineering & Technology Distinction Given to Rajant Kinetic Mesh

MALVERN PENNSYLVANIA: Rajant Corporation, the pioneer of Kinetic Mesh wireless networks, is an Institute of Engineering & Technology (IET) Industry Excellence Platinum Award winner for 2023. IET is a UK-based 149-year-old organization with membership of 170,000 engineering and technology professionals in 148 countries. The announcement was made on November 25<sup>th</sup> during the IET Malaysia Prestige Lecture and Award Dinner 2023, which recognizes the hard work and achievements of individuals and industry players who have contributed immensely to the nation of Malaysia and beyond.

There to receive the award were representatives from Rajant and channel partners Automation & Control Systems and Red Team. Sentiments about the significance of this award are:

“Automation & Control Systems has been a Kinetic Mesh Partner of Rajant since 2019. Rajant Corporation’s unique wireless mesh technology has been a game-changer for our clients, especially those running mission-critical and safety applications. I’m happy that IET recognizes Rajant’s engineering contribution with the prestige of this award.”

Steven Chan, Business Development Director, Automation & Control Systems Malaysia “Red Team serves clients with mission-critical applica-



tions that require extremely reliable, low-latency wireless connectivity. We found the performance of Rajant Kinetic Mesh networking to be unparalleled in the market. This prominent award from IET simply reaffirms the engineering leadership of Rajant Corporation.”

Dato Shahril, Managing Director, Red Team Sdn Bhd

“I’m honored to receive this award on behalf of Rajant Corporation. This notable distinction from the Institute of Engineering and Technology underscores the contribution Rajant makes to solving communication and connectivity challenges for high bandwidth industrial applications.”

Ong Beng Hui, Sales Director, Rajant Corporation

This industry award for excellence underscores the unique nature of Rajant’s technology, which extends communications in hard-to-reach places. Rajant Kinetic Mesh, the leading industrial wireless mesh network, is fully mobile and intelligently adapts to change—instantly and without outside interven-

## Steering Committee to Assess National Trade Facilitation Action Plan 2020-23



NEW DELHI: The Steering Committee jointly chaired by Secretary, Department of Revenue and Secretary, Department of Commerce will be convened later this week to review National Trade Facilitation Action Plan 2020-23.

To ease trade related processes, a national level mechanism was created through Trade Facilitation Agreement (TFA) under World Trade Organization (WTO) in each member country including India.

Besides implementation of the TFA, the ongoing mandate of the Steering Committee includes identification of the agencies/departments involved in the implementation of trade facilitation measures; conducting gap analysis and assessment of compliance of the agencies involved in trade facilitation and identifying changes required - including regulatory, procedural, and infrastructural for trade facilitation.

The Steering Committee consists of public and private partners involved in the compliance of TFA and other critical aspects of trade facilitation in the country.

Besides representation from Ministries and departments such as Finance, Commerce, Indian Directorate General of Foreign Trade (DGFT), Ports & Shipping all national trade and industry bodies CII, FIEO, FISME, ASSOCHAM, IPAI, FICCI, EICINDIA are member of the Committee.

## Driver Logistics launches Karnataka operations to Invest 525 Crores

ARUN KUMAR RAO  
Bengaluru

Driver Logistics, a growing logistics service provider, unveiled its multi-client warehouse and Partial Truckload operations in Karnataka. CEO Aqil Ashique, addressing a press conference, announced that the company’s strategic vision to position Karnataka as its gateway hub connecting South India to the rest of the nation.

Over the next year, Driver Logistics plans to hire more than 150 individuals for its Karnataka operations, with a focus on engaging young graduates. The company is set to expand its footprint across Karnataka, offering Warehousing, Full Truckload (FTL),



and Partial Truckload (PTL) services to clients in key towns.

With a bold investment plan totalling Rs 525 Crores over the next 5 years, Driver Logistics aims to revolutionize the logistics sector. The infusion of funds will drive technological advancements, benefiting shippers, logistics service providers, and the local job market.

Established in 2019, Driver

Logistics has achieved an impressive growth rate of over 30% annually, expanding its presence to 7 states. As part of its expansion strategy, the company plans to increase its warehouse count from 53 to over 100 in the next 18 months.

Karnataka is positioned as a pivotal hub for Driver Logistics, facilitating the consolidation of operations in Kerala,

Tamil Nadu, Telangana, and Andhra Pradesh. CEO Aqil Ashique emphasized the company’s resilient and efficient business model, highlighting its substantial growth without external funding.

Aqil Ashique, expressed optimism about the central government’s initiatives such as Gati Shakti, anticipating exponential growth in the logistics sector and a significant boost for companies in the 3PL sector. Beyond national expansion, Driver Logistics eyes the growing trade between India and South East Asian countries as a catalyst for increased demand in professional logistics services. In line with this vision, the company is exploring expansion into South East Asia, commencing with operations in Thailand.

## IT MoS envisions 20% GDP boost from Digital Economy by 2026

**GANDHINAGAR:** The digital economy has the potential to contribute 20 per cent to India's GDP by 2026, said Rajeev Chandrashekar, Union MoS Electronics and Information Technology, Skill Development and Entrepreneurship.



Currently, India's digital economy is at 11 per cent of the GDP and will surge to 20 per cent by 2026, he said. Speaking at the inaugural function of 'Startup Conclave 2023', held in Gandhinagar, he highlighted the growth of digital economy from 4.5 per cent of the GDP to 11 per cent. The digital economy is outpacing overall GDP growth, growing at two and a half times faster

than the overall GDP growth. By 2026, it is anticipated to constitute 20 per cent or one-fifth of India's GDP.

The minister emphasised that the goals outlined by Prime Minister Narendra Modi during the 2015 launch of the Digital India programme have significantly

transformed our economy, innovation ecosystem, and global standing both qualitatively and quantitatively. India's position has transformed from being the consumer of technology for nearly three decades to being the producer of devices, products and platforms for the world. The minister highlighted the evolution of the economy from dominance by a few groups to a highly diversified one. Stressing India's status as the world's fastest-growing digital economy, the minister expressed enthusiasm for the current state of the innovation and technology sector in the country, deeming it the most exciting period.

## CGTMSE Approves Guarantees to 78 Lakh MSEs In Last 23 Years: MoS MSME

**NEW DELHI:** The Credit Guarantee Fund Trust for Micro and Small Enterprises (CGTMSE) has permitted and extended the guarantees to 78,06,655 Micro and Small Enterprises under the Credit Guarantee Scheme for Micro and Small Enterprises, informed Minister of State for MSME, Bhanu Pratap Singh Verma in a written reply to the Rajya Sabha on Monday. He noted that the scheme was started in 2000 and the data of guarantee extended is as of October 31, 2023. As informed by CGTMSE, during the current year 52 programmes and training sessions



for Banks/Financial Institutions have been organized, said the MoS MSME.

As per the guidelines of Credit Guarantee Scheme for Micro and Small Enterprises, CGTMSE provides credit guarantee to its Member Lending Institutions (MLIs) for the credit extended by them to

Micro and Small Enterprises under the Credit Guarantee Scheme for Micro and Small Enterprises.

CGTMSE (Credit Guarantee Fund Trust for Micro and Small Enterprises) is setup by GoI, & SIDBI in August 2000 to make collateral free credit facilities available to MSEs (Micro & Small Enterprises).

As per RBI guidelines, MSE advances guaranteed by CGTMSE will attract zero risk weight for the guaranteed portion and no provision is to be made for the guaranteed portion in case the advances covered under CGTMSE, becomes NPA.

## State Bank of India Predicts RBI to Maintain No Rate Reversal Cycle till June 2024

**MUMBAI:** The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) is expected to continue the pause its stance in upcoming policy, said the SBI in its latest report.



"We expect the RBI to continue the pause stance in upcoming policy. Domestically, we believe at 6.50 per cent, we are in for a prolonged pause, no rate reversal cycle till June '24 stance," said SBI in the report.

"We believe the stance should continue to be withdrawal of accommodation as inflation is unlikely to tread below 5 per cent in rest of FY24; as amidst the structural change in liquidity is making its forecasting difficult, it should be looked at with a completely different prism," it added.

The RBI had kept repo rate unchanged at 6.50 per cent for four consecutive times, after cumulatively increasing it by 250 bps from May 2022 to December 2022.

The SBI report added that growth continues to remain resilient and risk is mostly from sources outside of home. Higher oil prices pushing up inflation, and tighter global financial conditions are key risks weighing on the currency, inflation and growth dynamics, it added.

All scheduled commercial banks' (ASCBs) credit grew as credit grew by 20.6 per cent. As per sectoral credit data of October 2023, personal, services, agriculture, MSME reported excellent credit growth on-year.

While housing, com-

mercial real estate grew over 35 per cent on-year, aviation reported growth of 67 per cent on year. "Overall, industry credit reported growth of 6 per cent. However, sectors such as chemicals, metals, textile, glass, food processing etc. reported double digit growth. In infrastructure, road reported 9 per cent growth while telecommunication and railway reported growth of 7 per cent each," stated the report.

Wheat sowing deficit decreased to 5 per cent for the week of November 24. However, sowing of major wheat, pulses and some oilseeds have been slightly delayed this year due to late harvest of kharif-grown paddy in a few states due to El Nino's adverse effects.

"Despite the government's efforts to increase MSP, mandi prices remain low in ragi, moong and cotton. However, interestingly, the price of cotton at e-NAM is higher than MSP," stated SBI.

SBI stated that CPI inflation is expected to come around 5.4-5.5 per cent by March 2023, although November and December inflation could overshoot 6 per cent. "With inflation expected to come down further, MPC is likely to maintain the status quo this fiscal," it said.

## Disinflationary RBI policy well aligned with growth objective: ASSOCHAM

**NEW DELHI:** RBI's continuing focus on 'disinflationary' monetary policy retaining key REPO rate unchanged at 6.50 per cent is well aligned with the intention of the Monetary Policy Committee for an ecosystem, favourable to a sustainable growth which promises to be robust braving global headwinds, ASSOCHAM has said.

"While inflation has been declining for the past few months, RBI seems resolute in its target of taming it to its target of four per cent. It has so far kept a vigilant eye on both global and domestic events for a stance that would bring more confidence to investors, borrowers and consumers as the focus of the credit policy remains on price and financial stability," ASSOCHAM Secretary General Deepak Sood said.

He said RBI has reinforced a robust and resilient trajectory of economic growth, revising its outlook for fiscal 2023-24 upward to 7 per cent from its earlier projections of 6.5 per cent. "This puts a stamp of RBI reinforcement of India remaining the fastest growing economy of the world amongst the major economies". The ASSOCHAM also welcomed several other measures unveiled by the RBI Governor Shaktikanta Das. Enhancing the UPI transaction limit from Rs 1 lakh to Rs 5 lakh for hospitals and educational institutions is a pragmatic measure. "Based on the feedback, this limit can be revised for other sectors as UPI has emerged as a great enabler for micro, small and medium enterprises," the chamber said.

## No Research on Pros & Cons of Foreign Investment in MSME Sector says MoS MSME

**NEW DELHI:** The MSME Ministry has conducted no specific study on the advantages and disadvantages of foreign investment in MSMEs sector from competitiveness and viability point of view, informed the Minister of State for MSME, Bhanu Pratap Singh Verma in a written reply to the Lok Sabha on Thursday.

The MoS termed Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) as an enabling policy, which is uniformly applicable irrespective of scale and size of eligible investee entities.

To promote FDI, the Government has put in place an investor-friendly policy, wherein most sector activities including MSMEs except certain strategically important sectors/activities are open for 100 per cent FDI under the automatic route, he mentioned in the reply.

He gave details of the vari-



ous schemes and programmes aimed at promotion and development of MSME sector in the country.

These schemes/programmes include MSME Champions Scheme, Credit Guarantee Fund Trust for Micro and Small Enterprises (CGTMSE), Prime Minister's Employ-

ment Generation Programme (PMEGP), Micro and Small Enterprises - Cluster Development Programme (MSE-CDP) and Raising and Accelerating MSME Performance (RAMP).

Further the Government has taken a number of initiatives to support the MSME Sector, he said.

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## U Gro Capital Proposes NBFC-MSME Category

**NEW DELHI:** Shachindra Nath, Managing Director of U Gro Capital has pitched for a new category of non-banking financial companies (NBFCs) serving micro, small and medium enterprises (MSME), reported Mint.

"Just like NBFC-MFI and HFC (housing finance companies), there should be NBFC-MSME," Nath told Mint exclusively. Gauging the impact of the Reserve Bank of India's (RBI) recent move to increase the risk weight on consumer loans, he said that it will have an impact on NBFCs with the bank borrowing cost increasing.

"However, it does not impact the NBFCs serving the MFI and housing finance segments. The RBI move is going to increase our borrowing cost from banks," he added without revealing further details.

The publicly-listed MSME lender on Tuesday partnered with Laghu Udyog Bharati, an organization dedicated to supporting micro-enterprises, to launch awareness programmes to em-



power MSMEs with knowledge about government schemes and digital credits, reported Mint.

"A research report shows that when it comes to credit, 28 per cent MSMEs are self-financed; 12% have raised financing through informal channels; while only 10% are financed through formal institutions such as banks and NBFCs. NBFCs share in MSME lending is just 10 per cent," Om Prakash Gupta, All India general secretary, Laghu Udyog Bharati, said during a press conference.

"We will organize awareness programmes for MSMEs with U Gro in 100-150 locations across India in next few years. We believe the awareness around credit will be a game-changer for small businesses in India," said Gupta.

## Tax revenues consistently clocking more than 1.6 lakh crores with room for growth: Shashank Priya

**FW DESK**  
New Delhi

We have embarked on a journey of one nation, one tax, one market and we need to continuously keep working towards addressing these problems that keep coming at the field level. Our tax revenues have been consistently clocking more than 1.6 lakh crore and we shall continue to grow because there are areas where revenues can still be tapped. We are looking at easing compliance, but at the same time, we are trying to see how we can bring in regularity of compliances and timely return filing and tax payment" said Shashank Priya, Special Secretary & Member (GST), CBIC at the National Conference on

GST organised by ASSOCHAM. "CBIC has taken a major decision to become a model two state, which means now we will not have our own back end system. We will be migrating to the back end system of GSTN because at the field level, there were problems regarding loss of data. We also felt that there will be a synergy between what the states and the center does if we are all working on one back-end system.

It may not be possible that everything can be addressed at a central level and ground level grievance redressal mechanism, state coordination committee meetings and mechanisms have been put in place to address problems that are arising in implementation



of the some of the provisions of the law," he added.

Pratik Jain, Chairman, National Council on Indirect Taxes, ASSOCHAM in his welcome address said, "GST is a tax which impacts all of

us. GST collections have been good over the past few months, and we are likely to exceed our collection target for FY 24. There is no doubt that GST has brought in structural simplicity with one law and

uniform tax rates across the states. However, industry feels that the Government needs to be push 'ease of doing business' agenda hard now. More than legislative aspects, tax administration needs to be streamlined now. There is a need for stakeholders to come together and adopt a consultative approach as we move ahead."

Ritesh Kanodia, Co-Chairman ASSOCHAM National Council on Indirect taxes focused on GST law which is constantly evolving and while there are certain challenges, we have also seen Government coming out with positive clarifications on some key issues e.g. ISD vs cross charge. Some important issues that however

need immediate consideration is multiplicity of audits and the quantum of notices that are being issued, past issues where demands have been confirmed and interest paid however there is now a dispute on credit, better clarity on GST on corporate guarantees and need for a relaxation/amnesty scheme for GSTR 2A-3B notices where law was not clear and there were also system issues. He further stressed that it was good to hear the Governments perspective on each of these issues and that they are being looked at proactively. While resolution may not be immediate, but the direction is to achieve ease of doing business by better use of technology.

## Govt approves Rs 2500 cr for continuation of interest equalisation scheme up to June '24

**NEW DELHI:** The Union Cabinet on Friday approved an additional allocation of Rs 2,500 crore for the continuation of interest equalisation or subsidy scheme on pre- and post-shipment rupee export credit up to June 30 next year. This would help exporters from identified sectors and all MSME manufacturer exporters to avail rupee export credit at competitive rates at a time when the global economy is facing headwinds. Exporters get subsidies under the Interest Equalisation Scheme for pre and post-shipment Rupee export credit.

## MOU Signed between Indian Banks' Association and United Forum of Bank Unions

### BANK EMPLOYEES TO GET AN ANNUAL INCREASE IN SALARY AT 17 PER CENT

**JAG MOHAN THAKEN**

After a long wait, the bank employees and officers will get an annual increase of 17% in their salary with effect from 1.11.2022. A Memorandum of Understanding was signed between Indian Banks' Association (IBA) representing Management of Banks, which are parties to the Bipartite Settlement, and United Forum of Bank Unions, other Unions and Associations on the basis of discussions held on 7th December, 2023 on wage revision. Discussions were held between the Indian Banks' Association representing Managements of Banks and the authorized representatives of Workmen Unions and Officers' Associations on wage revision for Officers and Workmen in banks.

The management and the Unions/Associations representing the workmen staff and officers, acknowledge the need for a robust banking system which is adaptive to the challenges facing the banking industry and the need to further improve the productivity, efficiency and responsiveness to the needs of the customers and various



stakeholders. With this commitment, it has been agreed to resolve the pending wage settlement issue and enter into an MoU. This wage revision will be effective from 1.11.2022 for a period of five years. An annual increase in salary and allowances is agreed at 17%, of the annual pay slip expenses for FY 2021-22, which works out to Rs. 12,449 crores for all public sector banks including SBI.

The new pay scales will be constructed after merging Dearness Allowance corresponding to 8088 points (average Index point as applicable for the Quarter of July, August and September, 2021) to the basic pay as on 31.10.2022, and adding thereon a loading of 3%, amounting to Rs 1795 crore.

It has also been agreed that distribution of annual wage

increase between Workmen and Officers will be worked out separately and proportionately based on breakup of establishment expenses for FY 2021-22.

Without prejudice to the demand of unions/associations for updating of pension for all retirees, it is also agreed that as a one-time measure applicable for the current bipartite / Joint Note period, monthly ex-gratia amount will be considered along with pension by PSBs to pensioners and family pensioners, who were drawing pension as on 31/10/2022.

The applicability of the said ex-gratia for the retirees of the current settlement period will be discussed further. The said ex-gratia amount will not attract any other allowance including dearness allowance.

To draw out a detailed Bipartite- settlement/Joint

Note on the various issues on which consensus positions are reached the parties will meet on mutually convenient dates.

The parties will endeavour to finalize the Bipartite Settlement /Joint Note within a period of 180 days from the date of these minutes.

Now the way for holiday on all the Saturdays have been paved and now the banks will remain closed on all Saturdays instead of second and fourth Saturdays. IBA has already recommended to the Government for declaration of all Saturdays as holidays under NI Act for Banking industry in line with earlier negotiations with unions/associations and the same will be pursued. The unions/associations urged for implementation of the same before signing of the final bipartite agreement/joint note.

It has also been agreed that all other issues of the Managements and Unions/Associations discussed during the process of negotiation including payment of ex-gratia to pensioners and family pensioners of private sector banks and foreign banks will be settled to the mutual satisfaction.

The signatories include V. Rao MD & CEO, Central Bank of India (Chairman- Negotiating Committee), Shanti Lal Jain MD & CEO, Indian

Bank (Alternate Chairman Negotiating Committee) and others for management And for Workmen Unions All India Bank Employees' Association, National Confederation of Bank Employees, Bank Employees Federation of India, National Organisation of Bank Workers, All India Bank Officers Confederation, Indian National Bank Officers Congress, National Organisation of Bank Officers along with others.

However, the retirees of the banks don't see this agreement favourable to them. They wanted update of the pension and not improvement.

The MOU signed on 7th instant says that proposed hike in pension will be in the shape of monthly ex-gratia. About the quantum of monthly ex gratia, the MOU is silent means will be decided later on. It is also stunning that this so-called ex gratia will also not attract any DA.

A Bank retiree says, "Deviation from the RBI line may be the assassination of the Bank Pension scheme. So, the proposal is not at all acceptable to the community of Bank pensioners."

Jag Mohan Thaken is a Haryana based retired Senior Bank Manager, views are personal

## Logistics Startup Shiprocket Launches New Financing Platform for SMBs

**NEW DELHI:** Shiprocket, an e-commerce logistics and shipping software company on Tuesday announced the launch of Shiprocket Capital, a new financing platform to facilitate up to Rs 10 crore in revenue-based financing to small and medium businesses (SMBs) operating online.

The company said it aims to enable around Rs 100 crore capital to SMBs in the next 12 months (December 2024). The funds will be collateral-free without any equity dilution to help enterprises ramp up their inventory, boost marketing, enhance production or expand into new markets. The repayment involves a one-time fee and a percentage of revenue generated by the SMB, according to the details available on the company's website.

Shiprocket Capital will cater to e-commerce businesses operating across diverse categories, including fashion, consumer electronics, beauty and personal care, home and kitchen, and jewellery and accessories. In its pilot phase, Shiprocket Capital said it has disbursed over Rs 35 crore to around 150 SMBs.

"According to a report by IBEF, India is home to over 5 lakh e-commerce businesses, but traditional financing methods have long presented challenges for e-commerce entrepreneurs. Offering a swift

## AWG downgrades India again as lessors fail to get back planes from Go First

and efficient means of accessing much-needed capital, revenue-based financing is increasing the startup growth by up to 30 per cent. Leveraging this potential, Shiprocket Capital presents a big opportunity for the 3 lakh merchants on the platform with a GMV of 30,000+ crores to scale their business," Shiprocket said in a statement.

The company said it will disburse capital through its partner non-banking financial companies (NBFCs) including InCred, Indifi, Klub, Stride, Vedfin, Velocity, and GetVantage within two days of document submission

by the SMB. Saahil Goel, Co-founder and CEO, Shiprocket, said, "India is on track to build a thriving ecosystem of 1 million e-commerce businesses by 2025. As an eCommerce enablement platform, we aim to empower them with flexible capital to grow their businesses and prove to be their partner in growth through Shiprocket Capital." Launched in 2017, Shiprocket provides a technology stack to help retailers integrate their shopping websites on Shopify, Magento, WooCommerce, Zoho, and others with the platform's multi-carrier API to manage orders, prints, and shipping labels. It also avails tracking information from multiple providers including managing Cash on Delivery orders and payment reconciliation.

Global watchdog group Aviation Working Group (AWG) downgraded India to "negative" from "positive" as foreign lessors have not been able to get back their aircraft from Wadia group's grounded airline Go First, which declared bankruptcy seven months ago. AWG's downgrade is expected to increase the cost of leasing planes for India's commercial airlines such as Air India, IndiGo, Spicejet and Akasa.

AWG had issued a positive watchlist notice in their CTC compliance index with a projected increase in India's score after the government issued a notification dated Oct 3, 2023 providing that the moratorium under the Insolvency and Bankruptcy Code, 2016 will not apply to aircraft, aircraft engines, airframes and helicopters governed by the Cape Town Convention. This had come as a positive development as AWG had put India on a watchlist with a negative outlook in May, saying the country failed to comply with international aircraft repossession norms after foreign lessors were unable to recover their leased planes from bankrupt Go First. The government's notification to exempt transactions involving aircraft, aircraft engines, and helicopters from the Insolvency and Bankruptcy Code (IBC) was issued in consonance with India's international treaty obligations as the country was a signatory to the Cape Town Convention and it Aircraft Protocol (CTC).

# INTERNATIONAL

## Rishi Sunak in danger of losing his Premiership

**LONDON:** Rishi Sunak, 42, the Indian-origin British Prime Minister, is fighting with his back to the wall to save his premiership as well as his political career. Sunak, who has staked his future on passing an immigration bill in the British Parliament, which, he thinks, will ensure asylum seekers to the United Kingdom are sent to Rwanda and consequently deter such people from illegally coming to Britain. The United Kingdom has signed an agreement with Rwanda to despatch illegal immigrants to the east African country. Summoning a media conference on Thursday, he told journalists the bill will make prospect of courts blocking any deportation decision “vanishingly rare”. He said: “That means that this bill blocks every single reason that has ever been used to prevent flights to Rwanda from taking off.” Three weeks ago, the UK's Supreme Court struck down



the move as in its view, the policy was unlawful, violated human rights, among other contraventions. It also felt Rwanda was not a safe place. Commenting on this, Sunak said: “You had better believe we’ve blocked those too (in the bill).” He emphasised the UK was also willing to ignore injunctions from the European Court of Human Rights. However, passage of the bill in the House of Commons next week has boiled down to a confidence vote on Sunak. The

disappointing the European convention on human rights in entirety. The Guardian newspaper commented: “It is not yet clear whether his (Sunak's) legal arguments are as robust as his rhetoric, and today he sounded more uncertain and defensive than he did when going over this ground last month”. The Daily Mail and the Sun, both generally supportive of the Conservative party, asked questions at the media conference which reflected doubts in their minds in the matter. Braverman has behaved like a woman scorned since her dismissal from the cabinet. She, first, made public a searing letter written to Sunak. Following that, she has been suspected on British media of plotting to unseat Sunak. She was asked: “Isn't the truth that you're a headline grabber that does it by spreading poison even in your own party?” She answered: “The truth is... I sought to be honest and

## Biden expresses concern over Israeli hostages in Hamas custody



US President Joe Biden has expressed deep concerns about the 135 Israeli hostages who are in the custody of Hamas. Biden has, according to Israel PMO, reiterated the position of the US that the Red Cross be allowed to visit the hostages and take stock of their physical and mental health. The White House in a statement said, “He noted that it was Hamas's refusal to release young women civilian hostages that led to a breakdown in the humanitarian pause. The leaders agreed to remain deeply engaged to pursue every possible opportunity to free the remaining hostages.” Biden has, according to Israel PMO, reiterated the position of the US that the Red Cross be allowed to visit the hostages and take stock of their physical and mental health. The White House in a statement said, “He noted that it was Hamas's refusal to release young women civilian hostages that led to a breakdown in the humanitarian pause. The leaders agreed to remain deeply engaged to pursue every possible opportunity to free the remaining hostages.” Biden has, according to Israel PMO, reiterated the position of the US that the Red Cross be allowed to visit the hostages and take stock of their physical and mental health. The White House in a statement said, “He noted that it was Hamas's refusal to release young women civilian hostages that led to a breakdown in the humanitarian pause. The leaders agreed to remain deeply engaged to pursue every possible opportunity to free the remaining hostages.”

## Israel to increase fuel supply to Gaza



The Israel security cabinet has voted in favour of the country's decision to allow more supply of fuel in Gaza. This was announced by the Israel Prime Minister's office on Wednesday night. However, two ministers of the security cabinet, Bezalel Smotrich and Itamar Ben Gvir, voted against this. The two ministers are considered far right leaders and are known for their hawkish positions. It is to be noted that the US has been putting pressure on the Israeli government to increase the supply of fuel into the Gaza strip. The US has asked Israel to allow a supply of 1,80,000 litres of fuel daily as against the present supply of 60,000 litres per day. The Israel PMO in the statement said that Israel would allow a minimal amount of fuel per day that was required to prevent a humanitarian collapse and spread of epidemic in South Gaza strip.

## New multipolar world order to replace unipolar system: Putin

A more just multipolar world order will inevitably replace the old unipolar system, Russian President Vladimir Putin said during a ceremony as he met with 21 new foreign ambassadors and received their diplomatic credentials. “The world is in a state of turbulence and is undergoing a radical transformation. An underlying trend however is the fact that the previous unipolar system is being replaced with a fairer multipolar world order,” he said on Monday. Putin called this transition an “objective process” which is also “irreversible”. Xinhua news agency reported.



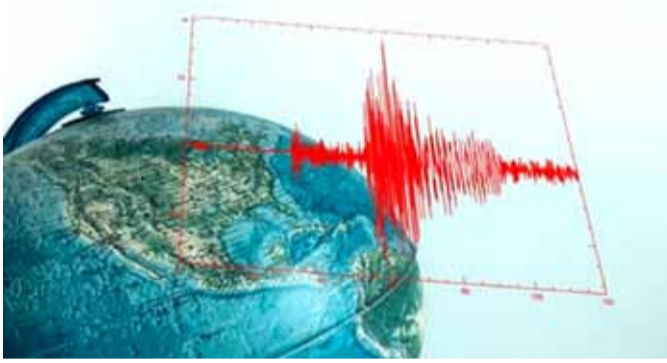
## Israel expands ground operation to south Gaza: IDF chief

**JERUSALEM:** Israel's military chief Herzli Halevi has said that the military has expanded the ground operation against Hamas to the southern Gaza Strip, an area previously considered as a “safe zone”. “We fought strongly and thoroughly in the northern Gaza Strip, and we are also doing it now in the southern Gaza Strip,” Halevi, the chief of the General Staff of Israel Defense Forces (IDF), said on Sunday during a tour at Israel's Gaza Division outside the besieged enclave, according to a statement released by the military. He said that the Israeli ground troops, in combination with air and sea forces, have almost completely “dismantled” two Hamas brigades, killing brigade commanders, company commanders, and “many” operatives, Xinhua news agency reported. Halevi said that on Saturday morning, a day after a fragile seven-day ceasefire between Israel and Hamas had collapsed, the forces “started the same process in the southern Gaza Strip.” He vowed that the offensive in the southern Gaza Strip “will be with no less strength than that, it will be with no fewer results than that, and Hamas commanders will meet the IDF everywhere in a very, very strong way.” Halevi added that the offensive in the northern Gaza Strip would continue with full force. The expansion of Israel's ground operation has heightened concerns over the severe humanitarian crisis in Gaza. “People have lost everything, and they need everything,” the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestinian Refugees (UNRWA), wrote on the social media platform X. “Gaza's population will soon begin dying from diseases as well as Israeli bombardment,” the agency warned. Meanwhile, rocket fire from Gaza continued on Sunday, targeting mainly southern Israeli communities. Rockets and anti-tank missiles were launched at northern Israel from Lebanon, lightly injuring at least four people in the community of Beit Hillel in the Galilee, according to Israel's Magen David Adom rescue service.



## 5.2-magnitude quake rocks Philippines

A 5.2 magnitude earthquake jolted Mindanao island in Philippines on Wednesday, the GFZ German Research Centre for Geosciences said. The quake that hit the island at 0155 GMT was epicentred 8.67 degrees north latitude and 126.69 degrees east longitude, and its depth was 10 km. Xinhua news agency reported.



## Indian students to suffer as Canada doubles fund requirement for study visa

**OTTAWA:** Canada's decision to double the amount of money that international students need to show to get a study visa will impact students from India the most as they make up about 40 per cent of all international students in Canada. To get a study visa to Canada, a student currently needs to show \$10,000 in his or her account for covering the initial cost of living. But from 2024, the students will have to show at least in their \$20,635 account on top of their one-year tuition fees. If students bring one family member with them, they will need to show an additional \$4,000. Of about 8,00,000 international students currently studying in Canada, 3,20,000 are from India. Students from Punjab roughly make up about 70 per cent of them. Making this announcement on Thursday, Immigration Minister Marc Miller said, “Ahead of September 2024, we are prepared to take necessary measures, including significantly



limiting visas, to ensure that designated learning institutions provide adequate and sufficient student support.” Promising to shut fraudulent

international students has caused a housing crisis, the minister said, “It would be a mistake to blame international students for the housing crisis. But it will also be a mistake to invite them to come to Canada with no support, including how to put a roof over their heads. That's why we expect learning institutions to only accept numbers of students that they're able to provide for, able to house or assist in finding off-campus housing.” Promising to shut fraudulent

colleges that have sprung up across Canada to lure international students, the minister said, “There are, in provinces, the diploma equivalent of puppy mills that are just churning out diplomas, and this is not a legitimate student experience. There is fraud and abuse and it needs to end.” Threatening to reduce study visas, he said, “If provinces and territories cannot do this, we will do it for them and they will not like the bluntness of the instruments that we use.”

## Under the Shadow of Tactical Nuclear Weapons, Israel-Hamas War in a Decisive Mode

**GOPAL MISRA** There is a growing apprehension worldwide that with the Israel-Hamas War entering the third month, hostages being exchanged and the four-day ceasefire ended, the desperate Hamas and its patrons, including Iran might use tactical nuclear weapons. It is being discussed among the defence planners that the nuclear devices, which could yield 3 kiloton of explosive energy is much useful in a limited conflict such as the Russia-Ukraine War and now Israel-Hamas conflict entering into an unprecedented fierce phase. Iran accusing Israel killing its soldiers in Syria has added a new dimension in the ongoing conflict. It may directly intervene or could provide tactical nuclear weapons to the terrorists, who are facing existential crisis in the war. Meanwhile, the US Congress has passed a controversial resolution defining anti-Zionism as anti-Semitism is considered yet another effort for justifying Israel's “revenge” action against Hamas. Interestingly, US President, Joe Biden's administration is facing dilemma, while it condemns the notorious behaviour of the “extremist Jew settlers” on the occupied West Bank, imposes visa restrictions on them; however, during the voting Democratic Party fails to oppose the resolution in the



Congress. It was passed by a thumping majority Most of the Democratic Party members abstained. On December 5, the House of Representatives had passed it by a huge margin in a 311-14 vote, with 92 Democratic members abstaining. Interestingly, Joe Biden was seen giving graphic details of the Hamas attack on October 7 at a fund-raising meeting for his party on December 5 in Boston. He was seen detailing the audience with accounts of “unimaginable cruelty”, and further stated there were reports of women violated, repeatedly raped, and their bodies being mutilated while still alive. He also expressed his anguish on women's corpses being desecrated, and further added that Hamas terrorists have been inflicting as much pain and suffering on women and girls as possible and then murdering them. **Iran Joining the Conflict:** It is true that Israel has ramped up its bombardments across central and southern Gaza. The civilian casualties are mounting up, as Gaza hospitals facing a Herculean task to save the lives of civilians. It is also being stated

that Hamas terrorists hiding in the tunnels are using the innocent Palestinians as a human shield. It has naturally perturbed Iran, but much depends whether it has obtained the tactical weapons from its patrons, especially China and North Korea. It is also stated that at present, the United States, Russia, and China possess smaller numbers of non-strategic (or tactical) nuclear warheads that are not subject to any treaty limits. The UN agencies have been closely watching Iran's nuclear programme, but Tehran's reluctance to allow UN inspectors to visit all nuclear facilities has caused anxiety worldwide about Iran violating the Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT). About 14 years ago in 2009, the UN had built a seismic monitoring station in Turkmenistan near its border with Iran, to detect tremors from nuclear explosions. On the basis of its reports the UN Security Council had demanded Iran freeze all forms of uranium enrichment. Iran's arguments was that the demand “unfairly compels” it to abandon its rights under the NPT to peaceful nuclear technology for civilian energy purposes. During the last 14 years, there have been numerous reports regarding Iran's quest for nuclear arsenal, but it has been denying such allegations. It is true that Zongso Saidou, a sanctions advisor for the U.N., had stated that as far as he knew, none of the U.N.'s member nations had alerted the sanctions committee about allegations of sales of uranium to Iran from Kazakhstan. The intelligence reports, however, had claimed that some rogue employees of Kazakhstan were prepared to sell Iran 1,350 tons of purified uranium ore in violation of UN Security Council sanctions. Interestingly, both Russia and Kazakhstan had promptly denied such reports. In September 2011 Israeli newspaper Haaretz reported several statements about Iran's nuclear program and China's foreign policy in the Middle East, Yin Gang of the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences has expressed his opinion on China policies toward region, and according to Haaretz he made surprising statement: “China is

opposed to any military action against Iran that would damage regional stability and interfere with the flow of oil. But China will not stop Israel if it decides to attack Iran. For all these reasons, Israel and the Middle East need a country like China. Israel needs China's power.” In March 2012, Chinese Foreign Minister Yang Jiech had reiterated his country's policy that “China is opposed to any country in the Middle East, including Iran, developing and possessing nuclear weapons.” **Israel and Atom Bomb:** It is widely believed that Israel, which is not a signatory to the NPT, possesses nuclear weapons. In 2018, however, Israel had claimed that its intelligence agency, Mossad seized about one hundred thousand documents of Iran's nuclear program. It is yet to be explained why it did not submit the documents to the UN. There is no confirmed information so far regarding Iran obtaining any kind of nuclear weapon. Meanwhile, the reports that Iran has developed Shahab-4 with a range of 2,000 km and a payload of 1,000 kg. The fear of even limited use of tactical nuclear weapons in the ongoing war cannot be ruled out. *Gopal Misra has been associated with national and international media. His books on journalism and geo-politics have been well-appreciated. Views are personal.*

## Climate Action Forum: Indiaspora Convenes Climate Experts at COP 28

**The daylong Forum will address critical climate change issues and highlight innovative projects and initiatives by the Indian diaspora that contribute to global sustainability efforts** From various sectors, including government, industry, and civil society, will participate in engaging panel discussions on topics such as sustainable technology, green finance, renewable energy, and the role of diaspora in climate advocacy. Key speakers include Dominic Waughray (World Business Council for Sustainable Development), Madhav Pai (WRI-India), BK Sister Jayanti (Faith Leader) and Vivek Oberoi (Indian Film Actor). Our partners in this endeavor are Council on Energy, Environment and Water (CEEW), Dasra, India Climate Collaborative, Indian Youth Climate Network (IYCN). MR Rangaswami, Founder and Chairman of the Board of Indiaspora, said, “This Climate Forum represents another step in Indiaspora's objective of being a convener for the Indian diaspora and leaders in India on some of the most pressing global issues. From our earlier work on climate, it is evident to us that these key stakeholders play an important role in advancing a globally beneficial environmental agenda.” Sreekumar Nair, CEO of Indiaspora-India, added that “Indiaspora's Climate Forum builds upon our work over the past 3 years in organizing virtual global Climate Summits. Given the caliber of expertise on stage at our Forum, it promises to be an insightful and impactful dialogue. We are excited to hear from an eclectic group of speakers including policymakers, entrepreneurs, business leaders, academics and nonprofit executives.” Indiaspora will host its day-long Climate Action Forum featuring 28 speakers from 5 countries under the theme of “Empower, Educate, Inspire, Act.” Distinguished speakers

## Pakistani woman cross over to India to marry with Indian guy

**JAGMOHAN SINGH Amritsar** Pakistani woman Jawaria Khanam, hailing from Karachi province of Pakistan today crossed over to India through the Attari-Wagah Border. On reaching India, Jawaria Khanam was received by her fiancé, Sameer Khan and his family members. They welcomed her with Dhol with the beat of the drum. Talking to the media, Jawaria Khanam said in the beginning of new year (first week of January of 2024) to tie the knot with Sameer Khan a man from West Bengal. Adding further she said that she along with the family of boy going to Kolkata by air where the marriage will be solemnized. “I am enormously happy as it took five years to take our love to the marriage destination with the consent of both families”. Currently, Khan's family relative is staying in a village in Gurdaspur district of Punjab. The couple's marriage will be solemnized as per Islamic rituals. Khanam said that initially, the Indian government denied granting a visa to the Pakistani national but finally they agreed to grant the visa and thanked the Indian Government. The couple is planning to extend the visa soon after the completion of the marriage ceremony, she said.

# Actor Manoj Bajpayee visits 10th season of Pro Kabaddi League in Ahmedabad



KAVITA SHARMA

One of Bollywood's most loved actors, Manoj Bajpayee along with Film Director Devashish Makhija made their presence felt at the 10th Season

of the Pro Kabaddi League in Ahmedabad, on the final day of the opening leg.

Bajpayee, who is from Bihar, is well known for his love for Kabaddi and the Patna Pirates. The actor also took time out

to meet the players before the matches kicked off. Bajpayee also took to the mat with Gujarat Giants' captain Fazel Atrachali and Patna Pirates' Sachin.

The actor-director duo were present in Ahmedabad for the purpose of promoting their upcoming film Joram.

The Pro Kabaddi League moves to the city of Bengaluru next with the games set to be played at the Shree Kanteerava Indoor Stadium.

# Two crore tourists visited Jammu & Kashmir until November

FW DESK Srinagar

For the first time after independence, Jammu and Kashmir has recorded the arrival of two crore tourists up to November this year, Union Tourism Minister G Kishen Reddy said Thursday in parliament.

Replying to a query in the Parliament, Reddy said that for the first time after India's independence, Jammu and Kashmir has seen two crore tourist arrivals including foreigners up to November this year. "The figure is set to go up further by December end," he said. He said that there has been 155 percent increase in the overall tourist arrivals in 2023 compared to 2021 and 2022. "85 lakh foreign tourists visited India this year so far," he said. The Union Minister said that Prime Minister Narendra Modi has played a huge role



in showcasing India's tourism potential and tourism industry.

"PM Modi has been the brand ambassador of India's tourism industry. In his (PM's) every foreign visit, Modiji showcased India's huge tourism potential that attracted lakhs of tourists to India," he said. On Wednesday, Union Home Minister Amit Shah, told the Parliament that J&K will surpass 2 crore tourist arrivals this year and the previous record set by BJP will be broken by none other than BJP itself.



# POTPOURRI

### Bollywood comedian 'Jr Mehmood' succumbs to cancer at 67



MUMBAI: Veteran Bollywood comedian, singer, director and character actor Naem Sayyed - popularly known as 'Junior Mehmood' - passed away after a protracted battle with cancer, here on Friday morning.

Jr Mehmood had been admitted to the Tata Memorial Cancer Hospital for treatment of stomach cancer and was on the path of recovery at home.

His condition suddenly deteriorated and he was put on ventilator support but failed to make it through early today.

Initially taken to hospital for a minor tummy ailment, it was later diagnosed as stomach cancer in the final stages as it had spread to the liver, lungs, with a tumour in the intestine and complicated by a bout of jaundice. The funeral of Jr Mehmood shall be performed this afternoon at the Juhu Muslim Cemetery, which a large number of Bollywood personalities are likely to attend.

Starting his film career as a child actor in 'Mohabbat Zindagi Hai' (1966), Jr Mehmood went onto work in over 250 films in multiple Indian languages, besides directing half a dozen Marathi films and crooning a few songs.

He enacted big and small roles with films like 'Naunihal' (1967), 'Brahmachari' (1968), 'Kati Patang' and 'Aan Milo Sajana' (1970), 'Caravan', 'Haathi Mere Saathi', 'Hare Rama Hare Krishna' and 'Jr. Mehmood in Hong Kong' (all 1971), 'Aap Ki Kasam' and 'Amir Garib' (1974), 'Geet Gaata Chal' (1975), 'Shehzade' (1989), 'Aaj Ka Arjun' (1990), 'Judaai' (1997), 'Journey Bombay to Goa' (2007), and many more.

## Dinesh Phadnis, 'Fredericks' of 'CID', passes away at 57



MUMBAI: Actor Dinesh Phadnis, who played the role of 'Fredericks' in the India's longest running television show 'CID', passed away in Mumbai. The actor was 57 years old, and was on ventilator support.

He was suffering from extensive liver damage, and was hospitalised on December 1. As per media reports, the 57-year-old actor was admitted to Mumbai's Tunga Hospital. Earlier, there were reports that the actor had suffered a heart attack which actor Dayanand Shetty had dismissed.

Shetty, who shared screen space with Phadnis in 'CID', had been sharing updates

about the actor's health and confirmed that the actor passed away at midnight.

All the actors from 'CID', who are known to be very close to each other, are at residence of Phadnis. His last rites will be conducted today at the Daulat Nagar crematorium.

'CID' started airing on television in 1998 and had a glorious run till 2018. It is one of the longest-running shows on Indian television. Dinesh played the role of Fredericks on the show and his character was loved by the audience for his comic timing and fun banter with other characters on the show, especially Shivaji Satam's ACP Pradyuman.



## Deepika Padukone attends Academy Museum Gala in LOS ANGELES

Mumbai: Deepika Padukone is in attendance at the Academy Museum Gala in Los Angeles. She is the first Indian star to be invited to the prestigious event.

The Academy Museum Gala is the second biggest stage after the Oscars which is organised by the same board.

Earlier this year Deepika was seen on the stage at the Oscars to present the Indian song act.

Deepika took to Instagram Stories, where she shared a string of pictures dressed in a dark purple velvet floor-sweeping gown with a plunging neckline. She completed her look for the event with some sparkly diamonds.

On the work front, Deepika had a fabulous year with 'Pathaan' and 'Jawan'. She will next be seen in 'Fighter' alongside Hrithik Roshan and Anil Kapoor. Deepika also has 'Kalki 2898 AD' with Prabhas and Amitabh Bachchan.

Deepika took to Instagram Stories, where she shared a string of pictures dressed in a dark purple velvet floor-sweeping gown with a plunging neckline.



## Vicky Kaushal: 'Katrina is perfect candidate for reverse psychology'

MUMBAI: Bollywood star Vicky Kaushal, who is receiving a positive response to his recently released film 'Sam Bahadur', graced the latest episode of the streaming chat show 'Koffee With Karan' with his 'Lust Stories' co-star Kiara Advani. During the episode, Vicky revealed that his wife, actress Katrina Kaif is "the perfect candidate for reverse psychology".

During the 'Koffee Shots' round, the show host Karan Johar, asked the guests if they have cracked the code to get their spouses to do what they want.

While Kiara didn't have an answer to this, Vicky spilled the beans about how consensus is reached in the Kaushal house.

Talking about the same, Vicky said, "Katrina is a perfect candidate for reverse psychology. If I want her to agree on something, I have to wholeheartedly, with abundance agree to what she wants. And then she turns around and says, 'BTW I see the point in what you're saying', and then she comes around".

Vicky also shared his experience of working with Bol-

lywood megastar Shah Rukh Khan. Vicky said, "I'll share an incident, one of the shoot dates, he had to rush to Delhi for some very important work and it couldn't have happened at another time or another day and it was a very critical kind of a moment in the film for my character which was with him and he just couldn't be there for that shoot and I had to give that shot with a body double and he had to rush".

The 'Uri' actor continued, "After he got done with his work which was like insanely important in Delhi, late in the night, he had called which I missed because there was an event and then he messaged me. A long message saying, 'Vicky, wo shot hum dobara karenge. I am really sorry I missed that, I couldn't be there to give just the cues, I couldn't be there, We'll do that shot again'. I had to call him and convince him ki nahi Raju sir is happy and it went okay and there is no need and pata nahi mujhe waapis hoga ki bhi nahi but I was nervous, But he was like, no, we will do it again, I am feeling terrible that I couldn't be there".

## Kay Kay Menon wishes 'The Railway Men' could qualify as India's entry to Oscars

MUMBAI: Acclaimed actor Kay Kay Menon wishes his series 'The Railway Men' was eligible to be sent as India's entry to the Oscars. He feels the series would have done India proud at this prestigious global stage.

Kay Kay said: "I wish 'The Railway Men' was eligible to be qualified as India's entry to the Oscars. This series shows the world what we, as a country, faced on that fateful night and also shows the spirit of selfless Indians who put their lives at risk to save countless



people from dying." The 4-part mini series is set during the 1984

Bhopal gas tragedy that rocked the country. It has been directed by debutant director Shiv Rawail.

Kay Kay added: "This series truly deserves to represent India at every global stage and tell people worldwide about our resilience and character in insurmountable danger and grief. The Railway Men is a show that every Indian should be proud of."

Known for delivering acclaimed performances throughout his stellar career, Kay Kay feels 'The Railway Men' is one

of his best works to date.

He said: "It rests in my filmdomography as one of the best projects that I have ever been a part of. I'm thrilled with the response that the series has received globally already. It deserves all the love. It is our tribute to the undying human spirit, a tribute to Bhopal and its resilience and it is also a tribute to all the unsung heroes of Bhopal whose sacrifice saved hundreds of thousands of people unaware of how to fight the silent killer in the air."

## Harven Pro Tennis League gets bigger and better for the fifth season, kicks off with grand opening ceremony



KAVITA SHARMA New Delhi

The Fifth season of the Harven Pro Tennis League (PTL) will get underway on December 7 at the RK Khanna Stadium in New Delhi. The league brings together the best men's, women's, juniors and veterans that the country has to offer in a team format with singles and doubles matches. The tournament, which will conclude on December 10, has roped in the likes of India Davis Cupper Mukund Sasikumar, ATP Top 100 Doubles player Anirudh Chandrasekar, Fenesta Nationals 2023 Runner-Up Karan Singh as well as top players like Arjun Kadhe, Nitin Kumar Sinha, Sidhant Banthia, Rithvik Bollipalli and Olympian Vishnu Vardhan. Meanwhile the women's field includes India's Billie Jean King

Cup member Sahaja Yamalappalli, and Sowjanya Bavisetti, and also top professionals like Vaishnavi Adkar, Soha Sadiq, Jennifer Luikham, Kashish Bhatia, Sharmada Balu and Sravya Shivani Chilikalapudi.

Played in a two-legged format, the season five of Harven PTL sees eight teams divided into two groups, with the top two teams from each group advancing to the semi-finals. Indraprastha Warriors, Ichiban Samurra, defending champions Gurgaon Sapphires, Mumbai Acers have been drawn into Group A. Meanwhile, inaugural season's winners Sankara Stag Babolat Yoddhas, DMG Delhi Crusaders, Lucknow Aviators and last year's runners-up Paramount Proec Tigers were slotted into Group B.

The season will get underway with DMG Delhi Crusaders tak-

ing on Lucknow Aviators and Sankara Stag Babolat Yoddhas facing Paramount Proec Tigers on the two adjacent courts at the RK Khanna Tennis Complex at Delhi Lawn Tennis Association (DLTA) in the capital on Thursday. The evening action will see Mumbai Acers play Indraprastha Warriors and Gurgaon Sapphires against newly introduced Ichiban Samurra. Also, the opening ceremony of the Harven PTL Season 5 took place ahead of the first game on Thursday and it was attended by Dr. Anil Jain - President of the All India Tennis Association (AITA).

Speaking about the upcoming season, PTL co-founder Aditya Khanna said at the press conference, "For me any sport is not about the sport but also about the environment which is created around it. This year we've created a fan park, a food festival, we've upgraded on social media as well. We've tied up with 50 academies in Delhi to bring people to the stadium. All of this, which are extending all around, represent the various facets of the material nature. This allegory of an inverted tree clearly conveys the message that Paramatman is the base of the entire cosmos. In other words, survival of the transient world depends entirely upon God."

# Bhagavad Gita : The Cosmic Tree of Life



Sri Krishna has further clarified that the branches etc. of this inverted tree extend everywhere - upward and downward - in the material world. It implies that the embodied souls are spread all over the universe. Bound by karma, they keep on wandering in the endless circles of life and death. It has also been stated that the one who is knower of the Vedas, understands the essential nature of the world tree. In other words, one can realise the true nature of the material world by following the teachings of the religious scriptures. The secret of creation is revealed to those who gain spiritual wisdom.

All the beings represent the branches of the world tree. The buds on these branches are said to be the various sense-objects appearing all over the phenomenal world. For this very reason, different branches of the tree are said to be growing downward i. e. in the material world. As a normal tree is irrigated by water, the branches etc. of the cosmic tree are nourished by the gunas, the three modes of material nature. Though always under continuous change, the world tree has been called eternal; in the same manner as the sea remains the same, inspite of ever rising and receding waves.

Just as the buds on the



branches bloom as attractive flowers, similarly the modes of material nature present themselves in the form of various alluring sense-objects. The glamour of the various objects of the material world gives rise to innumerable desires. To fulfil these desires, one engages himself in the performance of myriad forms of activities. But these desires can never be fully satisfied. Moreover, fresh desires keep on sprouting, just like the aerial roots of the banyan tree. Unfulfilled desires result in all kinds of births, and create more bondage in the phenomenal world. Roaming aimlessly in various life cycles, the embodied soul cannot know the beginning, the middle or the end of the universe. In other words, one is unable to comprehend the meaning and purpose of life. Sri Krishna has employed the symbolism of the peepul tree to

convey the message that the material world has no independent existence of its own. It is a never-ending cycle of life and death, which is forever dependent upon the Divine. The embodied soul being ignorant of the nature of the cosmic tree, lives in perpetual bondage. Sri Krishna has further stated that this tree can be cut down by a strong axe of non-attachment. In other words, the secret of the cosmic tree can be known and the bondage of sansara be overcome by evolving an attitude of detachment. To put it simply, one can work in this world, in every righteous way, but without being enslaved by the sense of 'me' and 'mine'.

nous place is the divine abode of the Supreme Lord. From the above advice of Sri Krishna, it is evident that for taking refuge in the Supreme Lord, one must first detach himself from the material world. When Sri Krishna says that after attaining the supreme abode of the Divine, there is no return; it means that when one experiences the truth of the Supreme, he does not want to be separated from that divine state.

How can that eternal supreme state be attained? Krishna has declared that those who have risen above the feeling of pride, who are freed from delusion, who have conquered the evil of attachment, who dwell constantly in the self, whose cravings have altogether ceased; and who have been liberated from the dualities of pleasure and pain etc. - such wise men achieve the above described divine state. They forever remain aware of the fact that the embodied soul is an integral part of the Supreme Lord. To summarise, the analogy of the cosmic tree affirms that the whole universe is a manifestation of the Paramatman. By detaching the mind from the glimmers of the world and attaching it to Ishvara, one can rise above the modes of material nature and attain the ultimate goal of self-realisation.