

## REGION

2



### MISTAKES CAN BE FORGIVEN, NOT INTENTIONAL BETRAYALS AND CRIMES: SPEAKER KULTAR SINGH SANDHWAN

## CORPORATES & INDUSTRY

5



### REPOS ENERGY AND CUMMINS INDIA LIMITED COLLABORATE TO REDEFINE FUEL MANAGEMENT, UNVEIL DATUM

## POTPOURRI

8



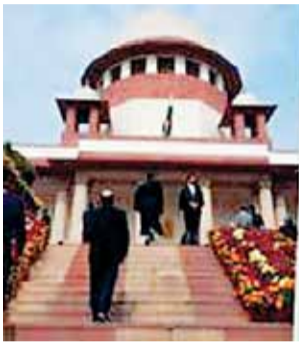
### THE STORY OF 'ARJAN VALLY' WITH BHUPINDER BABBAL ON 'RANG PUNJAB DE'

# SC upholds abrogation of Article 370, calls for polls by September next year

**NEW DELHI:** The Supreme Court on Monday upheld the government's decision to abrogate Article 370, which bestowed special status on the erstwhile state of Jammu and Kashmir, and said steps should be taken to conduct elections in the assembly by September 30 next year.

Writing the judgement for himself and Justices Gavai and Surya Kant, Chief Justice of India D Y Chandrachud said Article 370 of the Constitution was a temporary provision and the president has the power to revoke it.

The apex court also upheld the validity of the decision to carve out the union territory of Ladakh from Jammu and Kashmir in August 2019. The erstwhile state of Jammu and



Kashmir does not have internal sovereignty different from other states of the country, he said. "... all provisions of the Indian Constitution can be applied to J-K," the CJ said. "We hold the exercise of presidential power to issue constitutional order abrogating Article 370 of Constitu-

tion as valid," the CJ said. Jammu and Kashmir became an integral part of India and this is evident from Articles 1 and 370, the CJ said. The bench comprising CJI D Y Chandrachud and Justices Gavai, Surya Kant, Sanjay Kishan Kaul, Sanjiv Khanna, assembled at 10.56 am to pronounce the three separate and concurring judgements. Justices Kaul and Khanna wrote their judgments separately.

The princely state had become an integral part of India and this is evident from Articles 1 and 370, the CJ said. The bench comprising CJI D Y Chandrachud and Justices Gavai, Surya Kant, Sanjay Kishan Kaul, Sanjiv Khanna, assembled at 10.56 am to pronounce the three separate and concurring judgements. Justices Kaul and Khanna wrote their judgments separately.

The apex court reserved its verdict in the matter on September 5 after a 16-day hearing on a batch of petitions challenging the abrogation of the provisions of Article 370. Badal was addressing a congregation at Gurdwara Bhai Gurbakash Singh adjacent to Akal Takhat Sahib (highest Sikh temporal seat) in the Darbar Sahib complex to commemorate the 103 years of SAD's foundation.

# Sukhbir Singh Badal tenders unqualified apology in front of Sri Akal Takhat Sahib

**Says Be-adbi incidents were a conspiracy to permanently sabotage possibility of Panthic Govts in future too**



**AMRITSAR:** Shiromani Akali Dal president Sukhbir Singh Badal today tendered an unqualified apology to "Guru Sahiban and Guru Panth" on the precincts of Sri Akal Takhat for the sacrilege incident and its aftermath during the Akali government. "It inflicted deep pain on the heart of both Parkash Singh Badal and on my own that these incidents happened during the Akali government and that we could not arrest and punish the perpetrators of this heinous crime. Badal sahib left us, carrying this wound on his heart."

Badal was addressing a congregation at Gurdwara Bhai Gurbakash Singh adjacent to Akal Takhat Sahib (highest Sikh temporal seat) in the Darbar Sahib complex to commemorate the 103 years of SAD's foundation.

"In retrospect, I believe it was a huge blunder to allow some so-called Panthic personalities and organisations to pressurise the government into handing over the probe to the CBI instead of conducting it ourselves. It was only later that their game plan became clear to us but by that time the probe had already been handed over to the central agency," said Mr Badal, adding that he and Mr Badal were deeply aggrieved at our failure to catch, expose and punish the actual culprits as well as those behind the sacrilege tragedy."

The former Deputy Chief Minister said that he did not want to offer any alibis for this failure. "As a government, we should have realised the games that some elements masquerading as Panthic organisations were playing to not only destabilise the then government but also to permanently sabotage the possibility of a Panthic government in Punjab. We failed to realise that they were actually driving a wedge between the Khalsa Panth and its warrior force, the SAD. The worked hard to turn the community against its own right arm. That was the only way they could weaken the Khalsa Panth." He asked the Sikh masses to note how the forces that were so loud and active against SAD govt on sacrilege had become silent on sacrilege incidents even at Harmandir Sahib or on the police assault on Sikh shrines, including the one at Sultanpur Lodhi.

He sent out a call for "complete unity in the Panth under the Akali flag and principles. He said that both personally and as president of the SAD, he owned responsibility for

any wrong or any injustice done to any Akali worker in the past either by him or by Parkash Singh Badal or by any other leader or member of the party. I take responsibility for anything that went wrong and I apologise to all the brave Akali soldiers who felt estranged with the party. Both personally and as party president, I take full responsibility for all this."

He said that he will personally ensure that the mistakes of the past are not repeated. "I will personally attend to the grievances of every Akali worker and every Punjab, like Badal Sahab used to do. He said that a united and strong Akali Dal was a prerequisite for a strong and progressive Punjab. "We need to remain united in order to save the precious resources of our Punjab including river waters and control over BBMB. But make no mistake: SAD alone can guarantee that our heritage and culture is saved from conspiracies to erode and dilute it." The party also condemned the brazen sacrilege committed by the police at the sacred Gurdham at Sultanpur Lodhi.

# LS Speaker bans visitor's pass, calls meeting of all party floor leaders



**NEW DELHI:** Following the massive security lapse in Lok Sabha on Wednesday, Lok Sabha Speaker Om Birla has banned the visitor's pass and also called for an all party floor leaders meeting later in the day.

The decision was taken after a massive security breach in Lok Sabha on Wednesday afternoon, when two persons jumped from the visitor's gallery in the House causing a commotion.

The two persons also sprayed some gas. The Lok Sabha Speaker has also demanded for a detailed report on how this security breach took place on the 22nd anniversary of the 2001 Parliament attack.

Meanwhile, Delhi Police Commissioner Sanjay Arora, Home Secretary Ajay Kumar Bhalla have also reached the Parliament to access the situation.

One of the persons wearing a blue jacket was seen climbing on the tables as he ran inside the House spraying yellow gas spreading fear on the anniversary of the 2001 Parliament attack. All the galleries of the Lok Sabha had two security officials present during the proceedings.

According to Delhi Police sources, both the persons who created a massive lapse from the visitor's gallery of Lok Sabha causing a massive security scare in the House have been identified as Sagar Sharma and Manoranjan.

# Chief Justice of India seeks reports over woman judge alleges sexual harassment by senior, says wants to die in 'dignified way'



**FW CORRESPONDENT**  
New Delhi

A woman judicial officer posted in Uttar Pradesh's Banda district has written a letter to Chief Justice of India D Y Chandrachud accusing a district judge of sexual harassment and seeking his permission to end her life in a "dignified way", prompting the CJI to call for a report from the Allahabad High Court administration on the status of inquiry. The woman judicial officer, in her two-page letter, sought the CJI's permission to end her life following the abuse and harassment she had faced in her career during her posting in Barabanki. "I have no will to live anymore. I have been rendered to a walking corpse in the last year and a half. There is no purpose in carrying this soulless and lifeless body around anymore. There is no purpose left in my life. Kindly permit me to end my life in a dignified way," the letter, which went viral on social media, said. According to apex court sources, the Supreme Court's secretary general, under orders from the CJI, has asked the registrar general of the Allahabad high court about the status of the proceedings before the internal complaints committee (ICC) that is dealing with the complaint of the judicial officer.

# Parliament security breach: Delhi Police register FIR under UAPA

**NEW DELHI:** The Delhi Police have taken legal action against the individuals implicated in the breach of Parliament security, invoking UAPA and various sections of the IPC, including charges of trespassing and criminal conspiracy.

Sources indicate that the case, registered at the Parliament Street police station, involves sections 120-B (criminal conspiracy), 452 (trespassing), 153 (provocation with intent to cause a riot), 186 (obstructing public servants in the discharge of public functions), and 353 (assault or criminal force to deter public servants from duty)



of the IPC, along with sections 16 and 18 of UAPA. The investigation is now being handed over to the Special Cell. Among the four arrested are Manoranjan D. from Mysuru, Sagar Sharma from Lucknow, Neelam from Haryana's Jind, and Amol Shinde from Maharashtra's Latur.

# Senior MPs are vocal in their demand to return to the old building as there is many fault in the new parliament building

**MEENAKSHI BHATTACHARYA**  
New Delhi

The main reception gate of the new parliament building is on the just opposite side of the Rail Bhawan, some parts as before. But the mushroom-shaped reception room is not there any more, old one has been demolished. Now, in the general reception at that place is look like railway counter type. Security fence in two consecutive phases are there to enter the building. The first is a body search through a metal detector door frame, then face reading sliding door. Just Walk in, when entering the main building through the Shardul Gate, there is also a Face reading metal detector door frame. The way to go up to the second floor in the elevator to the visitors gallery. There is also a body search through sliding doors with metal and hand detectors.



As such, six times checking whereas there were three times in the old building. Even so, the security system of the parliament was so secure. In the name of new artificial intelligence (AI) systems, the number of Security Staff has decreased. 70 percent posts of Parliament Security Service which was earlier called "Watch and Ward", are vacant. The post of Joint Secretary is vacant, as he is the head of the Parliament Security Service (PSS). The 'AI' system has not started working. Senior MPs and experts are asking question again, "Why so hurry to start the session in the new parliament building without making complete?"

# Shiromani Akali Dal will participate in Delhi protest march by SGPC



**JAGMOHAN SINGH**  
Amritsar

The Shiromani Akali Dal will register its full presence in the protest march to be organized by the Shiromani Gurdwara Parbandhak Committee (SGPC) in Delhi on December 20, regarding the release of Sikh prisoners. This announcement was made by Shiromani Akali Dal President Sukhbir Singh Badal during a special meeting with the district presidents, constituency in-charges, and SGPC members at the SGPC office. A large number of Shiromani Akali Dal leaders participated in this gathering.

right to discriminate against the Sikh community on the issue of Sikh prisoners.

On this occasion, SGPC President Advocate Harjinder Singh Dhama thanked all the parties who supported the December 20 Delhi protest march being organized by SGPC regarding the release of Sikh prisoners and said that this struggle is for the protection of the human rights of Sikhs which will register a historic appearance with unity. He said that this protest march in a peaceful manner would prove to be an example. On this occasion, senior Akali leader Balwinder Singh Bhundar, Prof. Prem Singh Chandumajra, and Dr. Daljit Singh Cheema also addressed the gathering. During this gathering, some resolutions were also presented by Prem Singh Chandumajra on Panthic matters, which were approved by the present leaders amid Sikh victory slogans.

# Abrogation of Article 370: Congress says debate closed, SC verdict bound on everyone.

**WANTS IMMEDIATE STATEHOOD RESTORATION, ELECTIONS IN JK**



**KAVITA SHARMA**  
New Delhi

The Congress today said that the debate over the abrogation of Article 370 was closed after the Supreme Court today held that the article was abrogated in accordance with the constitution.

The Congress pointed out that the party was neither a petitioner nor a stakeholder in any of the petitions, which had challenged the abrogation of the Article 370, hence there was no question of it seeking any review of the judgement. The party made it categorically clear, "since accession, Jammu & Kashmir was -- and is -- an integral part of India. The people of Jammu and Kashmir are Indian citizens. We reiterate our resolve to work for the security, peace, development and progress of Jammu & Kashmir", the party added.

Addressing a press conference at the AICC headquarters here today, P Chidambaram and Dr Abhishek Manu Singhvi, both MPs Senior Spokespersons, said "the Supreme Court has held that the Article 370 was abrogated in accordance with the Constitution that is the law of the country. And all of us are bound by the law of the country. We can have opinions, but that is a law".

Dr Singhvi said, according to the Constitution, the Supreme Court's is the final word and hence the debate over the abrogation of the article is closed. He pointed out, the Congress was neither a party nor a stakeholder in any of these petitions challenging the abrogation. "Hence

the decision is final and the Congress neither has any agenda nor has the party ever said that it will seek the review of the decision", he clarified.

P Chidambaram said, while the judgement of the apex court has decided many issues, it has left open some issues that are also vitally important. "Prima facie, we respectfully disagree with the judgement on the manner in which Article 370 was abrogated. We reiterate the CWC resolution dated 06-08-2019", Mr Chidambaram said. He said, "we are also disappointed that the Hon'ble Supreme Court did not decide the question of dismembering the State and reducing its status to two Union Territories". That question has been reserved for adjudication in a suitable case in the future, he pointed out.

Welcoming the SC decision directing restoration of the statehood of J&K, the Congress leaders said that the Indian National Congress has always demanded the restoration of full statehood for what has become the Union Territory of J&K. "We welcome the Supreme Court's verdict in this regard. Full statehood must be restored immediately. The aspirations of the people of Ladakh must also be fulfilled", they added.

The party also welcomed the court's direction to hold assembly elections. However, the leaders added, "we believe that the elections should be held immediately and there is no reason to wait until September 30, 2024."

# December 13 security lapse in Parliament: Congress firm on Home Minister's statement in both houses

**KAVITA SHARMA**  
New Delhi

The Congress today expressed its firm resolve seeking a statement of the union Home Minister Amit Shah in both the houses of the parliament over the serious security lapse that took place in the Lok Sabha on December 13. It said, without his statement it did not see any possibility of the two houses functioning.

The party also accused Amit Shah of contempt of parliament by speaking at a television channel on the subject when the house was in session.

Addressing a press conference here today, AICC general secretary in charge of the Communications Department, Jai Ram Ramesh pointed out, while the government was trying to brush aside the incident



is the collective stand of the Indian National Democratic Inclusive Alliance (INDIA) partners that the Home Minister should come to both the houses of the parliament make a statement and take questions on the issue.

The Congress general secretary pointed out, only yesterday the Home Minister gave a detailed interview to a television channel. He said, if he can speak at length on television on the matter, why he cannot speak in the parliament when the house is in session. He observed that this is the contempt of the parliament and the parliamentary traditions that the minister spoke on such a pressing issue when the house is very much in session.

Taking a dig at the Home Minister, Ramesh said, other-

wise, the Home Minister can mostly be seen in the house but this time he probably did not find any excuse to blame Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru for the incident. Taunting the Home Minister for trying to blame everything on Nehru, he remarked, he was sure if Mr Shah could establish a link between Nehru and those involved in the incident, he would be definitely making a statement in the parliament.

The Congress general secretary reiterated that his party as well as the INDIA partners did not have any intention to wash out the parliament. He said their demand was simple that the Home Minister should come to both houses of the parliament, make a statement and take questions as to how this security breach of such magnitude could take place.

# Kulwant Singh the close aide of Amritpal Singh arrested

**JAGMOHAN SINGH**  
Amritsar

Kulwant Singh the close aide of Amritpal Singh chief of 'Waris Punjab De' outfit has been arrested by the Punjab Police.

Confirming the arrest of accused Kulwant Singh, Deputy Superintendent of police Riputapan Singh said on Friday that accused was a resident of Moga district of Punjab. However, Amritpal was arrested in the month of April this year from Moga.

DSP said that Kulwant Singh was coming absconding and was produced in the court today which sent him on four days police remand. Singh made it clarified that he was arrested on Thursday.

However, Amritpal Singh was declared fugitive in March this year and was arrested af-



ter one month in April 2023, thereafter Amritpal Singh and his associates were lodged to Dibrugarh jail in Assam. Nine of his associates were also lodged in the same prison as National Security Act (NSA) was invoked against all the accused.

Police Station Ajnala had booked Amritpal Singh and his nine associates for alleged spreading disharmony, attempt to murder, attack on police personnel and obstructing the lawful discharge of duty by public servants.

# Mistakes can be forgiven, not intentional betrayals and crimes: Speaker Kultar Singh Sandhwan

CHANDIGARH: Raising questions on the Shiromani Akali Dal Badal President Sukhbir Singh Badal's apology for the 'unfortunate incidents' of sacrilege, Kultar Singh Sandhwan, Speaker Punjab Vidhan Sabha, said that it is very necessary to see what is the purpose of Sukhbir Badal behind this apology.



In 2015, in the Parkash Singh Badal government, a series of incidents of desecration of the sacred Sri Guru Granth Sahib Ji took place but the Akali Government adopted a completely negligent attitude, which emboldened the anti-social elements. Sukhbir Singh Badal, then Home Minister of Punjab, used to say that nothing happens in Punjab without their knowledge and orders. But due to their negligence these incidents of blasphemy contin-

ued and the Badal government did not catch any of the conspirators and accused. Sandhwan questioned that Sukhbir Badal has apologized for the sacrilege incidents for his political interests but who will apologize for the martyrs Bhai Gurjit Singh and Bhai Krishan

by no apology for the incidents of desecration of Guru Granth Sahib Ji. If Sukhbir Badal truly wants to repent for the crimes of blasphemy, then he should leave active politics and bow down at Sri Akal Takht Sahib and in front of all the Sikh Sangat as a humble Sikh of the Guru. In this his apology, sought by the President of Akali Dal Badal, he cried about his political degradation and asked people to once again hand over the state to the Badal family, so it was all a political drama. He further said that Sukhbir Badal has added another crime to his pile of sins by playing political tricks under the pretext of pardon. History tells us that whoever tried to take such advantages in the name of Guru, they have never succeeded and never will.

# Nine years of Modi govt have become a shining example of good governance, development & prosperity : Vanathi Srinivasan

JAGMOHAN SINGH Amritsar

Bharatiya Janata Party Punjab, Mahila Morcha organised their first state executive meeting in Amritsar today since Jai Inder Kaur took over as the state President. The meeting was presided over by National President Vanathi Srinivasan, State President Jai Inder Kaur and state prabhari Updesh Andotra. Addressing the team of State Executive Members of Punjab Mahila Morcha Vanathi Srinivasan said, «I am grateful to the people of Punjab for their warm love and affection that they have showered upon me since my arrival in Punjab. Visiting Sri Darbar Sahib and the historic Jallianwala Bagh have been a surreal experience for me and I will cherish these memories always.»



countrymen which has been reiterated now by the thumping victory of the BJP in 3 assembly elections.» She further said, «Construction of Sri Kartarpur Sahib Corridor, Punishment to perpetrators of 1984 Riots, FCRA to Sri Harmandir Sahib, Bringing the sarroops of Sri Guru Granth Sahib Ji from Afghanistan to India with full respect and honor have been some of the steps taken by the Modi government for the betterment of Sikhs and Punjabi community. Now it's the duty of each and every worker of Mahila Morcha to take these and all the other works of Modi government to the common public of Punjab.»

Addressing the meeting Jai Inder Kaur said, «First of all it's my pleasure to welcome our National President Vanathi Srinivasan on her maiden visit to Sri Amritsar Sahib. It has been an enlightening experience for us all to get the guidance of Vanathi ji and I assure her that the Punjab Mahila Morcha will work hard for the betterment of the party in the state.» Talking about Modi Govt's pro women policies Jai Inder Kaur said, «The Nari Shakti Vandan Adhinyam (Women's Reservation Bill) was a historic move of the central government for the empowerment of women and ensuring inclusive governance at the highest level.

# 1103 criminals arrested in 653 FIRs in raids by 1309 teams comprising of 7049 policemen under 'Operation Aakraman' in Haryana



SATISH HANDA

According to Shatrughit Kapoor, Director General Police Haryana, under 'Operation Aakraman' campaign launched in the state against hard core criminals, drug and liquor smugglers and anti-social elements in the state as many as 1309 police teams comprising of 7049 policemen have been successful in arresting 1103 persons against whom 653 cases have been registered against under various sections of IPC including NDPS, Excise and Arms Act. DGP Kapoor said that the campaign against such anti-social elements would continue till the state becomes completely crime free. He said that as many as five similar campaigns have been conducted in Haryana state in past years also and this was the sixth campaign launched in the state led by SPS and DSPs in each team that provided satisfactory result. While talking to media persons DGP Kapoor disclosed that during recent raids police was able to seize 57 arms, 62 cartridges, and two magazines, 4 kg 528 gm ganja, 31.99 gm heroine, over 22 kg doda post, 1415 kg opium, over 53 gm smack, 1.38 gm charas, 2030 intoxicated tablets, capsules and injections, a stole motorcycle and Rs 65,200 currency notes from arrested accused. DGP said that among those arrested included eight criminals having prize announced by the government for their arrest.

# Amritsar police bust inter-state arms smuggling racket; one held with 13 pistols

JAGMOHAN SINGH Amritsar

Commissionerate Police busted an Inter-state arms smuggling racket with the arrest of its one key member from the area of Village Bhaini in Amritsar, said CP Amritsar Gurpreet Singh Bhullar here on Tuesday.

Addressing the press conference here today, Singh said that the arrested person has been identified as Amritpal Singh alias Kallu (28), a resident of village Bhullar in Tarn Taran. The arrested accused has been facing at least eight criminal cases pertaining to the NDPS Act and Hurt in various districts. The police team has also recovered 13 .32 bore pistols along with 24 magazines and two live rounds, apart from impounding his Hyundai I-20 car.

Singh said that acting swiftly on secret information about illegal weapons being smuggled from Madhya Pradesh to supply them to criminal elements in the state, the Police team launched a special operation and apprehended the accused from Village Bhaini, Police Station Chheharta, Amritsar.

"During questioning, the arrested accused disclosed that he used to buy one pistol from Madhya Pradesh for Rs 35,000 and sell it for Rs 50,000 in Punjab," he said, while adding that Police teams were putting all efforts to unearthing the whole network, identify the complete procurement and supply chain access to bust the network.

A case FIR no. 273 dated 10-12-2023 has been registered under Section 25/54/59 of the Arms Act at Police Station Chheharta, Amritsar.

# First meeting of high-level committee formed by Akal Takht Sahib on the issue of Bandi Singhs held

Meeting to be held soon with Prime Minister Narendra Modi: Dhami JAGMOHAN SINGH Amritsar

The first meeting of the five-member high-level committee formed by Sri Akal Takht Sahib to hold talks with the Centre government on the issue of Bhai Balwant Singh Rajoana and other Bandi Singhs (Sikh prisoners) was held on December 9 at the headquarters of the Shiromani Gurdwara Parbandhak Committee (SGPC).

The meeting was attended by SGPC President Advocate Harjinder Singh Dhani, Delhi Sikh Gurdwara Management Committee President Harmeet Singh Kalka, Rajoana's sister Kamaldeep Kaur Rajoana and senior Akali leader Virsa Singh Valtaha. After holding serious discussions in the meeting which lasted for more than two hours, speaking to the media, Har-



jinder Singh Dhani said that it has been decided to hold talks with the Centre Government about Bhai Rajoana and other Sikh prisoners. In this regard, a letter is being written to Prime Minister Narendra Modi to give time for a meeting with this committee formed by Akal Takht Sahib. He said that in the initial meeting of this committee, it has been decided to negotiate with the Government of India on the issue of Sikh prisoners in a friendly atmosphere and further steps will be taken in this direction. Dhani said that every step will be taken according to the

valuable suggestions of the committee members and we want the talks with the government to go ahead in a good atmosphere in the case of Sikh prisoners. The SGPC President said that efforts will be continued democratically to ensure the protection of the human rights of Sikh prisoners. The SGPC President said that this committee is representing Akal Takht Sahib and every member of it has expressed commitment to perform their responsibility with sincerity. Every member has the feeling that the case of Sikh prisoners must reach a conclusion and hopes that it will be successful.

# Punjab police bust drug smuggling racket; four held with 3-kg heroin, 9 lac drug money

JAGMOHAN SINGH Amritsar

Punjab Police have busted a drug smuggling racket with the arrest of four persons after recovering 3Kg heroin and Rs.9 Lac drug money from their possession, said Commissioner of Police (CP) Amritsar Gurpreet Singh Bhullar here on Tuesday. Those arrested have been identified as Vikramjeet Singh alias Vicky of Lohgarh in Amritsar, Rashpal Singh of village Hoshiar Nagar in Amritsar,



Gourav alias Kali of Varyam Singh Colony in Amritsar and Sahil Kumar alias Manthan of Durgiana Abadi in Amritsar. Apart from seizing heroin, Police teams have also impounded their Innova car (PB11AX7843),

in which they were going to supply the heroin consignment. Bhullar said that following reliable inputs Police teams conducted a special police checking in the area of Gol Bagh backside Railway Station Amritsar and arrested all the four accused persons when they were going to deliver the heroin consignment in their Innova car. Bhullar said that the arrested accused Rashpal Singh has already been facing two criminal cases pertaining to theft and NDPS act at Amritsar Rural and Tarn Taran.

# Two arrested smuggling top brand wine of value Rs 1.5 crore under pesticides stocks by Ambala police

SATISH HANDA Ambala

CIA-1 staff team of Ambala police on a secret information on Friday late evening stopped a truck at a police barrier near Ghas Mandi T-Point Devinagar near the Toll Plaza on the G.T. Road Ambala City. The truck was bearing registration number HP93-4117 carrying stocks of pesticides used in agriculture. During checking police party recovered 40 cases of top brand English wine of value worth Rs 1.5 crore hidden under the consignment of the pesticides, which included 4 cases Signature brand wine, 12 cases 100 Piper Black brand wine, one case 100 Piper Gold brand wine, 10 cases Blender Pride brand wine, 10 cases Teacher brand wine, 6 cases Royal State brand wine, 1 case Blender

Pride Reserve wine along with 1084 cases of pesticides in the vehicle. The consignment receipt of wine was also shown as pesticide drugs.

According to police information, CIA staff of police arrested two persons in the truck, seized wine stocks and impounded the vehicle. The arrested persons were identified as Mehar Chand a resident of village Basot under Nalagarh police station in Solan district (H.P) originally hailing from Balaji Nagar in Telangana state, whereas Mehar Singh alias Bittu was a resident of Kirat Sahib in Ropar district (Punjab). Information reveals that GR of the consignment was issued by BASF India Limited c/o R.K. Enterprises Malerkotla (Ludhiana) in the name of Suvadeep Agro Service Private Limited, Shamirpet, Hyderabad (Telangana).



# CM has now directed SSP's to embroil SAD social media heads in fake cases – alleges Sukhbir Badal

JAGMOHAN SINGH Amritsar

Shiromani Akali Dal (SAD) president Sukhbir Singh Badal today said chief minister Bhagwant Mann had allegedly now directed district police chiefs to embroil SAD social media heads in fake cases.

Talking to the media here, the SAD president said "I want to tell Bhagwant Mann that neither the SAD nor its workers will be cowed down by such pressure tactics. The SAD has a long and glorious history of fighting against repression. The more we are repressed, the stronger we bounce back".

Badal said the chief minister had first forced the cyber crime cell to register a frivolous case against party general secretary Parambans Singh Romana who had got relief from court with the latter even observing that the case seemed to be one of political vendetta. He said following this a fraudulent case had also been



cooked up against a legislator Ganieve Kaur Majithia which was also stayed by the high court. "Now the chief minister is trying to silence senior leader Bikram Majithia by issuing summons in a case in which the Punjab Police has failed to present a challan for the last two years". He said such acts would not intimidate the SAD which would continue to expose the chief minister at every available opportunity. Detailing the latest pressure tactic of the Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) government, Badal said "Now the Punjab CID head has on instructions of the chief minister decided to silence SAD social media voices that are exposing him every day". He said district police chiefs had been

# Dev Samaj School's Annual Function 'Guldasta': Junior wing students show talent

KULBIR SINGH KALSI Chandigarh

Annual function 'Guldasta' for the session 2023 of the junior wing was held with great zeal and enthusiasm at I.S. Dev Samaj Senior Secondary School Sector 21C Chandigarh.

A galaxy of dignitaries graced the function. The Chief Guest on the occasion was Anup Gupta, Mayor UT Chandigarh. Principal, Sabeha Dhillon Mangat felicitated the worthy Chief Guest. Dr. Agnese Dhillon - Secretary Managing Committee Dev Samaj Colleges and Incharge Dev Samaj Vidhya Vibhag, Bruno Dhillon, Iqbal Singh Dhillon, Maanvinder Singh Mangat - Chief Administrative Officer - The Dev Samaj, Dr. Richa Sharma, Dr. Meena Chopra, Loveleen Bedi, Sahil Abhi and Lt. Kesu Singh presided as Guests of Honour. Dr. Jaspal Kaur Manager I.S. Dev Samaj School was also present on the occasion.



The cultural extravaganza began by invoking the blessings of Bhagwan Dev Atma, founder of the Dev Samaj through school prayer 'Bhala Chahna'. The 2 days' extravaganza was beautifully showcased through dazzling dances, couplets, nursery rhymes, 'show and tell' and skits related to the current issues of the society by the students of the junior wing. The students mesmerized the audience with the motivational song 'Hum Hunge Kamyab', couplets related to the animal and birds Kingdom. The audience were enthralled by the Gujarati, Lazium and Koli dance presented by the students. The students sensitized the audience through their two impactful plays on 'Swachhta' and 'Jalim Singh'.

# Jan Aushadhi Kendras scheme to help patients in Haryana became sick

SATISH HANDA

Medicines for the treatment of gastric disorders, Blood Pressure, diabetes, cardiovascular ailments and pain management with sales rising about 170 since past some time were started sold through Jan Aushadhi Kendra all over in Haryana state as a result citizens saved about Rs 20,000 crore in past nine years, The Jan Aushadhi Kendras selling generic drugs at affordable prices have seen their sales rise more than 170 times in last nine years, but the government has no intention of making them available online in the near future. There were three stores opened inside the hospitals in three districts and 86 stores in private sector, of these as many as 58 stores have been closed down in the absence of proper infrastructure. CEO of the Pharmaceuticals and Medical Devices Bureau of India Dhadhich said that



generic medicines to treat such medical disorders gasketric issues, diabetes, cardiovascular ailments and pain have seen the highest sale at these Jan Aushadhi Kendras under the Pradhan Mantri Bharatiya Jan Aushadhi Pariyojana scheme. The drugs sold at these Kendras are 50% to 90% cheaper in prices than their branded counterparts available at the medical stores. He said, there are plans to increase the number of drugs and surgical equipments available at these Kendras in the near future and currently the country has 9484 Jan Aushadhi Kendras and there is a proposal to increase to 10,000 with the product basket of about 1800 drugs and 285 surgical items. According to the information, there are currently four warehouses under the scheme located at Gurugram, Chennai, Guwahati and Surat, with the central warehouse at Gurugram being the largest among four.

# Prez Murmu, PM Modi, Kharge, Sonia pay tributes to 2001 Parliament attack victims

**NEW DELHI:** President Droupadi Murmu, Prime Minister Narendra Modi, Union Home Minister Amit Shah, Congress president Mallikarjun Kharge and CPP chairperson Sonia Gandhi on Wednesday paid tributes to the security personnel who died during the 2001 Parliament attack.

The Prime Minister, Vice President Jagdeep Dhankhar, Lok Sabha chairman Om Birla, Kharge, Sonia Gandhi, Leader of Congress in the Lok Sabha Adhir Ranjan Chowdhury, Trinamool Congress leader Derek O'Brien paid floral tributes in the Parliament premises to the fallen security personnel.

President Droupadi Murmu in a post on X, said, "On this day, 22 years ago, the nefarious plan of terrorists to eliminate the top line of political leader-



ship of the country and damage our Temple of Democracy was foiled by the brave security personnel, including the nine who laid down their lives for the motherland. The nation will forever remain in their debt. Their sacrifice will not be allowed to go in vain as we reiterate today our pledge to wipe out terrorism - a threat to

humankind everywhere - in all its forms and manifestations." PM Modi in a post on X said, "Today, we remember



and pay heartfelt tributes to the brave security personnel martyred in the Parliament attack in 2001. Their courage and sacrifice in the face of danger will forever be etched in our nation's memory."

Kharge also in a post on X said, "We remember the brave personnel who made the supreme sacrifice while the Parliament was attacked on this day in 2001." "We bow to their indomitable courage and are forever indebted to them. Our thoughts remain with their families. India stands united against terrorism," he added. Terrorists of the Pakistan-based Lashkar-e-Taiba and Jaish-e-Mohammed outfits attacked the Parliament complex on December 13, 2001, killing nine people. All five terrorists were gunned down by the security forces.

# Quiz-Master, Trinamool Congress's spokesperson Derek O'Brien suspended from Rajya Sabha for the remaining winter session



**MEENAKSHI BHATTACHARYA**  
New Delhi

Quiz Master & Spokesperson of Trinamool Congress, Rajya Sabha MP Derek O'Brien has been suspended from the remaining part of the winter session. This action has been taken against him due to his 'condemnable behaviour' in Rajya Sabha. According to the Chairman of the Rajya Sabha, "Derek O'Brien had entered the well of the House and raised slogans there and disrupted the proceedings of the House."

On Wednesday, there was high drama in both houses of parliament on Thursday, December 14, a day after there was a security breach in the Lok Sabha. Opposition parties were asking questions in the House regarding the major lapse in security of the Lok Sabha. Seeing the increasing noise and commotion, the proceedings of the House were adjourned. Other opposition parties including Congress were asking questions as to how there was such a huge negligence in the security of the House. INDIA Alliance demands that Home Minister Amit Shah will answer this question in both the houses.

It is noteworthy that there was a major lapse in the security of Parliament on Wednesday, the black 13 December. In 2001, on the anniversary of the Parliament attack, two people jumped into the floor of the House from the visitor's gallery in the Lok Sabha.

These people carried smoke stick cannister, sprayed yellow gas and raised slogans. Zero hour was going on when this incident happened inside the House. In the Rajya Sabha on Thursday, opposition members demanded a short-term discussion on the security breach the day before. The Chairman of the Rajya Sabha Jagdeep Dhankhar informed the House that he had received 26 notices demanding suspension of business to discuss the security breach but said that he did not find merit in the notices and he rejected all. Both houses were adjourned within an hour of proceedings starting.

When the Rajya Sabha resumed proceedings at noon, a motion was moved by the leader of the house and BJP MP Piyush Goyal against Derek O'Brien. Chairman Dhankhar accused TMC MP O'Brien of "gross misconduct" and "gross defiance of the directions of the chair".

Parliament smoke attack case: Hang my son if he has done any 'injustice', says father of accused Manoranjan Bengaluru - The father of Manoranjan, who was arrested following his smoke canister attack in the Lok Sabha while the proceedings were underway on Wednesday, said that his son should be hanged if he is done any "injustice".

Devaraje Gowda said that he condemned the incident. "If he has done any injustice to the society, he is not my son at all. If he is guilty, let him be hanged. We are not connected to any political party," he said in Mysuru.

"Manoranjan had completed his BE degree and was moving to Bengaluru and New Delhi. Former PM H.D. Deve Gowda had helped my son to get a seat in the engineering college," Devaraje Gowda stated.

Meanwhile, a police team headed by the ACP rank officer has reached the residence of Manoranjan in Vijayanagar locality of Mysuru and is collecting information about him.

Mysuru-Kodagu MP Pratap Simha, from whose office the passes were issued to the accused youth, said that they had sought them to watch the proceedings.

Meanwhile, Chief Minister Siddaramaiah, at the assembly session in Belagavi Suvarna Soudha, condemned the development and termed it is a serious security lapse. The issue resulted in heated arguments between the Congress and the BJP.

Rural Development and Panchayat Raj, IT and BT Minister Priyank Kharge attacked the BJP, asking what would have happened in case the pass would have been issued by the Congress MP?

"Don't the Members of Parliament have responsibility while issuing passes? Would BJP leaders be quiet? They would have branded us with the label of anti-national."

# PM Modi, Mallikarjun Kharge greet Sharad Pawar on his 83rd b'day



**NEW DELHI:** Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Congress President Mallikarjun Kharge on Tuesday greeted Nationalist Congress Party (NCP) founder Sharad Pawar on his birthday. PM Modi took to X, and said, "My best wishes to Sharad Pawar Ji on his birthday. May he be blessed with a long and healthy life." Kharge in a post on X in Marathi said, "Happy Birthday to Nationalist Congress Party President, former union minister, Sharad Pawar Ji. I wish him good health and long life." Pawar, 83, has served as a chief minister of Maharashtra and Union minister.

# Centre's 'Unrealistic' demands' killing gaming sector: Priyank Kharge

**ARUN KUMAR RAO**  
Bengaluru

Karnataka Minister for IT & BT, Priyank Kharge, while flaying the Centre's "Unrealistic demands", sought legitimacy for the gaming industry in the country, saying it could result in a windfall in investments. Kharge comment came after state government passed a bill hiking goods and services tax (GST) on the gaming industry to 28% at the winter session in Belgavi, a move which merely endorsed a levy by the Centre.

Priyank Kharge, Qoting studies on the Indian gaming industry, in a series of comments on X, SAID BETWEEN 2020-2023 (during pandemic), the online gaming sector in India registered a 28% growth. He said the



country has a staggering 42.5 crore gamers. He said, "with a market size of 16,428 crore in 2023, industry estimates suggest it will reach 33,243 crore in a couple of years. The sector directly and indirectly employs around one lakh individuals, with the prospect of expanding

to 2,50,000 job opportunities by 2025", he added.

Lambast the Centre priyank said, "Gaming companies want to be regulated, but the central government is being unrealistic and unreasonable with their demands, which is not only killing employment in

the sector, but is also driving away gamers to Chinese and European gaming sines where they are being duped.

He said, country has as many as 1,400 online gaming start-ups and reports suggest 430 crore downloads of gaming apps were recorded in 2023 alone. "In gaming purchases and deposits contributed Rs 8,370 crore through UPI transactions and the online real money gaming segment enterprise has a valuation of Rs 1,60,000 crore. The estimated corporate tax and TDS contribution to the exchequer by the real money gaming sector between FY24-28 will be Rs 6,500 -6800 cr, with GST contribution to the exchequer between FY24-28 could be around Rs 76,000 cr." He added.

# Congress flags allegations against MP CM-designate Mohan Yadav, questions 'Modi's guarantee'

**NEW DELHI:** A day after the BJP announced Mohan Yadav as the Madhya Pradesh chief minister designate, Congress on Tuesday took a dig at the saffron party, saying there are many serious allegations against him, including large-scale manipulation in the Ujjain masterplan and asked if this was the Prime Minister 'Narendra Modi's guarantee' for the state.

In a post on X, Congress General Secretary Jai Ram Ramesh said, "Eight days after the election results, the BJP elected the Chief Minister of Madhya Pradesh, a person against whom there are many serious allegations including large-scale manipulation in the Ujjain masterplan."

He said, "Out of the 872 acres of land reserved for Simhastha, the land was alienated by changing the land use. Many of his videos are also viral on social media in which he is seen abusing,



Is this 'Modi's guarantee' for Madhya Pradesh?" Ramesh took a swipe at the Prime Minister over his statement of 'Modi ki Guarantee'. Ramesh also attached a news clipping to back his claims. The Madhya Pradesh unit of the BJP made Mohan Yadav the next Chief Minister of the state on Monday. The decision came after the party's legislative meeting in the state capital.

tionable statements." "Is this 'Modi's guarantee' for Madhya Pradesh?" Ramesh took a swipe at the Prime Minister over his statement of 'Modi ki Guarantee'. Ramesh also attached a news clipping to back his claims.

The Madhya Pradesh unit of the BJP made Mohan Yadav the next Chief Minister of the state on Monday. The decision came after the party's legislative meeting in the state capital.

# Bhim Army chief slams Mayawati for practising nepotism



**NEW DELHI:** Bhim Army chief Chandra Shekhar, who is seen as a potential contender to don the mantle of a Dalit leader, has slammed Mayawati's decision to name Akash Anand as her political heir.

Reminding the BSP chief of her earlier statement of keeping relatives, brothers and sisters away from politics, Chandra Shekhar, in a series of posts on X, said, "Bhim Rao Ambedkar had said, 'Earlier, the king was born from the queen's womb, but now I have made arrangements that the king will no longer be born from the queen's womb, but from the ballot box.'"

Chandra Shekhar stated,

Party chief Mayawati has entrusted upon me the responsibility of carrying forward the ideology of Dr Bhimrao Ambedkar and Kanshi Ram, for the development of Dalits"

"Speaking in a public meeting, Mayawati had said that when

Kashi Ram laid the foundation of this party on April 14 1984, he had decided to keep family and relatives away from politics to do something in politics selflessly. I will also keep my family away from politics and now she has forgotten her own commitment to the people." Meanwhile, Bahujan Samaj Party (BSP) national coordinator Akash Anand has called upon party workers and supporters to gear up to fight for social justice. Party chief Mayawati had named him her political successor at a national level meeting held at the state unit office on Sunday. "Party chief Mayawati has entrusted upon me the responsibility of carrying forward the ideology of Dr Bhimrao Ambedkar and Kanshi Ram, for the development of Dalits - the exploited and deprived society in the country...I will undertake the responsibility with full devotion and honesty," Anand said in a post on social media platform X.

"The Bahujan Samaj Party is a mission, and we have to take it to every corner of the country. I express my heartfelt gratitude to all workers and supporters. The support of all young friends is very important in this journey."

# MP Raghav Chadha staunchly opposed bill of appointment of Chief Election Commissioner in Rajya Sabha



**NEW DELHI:** Aam Aadmi Party's (AAP) Rajya Sabha MP Raghav Chadha vehemently opposed the controversial bill related to the appointment of the Chief Election Commissioner and other Election Commissioners in parliament on Tuesday. The AAP Rajya Sabha MP stated that the BJP wants to control the Election Commission by introducing this bill. If passed, it will bring the appointment of the Chief Election Commissioner along with two additional Election Commissioners completely under the control of the central government, enabling them to choose anyone they wish. MP Raghav Chadha emphasized the importance of a non-partisan Election Commission in the country's democracy. The Election Commission determines when and where elections will take place in the country, the maintenance of Electronic Voting Machines (EVMs), and where they will be deployed. He mentioned that this bill is not only disrespectful to the Supreme Court but also to Lal Krishna Advani, a founding member of the BJP. L.K Advani had advocated for the formation of a 5-member committee in the Chief Election Commissioner's selection committee, comprising the Prime Minister, opposition leader, Law Minister, and leaders from both the Lok Sabha and Rajya Sabha. My demand is that the government should withdraw this bill.

AAP's Rajya Sabha MP from Punjab, Raghav Chadha staunchly opposed the highly contentious bill related to the appointment of Chief Election Commissioner and Election Commissioners. The Rajya Sabha MP of the AAP ques-

tioned the BJP, asking if the BJP wants to end non-partisan elections in the country. Does the BJP's government not understand the importance of democracy? Does the BJP not value constitutional institutions? Does the BJP want to make a puppet of every constitutional institution? Does the BJP not respect the decisions of the Supreme Court or understand its importance? These are some questions emerging after reading this bill because this government wants to completely bring the Election Commission of India (ECI) under its control through this bill. They want complete dominance over it. The selection and appointment of the Chief Election Commissioner (CEC) and two additional Election Commissioners (ECs) out of the 3 members of the Election Commission will fall into the hands of the government, allowing them to appoint anyone as the Election Commissioner as they desire.

MP Raghav Chadha mentioned, "The Election Commission plays an important role in our country's elections. The Election Commission decides whose vote will count, the date and number of phases for elections. The Election Commission determines the management, control, coordination, and usage of Electronic Voting Machines (EVMs). This Election Commission is a crucial institution for conducting impartial elections in this country. This bill is going to destroy one of the few remaining independent institutions in India i.e. the Election Commission, and thereby dislodge free and fair elections from India."

# J&K L-G rubbishes house arrest claim of Mehbooba Mufti



**J&K Lt. Governor Manoj Sinha** on Monday rubbished claims of former Chief Minister Mehbooba Mufti that she has been put under house arrest. Sinha released a video statement in which he said that nobody has been put under house arrest in J&K.

The Lt Governor called Mehbooba's claim of having been put under house as 'spreading rumour'. Earlier, the PDP had said on its official social media page that Mehbooba Mufti had been put under house arrest on the eve of the historic verdict on Article 370 by the 5-judge constitutional bench of the Supreme Court.

# Income Tax Raids trigger political slugfest

**ARABIND MOHAPATRA**  
Bhubaneswar

Seizure of unbelievably huge amounts of cash by the IT officials following raids against the liquor business being run by the family of Congress Rajya Sabha MP from Jharkhand Dhiraj Sahu has triggered a political earthquake in the state. Though Sahu is an MP from neighbouring Jharkhand the main concentration of his family's liquor business is in Odisha, especially the western part of the state where Mahua-based country liquor is extremely popular.

The IT officials, who began searches on December 6, are said to have recovered around Rs.350 crore in cash, following raids at several locations in Odisha, Jharkhand and West Bengal. These are states where the Sahu family has been running its liquor business successfully. The raids lasted around six days with the biggest cash recoveries being made from Bolangir, Sambalpur, Sundergarh and

Bhubaneswar in Odisha where the Sahu family dominates the country liquor trade.

This is being described as the biggest cash recovery in the history of the IT department in a single operation. So huge was the recovery that it took nearly 50 bank officials assisted by 40 counting machines to count the seized cash. Sahu family run BDPL group is said to have a virtual monopoly of country liquor manufacturing and marketing business in Odisha with control over 250 country liquor units in the western parts of the state where mahua-based liquor is quite popular.

Sources said that raids against the group began on December 6 on the suspicion of tax evasion but the cash recovery was mind-boggling. Though the IT department is yet to come out with a detailed official statement sources said the raids commenced after suspicion was allegedly aroused by the group's inconsistent and low net profits. Major cash recoveries



were made from Sudapada area of Bolangir town. Recoveries were also made from Sambalpur and Sundargarh, among others. Some of the seized currency notes were covered with mildew as they had obviously been stored for a long time. Several bundles of Rs. 500 denomination notes were found torn in the middle and dumped near the boundary wall of Boudh Distillery Private Limited.

The recovery had triggered the political blame game. While the Congress, which has refused



to defend Sahu, wants a fair probe into the issue the BJP alleges that Congress and the Naveen Patnaik-led Biju Janata Dal (BJD) are hands in glove and the seized money would have helped the regional party in the elections. A senior BJP leader went to the extent of saying that the bulk of the recovered cash was deliberately hidden in a backward district like Bolangir to avoid arousing suspicion. The cash would have been used by the BJD which was planning

early elections in the state. The charge, though, has been trashed by the BJD which describes it as the figment of BJP's imagination.

While the BJD has demanded a thorough probe into the issue the Congress insists that the probe has to be impartial to bring out the whole truth. The party has no faith in agencies like ED, CBI or even the income tax department for they all are run by the state government.

Sources said Sahu family, which has been in liquor business for a long time, owns the BDPL group which consists of four companies including Boudh Distillery Private Limited which is based in western Odisha's Boudh district and Baldeo Sahu Infra Private Limited which is based in Bolangir. The business is said to have been established by late Rai Saheb Baldeo Sahu, father of Dhiraj Sahu. Today the group has country liquor and IMFL shops all over Jharkhand, Odisha and West Bengal.



**BINOY VISWAM** EXPLAINS WHY THE GOVT MUST DISCUSS CLEAN AIR FIGHT IN PARLIAMENT'S WINTER SESSION

## No more hot air about air pollution



negligence of the government, the programme has ended up being a non-starter. When the G-20 was hosted by India with fanfare, the Modi government boasted that India, the 'Vishwaguru', was ahead in every developmental yardstick. But the reality is evident to all: the pathetic living conditions of our people. The adapted safety standards of the World Health Organization have said that the annual average concentrations of PM2.5 should not exceed and

dioxide emissions from an ever-growing number of vehicles (over 3.38 million private cars in 2021 in Delhi) cannot be ignored. Yet, discussions on air pollution by the government and the political forces behind it always revolve around stubble burning and 'irresponsible' farmers.

This greed of the capital along with its market-controlled path of development at the expense of people, brings to memory what Karl Marx wrote in the first chapter of the Communist Manifesto in 1848. He characterised the bourgeois government as the "executive committee for managing the general affairs of the capitalists". That statement remains true in the era of LPG, i.e., Liberalisation, Privatisation, and Globalisation.

### Practices worth examining

The existing and alarming situation of air pollution in the country warrants an urgent proactive plan on the part of the government to protect life expectancy. The government should understand that people and their lives are of paramount importance; not the profits of the government cronies. If the government is serious, it should find the time to discuss in the winter session of Parliament the severe crisis caused by the frightening rate of air pollution. There are various worthy practices worth emulating such as "wind path forests" in different countries and India's own concept of "Social Forestry". This is the time to act, and to give hope to the people. The Prime Minister should convene an all-party meeting urgently to set the ground for India's fight for ensuring safe air and environment.

*Binoy Viswam, a Rajya Sabha Member of Parliament, is a member of the CPI National Secretariat. He has been nominated as Secretary of the CPI's State Committee. Views are personal.*

India's Prime Minister Narendra Modi and his colleagues in the Bharatiya Janata Party must have forgotten what they have said about the menace of air pollution in their manifesto for the 2014 elections. To brush up their memory, here is a quote from page 36 of the said manifesto: "The present generation has to make this world a better place to live. A better place not only for us, but for our future generations as well. We have to nurture the environment, institutions, people, resources and amenities... We will take Climate Change mitigation initiatives with all seriousness and work with the global community and institutions in this regard. We will: (do) Ecological Audit of projects and pollution indexing of cities and townships will be done on a scientific basis. Pollution control mechanisms will be set up on priority basis".

After ruling for five years, in the election in 2019, the BJP proclaimed its pollution control commitment in the following words, in Point 21 of the 2019 manifesto: "We have evolved technologically better strategies and devices to map the level of pollution in cities and rivers and have taken effective steps to reduce the level of pollution in major cities, including the national capital. We will convene the National Clean Air Plan into a Mission and we will focus on 102 most polluted cities in the country. Through concerted action, we will reduce the level of pollution in each of the mission cities by at least 35% over the next years." Living in Delhi and breathing its polluted air, they should have understood by now that the promises still remain the same — as only promises.

In the million-plus (population) cities where the National Clean Air Programme is supposed to have done miracles, people still experience tortured breathing in the aftermath of profit-motivated growth for which the BJP is full of self-praise. When

IQAir released the World Air Quality Report 2022, 39 Indian cities were named in the list of the 50 most polluted cities in the world. The report said that air pollution is the second biggest risk factor for disease in India. In 2019, a Lancet study found that nearly 1.6 million deaths in India could be attributed to air pollution, comprising 18% of the total deaths in the country.

### Disease burden

India's air pollution is solely responsible for the highest number of respiratory diseases such as chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD) (50% of all cases in the world are in India), asthma (13% of global burden is in India) and rising cases of cancer and stroke throughout the country.

The result is that people in these cities have a reduced life expectancy, of nine years, at the present stage. Even the World Economic Forum reports that the cost India pays in terms of air pollution is Rs 7.91 lakh crore annually.

While the National Clean Air Programme that BJP promised in its manifesto was officially launched in 2019, comprising 131 most polluted cities, due to the utter

5 ug/m3. As India is nowhere near the safety zone, the people are helpless victims of the pollution crisis.

Lured by power and guided by corporate greed, the party in power has never cared to revisit the promises made to the people. Let the country have a look at the amendments made by the Modi government in the forest and environment-related legislations. They were all meant for the destruction of forests and environment; not for their protection. The Great Nicobar Development Plan is an assault on the richness of the biodiverse abundance of the islands, with a disastrous impact on the air, water and environment conditions of India as a whole. The Central Vista project of the BJP government, which has been boasted about a lot, has caused unimaginable damage to the air of the capital. The Rs 20,000-crore project has resulted in the loss of tens of thousands of trees in Lutyens' Delhi.

To ensure the Central Vista Project, the government blatantly disregarded building laws in the country and found shelter in the outdated Government Buildings Act of 1899! Pollution from the indiscriminate demolitions (recently, 80,000 tonnes of debris were heaped in Noida) and carbon



**NISSIM MANNATHUKKAREN** SAYS WESTERN COMPLICITY IN PALESTINIAN PLIGHT STEMS FROM COLONIAL, IMPERIAL ROOTS

## The hypocrisy of Western democracy



With a staggering 17,000 Gazans already killed since October 7, Palestine is seeing one of its greatest tragedies. The West has shockingly enabled this in various ways: it has supported Israel's "right to defend" by reducing Palestine to Hamas; conflated critiques of Zionism and the Israeli state with anti-Semitism; weaponised the Holocaust; and attempted to erase history (the White House described Hamas' attack as "unprovoked").

Western societies that profess democracy have also scotched their own people's freedom of expression — not with official diktats but by demonising and targeting citizens speaking in support of Palestine. Western universities have become the major ground for this. In Ivy League institutions such as Harvard and Columbia, the private details of students who signed pro-Palestine letters have been made public. Prominent Jewish donors (and supporters of the Israeli state) have withdrawn funding from universities including Harvard and Pennsylvania alleging inaction against anti-Semitism and anti-Israel speeches on campuses (note: 45% of Harvard's revenue of \$5.8 billion in 2022 came from philanthropy). University administrations in North America put out official statements condemning only Hamas. And scholars working on Palestinian freedom have faced various unwritten codes of harassment.

The media has been key in framing the Palestine-Israel conflict for Western citizens for 75 years. The fundamental problem here, with a few honourable exceptions,

as anti-Semitic. Some actors, artist agents, and magazine editors have had to face professional consequences.

The most egregious actions have taken place in Europe, the supposed bastion of free speech. Countries including the U.K., France, Germany, and Italy emphatically declared their support for Israel and imposed various kinds of bans (some of them blanket) on pro-Palestinian protests. Austria, for instance, banned a pro-Palestinian demonstration citing the inclusion of the phrase "from the River to the Sea" in invitations, as a justification. Ironically, this is the same "free" Europe where blasphemy laws are abolished (Denmark, Sweden) and caricatures of religion are allowed (France) and have led to burnings of the Koran and cartoons on Prophet Muhammad.

There is no denying that there are inflammatory positions, fake news articles, and also celebration of brutality on both sides of the divide, all of which are not conducive to reasoned debates. If incidents of racism towards Palestinians/Arabs have increased, so has anti-Semitism.

But the root cause of Western complicity in Palestinian oppression lies in colonialism and imperialism, which is masked by the façade of liberal democracy. Democracy has seemingly thrived in the West, which has perpetuated colonialism and imperialism elsewhere. But even those democratic freedoms at home seem under threat now.

### An exposé

The way out of the complicity in Israel's colonisation of Palestine can only be through

an exposé of the hypocrisies of Western democracy. This has been undertaken by those on the margins of this democracy. For instance, the Canadian government-appointed National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls was forced to acknowledge that the Canadian state has perpetrated genocide against the Indigenous people. There is resistance to the war in Palestine, not just by Arabs and Palestinians but also by Jewish dissenters. The horrors unfolding in Gaza are also changing opinions. Mainstream Western media has given more space to Palestinian stories this time, even if they are not enough. In recent U.S. opinion polls, almost 70% of Democrats and Democratic-leaning voters under 35 years disapproved of President Joe Biden's support to Israel.

As the Israeli carnage in Gaza resumes, the West has to listen to people such as Israel-born Omer Bartov, one of the world's foremost Holocaust scholars, who, while rightly expressing empathy with the Jewish victims of Hamas' heinous war crimes, warned of genocide and asked leaders and scholars "to publicly warn against the rage and vengeance-filled [Israeli] rhetoric that dehumanises the population of Gaza..."

As another Holocaust scholar Raz Segal asserted, "No justice is possible... without a truthful reckoning of how we got here." The West must acknowledge its own monstrous role in getting Palestine to this precipice.

*Nissim Mannathukkaren is Professor, Dalhousie University, Canada, and posts @nmannathukkaren. Views are personal.*

## Holding rates amid inflation is MPC's balancing act

The recent decision by the Monetary Policy Committee (MPC) to hold the benchmark interest rates steady at 6.5% for the fifth consecutive bi-monthly meeting, despite raising the forecast for full-year GDP growth and acknowledging potential food price shocks, raises questions about the risks of lagging in anchoring inflation expectations. The MPC's move comes amid signs of inflation quickening in November-December, driven by uncertainties in food prices and an unfavourable base effect, potentially derailing the disinflation process. With the likelihood of price gains accelerating in the coming months, coupled with the volatility in oil prices and global financial markets, the risks to price stability remain significant. The RBI's 'Households' Inflation Expectations Survey' from November starkly reflects this, with households anticipating higher inflation rates in the near and medium-term future. The central bank's messaging, however, shows a dissonance. On one hand, the MPC has upgraded its real GDP growth projection for the fiscal year ending in March 2024 to 7%, from 6.5% in October. This optimistic outlook is attributed to robust investment, manufacturing strength, construction buoyancy, and a gradual rural recovery potentially boosting household consumption. On the other hand, the MPC's caution on inflation and the cumulative 250 basis point increase in the benchmark rate since May 2022 suggest a more guarded stance. This paradox is further compounded by the RBI's 'Consumer Confidence Survey', indicating that consumers maintain negative sentiments on both current and future price conditions. High inflation is evidently hampering discretionary spending, as Deputy Governor Michael D. Patra highlighted. This situation underscores a broader challenge: achieving a delicate balance between fostering economic growth and ensuring price stability. As the MPC navigates these complex economic dynamics, its primary task remains clear. Ensuring price stability is crucial; without it, the benefits of GDP growth and employment could be undermined by diminishing purchasing power.

**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.



**THE FINANCIAL WORLD**  
RNI NO. CHAENG/2001/03736  
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: PLOT NO-F5, IT PARK, CHANDIGARH CHANDIGARH 160101; PHONE: 9888040061  
EDITOR\* ABDUL WASEY  
(\*RESPONSIBLE FOR SELECTION OF NEWS UNDER THE PRB ACT)

### BOOKS: REVIEW

## New book helps in navigating the complexities of modern life



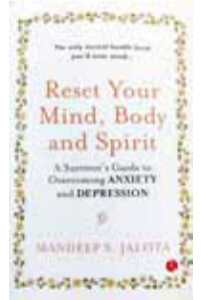
**SATISH SINGH**  
In the realm of self-help literature, Mandeep S.

Jalota's debut book, "Reset Your Mind, Body, and Spirit," stands as a compelling testament to the resilience of the human spirit. Jalota, who serves as the Joint Commissioner, GST, in Mumbai, brings a deeply personal touch to his writing, drawing from his own battle with depression. This authenticity lends the book a powerful credibility, making it not just a guide but a companion for those seeking solace in turbulent times. At the heart of Jalota's message is the belief that our mental anguish — be it anxiety, sadness, or depression — is often rooted in our patterns of thought. He contends that obsessing over past negatives, fretting about

the future, and falling into the trap of constant comparison are key contributors to a disturbed mental state. His insights here are particularly striking, resonating with a contemporary audience that is often caught in these exact mental loops. "Reset Your Mind, Body, and Spirit" goes beyond mere diagnosis, offering actionable advice on maintaining mental, physical, and emotional wellness. Jalota emphasizes the insidious nature of stress, which, borne out of daily uncertainties, can spiral into depression if left unchecked. His perspective on the mind's power to create personal hells or heavens is thought-provoking, highlighting the significant role our mental state plays in our overall well-being.

One of the book's strengths is its holistic approach. Jalota doesn't just focus on the mind; he stresses the importance of a healthy body in fostering a healthy mind. Disciplined living — encompassing nutritious eating, adequate sleep, and regular exercise — is championed as a bulwark against stress and disease. The author's practical tips here are grounded in simplicity, steering clear of overcomplication. Jalota's exploration of happiness is another highlight. He delves into the subjective nature of happiness and how our internal dialogues and worries about past and future events can influence our mental health. His argument that a self-motivated person, armed with a clear vision and

**Jalota emphasizes the insidious nature of stress, which, borne out of daily uncertainties, can spiral into depression if left unchecked**



"Reset Your Mind, Body, and Spirit" By Mandeep S. Jalota Rupa Publication Rs 395

positivity, is better positioned to achieve their goals is particularly motivating. The book also addresses the impact of mental health on physical wellness. Jalota makes a compelling case that mental disturbances can manifest as physical ailments and that positive thinking, coupled with a disciplined lifestyle, can act as a preventive measure. This mind-body connection is a recurring theme, underscoring the book's holistic ethos. For parents, "Reset Your Mind, Body, and Spirit" offers sage advice on child-rearing. Jalota underscores the importance of instilling positive values in children to ensure their future well-being and mental health. This focus on early intervention is a vital inclusion, broadening the book's

appeal and relevance. A significant portion of the book is devoted to navigating life's later stages. Jalota's perspective on old age is refreshingly optimistic. He argues that the elderly, often unburdened by the attachments and worries that define younger years, are in a unique position to live life fully for themselves. His encouragement to embrace every moment with positivity is both uplifting and grounding. The book's relevance in today's stress-filled, materialistically driven world cannot be overstated. Jalota's emphasis on living a balanced life, amidst constant challenges, is a timely reminder of the need for personal well-being in the face of relentless societal pressures. In conclusion, "Reset Your Mind, Body, and Spirit" is more than just a self-help book; it is a guide to living a fulfilling life. Mandeep S. Jalota's personal journey, combined with his insightful observations and practical advice, makes this book a valuable resource for anyone looking to navigate the complexities of modern life. It's a book that doesn't just aim to reset your state of being; it aims to transform it.



# Indian Economy to Grow at 7.5-8% in FY24: FICCI

**NEW DELHI:** The Indian economy is expected to grow by 7.5 per cent to 8 per cent in the current fiscal year Anish Shah, President, the Federation Indian Chambers of Commerce and Industry (FICCI), said on Monday. During an interview with PTI, Shah said that due to strong growth momentum, positive sentiments, and increase in private investments, the economy will grow by 8 per cent in the next fiscal year (2024-25) as well. The FICCI President cautioned that geopolitical factors could be a concern for India's growth prospects. "We have seen great growth numbers so far at 7.8 per cent, 7.6 per cent. I expect that to continue because we have got



strong momentum. We are seeing multiple companies investing, adding capacities, something that Mahindra group has done as well," he said. Notably, the Indian economy logged a growth rate of 7.8 per cent in the first quarter of FY24, and 7.6 per cent in the quarter ended September 2023.

The growth rate for the first half of the current fiscal year came out to be 7.7 per cent. Regarding the economy's pressure points, Shah said the main pressure points remained outside India. "We are seeing stress with regard to Israel and Gaza, added to

what is happening in Ukraine. Our hope is that it does not expand or accelerate any further from there," he stated. Shah stated that the government needs to maintain the growth momentum to deal with the issues arising globally. Expressing his views about the RBI's decision to keep interest rates unchanged for the fifth consecutive time, he said, "One needs to give lot of credit to RBI for being pro-active, because they have acted early. That has helped. More important factor is to have inflation under control, than to reduce rates. It has worked so far. I would rely on the experts of the RBI to manage the economy which they have done very well so far."

## RBI Aims to Strengthen Digital Infrastructure with Cloud Storage Services

**MUMBAI:** The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) is working on setting up a cloud facility for India's financial sector to enhance its security, integrity and privacy. The service, which will be developed by a subsidiary of the central bank, will directly compete with similar services offered by American companies like Amazon, Google and Microsoft. The central bank is taking the similar approach as it has done with setting up 'digital public infrastructure' (DPI). There the underlying technology is built by the government, and is later outsourced to the private sector for developing various applications. The biometric identity programme Aadhaar and United Payments Interface (UPI) are key examples of DPI. "Banks and financial entities are maintaining an ever-in-



creasing volume of data. Many of them are utilising various public and private cloud facilities for this purpose. The Reserve Bank is working on establishing a cloud facility for the financial sector in India. The proposed facility would enhance the security, integrity and privacy of financial sector data," RBI said in its statement on developmental and regulatory policies.

The facility will be set up and initially operated by the Indian Financial Technology & Allied Services (IFTAS), a wholly-owned subsidiary of RBI. Eventually, the cloud facility will be transferred to a separate entity owned by the financial sector participants, the central bank said. The service is intended to be rolled out in a calibrated fashion in the medium term. While details about the cloud service, especially around its adoption, are yet to be released, the fintech industry is looking forward to whether the central bank would require companies to switch to its cloud offering. The regulator already has an exhaustive set of norms of localisation of data, and many in the industry believe that the cloud service could take those norms a step further.

## Over 51 Cr PM Jan Dhan Accounts Opened, 4.30 Cr Remain Dormant: Union MoS Finance



**NEW DELHI:** The Ministry of Finance stated that over 51.04 crore Pradhan Mantri Jan Dhan Yojana (PMJDY) accounts have been opened as of 29 November, 2023, holding a total deposit balance of Rs 2,08,855 crore, as informed by Union Minister of State for Finance Bhagwat Kisanrao Karad in a written reply in Rajya Sabha on Tuesday. The Minister also stated that as on 22 November, 2023, a total of 4.30 crore PMJDY accounts are dormant, i.e., having zero balance, since the scheme provides an inbuilt feature of non-requirement of maintaining any minimum balance in PMJDY accounts. The Minister further stated that there is no inbuilt provision of micro-investments, such as flexi-recurring deposits, in PMJDY scheme. However, PMJDY account holders can avail benefit of micro-investments such as flexi-recurring deposits etc. as per the terms and conditions of their respective banks. Launched in 2014 as the National Mission for Financial Inclusion, the scheme aims to ensure comprehensive financial inclusion in the country by providing universal access to banking facilities and basic bank accounts to every unbanked adult.

## Gurugram, Noida Operating In First-World Economy: Raghuram Rajan



**NEW DELHI:** Different parts of India are operating at various levels of world economies, such as people in Noida and Gurugram are operating in first-world economy level, said former RBI Governor Raghuram Rajan.

Rajan who is the Katherine Dusk Miller Distinguished Service Professor of Finance at Chicago Booth, said that while the Indian economy is largely playing catch-up, many parts of the economy are operating at "first-world" levels, but many are worse even than third-world. Speaking at YouTuber Akash Banerjee's The Deshbhakt channel podcast, he said, "Parts of the Indian economy are first world, further adding, "People in Noida or Gurgaon are essentially operating in a first-world economy." He said that parts of India are worse than third-world or sub-Saharan Africa. Considering our growth, he said India will become a USD 10,000 per capita economy by 2047, which is still USD 3,000 behind China. "Our current per capita is around USD 2,500. India cannot become a developed country by 2047 at the current growth rate.

## World Economy's Disintegration Into Regional Power Blocs Will Wipe Out Open Trade Gains: IMF

**NEW DELHI:** The global economy is on the edge of a second cold war that could "annihilate" progress made since the collapse of the Soviet Union, Gita Gopinath, IMF's first deputy managing director has warned. The increasing fragmentation of the world economy into regional power blocs - centred around the US and China - risked smearing out trillions of dollars in global output, she said on Monday. "If we descend into cold war two, knowing the costs, we



may not see mutually assured economic destruction. But we could see an annihilation of the gains from open trade," said the senior official. Warning that the world was at a "turning point" as tensions mounted between the planet's most powerful nations,

Gopinath urged governments to pull back from the brink and work together on shared economic priorities where possible. Her intervention comes amid a slowdown in international trade since Russia's invasion of Ukraine in February 2022 inflamed pre-existing tensions between the US and European nations in the west and China and Russia in the east. "While there are no signs of broad-based retreat from globalisation, fault lines are

emerging as geo-economic fragmentation is increasingly a reality. If fragmentation deepens, we could find ourselves in a new cold war," she said. Setting out the potential damage from a collapse in trade between the two blocs - divided along the lines of the UN vote on the 2022 Ukraine resolution - Gopinath said the world economy could expect to see losses worth about 2.5 per cent of gross domestic product (GDP), or about USD 2.5tn (£2tn) if trade was eliminated entirely.

## Former RBI governor Raghuram Rajan warns states opting for old pension scheme

**NEW DELHI:** Former Governor of the Reserve Bank of India Raghuram Rajan Tuesday warned states that opting for the old pension scheme over the new would ultimately cripple their finances. Rajan was speaking at the Delhi launch of the book Breaking the Mould: Reimagining India's Economic Future, co-authored by him and economist Rohit Lamba. The former central bank chief also spoke about the larger trend of political parties competing with each other to offer non-targeted cash transfers and other financial incentives to woo voters. "Direct benefit transfers, when targeted, can help those at the very bottom," Rajan said, in response to a question from the moderator about states increasingly opting for cash transfers. "They can help feed children, and send them to school."

The problem is when these transfers are untargeted and there's competition between parties over how much to give," he added. "A no-go area is switching from the New Pension Scheme (NPS) to the Old Pension Scheme (OPS). This will only bankrupt the government down the line." So far, five states - Rajasthan, Chhattisgarh, Jharkhand, Punjab and Himachal Pradesh - have reverted to the OPS. At the time the decision was taken, Rajasthan, Chhattisgarh and Himachal were led by the Congress, while the party was part of the ruling coalition in Jharkhand. The Aam Aadmi Party (AAP), also in the Opposition coalition, governs Punjab. Governments have recently changed in Rajasthan and Chhattisgarh, where the BJP stomped to power in the recently-concluded Assembly elections. While there has been no official announcement yet, it is expected that the new governments will restore the NPS as that has been the stand of the BJP at the Centre and in the states it governs. The main difference between the NPS and OPS is how the pension payable to retired civil servants is financed. Under OPS, the government

# Retail Inflation Reaches a Three-Month Peak, Surging to 5.55% in November

**NEW DELHI:** India's Consumer Price Index (CPI)-based inflation rose to 5.55 per cent in November from 4.87 per cent in October, denoting a three-month high, as per a data released by the National Statistical Office (NSO) on Tuesday. This is due to a spike in prices of onion led a rather broad-based rise in food inflation. However, the latest print being at the lower end of the forecasts by analysts and the continued moderation of core inflation to a 44-month low of 4.1 per cent, would offer comfort to the Reserve Bank of India (RBI). The government has recently taken a host of steps to boost supply of food items, including wheat, sugar



and onion. The central bank in the December monetary policy statement unveiled last week had anticipated "an increase in prices of key vegetables which may push CPI inflation higher in the near-term." Separate data released on Tuesday showed factory output, measured by the Index of Industrial Production (IIP), rose to a 16-month high of 11.7 per cent in October from 6.2 per cent in September, aided by a

favourable base, and a rise in manufacturing output amidst festive demand. Inflation in onions was at a 38-month high of 86.46 per cent in November, which pushed vegetables inflation to 17.7 per cent during the month from 2.70 per cent in October. The massive increase in onion prices are a consequence of fresh kharif harvest arriving late in the market. However, the prices of onions are likely to cool off towards December end partly aided by ban on the exports of the staple vegetable imposed last week, easing inflationary pressures. As on Tuesday, retail prices of onion were down 6 per cent on month.

# Google's Digital Push to Empower India's MSMEs



**NEW DELHI:** Google plans to make a calculated investment in digital payments with the aim to strengthen the dynamic Indian Micro, Small and Medium Enterprise (MSME) market, said Sanjay Gupta, country head and Vice President of Google India, in an exclusive interview with Mint. Google plans to expand its impact beyond payments, aiming to unlock India's MSME potential through financial inclusion and digital empowerment, noted Gupta, while speaking to Mint. Recognizing the limited access to credit hindering MSME growth, Gupta said, "India still suffers deeply from lack of access to credit. We haven't built a great MSME part in this country. MSMEs only contribute 28 to 29% of GDP, whereas in the US and China, it goes to 55 to 60% because there is not enough capital (in India) which is easily accessible." He added, "If we can enable credit to be made affordable to every Indian in a simple and easy manner, it will be a game changer," reported Mint.

Google Cloud's support for the Open Network for Digital Commerce (ONDC) aims to foster a thriving digital commerce ecosystem, further boosting MSME activity, Gupta told Mint. Beyond just payments, Gupta stated, Google envisions smartphones as gateways to citizen services, leveraging AI to personalize and simplify access in local languages, overcoming the barrier of an English-dominated internet. While the COVID-19 pandemic ravaged many industries, Google took a step to support the struggling media landscape. Recognizing the vital role of media in informing and engaging communities, Google implemented initiatives to help small and large publishers weather the storm. One of the key initiatives involved opening up the Discover platform, a prime space for brand visibility, to a wider range of media publishers. This provided small businesses with a valuable opportunity to showcase their brands to a vast audience, fostering brand awareness and growth. Google offered access to cutting-edge technology and tools to help publishers optimize their content, improve user engagement, and generate revenue. By opening up the Discover platform and investing in digital transformation initiatives, Google played a crucial role in helping small businesses and publishers not just survive but thrive during the pandemic.

Google Cloud's support for the Open Network for Digital Commerce (ONDC) aims to foster a thriving digital commerce ecosystem, further boosting MSME activity, Gupta told Mint. Beyond just payments, Gupta stated, Google envisions smartphones as gateways to citizen services, leveraging AI to personalize and simplify access in local languages, overcoming the barrier of an English-dominated internet. While the COVID-19 pandemic ravaged many industries, Google took a step to support the struggling media landscape. Recognizing the vital role of media in informing and engaging communities, Google implemented initiatives to help small and large publishers weather the storm. One of the key initiatives involved opening up the Discover platform, a prime space for brand visibility, to a wider range of media publishers. This provided small businesses with a valuable opportunity to showcase their brands to a vast audience, fostering brand awareness and growth. Google offered access to cutting-edge technology and tools to help publishers optimize their content, improve user engagement, and generate revenue. By opening up the Discover platform and investing in digital transformation initiatives, Google played a crucial role in helping small businesses and publishers not just survive but thrive during the pandemic.

# Sensex down more than 200 points as IT heavyweights lag



**MUMBAI:** BSE Sensex is down 249 points on Wednesday morning trade as IT stocks face selling pressure. BSE Sensex is trading at 69,301 points with Infosys, TCS down more than 2 per cent. Vaishali Parekh, Vice President - Technical Research, Prabhudas Lilladher, said Nifty has been roped in with a tight resistance near 21,000 zone and has witnessed some profit booking during the intraday session to dip towards 2,0850 zone to end in the red near the 20,900 levels. With near-term support positioned near 20,850 zone, we can expect some consolidation and would need a decisive breach above 21,000 levels to carry on with the uptrend and expect for next higher targets of 21,800-21,900 levels in the coming days with major support lying near 20,550 zone of the rising trendline zone. The support for the day is seen at 20800 while the resistance is seen at 21,050. V.K. Vijayakumar, Chief Investment Strategist at Geojit Financial Services said the

short-term undercurrent of the market is bullish despite the high valuations. The growth momentum in the economy, the sustained buying by DIIs and retail investors, reversal of the FPI strategy from selling to buying and favourable global cues will keep the market resilient. From the global perspective, tonight's Fed message is important in setting the global market trend. Markets will wait for the Fed chief's message before taking a decisive turn. Even though India's CPI inflation has come higher at 5.55 per cent in November compared to 4.87 per cent in October, this print is lower than the market expectation of 6 per cent. IIP growth of 11.7 per cent in October indicates continuation of the growth momentum in the economy. Steadily declining Brent crude (now below \$74) is strengthening India's macros. Leading banks, capital goods, cement, oil marketing companies and the leading airline company are on strong wicket, he said.

## India's retail inflation rises to 5.55% in November

India's retail inflation increased to 5.55 per cent in November after having slowed to a four-month low of 4.87 per cent in October, with higher food prices pushing up the cost of living and stretching household budgets. The increase in the inflation level above the RBI's 4 per cent target means that the central bank is not likely to go in for a rate cut to spur economic growth. Food inflation, which accounts for nearly half of the overall consumer price basket, rose by 8.7 per cent during November compared to 6.61 per cent in October as the prices of vegetables such as onion, fruit, and pulses went up sharply during the month, data released by the Ministry of Statistics on Tuesday showed. The prices of pulses, which are the main source of proteins in the country's diet, shot



up by a whopping 20.2 per cent during the month while vegetable prices increased by as much as 17.7 per cent and fruits turned costlier by 10.9 per cent. Cereal prices too rose by double digit figures while spices turned costlier by

21.55 per cent. However, there was some consolation in fuel prices showing a marginal dip compared to the same month last year as the government reduced the price of LPG and kept petrol and diesel prices on hold during the month.

## India Hits 8-month High Wholesale Price Inflation Of 0.26% In Nov



**NEW DELHI:** For the first time since March 2023 India's wholesale inflation paced out of the deflationary zone as it jumped up to 0.26 per cent in November, as per data released by the Ministry of Commerce and Industry on Thursday. Wholesale Price Index (WPI) inflation was at -0.52 per cent in October 2023 and 6.12 percent in November 2022. At 0.26 per cent, the latest wholesale inflation print is the highest in eight months. The WPI data comes two days after the statistics ministry said the headline retail inflation fell to a three-month low of 5.55 per cent in November, still down 189 basis points from the 15-month high of 7.44 per cent in July. Wholesale inflation has zoomed 149 basis points over the same period. One basis point is one-hundredth of a percentage point.



# The Story of 'Arjan Vailly' with Bhupinder Babbal on 'Rang Punjab De'

**KULBIR SINGH KALSI**  
Chandigarh

The esteemed singer Bhupinder Babbal, the voice behind the hit song "Arjan Vailly," is all set to grace the stage of "Rang Punjab De" exclusively on Zee Punjabi on December 11.

Babbal's live performance promises to captivate audiences with his soulful rendition of "Arjan Vailly" and an insight into his experience of creating this mesmerizing melody for the movie. His melodic prowess and emotive delivery have already won hearts, and now viewers will have the chance to witness his magic firsthand.

Tune in today to witness a memorable evening filled with music, anecdotes, and the essence of "Arjan Vailly" brought to life by Bhupinder Babbal, exclusively on "Rang Punjab De".



# John Abraham shoots for 'Vedaa' in Kashmir

**FW DESK**

Bollywood star John Abraham recently concluded the shooting schedule of his upcoming film 'Vedaa' in Kashmir alongside co-star Sharvari Wagh. The duo wrapped up filming after a four-day stint that covered picturesque locations in Srinagar, Pahalgam, and South Kashmir's Ashmuqam area.

The crew shot the last sequence in Ashmuqam before the team departed for Mumbai. Throughout the shoot, John Abraham was visibly enamored by Kashmir's natural beauty and the warm hospitality extended by locals.

Expressing his admiration for the region, John encouraged people to explore Kashmir beyond its significance as a shooting destination. Clad in traditional Kashmiri attire, he emphasized the inviting nature of the locals and invited others to experience the valley's charm beyond film sets.

In a video message, the actor said, "I want people to come to Kashmir not only for shooting but for holidays as well," he said.



He highlighted the warm welcome received and advised against littering, stressing the importance of preserving the valley's pristine beauty.

"We had a great welcome here, and everyone here wants to work. The people always look at you with a smile and an open heart," John added.

# POTPOURRI

## Jan-Jan Ke Adarsh, Mann-Mann Ke Aaraadhya - Siya Ram are revealed in Sony Entertainment Television's Shrimad Ramayan

**KULBIR SINGH KALSI**  
Chandigarh

Amidst heightened anticipation, Sony Entertainment Television brings to life the divine 'Shrimad Ramayan', starting January 1, 2024 and will air every Monday to Friday at 9:00 PM. The show promises a renewed telling of this great Indian epic and the channel has now dropped the next promo which reveals Jan-Jan Ke Adarsh, Mann-Mann Ke Aaraadhya - Siya Ram.



The revered Sita will be essayed by the talented actress Prachi Bansal, who is poised to embody the grace, resilience, and strength that define this Goddess. Actor Sujay Reu breathes life into Lord Ram, an embodiment of the ideal husband, characterized by unwavering devotion and integrity. The devotional promo highlights Sita's unwavering faith and admiration for Lord Ram, perceiving him not merely as a prince but as the epitome of an ideal life partner.

ment of the ideal husband, characterized by unwavering devotion and integrity. The devotional promo highlights Sita's unwavering faith and admiration for Lord Ram, perceiving him not merely as a prince but as the epitome of an ideal life partner.

# Cold wave grips Kashmir Valley



**FW DESK**

Kashmir remained gripped by a persistent cold spell as temperatures plunged well below freezing point across the valley, officials reported on Friday.

Srinagar, the summer capital, saw the mercury drop to minus 3.5 degrees Celsius on Wednesday night, marking a slight rise from the previous night's minus 5.4 degrees Celsius.

Pahalgam, a key base camp for the annual Amarnath Yatra pilgrimage, recorded a chilling minus 5.0 degrees Celsius. Meanwhile, the renowned Gulmarg resort in Baramulla district registered a low of minus 3.44 degrees Celsius.

Other areas in the valley also experienced harsh cold, with Qazigund at minus 2.8 degrees Celsius, Kokernag at minus 1.9 degrees Celsius, and Kupwara at minus 4.2 degrees Celsius.

In Jammu, temperatures hovered at 7.3°C, slightly below the usual for this time of year. Banihal recorded 1.7°C, Batote 4.2°C, and Bhaderwah 0.4°C.

The relentless cold wave persists across Kashmir, impacting various parts of the region with significantly below-average temperatures.

# Post breakup with Asim, Himanshi Khurana enroute on 'Chaar Dham Yatra'



**MOHALI:** Known for her major works in Punjabi industry, actress and singer Himanshi Khurana has shared a glimpse of her recent visit to the Puri Jagannath Temple in Odisha, and said she is on a 'chaar dham yatra'.

The actress, who was in a relationship with her 'Bigg Boss' co-contestant Asim Riaz, has recently announced her breakup over religious reasons. Now, post breakup, Himanshi is on a

spiritual visit with her mother. Taking to Instagram, she shared pictures of herself from the Jagannath Temple.

Himanshi is wearing a brown long kurta with long sleeves and a grey dupatta. With her hair left open, she accessorized the look with a silver neck piece.

In the stories section, the 32-year-old actress shared a breathtaking glimpse of snow clad mountains and roads.

The actress captioned the post as: "Jaganath puri with maa Chaar dham yatra....."

Himanshi has done movies like 'Sadda Haq', 'Afsar', 'Shava Ni Girdhari Lal'. She had also participated in the 13th season of the controversial reality show 'Bigg Boss'.

# Shreyas Talpade suffers heart attack, undergoes angioplasty

**MUMBAI:** Actor Shreyas Talpade, who is known for 'Iqbal', 'Golmaal' franchise and 'Poster Boys', suffered a heart attack. The actor was shooting for a film and after completing the shoot collapsed due to a heart attack on Thursday evening.

As per media reports, he was rushed to the hospital and underwent angioplasty at the city's Bellevue Hospital in Andheri West. The angioplasty was conducted at around 10 p.m. and currently the actor is doing fine now.

The actor shot through the day, and was absolutely fine. He even joked around with the crew on the set, and shot sequences that had a bit of action. However, once he went home, he told his wife that he was feeling uneasy.



He was then rushed to the hospital but he collapsed on the way. Once he reached the hospital, the medical professionals conducted the angioplasty and is now stable.

# Shriya Pilgaonkar plays small town girl in relationship with an alcoholic in 'Dry Day'

**MUMBAI:** Actress Shriya Pilgaonkar, who is gearing up for the release of her streaming film 'Dry Day', has shared that she plays the role of a small town girl who is stuck in a relationship with a guy addicted to alcohol.

The film also stars Jitendra Kumar. The actress also shared that the film explores the transformative power of love.

Talking about the same, the actress said: "The story of our film 'Dry Day' is entertaining, authentic and will surely strike an emotional chord with the viewers. We have a lovely cast and team. I play the character of Nir-mala, a feisty, charming small town girl who comes from an educated family but ends up getting stuck in a relationship with Gannu who is addicted to alcohol."

She further mentioned: "She does her best to take charge and get him to mend his ways for their future. The film explores certain social themes and also highlights the transformative power of love. I enjoy comedy and social satire as a genre and I had a wonderful



time cultivating the sweet relationship of Nir-mala and Gannu. Emmay entertainment has produced some of the best content of the recent past and collaborating with them on this film and working with Saurabh sir was incredibly rewarding and enriching."

Directed by Saurabh Shukla and produced by Monisha Advani, Nikhil Bhojwani and Nikhil Advani of Emmay Entertainment, the film will premiere exclusively on Prime Video on December 22 in Hindi along with dubs in Tamil, Telugu, Malayalam, and Kannada.

# Nitin Gadkari Inaugurates GICA, Honours 12 Eminent Personalities from Tricity

**KULBIR SINGH KALSI**  
Chandigarh

The Global Indians Conclave and Awards (GICA) was inaugurated by Nitin Gadkari, Minister of Road Transport and Highways of India in the national capital. The Chief Guest, Nitin Gadkari, felicitated 24 distinguished individuals from various fields, including philanthropy, science, real estate, education, sports, business, and literature. These awardees were lauded for their exemplary contributions to society, the country, and the world at large. Tricity based individuals made a mark as many from the region were felicitated for their achievements. The event was organized by the NGO 'I am Still Human'.

12 eminent personalities from tricity were honoured and these included Piyush Kansal - Director Royale Estate Group, Neeraj Kansal - Director, Crack Academy, Acharya Manish - Founder of HIIMS and Shuddhi clinics, Dr Ravul Jindal - Director Fortis Hospital Mohali, Jagjit Singh Majha, CMD, PCL Housing,



Karmjeet Singh - Director Gobind Coach Builders, Shiv Bansal - CEO, Him Imperial Auto Glass Works, Dr Sunaina Sindhvani - Author, Barinder Sran - International Cricketer, Yash Vardhan Swami - Founder Trained by YVS, Sumeet Soni - CEO, Zapbuild and Sanam Kapoor - Founder, La Pino's Pizza.

Nitin Gadkari, in his address to the audience, congratulated the awardees and urged everyone to work tirelessly for the nation's development. He congratulated NGO 'I am Still Human' for their work towards social welfare and also

urged them to work in the direction of road safety. Operational since 2015, the NGO presently works majorly for the welfare of the Veterans, Martyr Families and the Indian Armed Forces.

Co-organizers of GICA, Vivek Mehra (also Founder of NGO 'I am Still Human') and Bhavpreet Singh, expressed their gratitude and shared the vision behind GICA. Vivek Mehra emphasized the importance of recognizing global achievements, saying, "GICA serves as a platform to honour those Indians whose contributions have made a significant impact on a global scale. Together, we can build a world inspired by positive change." Bhavpreet Singh highlighted the need for insightful discussions to inspire and enlighten, stating, "Our objective is to bring together thought leaders to discuss ideas that can drive positive change globally. Through these discussions, we aim to create a blueprint for a brighter future."

Lt Gen K J Singh (Retd), Former GOC in C Western Command also shared the stage with Nitin Gadkari, adding a distinguished presence to the event. Several other notable personalities from tricity also attended GICA, including Vineet Joshi, Former Media Advisor to Government of Punjab, Drishmeet Singh Buttar, Managing Partner, Healing Hospital, Harteg Singh, Real estate investment expert, and Chandan Sanwal, Founder Chandigarh Bytes.

# Germany beat India into the semi-finals of FIH junior world cup hockey

**SUNIL THAPLIYAL**  
New Delhi

The Indian team suffered a crushing defeat in the semi-finals of the Junior Hockey World Cup on Thursday. Germany defeated them 4-1 in the match played in Kuala Lumpur. The Indian team will now play Spain for the bronze medal in the tournament. India had not just 1-2 but 12 penalty corners in the match but could not convert a single penalty corner into a goal. The team had to take the consequences and was defeated 4-1 by Germany in the semi-final.

Germany shattered the Indian team's dream of winning the title for the third time. The Indian team now has to play Spain for the bronze medal on Saturday. At the same time, Germany will meet France, who beat Spain 3:1 in the second semi-final, in the final. Six-time world champions Germany were awarded two penalty corners in the semi-final match, both of which led to goals. The Indian team, which had recorded a spectacular 4-3 win over the Netherlands in the quarter-finals match, was unable to maintain that momentum in this game.

The Indian team, who staged a comeback from a two-goal deficit in the quarter-finals, had no answer to the strong German defence.

Germany scored in all four quarters, while the only goal for India was scored by Sudeep Chirmako in the 11th minute. For Germany, Ben Hasbach scored a field goal in the 8th minute and a penalty corner in the 30th minute. Paul Glander converted



the penalty corner into a goal in the 41st minute. Florian Spirling sealed the 4:1 victory by scoring a field goal two minutes before the final whistle. The match was evenly poised in the first quarter when Hassbach scored in the 8th minute and Chirmako equalised for India after 3 minutes. India was awarded 4 penalty corners in the first quarter. The six penalty corners it got in the next quarter were in vain. At the same time, Hasbach scored a penalty corner goal for Germany. In the third quarter, Paul scored at the second penalty corner to give Germany a 3:1 lead. Spirling scored the fourth goal in the 58th minute.

India won the Junior Hockey World Cup in 2001 in Hobart and 2016 in Lucknow. The Indian team also finished runners-up in the 1997 World Cup in Milton Keynes, England. Two years ago, at the last Junior World Cup in Bhubaneswar, it had to settle for fourth place. This year, India met Germany five times and lost all five times. The last time Germany beat them 6-3 in the semi-finals of the Johor Cup. At the 2021 Junior World Cup in Bhubaneswar, Germany also beat India 4-2 in the semi-finals.

# New artificial intelligence model could help prevent sight loss in humans

**FW CORRESPONDENT**  
New Delhi

Team of Researchers have created a new artificial intelligence (AI) model capable of predicting long-term visual impairment risk in patients dealing with high myopia, which ranks among the top three causes of irreversible blindness in various parts of the world.

The experts at Tokyo Medical and Dental University (TMDU) have created a special AI that can predict the risk of long-term vision loss. This kind of AI, called machine learning, helps computers learn from information to become better at tasks.

The team at the Tokyo Medical and Dental University (TMDU) said its machine-learning model works well for predicting—and visualising—the risk of visual impairment over the long term.

Machine learning is a type of AI focused on building computer systems that learn

from data, enabling software to improve its performance over time.

People with extreme shortsightedness (called high myopia) can clearly see objects that are near to them but cannot focus on objects at a distance.

Contacts, glasses, or surgery can be used to correct their vision, but having high myopia can lead to a condition called pathologic myopia, a leading cause of blindness.

"We know that machine-learning algorithms work well on tasks such as identifying changes and complications in myopia but in this study, we wanted to investigate something different, namely how good these algorithms are at long-term predictions," said Yining Wang, lead author of the study.

The study, recently published in the journal JAMA Ophthalmology, looked at the visual acuity of 967 Japanese patients at TMDU's Advanced Clinical



Center for Myopia after 3 and 5 years had passed. The researchers formed a dataset from 34 variables that are commonly collected during ophthalmic examinations, such as age, current visual acuity, and the diameter of the cornea.

They then tested several popular machine-learning models such as random forests and support vector machines. Of these models, the logistic regression-based model performed the best at predicting visual impairment at 5 years.

However, predicting outcomes is only part of the story, the researchers said. "It is also important to present the model's output in a way that is easy for patients to understand and convenient for making clinical decisions," said Kyoko

Ohno-Matsui, senior author of the study.

The researchers used a nomogram to visualise the classification model. Each variable is assigned a line with a length that indicates how important it is for predicting visual acuity.

These lengths can be converted into points that can be added up to obtain a final score explaining the risk of visual impairment in future, they said. People who permanently lose their vision often suffer both financially and physically as a result of their loss of independence.

The decrease in global productivity caused by severe visual impairment was estimated to be \$94.5 billion in 2019.

Although the model still has to be evaluated on a wider population, this study has shown that machine learning models have good potential to help address this increasingly important public health concern, which will benefit both individuals and society as a whole.