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Delhi govt approves Rs 1000 cr for rural development projects in Rural development Board Meeting

FW CORRESPONDENT
New Delhi

In a significant development, the Rural Development Board, responsible for the development of both urban and rural areas in Delhi, has undergone a transformation and is now known as the Gram Vikas (Rural Development) Board. This meeting was held in the Delhi Secretariat on Wednesday.

"While previously focusing solely on rural areas, the board, through the Gram Vikas department, now extends its efforts to villages in urban regions that have not yet undergone urbanisation. Today, a meeting of the board was convened" said Gopal Rai, Delhi Environment Minister.

In the previous session, Gopal Rai asserted, approvals



were granted for 564 schemes costing Rs 759 crore, benefiting 194 villages across 45 assembly constituencies. In today's meeting, new proposals worth Rs 250 crores were presented before the board.

Combining old and new proposals, the board has approved development projects amounting to approximately Rs 1,000 crore. However, concerns have

been raised regarding the execution of several approved projects. Acknowledging this, in today's meeting, directives were issued to officials from the MCD (Municipal Corporation of Delhi) and the Flood and Irrigation Department to expedite project implementation.

Additionally, a task force comprising officials is set to be

formed, responsible for weekly reviews to monitor the progress of ongoing projects. A camp has also been set up today to address issues in the approved projects, with the participation of both officials and legislators.

Apart from the officials of the Rural Development Board, MLAs associated with the villages of Delhi were present in this meeting.

Earlier, Delhi Lieutenant Governor (LG), Vinai Kumar Saxena on January 2 attended the 'Dilli Gramodaya Abhiyan', a campaign to develop urbanised villages and said that efforts are being made to bring changes to the villages of the national capital. Speaking at the campaigning program, the Delhi LG said, "I keep visiting the villages of Delhi, and I have seen there are issues with roads, drainage, issues of cleanliness

and in some villages there are issues with schools as well."

"Delhi is the capital of India so everything in Delhi should be world-class but unfortunately, it is not like that. Efforts are being made to bring changes to the villages of Delhi. Last year, I adopted 5 villages and a lot of work has been done there. Every village should have basic requirements like good roads, clean gutter, streetlights, Police chowki, sports facilities, dispensaries and a post office," added Saxena.

"This program for today is focused on the purpose that we go to villages and ask the villagers about their issues. Our officials have surveyed every village and made charts which consist of the list of facilities provided or need to be provided. Now we are asking the villages themselves about their needs," he said.

Muted response observed to Pre-Packaged Insolvency Process for MSMEs: RBI Governor

NEW DELHI: The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) reports limited adoption of the government's Pre-Packaged Insolvency Resolution Process (PPIRP) for managing financial stress among Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs).

Launched in 2021, it deals with default amounts ranging from Rs 10 lakh to Rs 1 crore. RBI Governor Shaktikanta Das, addressing a conference on the future roadmap for resolving stressed assets and IBC (Insolvency and Bankruptcy Code), noted a relatively muted response to PPIRP, on Thursday. "One reason could be the hesitancy on the part of the financial creditors (FCs) in approving the proposals under this mechanism, wherein the haircut is perceived as voluntary," said Das.

Despite this, he emphasised that PPIRP could encourage



promoters to proactively engage with creditors, potentially preventing defaults and facilitating quicker, smoother resolutions to avoid adversarial litigations.

"Overall, this could be a win-win situation for both creditors and debtors. Once this perception is established, there could be a greater acceptance of this mechanism for larger corporate debtors as well, and when the statutory enablers are in place," the governor

explained. Governor Das underscored the potential game-changing role of PPIRP in the out-of-court resolution framework, especially considering the coordination challenges with a creditor universe, including mutual funds, insurance companies, and bond/debenture holders, outside the scope of the Prudential Framework for Resolution of Stressed Assets.

He acknowledged the limitations of the out-of-court resolution framework and expressed the RBI's interest in aligning it effectively with the IBC. Das considered PPIRP a potential game-changer in this regard. According to data shared by Minister of State, MSME Ministry, Bhanu Pratap Singh Verma, only six cases were admitted under PPIRP, with four ongoing, one resolved, and one withdrawn.

ACB raids LNJP Hospital amid row over substandard medical and surgical devices, supplies



FW CORRESPONDENT
New Delhi

An Anti-Corruption Branch (ACB) team raided the Delhi government-run LNJP Hospital in a case related to alleged supply of sub-standard medical and surgical equipment, the officials said.

The team questioned staffers and officials of the hospital, and also seized some documents related to the case, a senior ACB officer reportedly said. The ACB team was at the hospital for around three hours.

Responding to the raid, the Delhi government in a statement said all the "sub-standard items were bought from the central government's portal called GeM (Government e Marketplace)" and added this should be investigated by a central agency such as the CBI.

On January 5, an FIR was registered by the ACB in connection with the alleged supply of sub-standard quality medical and surgical equipment in six Delhi government-run hospitals, including the LNJP Hospital, the officials reportedly said.

The case was registered under provisions of the Prevention of Corruption Act and the Drugs and Cosmetic Act, and section 120B (criminal conspiracy) of the Indian Penal Code, they said. When contacted, Joint Commissioner of Police, ACB, Madhur Verma reportedly confirmed the raid. The FIR was registered on a complaint from the deputy secretary (vigilance) of the Delhi health and family welfare department.

Medical and surgical equipment supplied by 13 different suppliers were found to have failed the standard quality in lab tests, according to the FIR.

PM Modi holds spectacular roadshow in Nashik, to throw open 27th National Youth Festival

NASHIK: Prime Minister Narendra Modi arrived in this pilgrim centre and launched a spectacular roadshow, virtually symbolising the start of the Bharatiya Janata Party and its allies' 2024 poll campaign, here on Friday morning.

PM Modi was accompanied by Chief Minister Eknath Shinde and Deputy CMs Devendra Fadnis and Ajit Pawar, and state BJP chief Chandrashekhar Bawankule on an open-topped vehicle which traversed the 1.20 kms long road.

Thousands of people and party activists lined up on both sides as the foursome waved at them and nodded in approval at the cultural events organised on one side of the road.

The roadshow started from the Mirchi Circle to the Janardan Swami Math Chowk on the Chhatrapati Sambhajnagar-Nashik Highway along with a cultural show in which over



1,50,000 people joined enthusiastically, amidst tight security all around.

Organised by the Ministry of Youth Affairs in collaboration with other departments, the NYF theme this year is 'MyBharat-ViksitBharat@2047 - By the Youth, For the Youth' to herald the aspirations of the young generations for India's future.

Besides Nashik, 750 districts and major cities are simultaneously hosting various

NYF-related events like road safety, cultural programmes and events showcasing India's diverse heritage, to foster a spirit of national unity and progress among the youth.

The PM will also visit the historic Kalaram Temple for a 'darshan' and 'puja', then inaugurate the 27th National Youth Festival marking the 161st birth anniversary of the philosopher Swami Vivekananda and interact with the local leaders here.

Later this afternoon, the PM will reach Mumbai to inaugurate the country's longest bridge across the sea, the 'Atal Bihari Vajpayee Sewri-Nhava Sheva Atal Setu' linking Mumbai island with the country's mainland.

The PM will also inaugurate/launch/dedicate/other major infrastructure projects worth over Rs 30,000 crore in the state during his daylong tour here.

IMD warns of bone-chilling cold wave in North India



NEW DELHI: There seems to be no immediate respite from the bone-chilling cold wave and fog which will continue for the next few days, said the India Meteorological Department (IMD) on Friday.

The IMD said the cold wave to severe cold wave conditions are likely over North India during the next two days while cold day to severe day wave conditions are likely over the plains of Northwest India during the next three days and then the conditions will abate thereafter.

The IMD also predicted that dense to very dense fog conditions are likely to continue to prevail over North India during the next five days.

In its daily bulletin, the weather forecast agency said that minimum temperatures are in the range of 3-7 degree Celsius over most parts of Punjab, Haryana, Chandigarh, Rajasthan, and in some parts of Uttar Pradesh, south Rajasthan, north Madhya Pradesh and in isolated pockets of Bihar.

"These are below normal by (-) 1 degree Celsius to (-) 3 degree Celsius at many places of north India. Today, the lowest minimum temperature of 1.4 degree Celsius reported at Amritsar (Punjab)," said the IMD.

It also said that cold wave to severe cold wave conditions prevailed in isolated pockets

of East Rajasthan, Punjab and cold wave condition in isolated pockets of Haryana and West Rajasthan.

"Gradual fall by 2-3 degree Celsius in minimum temperatures is likely over many parts of Central and East India during the next 2-3 days and no significant change thereafter. However, no significant change in minimum temperatures is very likely over Northwest India during the next five days," said the IMD.

As per weather department, cold wave to severe cold wave conditions are very likely to continue in isolated pockets of Punjab, Haryana, Chandigarh and Delhi on Friday and Saturday and cold wave conditions in isolated pockets on Sunday.

"Cold wave conditions are very likely in isolated pockets of Rajasthan on Friday, over Uttar Pradesh on Friday and Saturday and over Bihar during Friday and Sunday," said the IMD.

The IMD also predicted that ground frost conditions were very likely over Uttarakhand, Punjab, Chandigarh and Haryana on Saturday.

J&K: Assembly, panchayat polls likely after Lok Sabha election



FW DESK

Panchayat and Assembly polls in Jammu and Kashmir are likely to follow the upcoming Lok Sabha elections, media reports said. The tenure of nearly 4,900 village panchayats concluded on Tuesday, leaving rural areas without elected grassroots representatives.

However, the District Development Councils, established through direct elections in 2020, remain active.

As for the Assembly elections, the Supreme Court's deadline of September 2024 has added a timeline to this process. Logistical and security assessments for these elections are expected during the Election Commission's visit to the region as part of its Lok Sabha polls review.

Over 22 000 vacancies in various govt department of Delhi to be filled in next 1 year: LG VK Saxena

FW CORRESPONDENT
New Delhi

Over 22,000 vacancies in various departments of the Delhi government will be filled in the next one year, Lieutenant Governor VK Saxena reportedly said while handing over appointment letters to 398 new recruits.

He said that with the issuing of the appointment letters in various departments and civic agencies under the Delhi government to the 398 candidates, the total number of recruitments has reached nearly 22,000 during the last one-and-a-half years.

"It was humbling to hand over appointment letters to over 149 dependents on compassionate ground simultaneously - a record in itself, recruited after



strictly following a transparent & hassle free process. Another 22,000 vacancies are expected to be filled in the next one year," Saxena said in a post on 'X'.

The 398 recruits included 149 appointments on compassionate grounds. Ever since he took over, the LG has been stressing upon permanent appointments against government vacancies instead of ad-hoc and contract-

al recruitment, underlining that such practices lead to favouritism, corruption and exploitation of deserving candidates, a Raj Niwas note said. Saxena ensured the streamlining of the recruitment process of the Delhi Subordinate Services Selection Board (DSSSB) through several steps that have reduced the time taken to declare results to six to eight months, it said.

Pannun case: US says will not provide 'discovery material' to Nikhil Gupta

NEW YORK: The US government has refused to provide "discovery material" after it was asked by a New York court to respond to a motion filed by lawyers of Indian national Nikhil Gupta, named in an alleged plot to assassinate Sikh radical Gurbhant Singh Pannun.

Gupta's lawyers, while also claiming that their 52-year-old client is facing human rights violations, had sought material, or evidence, relating to the charges against him in a 'Motion to Compel Production of Discovery' filed on January 4 in the US District Court, Southern District of New York.

Following this, in an order dated January 8, US District Judge Victor Marrero asked the government to file a reply to the motion within three days of the date of the order.

In a response filed with the district court on Wednesday, the US government, while objecting to provide the "materials," said "the defendant is not entitled to discovery."

"...the government is prepared to produce discovery promptly upon the defendant's appearance in this District and arraignment on this case. Before then, however, the defendant is not entitled to discovery, and he identifies no good reason for the Court to order it," federal prosecutors said.

"The government stands ready to provide discovery to him, like any other criminal defendant, promptly upon his



appearance and arraignment in this District. His motion to compel discovery should be denied," US Attorney Damian Williams said.

On January 4, defence counsel filed the motion requesting that "the Court enter an order directing the Government to begin providing defense counsel with discovery material".

Gupta's attorney Jeff Chabrow said in the motion that the "defence materials" are "relevant to its ability to defend the instant charges".

In response, the New York court had given the government three days to file a reply to the motion.

A motion to compel is a request made to the court to force a party to comply with a discovery request.

It is typically filed by the party seeking the information or evidence, and it asks the court to order the other party to comply with a discovery request that has not been fulfilled.

If the motion is granted, the court will typically order the other party to provide the requested information or documents within a specified

timeframe. In addition, the lawyers mentioned in the court documents that Gupta, who was arrested by Czech authorities on June 30, 2023, in response to a request by the US under an extradition treaty, is facing human rights violations while being in custody. The motion stated citing Gupta's family that they have "limited access" to him, he is not allowed consular access and "faces basic human rights violations in custody in Prague."

In November last year, US prosecutors announced murder-for-hire charges against Gupta for involvement in a foiled plot to assassinate a US citizen allegedly on behalf of an Indian government employee.

Gupta has been charged with murder-for-hire, which carries a maximum sentence of 10 years in prison, and conspiracy to commit murder-for-hire, which carries a maximum sentence of 10 years in prison, US Attorney for the Southern District of New York, Matthew G. Olsen, had said.

Not us, Maharaja Hari Singh enacted Art 370



Article 370 was introduced and enacted by Maharaja Hari Singh to stop people from Punjab settling in Jammu in the wake of India's partition, former Jammu and Kashmir Chief Minister Dr Farooq Abdullah said while addressing the media in Baran village on the outskirts of Jammu on Monday.

"We didn't bring Article 370. This was introduced and implemented by Maharaja Hari Singh in 1947. It was only out of fear that the people of Punjab would come here after partition and settle down and the poor people of our state would sell their land at lesser rates," he said while addressing a press conference in Jammu. Abdullah stressed that Maharaja's intent behind Article 370 was to safeguard the interests of the people in Jammu and Kashmir, particularly the marginalized communities, in the aftermath of partition.

He reiterated that the article was put in place to reserve jobs exclusively for the locals of Jammu and Kashmir and Ladakh, serving as a protective measure for their socio-economic well-being.

ODOP Program Surpasses 50 Aggregators in 'Brand India' Mission

NEW DELHI: The One District One Product (ODOP) program, led by the Department for Promotion of Industry and Internal Trade (DPIIT) under the Ministry of Commerce & Industry, has achieved a milestone by enlisting more than 50 aggregators, sharing the common objective of 'Brand India'.

ODOP aims to realise the vision of fostering balanced regional development across all districts of the country. The concept is to select, brand, and promote one product from



each district. The ODOP program has created a diverse community of aggregators across 25+ States and Union Territories, representing over 160 districts. The

initiative focuses on informing consumers about the origins of product ingredients, building a unique identity, and promoting awareness. The Ministry of Commerce & Industry stated,

"The focus is on enhancing efficacy and providing an immersive experience, ultimately inviting the world to authentically 'Experience India'."

The aggregators leverage inventive and eco-friendly packaging methods, coupled with compelling storytelling elements, to showcase product promotions.

These creative approaches enrich the customer experience and contribute to a comprehensive narrative of the product and the artisans' remarkable journey.

Delhi, Punjab CMs visit jailed AAP legislator in Gujrat ; criticise BJP

NEW DELHI: Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal, along with his Punjab counterpart, Bhagwant Mann, on Monday visited incarcerated Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) legislator Chaitar Vasava at Rajpipla jail in Gujarat.



Both criticised the ruling BJP in the state for what they termed as "its peak in authoritarianism". Mann said the BJP's approach towards individuals who work for public welfare is a challenge for the entire nation. "Those who work in the public's interest are being targeted and unjustly jailed on

During the rally, Kejriwal announced Vasava as the AAP candidate for the Bharuch Lok Sabha seat in the upcoming Lok Sabha elections.

The seat is currently held by BJP's former Union minister Mansukh Vasava.

Chaitar Vasava is a legislator from Dediapada in Narmada district. He was arrested last year on charges of intimidating forest officials and firing shots during a dispute over land cultivation rights of local tribals in Narmada district.

The case also involves his wife, Shakuntalaben, who faces similar charges.

Delhi govt issues show-cause notice to Lok Nayak Hospital authorities for not admitting injured man



FW CORRESPONDENT
New Delhi

In the aftermath of the controversial death of an injured man who was reportedly denied admission at four different hospitals, the Delhi government has taken swift action by issuing a show-cause notice to the authorities of LNJP Hospital. The notice directs them to terminate the services of a senior resident doctor implicated in the incident.

A similar show-cause notice was issued by the health and family welfare department of the Delhi government to the Guru Teg Bahadur (GTB) Hospital authorities asking them to terminate the services of a senior resident doctor.

Pramod, 47, who was arrested after a 21-year-old woman alleged that he had molested her in an inebriated state, died

of the injuries he suffered after jumping out of a moving police van on January 3, a senior officer said. He was allegedly denied admission by four government hospitals, including three Delhi government-run facilities, due to unavailability of beds or equipment, a senior officer had said earlier.

Officials said a meeting was also held with medical directors and medical superintendents of all Delhi government-run hospitals after the incident and they were asked to ensure that such an incident does not take place.

"The patient was first taken to the Jag Pravesh Chandra Hospital where he was administered first aid and was intubated. He was then taken to the GTB Hospital which said that the CT scan machine was non-functional and referred the patient to the LNJP Hospital,"

an official said.

The official said the Jag Pravesh Chandra Hospital had also sent a junior resident with the patient to the GTB Hospital. "There was no negligence on their part (Jag Pravesh Chandra Hospital). The GTB Hospital authorities could have got the CT scan of the patient done at the Rajiv Gandhi Hospital, which is in the same campus as the GTB and then admitted the patient. CT scan is not a line of treatment. The patient was intubated and was on assistive breathing. CT scan is a diagnostic procedure," another official said.

The GTB Hospital authorities then referred the patient to the LNJP Hospital where he could not be admitted due to the unavailability of beds in the ICU ventilator.

The show-cause notice said the "entire episode shows complete lack of empathy and professionalism among the medical officers involved as well as lack of supervision on the part of the concerned medical director". "Now, therefore, Medical Director, LNHP is hereby directed to immediately terminate the services of Dr Vikash Yadav, (on duty senior resident on 03.01.2024). Further, Dr Suresh, medical director, LNHP also directed to explain the reason for the above said lapse on his part within three days of receiving of this SCN failing which action as deemed fit shall be initiated against him," read the notice.

Congress sure to win all 10 LS seats in Haryana in upcoming polls: Bhopinder & Deepender Hooda



SATISH HANDA

Former Haryana Chief Minister Bhopinder Singh Hooda and his son Rajya Sabha MP Deepender Hooda while replying to a media question said that the Congress will win all seats in Haryana in the forthcoming Lok Sabha Elections. Information reveals that Former Haryana CM has also assured Congress highcommand New Delhi that the Congress will win all 10 Lok Sabha seats in Haryana in the upcoming election.

Deepender Hooda said that Bhartiya Janata Party President J.P. Nadda belongs from Himachal Pradesh, during last assembly poll campaign said that the BJP would form the government in Himachal, but the Congress won the election and formed the government under the leadership of Sukhvinder Singh Sukhu. "I want to tell Nadda that what happened in Himachal will repeat in Haryana," he added. Deepender Hooda also accused the BJP of misusing the central investigative agencies to target opposition leaders.

Suchana Seth, CEO of an AI startup, killed her 4 year old son in Goa

ARUN KUMAR RAO
Bengaluru

Suchana Seth, the 39-year-old CEO of an AI startup in Bengaluru, was arrested allegedly murdering her four-year-old son at a service apartment in Goa's Candolim and by hiring taxi to travel back to Karnataka with child's body in a bag. She was apprehended in Karnataka's Chitradurga district while attempting to flee in a cab with her son's body in a bag. The shocking crime, for which investigators are still to find a motive. But initial investigations suggest that Seth cited an "estranged relationship" with her husband as a factor. Members of the house



keeping staff found a blood stain which cleaning the service apartment from which Suchana Seth had checked out on Monday morning. Based on an alert from Goa Police, she was detained at Aimgangala police station in chitradurga district in Karnataka. Calanguta cops will take custody of Suchana and take her to Goa on transit remand.

place. But when Inspector Paresh Naik Calangute police station verified details he found the address was fake. Suchana gave a Bengaluru address while checking to room 404 at Candolim's Hotel Sol Banyan Grande on Saturday. Naik called taxi driver again and speaking in Konkani asked driver to visit a nearby police station without the passengers suspecting anything. The taxi had entered Chitradurga district by then. The driver apparently steered the car to Aimgangala police station without Suchana getting a whiff of the plan. Naik's suspicion came true when an officer there checked car and found the body of the child in a bag.

IIM Sambalpur spearheads agricultural education advancements with specialized FDP



FW CORRESPONDENT
New Delhi

IIM Sambalpur, conducted a Faculty Development Programme (FDP) for executives of Bhubaneswar-based Odisha University of Agriculture and Technology (OUAT), at its campus. The residential program was conducted for as many as 36 mid-career faculty members in two separate batches, with a focus on their professional growth and development in the ever-changing field of management education in the realm of agriculture. Prof. Mahadeo Jaiswal, Director, IIM Sambalpur, stated, "The primary objective of the FDP was to enhance the professional growth and development of faculty members working in OUAT focused on management education. The program provides thorough training in the basic principles of general management, pedagogical techniques especially case methods, cutting-edge research methodologies, and advanced topics within specific domains."

10 large companies from Japan & USA willing for industrial investment in Haryana

SATISH HANDA

Khattar during the 10th Vibrant Gujarat Global Summit-2024 at Gandhinagar in Gujarat attracted foreign investment in Haryana state and many firms desired to collaborate with the state, while talking to media persons on Thursday, he said the state government will establish a joint collaboration cell for the convenience of Japanese and USA investors. This cell will continuously engage with representatives of investors to expedite the plug-and-play model. Haryana chief minister Manohar Lal Khattar on Thursday held a series of one-on-one discussions with representatives of Japanese and American corporate entities inviting them to invest in Haryana. Gujarat chief minister Bhupendra Patel was also present along with CM Haryana at the Vibrant Gujarat Global Summit 2024 in Gandhinagar.



Khattar said the state government will establish a joint collaboration cell for the convenience of investors which will continuously engage with the representatives of investors to expedite the plug-and-play model. An official spokesperson said that during the meeting with Japanese representatives, a consensus was reached between Japan and Haryana government on formulating a hydrogen policy in the area of clean-green energy. Khattar also held a meeting with Microsoft India president Puneet Chandok. "Microsoft would collaborate with the Haryana government in the field of artificial intelligence. A meeting will be organised with Microsoft representatives in Chandigarh where the company will present its roadmap.

According to information, the investors that expressed desire to invest in Haryana include Jetro, Dango Corporation, Maruti Suzuki, Yamanashki Hydrogen, Air Water Company, Tyotus, Ambika Automative Safety, JCCII India from Japan and Blackstone, UPS Logistic Company from USA. A detailed discussion on the proposal was also held with the representatives of these companies, the spokesperson said.

The entire project of installing Automatic Number Plate Recognition (ANPR)-based violation detection cameras is estimated to be done at a cost of Rs 20 crore and the Transport Department of the Delhi government has floated a tender for procuring such cameras and the

Delhi all set to use AI equipped digital eye to monitor traffic violations

FW DESK
New Delhi

From detecting triple riding to those using cellphones while driving, from overage vehicles plying in the city to those without a valid PUC, the Delhi government is planning to install Artificial Intelligence-based cameras to detect traffic violations to strengthen enforcement and ramp up road safety, officials said.

The entire project of installing Automatic Number Plate Recognition (ANPR)-based violation detection cameras is estimated to be done at a cost of Rs 20 crore and the Transport Department of the Delhi government has floated a tender for procuring such cameras and the



supporting technology.

In order to improve road safety on the streets, the department has taken an initiative to deploy Integrated Traffic Enforcement Management System (ITMS) across Delhi which will help it reduce the number of accidents and related fatalities with the help of advanced AI-based video analytics technology-based solution, an official said.

"The objective of the ITMS is to reduce the number of drivers who violate traffic rules, penalise the offenders, and run road safety awareness initiatives across the junctions thereby making the roads of Delhi safer for both pedestrians and motorists," he explained. The ANPR technology is a key aspect of the ITMS, the official said.

"Shriram Yatra" will be organized with great enthusiasm on 14th January, 2024 in Ambala Cantonment - Home Minister Anil Vij

SATISH HANDA
Ambala

Haryana Home and Health Minister Anil Vij said that a grand "Shriram Yatra" will be organized in Ambala Cantonment on January 14th, aligning with the consecration of the idol in Lord Shriram Temple in Ayodhya. The preparations for this yatra were discussed in a meeting chaired by Home Minister Anil Vij at his resi-



dence in Ambala today.

Home Minister Anil Vij outlined the route of the yatra, starting from Subhash Park at 11 AM on January 14th, passing through key markets in Ambala Cantonment, and culminating

back at Subhash Park. Devotees will sing hymns praising Lord Rama during the yatra. All sections of the society are invited to participate in the yatra, and responsibilities related to the organization were delegated during the meeting. Home Minister Anil Vij also said that the illumination of homes and markets with lamps and lights on January 22nd, marking the occasion of the consecration in the Shriram Temple.

Karanpur election result: Raj Minister Surendra Pal loses, Cong's Kunnar wins

JAIPUR: Surendra Pal Singh TT, who was made a minister in Rajasthan even before being elected as an MLA, on Monday lost the Assembly election to Congress rival, Rupinder Singh Kunnar by 11,283 votes from the Karanpur seat.

The BJP candidate was the Minister of State (Independent Charge) in Bhanu Lal's cabinet.

This is the first time in Rajasthan that a leader who became a minister before becoming an MLA has lost the election. The Assembly elections were held in November, but the election on Karanpur seat was postponed due to the death of the Congress candidate and the then MLA Gurmeet Singh Kunnar. The Congress then gave the ticket to his son, Rupinder Singh Kunnar.

Former Chief Minister Ashok Gehlot and Congress State President Govind Singh Datasara, while congratulating Rupinder Singh Kunnar on the victory, said that this mandate was a



"slap on the dictatorship of BJP".

At the same time, BJP state president C.P. Joshi said that he will review the reasons for the defeat. Kunnar got 94,761 votes and TT got 83,500 votes. Counting was done on Monday at Dr. Bhimrao Ambedkar Government PG College. Voting on this seat was held on January 5. Even before winning the elections, this seat was in the news due to the appointment of BJP candidate Surendra Pal Singh TT as a minister in the new government.

The eyes of the entire state were fixed on this election result. Counting of votes was completed in 18 rounds. TT was ahead in the first two rounds, but started falling behind from the third round onwards.

Over a dozen gangsters from Haryana running rackets jail and abroad

SATISH HANDA

To stop gangsters from going abroad on passports issued on the basis of fake documents has become a big challenge for the Special Task Force of Haryana police as well as NIA. However, instructions have been issued to all police stations to ensure that there is no negligence in the verification of suspicious passport holders as well as applicants, and also file cases against the witnesses in such cases and strict action will be taken in the future as well. The police also arrested some of the gangsters from abroad and brought them to India but the trend of gangs operating from abroad continues.

Even after issuing Red Corner notice, gangsters go abroad after getting passports on fake documents. Gangsters Lipin Nehra, Neeraj Pandit, henchmen of gangster Lawrence Bishnoi and Himanshu Bhav are running their gangs from abroad. They call from abroad and carry out serious crimes like extortion and murder, supply of arms and drugs. A senior Haryana Police officer said, by getting passports made on the basis of fake documents, gangsters Neeraj Pandit, Himanshu Bhav, Lipin Nehra and others had gone abroad and were carrying out criminal activities from there. A senior officer of the STF said, probe had revealed that earlier gangsters used to operate from Canada, Pakistan and Dubai but now, they had started going to countries like Portugal,



from Dubai. Gangster Raju Bisaudi brought from Thailand by the STF, gangster Vikas Lagarpuriya arrested on his return from Dubai. Other gangsters of the Lawrence Bishnoi gang including Goldy Brar, Lipin Nehra and Anmol Bishnoi are still operating the gang from abroad. DGP Haryana said that they are now vigilant about the possibility of criminals making fake papers for passports and instructions has been issued to all police stations that there should not be any negligence in verifications.

As per sources, gangster Virender Pratap alias Kala Rana, who is associated with Lawrence Bishnoi gang and now lodged in Tihar Jail remains in touch with Lawrence's brother Anmol Bishnoi who is in abroad and Satinder alias Goldy Brar through social media applications. Kala Rana, through his nephew Bhanu Pratap and another relative Prince both are also in abroad has been making ransom calls in Kurukshetra, Ambala, Yamunanagar, Kaithal and Panchkula districts. Information reveals that after getting the ransom, it is distributed among his family members and members of the Bishnoi gang, Kala Rana's brother Surya Pratap and his relatives, and members of Bishnoi gang are helping him. The ransom money is transferred through bank accounts or hawala.

Deakin University opens India's first international university branch campus

YOGESH KANT
New Delhi

Deakin University officially unveiled its India's first-ever international branch campus in Gift City Campus in Ahmedabad, Gujarat. Leading up to the official campus inauguration, Narendra Modi, Prime Minister of India, met with the Deakin delegation and spoke about enhancing collaboration between the government and academic institutions pertaining to cyber security; Deakin's three-decade presence and engagement in India; and the upcoming campus inauguration alongside the Vibrant Gujarat Summit.

"Australia setting up India's first-ever foreign university campus is a landmark moment in Australia-India relations. This opens a new chapter in our education ties, and this is only the beginning," said His Excellency Philip Green OAM, Australian High Commissioner to India, during his address at the inauguration event at the India campus in GIFT City, Gandhinagar, Gujarat.

Deakin's GIFT City Campus, India, gives local students access to Deakin's future-ready, world-class, postgraduate courses in business analytics and cyber security, at half the cost of Australian international fees. "Opening the world's first international branch campus in India reflects our commitment to offering global education that empowers students to excel in the digital age. This is an investment in the future leaders who will uphold and strengthen the bond between our nations," Professor Martin said.

Notably, Professor Iain Martin, also represented Australia in a CEO roundtable with Prime Minister Modi, prior to the inauguration. "Steadfast in our promise to give back to our community and change lives, two fully funded scholarships will be awarded to economically challenged students, underlining Deakin's commitment to foster educational equity and nurture local talent." "Commemorating Deakin University's 50th anniversary and 30 years in India, opening



our campus in India magnifies these milestones," Professor Martin said.

The campus features brand-new digital classrooms, libraries and cyber security labs, aimed at delivering an exceptional educational experience, while its digital integration with Deakin's Australian campuses ensure students will have comprehensive access to essential learning resources.

As India's workforce requirements expand and evolve within emerging technology sectors, Deakin University is set to expand its academic

portfolio at the India campus, equipping students for global market leadership and positioning Deakin as an educational contributor to India's growing digital workforce.

The campus will also serve as a startup incubator, nurturing entrepreneurial talent and innovation with specialised short courses and extensive support to elevate the regional startup landscape.

At the formal ceremony, Ravneet Pawha, Deakin Vice-President (Global Alliances) and CEO (South Asia), expressed that it is an exciting

time for cross-cultural education between Australia and India, and untapped global learning experiences.

"Our bold vision is for GIFT City to be a regional hub in the future, attracting students from across the globe to India and offering Australian students a unique opportunity to spend a trimester at Gujarat," she said.

Following the launch, Deakin University kick-started its industry engagements with the inaugural Deakin University x IABCA Leadership Roundtable. The event brought together prominent figures from both Indian and Australian governments and industries for a participative dialogue on 'Building Sustainable Futures across the Australia-India Corridor', setting the stage for a series of strategic dialogues and partnerships for shared progress.

Speaking about this historic junction in Indo-Australian education relations, Ms. Pawha said, "I commend the tireless efforts and support from both nations' governments in realising this audacious project.

This sets the stage for more innovative, expansive work in bilateral knowledge co-operation, envisioning a future where education knows no borders. I strongly encourage Indian students and professionals to embrace this opportunity and emerge as global pioneers in a tech-forward economy."

The official Deakin University GIFT City Campus launch event, which occurred alongside the Vibrant Gujarat summit, was graced by distinguished guests from the government, academia and industry, including Deakin alumnus, Princess Jahanvi Kumari Mewar.

The opportunity to study at Deakin's GIFT City Campus has seen a surge of interest, with potential students drawn to internationally accredited programs and unique internship opportunities within GIFT City's industry network.

Priced at around 21 lac rupees for the two-year course (fast-tracked to 18 months), the program will be delivered by local and international staff, along with guest lectures from leading industry figures.

TMC not to initiate further seat-sharing talks with Cong

NEW DELHI: The Trinamool Congress is no longer interested in initiating fresh talks with the Congress regarding the seat sharing arrangement for the Lok Sabha polls this year as part of the INDIA bloc.

A veteran leader of the party and also a senior member of the West Bengal Cabinet said that the party's supreme and Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee was of the opinion that further talks with the Congress were useless on two grounds.

"The first reason is that the Congress' demand for eight to ten seats in West Bengal is totally absurd considering that the vote share of the country's oldest national party has come down to just three per cent in the 2021 state Assembly polls. "Without a single member in the state Assembly and just



two MPs in the Lok Sabha, the demand for eight to ten seats is nothing but overreach," said a state Cabinet member.

He added, "It seems that the Congress leadership is more interested in a seat-sharing agreement with the CPI(M)-led Left Front rather than with the Trinamool Congress and hence the leadership of the state's ruling

party does not find the necessity of initiating any further discussions on seat sharing with the Congress."

Party insiders said that Mamata Banerjee was specially irked on receiving the information that the Congress along with the CPI(M) had taken an in-principle decision to back the lone All-India Secular Front

(AISF)- candidate Naushad Siddique in the forthcoming Lok Sabha polls from Diamond Harbour constituency in South 24 Parganas district from where the sitting MP is Trinamool Congress' General Secretary and the Chief Minister's nephew Abhishek Banerjee.

Recently Mamata Banerjee herself gave hints on this count as she said that while the Opposition INDIA bloc will continue in the national perspective, in West Bengal the Trinamool Congress will fight alone.

Soon after that State Congress President and veteran Lok Sabha member Adhir Ranjan Chowdhury challenged the Chief Minister to contest against him from Baharampur Lok Sabha constituency in Murshidabad district from where he is a five-time MP.

Satyapal Malik defends move to dissolve J&K Assembly in 2018

FW DESK

Former Jammu and Kashmir Governor, Satyapal Malik, has once again defended his contentious move of dissolving the Jammu and Kashmir Legislative Assembly on November 21, 2018. He attributed the decision to Peoples' Conference leader Sajad Lone's purported intention to engage in 'horse-trading'.



"I asked Lone. He didn't have even six MLAs. But he said that if you let me take over, I can provide you the majority in one week... I sensed there would be major horse-trading if I allowed that. This is not my job, and I will not do it"

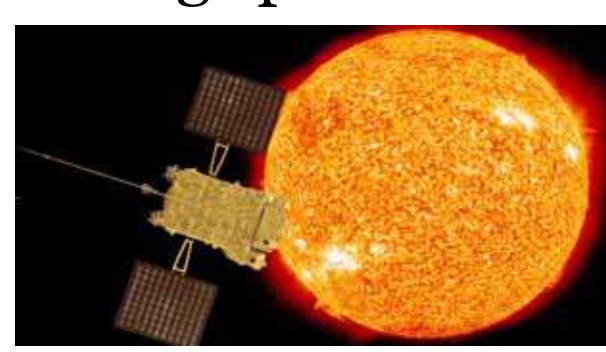
During an interview on senior Supreme Court advocate Kapil Sibal's YouTube channel "Dil Se," Malik asserted that the decision to dissolve the assembly was solely his own and not influenced by the BJP-government. When pressed about the constitutional legality of the dissolution, Malik initially cited it being in the Jammu and Kashmir Constitution, only to be corrected by Sibal, to which Malik questioned, "Then how did it happen?"

Regarding pressure from the central government, Malik denied any coercion, stating that despite seeking advice, he received no response from the Centre.

Malik highlighted his reluctance to invite Sajad Lone to form the government, expressing concern over potential horse-trading. He recalled, "I asked Lone. He didn't have even six MLAs. But he said that if you let me take over, I can provide you the majority in one week... I sensed there would be major horse-trading if I allowed that. This is not my job, and I will not do it."

While acknowledging Mehbooba Mufti's majority, Malik defended his decision to dissolve the assembly, citing fears from various parties about potential defections due to the looming threat of horse-trading. He stated, "Several parties were keen that the assembly should be dissolved because they feared that their party members would be weaned away... which is why I dissolved the assembly." Malik reiterated that his action was aimed at preventing potential horse-trading, emphasizing the increasing threats faced by various parties, leading to the dissolution of the assembly.

India in Sun's glory as Aditya reaches vantage point



ARUN KUMAR RAO
Bengaluru

India successfully placed a solar space observatory at a vantage point, around 1.5 million-km from Earth, as we know cannot exist and Aditya will soon begin to unravel Sun's mysteries through the instruments it is carrying. Isro chairman Somnath told media that Aditya-L1 is meant for the world and that data from the mission will be made available to researchers from across the globe. We are only the fourth nation to have a mission of this class and like the PM said after Chandrayaan-3 I want to say this is another Indian mission due to the looming threat of horse-trading. He stated, "Several parties were keen that the assembly should be dissolved because they feared that their party members would be weaned away... which is why I dissolved the assembly." Malik reiterated that his action was aimed at preventing potential horse-trading, emphasizing the increasing threats faced by various parties, leading to the dissolution of the assembly.

ISRO scientists for putting India's solar observatory Aditya-L1 in halo orbit around the strategic Lagrange point L1 after a 127 day journey from Earth, saying "India creates yet another land mark". President Droupadi Murmu pointed out that "significant participation of women scientists in Isro mission takes women empowerment too on to higher orbit".

ISRO in statement issued

Bell weighing 2,400 kg on its way to Ram temple in Ayodhya

ETAH (UP): The Ram temple in Ayodhya will soon receive a massive bell, weighing 2,400 kg, made of 'ashtadhatu' (eight metals), from the Jalesar town in Etah district.

The bell has been manufactured at a cost for Rs 25 lakh and will be transported by train on Tuesday.

Manufactured by a diverse team of around 30 workers, the bell, made of eight metals - gold, silver, copper, zinc, lead, tin, iron, and mercury - is among the largest in the country.

Aditya Mittal, a metal businessman, said that his late brother, Vikas Mittal, former chairman of Jalesar Nagar Panchayat, wished to donate the bell to the temple but passed away in 2022 after a cardiac arrest. However, Aditya and another brother Prashant Mittal honoured his wish to donate the bell to the temple.

Aditya said that the bell, measuring six feet in height and five feet in width, will produce a sound audible within a 2 km radius.

Providing insights into the bell-making process, Prashant Mittal, highlighted its uniqueness, emphasising that it is crafted as a single piece, making the task more challenging.



The lengthy process included shaping and measuring meticulously, creating wooden templates for the mould, metal preparation, tuning, grinding, and fitting the clapper.

The Mittals had received the order for the bell from the Nirmohi Akhara, a litigant in the Ayodhya title dispute, immediately after the apex court's decision in November 2019.

Aditya said, "We believe there is some divine reason that this work came to us. So, we decided to donate it to the temple."

Union Ministry of Textiles Hosts 'Harshakala' Handloom Fair in Bengaluru

BENGALURU: The National Handloom Fair 'Harshakala', organised by the Union Ministry of Textiles, the Karnataka Department of Handlooms and Textiles, and the Cauvery Handlooms in Bengaluru, is set to continue until January 24. Buyers can enjoy a 10 to 20 per cent rebate during this period. The fair, hosted at the Kassiya Udyog Bhavan in the city, features a diverse array of handloom products with a hundred stalls, including 60 from other states, as reported by DH.

During the inauguration on Thursday, C N Shridhar, Commissioner for Textile Development and Director, Department

of Handlooms and Textiles, highlighted that the fair would feature diverse traditional products. Handloom associations from different districts and states will showcase various traditional and Geographical Indication (GI)-tagged items. These include Molakalmuru silk sarees, Ilkal saris, Udipi saris, Guledduguda Khana, and Kallur silk saris, along with woollen blankets, quilts, and special products from across the country, all available for sale.

Consequently, the government was able to pass controversial new legislation like the criminal laws, the Telecommunications Act, and the appointment of the Election Commission of India. The new laws grant extraordinary powers to the executive and with the ruling party having a

Jamaat-e-Islami Hind says "India becoming an illiberal democracy"

KAVITA SHARMA
New Delhi

The Vice President of Jamaat-e-Islami Hind (JIH), Prof Salim Engineer has voiced concern over the situation in the country. Addressing the media at the monthly press conference at the JIH headquarters, the JIH Vice President said, "We are concerned about the steady slide of our country from a constitutional democracy to

an illiberal and majoritarian democracy. Numerous developments substantiate this concern. The recently concluded winter session of Parliament saw the suspension of almost the entire Opposition (46 MPs from the Rajya Sabha, and 100 MPs from the Lok Sabha) over frivolous charges. Without an Opposition, there was zero accountability on the floor of the house, and nobody to question the government's decisions and actions.



brute majority in Parliament, our country appears to move towards the concentration of power in the executive or the hands of a single leader, diminishing the effectiveness of constitutional checks and balances. The narrative of hyper-nationalism and populism coupled with divisive rhetoric that targets religious minorities is leading to polarization and the steady deterioration of pluralism and tolerance in society.

Consequently, the government was able to pass controversial new legislation like the criminal laws, the Telecommunications Act, and the appointment of the Election Commission of India. The new laws grant extraordinary powers to the executive and with the ruling party having a

NE sees sharp rise in narco smuggling, immigrant influx post Myanmar coup

NEWDELHI: Of India's 1,643 km unfenced porous borders with Myanmar, the frontiers with Mizoram (510 km) and Manipur (398 km) are most worrying as illegal influx of Myanmar, drug peddling and cross-border movement of inimical elements including militants is on the rise.

The complex and the rising danger of drug trades and cross-border movement of inimical elements as well as violence-hit civilians have

become more challenging for the Indian authorities especially after the 2021 February coup by the Myanmar military.

Considering the vulnerability of the 1,643 km unfenced India-Myanmar borders with Arunachal Pradesh (520 km), Manipur (398 km), Nagaland (215 km) and Mizoram (510 km), the Free Movement Regime (FMR), which allows citizen residing close to both sides of the border to move 16 km into each other's terri-



tory without passport or visa, is likely to be discontinued soon.

The FMR allows people to cross over after showing a border pass with one year validity.

Assam Rifles and Border Road Organisation (BRO) officials said that work of erection of border fencing along the Manipur border with Myanmar is now going on and there are plans to erect fencing on the entire India-Myanmar border within the next four

years.

"The erection of fencing is not only to stop the misuse of FMR, but also to prevent influx of illegal immigrants, drugs peddling and gold smuggling. The insurgent outfits also take the advantage of the FMR freely and undertake their movement on either side of the border to carry out attacks on the Indian side and flee towards Myanmar," a top Assam Rifles official told to media.

Making India a World-Leader in Quality

PIYUSH GOYAL



products, and businesses, which have to deal with increasingly demanding and discerning consumers in the domestic and international markets.

Prime Minister Modi's Digital India initiative has helped the family of 140 crore Indians connect with the world and know about the best products and practices. They routinely check customer reviews for performance, durability and dependability before buying a product. They publicly highlight deficiencies if they are dissatisfied with the product. Therefore, striking a balance between product quality, price, and innovation is the need of the hour.

The Modi government is focused on developing a robust quality ecosystem to provide safe, reliable and superior-quality goods, and promoting exports of Indian products. Prior to May 2014, only 14 QCOs

building robust quality consciousness in India. This also helps reduce dumping poor-quality goods into the country. Access to the best quality goods is the right of every Indian citizen in our Amrit Kaal

QCOs are also critical for the health and safety of people. Sub-standard products can be extremely hazardous for households because of risks such as fires due to cheap electronics, hospitalization of children because of toxic chemicals in toys and electrical short-circuits.

Quality Control on Exports

QCOs have accelerated the mission of 'Make in India for the World'. Many products under QCOs are being exported. Cast Iron products, solar DC cables, door fittings, ceiling fans, helmets, smart meters, hinges, air coolers and air filters are quality-controlled products that are exported much more than they are imported. Cast Iron products covered by QCOs had exports of \$535 million last year, while imports were barely \$68 million. About 25 QCOs are on products where exports exceed imports.

This clearly demonstrates that QCOs are focused on

Quality Governance, Quality Products

The drive to upgrade products to global standards is a subset of the Prime Minister's broader vision to improve the quality of life for his family of 140 crore Indians. He has responded to their aspirations with a series of decisive steps to provide basic necessities such as roti, kapda aur makaan along with healthcare, and superior infrastructure. His compassionate, corruption-free governance has accelerated growth, moderated inflation and made India sparkle globally. About 13.5 crore people have moved out of poverty in five years.

People have responded to the PM's high-quality governance with their vote in recent assembly elections. This has a strong message for Indian manufacturers. When people make a selection -- with their vote or their wallet -- they choose top quality. As Philip Crosby, author of 'Quality is Free' once said: "If you're out of quality, you're out of business."

Piyush Goyal - Union Minister of Commerce and Industry, Consumer Affairs, Food & Public Distribution and Textiles

Government focuses on MSME Growth, Encouraging Micro Units to Transform into Medium-Sized Enterprises

GANDHINAGAR: MSME Secretary Subhas Chandra Lal Das outlined the government's strategy to improve the productivity and efficiency of Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs), on Friday.

The emphasis will be on fostering the upward growth of these businesses and promoting the transition of micro units into medium-sized enterprises.

During the Vibrant Gujarat Global Summit's final day, Das highlighted the government's collaboration with state governments in this endeavour, emphasising that approximately 90 per cent of the country's MSMEs are currently micro units.

In a move toward inclusivity, Das revealed plans to work with nano enterprises, a smaller subset under micro-enterprises.

These nano enterprises will be included in priority sector lending, and the government will introduce additional schemes to support their growth.

Due to their low turnover, nano enterprises currently remain outside the purview of the goods and services tax



and various schemes, limiting their access to formal credit channels.

The Udhyan registration portal has witnessed the registration of about 2.1 crore such enterprises, he added.

Looking ahead, the MSME Secretary set a target to achieve 3 crore registrations on the Udhyan portal by the year-end, underscoring the need to enhance the quality and productivity of MSMEs across the nation.

"MSMEs will have an important role to play for VIKsit Bharat," he further said, noting that presently contributing one-third of the country's GDP and approximately 50 per cent of exports, MSMEs employ about 16 crore individuals.

To achieve the goal of a developed economy by 2047, Das stressed the necessity for the MSME sector's contribution to further increase.



India's growth, spending, and the road ahead

The latest advance estimates of India's national income for the current fiscal year paint a picture of an economy buoyed by government spending, seemingly on steroids. The National Statistical Office (NSO) projects a marginal uptick in real GDP growth to 7.3%, a slender advance from the previous year's 7.2%. However, a closer examination of the sectoral output and expenditure numbers reveals an economy still in search of sustainable, consumption-led growth drivers. The Gross Value Added (GVA) growth, a key measure of economic output, is anticipated to decelerate to 6.9%, down from the last fiscal year's 7%. This slowing is particularly evident in the agriculture, livestock, forestry, and fishing sector — the cornerstone of rural India. This sector is projected to see a growth of just 1.8%, the slowest in eight years and significantly lower than the 4% pace of 2022-23. This subdued performance, potentially exacerbated by the shortfall in kharif output and lagging rabi sowing, particularly in paddy and pulses, casts a shadow on the rural economy, a major employment provider and a significant contributor outside the services sector. On the demand side, private final consumption expenditure, a dominant GDP component, is set to record its slowest expansion in over two decades at 4.4%. This slowdown reflects the rural economy's struggles, impacted by monsoon irregularities and weak farm output, dampening demand for a myriad of consumer goods. The silver lining remains Gross Fixed Capital Formation (GFCF), including government capital spending, which is pegged to grow by 10.3%, reaching a record 34.9% share of GDP. This shines as the primary growth driver in an otherwise subdued economic landscape. As India approaches a general election, policymakers face a daunting dilemma: continue robust spending to sustain growth, risking fiscal imbalance, or tighten fiscal policy, potentially losing further economic momentum. The path India chooses will significantly influence not just its immediate economic future but also its long-term growth trajectory.

LETTERBOX

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Failure is simply the opportunity to begin again, this time more intelligently.

HENRY FORD

EVERYDAYPOWER

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VALERIAN RODRIGUES FINDS OUT WHY THE PARLIAMENT'S DECLINE AS OPPOSITION'S VOICE, DESPITE CITIZEN ENDORSEMENT, IS TROUBLING

The Indian Parliament, a promise spurned

The relative distance from the din and dust that the lamentable turn Indian Parliament took in December 2023, gives us a vantage point to review the state of this foundational institution of public life of the most populous country in the world today. It was one of the gravest security lapses the House has witnessed in its history when two young men with gas canisters jumped on to the floor of the Lok Sabha from its gallery and spread pandemonium there for reasons little known so far.

The incident led to a stand-off between the Opposition and ruling party, eventually leading to the suspension of 146 members of both Houses of Parliament, from different Opposition parties. Much of the discussion on both these unprecedented events has hitherto focused on procedural and regulatory concerns. While they are important, it is also necessary to see the bearing of these events on the conception of a parliamentary government for India.

Having a parliamentary government

In historical hindsight, it may be worth noting that while progressive expansion of representation under the colonial aegis exposed a section of Indians to legislative processes, and some of them came under the spell of the Westminster system, the choice of the parliamentary form of government was the outcome of a closely deliberated process. There was much contestation within the Constituent Assembly, as well as outside it, regarding the form of government best suited for India: There were at least four stances around which the debate raged: presidential, Indian orthodoxy, Swarajist, and parliamentary.

Those who argued for the presidential system adduced reasons of stability, unity of the nation, primacy of centralisation, and drew heavily from the American model. Some of its apologists were also tilted towards religious and social majoritarianism. Those who argued for Indian orthodoxy pointed out that one of the cardinal beliefs of Indian anti-colonial movement was to establish a regime founded on Indian classical and



as they can effectively rally in the choice of the representatives. Both these arguments implied that India's representative model encompassed great doctrinal, ethnic, and cultural pluralisms. Some of them may coalesce into a common fold overtime, but others may not, and new ones may sprout forth under conditions of freedom. Those who defended the parliamentary model on this ground also pointed out it was the authentic representative of the true spirit of India.

Pangs of creating an opposition

From the nature of the parliamentary system, it is obvious that such a regime can endure and be effective only if it has stable support, but it has to be questioned and challenged to ensure that it remains faithful to the common good. It is a paradoxical demand: a majority that is elected regards that it has found endorsement from the citizen community, but the reason of the system says such endorsement must be constantly and critically validated by keeping the common good in view. Although the term, political party, did not find a mention in the Indian Constitution till the enactment of the Tenth Schedule, the dialectics of stable support and effective opposition could be institutionally operated only through a competitive party system.

Given the commandeering position the Congress party enjoyed in the First Lok Sabha, Jawaharlal Nehru was sensitive to the absence of an effective opposition, although when such an opposition took shape in the Parliament, he was not very comfortable with it. It is also important to point out that once the Opposition found its effective voice within the House, those radical voices which initially claimed that they took the route of franchise to wreck Parliament from within, were largely absorbed within it. Given the paradoxical challenge that a parliamentary system throws up, the ruling party at the Centre as well as in States, has not found it easy to face a sustained Opposition and employed all subterfuges to limit its space,

but the logic of the system has constrained it to live with it.

The present state

Given the centrality of Parliament to India's chosen public life, its security breach is a breach inflicted on the nation as a whole. The demand of the Opposition to make this issue central in Parliament is, therefore, understandable. In this context, it was the duty of the leadership of both Houses to ensure necessary assurances and explain the lapses. It did not seem that the present leadership exerted itself in that direction.

On the contrary, they converted the insistent demand of the Opposition, however excessive it might have been, as an affront to the working of the Parliament. There are a range of parliamentary committees. The presiding officers could have taken the Opposition into confidence to form a committee on security, at the least. Was the leadership of the Houses kowtowing to the executive at the expense of their dignity?

Madhu Dandavate mentions an incident when Jawaharlal Nehru sent a note to Speaker Mavalankar which read, 'Sir, I have some urgent work with you. Will you come to my chamber?' Mavalankar wrote on the same note, 'According to the accepted conventions of parliamentary life, a Speaker does not go to the chamber of any executive, including that of the Prime Minister. However, if you have any work, you are welcome to my chamber.' Nehru apologised and obliged.

While the Opposition in the present Parliament is not a paragon of parliamentary virtue, it is the responsibility of the leadership of the House, including its presiding officers, that it becomes the voice of the nation. The suspension of almost the entire Opposition from both the Houses, can hardly meet this test. It is also important to restate the principle that it is not the truth that a ruling dispensation upholds that serves its claim to rule but its ability to defend the course that it pursues as the truth.

Valerian Rodrigues has co-authored with B.L. Shankar the book, *The Indian Parliament: A Democracy at Work*



TALMIZ AHMAD EXPLAINS WHY GAZA CONFLICT RISKS PUSHING WEST ASIA TOWARDS CATASTROPHIC ESCALATION

An expanding Gaza war, with no endgame in sight

With the Gaza war having reached its three-month mark, it has spread dangerously to Lebanon, Iraq, Yemen and even Iran. On January 2, an Israeli drone strike on a Hamas office in Beirut, killed Saleh al-Arouri, the deputy head of the Hamas leadership located abroad. The next day, two explosions in Kerman, at the mausoleum of General Qassem Soleimani, former head of the Al Quds Force, killed 95 people who had gathered at the shrine to mourn on the fourth anniversary of his assassination. Though the Islamic State has claimed responsibility, many Iranians suspect it to be Israeli's hand.

And, on January 4, the United States announced the targeted killing of the head of an Iran-affiliated militia in Baghdad that has been attacking American targets since the beginning of the Gaza war. These attacks have occurred amidst the ongoing skirmishes in the Red Sea's waters over the last several weeks, with the Houthis targeting commercial shipping with drones and missiles and inviting strong U.S. retaliation. The Houthis have demanded that humanitarian assistance be provided urgently to the beleaguered Palestinians in Gaza.

These attacks have escalated tensions in the already volatile region that is reeling from the death and destruction wreaked by Israel in Gaza since early October. Over the last three months, over 22,000 Palestinians have been killed, most of them women and children, while nearly two million have been displaced, the largest displacement of Palestinians in history. An extraordinary humanitarian catastrophe faces the two-million strong Palestinian community in Gaza.



Netanyahu could pursue escalation

Israeli troops have also expanded their military operations to the West Bank: nearly 300 Palestinians have been killed, several thousand taken into detention, and numerous homes destroyed. Israeli cabinet Ministers have complemented the violence of their soldiers by calling for the cleansing of Gaza of Palestinians and the resettlement of the enclave with Jewish settlers.

The major concern at present is that a desperate Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu might pursue the escalation trajectory as, despite the mass killings in Gaza, Israel has very little to show for its efforts: though committed to the destruction of the Hamas war machine and of the movement itself, no prominent Hamas leader has been apprehended in Gaza, while Hamas continues to inflict damage on Israeli soldiers in the ground fighting. A few thousand women and children have been detained by Israeli security to reveal the location of Hamas leaders, with no apparent success so far.

There are concerns that al-Arouri's

killing was carried out to proclaim some success in the war on Hamas. Saleh al-Arouri, by all accounts, was a soft target. Though he has been a prominent presence in the Hamas leadership, in recent years he had been located in Beirut and was principally liaising with Hezbollah and Iran. Most reports suggest that he had no involvement with the planning or execution of the October 7, 2023 attacks.

Peace is distant

Targeted killings serve no useful purpose: while the deceased leaders are quickly replaced, the assassinations increase mutual hostility and escalate tensions. The worrying possibility is that Mr. Netanyahu might not be averse to a regional conflagration: following the political and military failures that facilitated Hamas's October 7 attacks and with no military success to speak of so far, now, with the Supreme Court rejecting his judicial reforms proposals, the Prime Minister faces the imminent prospect of resignation, arrest and imprisonment. Could a desperate Netanyahu not wish to seize this opportunity to obliterate all Palestinian resistance, eliminate Hezbollah as a fighting force, and debilitate Iran as a threat?

The reason why this prospect is even being raised is because, through the three-month war in Gaza, no major player has exhibited a vision or a strategy regarding the endgame and the "day after" the cessation of hostilities. Beyond bellicose claims relating to the extermination of Hamas and ethnic cleansing of the occupied territories, Israel has shown no clarity about its war aims or the management of Gaza after the war. Certainly, there is no mention of a longer-term peace process. Thus, mass

killings in Gaza and provocative targeted assassinations in the neighbourhood have become ends in themselves.

A role for Saudi Arabia

The U.S. has been in search of a policy from day one. Beyond its total political and military support for Israel, the Biden administration has shed crocodile tears over humanitarian concerns, but achieved nothing on the ground. The region's already discredited hegemon appears incapable of insisting on a peace process — obviously, the clout of Israel's right-wing supporters in Washington have paralysed the government and lulled it into somnolence.

The Arab states have exhibited neither voice nor leadership so far: beyond pointless conferences and resolutions, there is no sign of a consensual and forceful approach to the broader Palestine issue or even concerns about regional security.

The principal responsibility for ushering in peace now rests on Saudi Arabia. It alone has the regional and global standing to insist that its subed to U.S. Having shrugged off its subordination to U.S. diktat, it has been confidently pursuing an independent foreign policy that resonates positively with the world's leading powers. Palestinian interests and regional peace require robust and pro-active Saudi initiatives, which have been missing so far.

This is the time when West Asian rulers and their people should be on the same side to serve the region's interests. Failing that, they will be swept away in the tidal wave of regional conflict they have done nothing to prevent.

Tal Miz Ahmad is a former diplomat. Views are personal.



BOOKS: REVIEW

Amitava Kumar's 'The Yellow Book': A mosaic of text, visuals

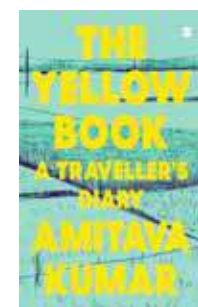
Amitava Kumar's latest offering, "The Yellow Book: A Traveller's Diary," is an audacious exploration of hybrid literary forms, following the path of its predecessor "The Blue Book." Published by HarperCollins India, this work stands as a testament to the potential of experimental literature in our contemporary cultural landscape. Kumar's proclamation, "I want to proclaim my allegiance to the nation of hybrids!" resonates throughout the pages, encapsulating the essence of his work. "The Yellow Book," like "The Blue Book," is a fascinating amalgamation of text and visuals. It

encompasses diary entries, letters, essays, drawings, paintings, and photographs, all blending to create a multifaceted reading experience. The hybridity of the content results in a journey that is as unpredictable as it is engaging. Readers may find themselves oscillating between awe and skepticism, as the book evokes reactions as varied as jaw-dropping admiration and eye-rolling dismissal.

The central part of the book, dominated by a diaristic mode, serves a dual purpose: documenting Kumar's everyday life and offering insights into the creative process, particularly for writers.

It's as much about the man behind the public persona as it is about the author's journey as his daughter

Kumar, an English professor at Vassar College, shares his experiences teaching American students in London, presenting exercises aimed at unlocking their creative potential. The narrative here is intimate and insightful, yet it occasionally borders on the presumptuous, with Kumar's world of illustrious



The Yellow Book: A Traveller's Diary By Amitava Kumar HarperCollins; 216 pages; Rs 699

friends and intellectual prowess potentially alienating to the casual reader.

One of the book's most engaging aspects is its visual component. Drawings and photographs punctuate the text, sometimes expanding to fill entire pages, adding depth to the narrative. However, there are moments when the written word feels insufficient, leaving the reader craving more substance. For instance, Kumar's mention

of a conversation about his work's dialogue with Arundhati Roy's is intriguing but frustratingly brief, leading one to question the purpose of such diaristic ellipses.

The book hits its stride as Kumar's London class concludes and ventures into more essayistic territory. In "Enemy of the People," a compelling essay about Salman Rushdie and his assailant Hadi Matar, the absence of images creates a space where Kumar's prose is at its most gripping. Yet, it is in the essay "Host Country/Lost Country" that Kumar's hybrid approach truly shines. Here, he writes poignantly about his visits to his ailing father in Patna and their village Jadopur. The interplay of text and images in this section elevates the emotional impact, creating a deeply moving narrative.

BEL, IIT Delhi ink MoU to transform breakthroughs in Deep Tech research into products for Indian Navy

ARUN KUMAR RAO
New Delhi

Bharat Electronics Ltd (BEL) has joined hands with the Foundation for Innovation and Technology Transfer (FITT) at IIT Delhi to translate breakthroughs in Naval Deep Tech research being carried out at CARE - IIT Delhi, into products for Indian Navy, press release from BEL said.

BEL and IIT Delhi signed an MoU for R&D collaborations in various emerging technologies, as envisaged by the Indian Navy's office of Naval Projects at IIT Delhi, to facilitate conversion of inventions in ongoing Deep Tech research into Naval products. The MoU was signed



by Mr Manoj Jain, Director (R&D), BEL, and Prof Preeti Ranjan Panda, MD, FITT, in the presence of dignitaries from the Indian Navy and IIT Delhi.

The Naval research being carried out at CARE - IIT Delhi required some handholding from the industry, as industry partners need to be part

of the research and product development from the initial stages itself to ensure smooth transition during prototype trials and production.

The entry of BEL marks the beginning of a new chapter of synergy between the industry and user-academia alliance at IIT Delhi, giving a boost to the GoI's Atmanirbhar Bharat drive. BEL and IIT Delhi will now jointly work on core technology development with use cases in areas of interest pertinent to the Indian Navy.

BEL has expressed interest to participate in collaborations in the field of Naval Electronic Systems, including RF, Sonar systems, IMARS, Communication Systems, etc.

Vibrant Gujarat Global Trade Show 2024: HAL to Showcase its Products with Thrust on Indigenisation



ARUN KUMAR RAO
Bengaluru

HAL is all set to participate in the 10th edition of Vibrant Gujarat Global Trade Show 2024 from January 9 to 13 at Gandhinagar, Gujarat. «With thrust on «Atmanirbhar Bharat», HAL seeks to explore the capability of Indian industries through this event», says C B Ananthkrishnan, CMD (Add. Charge), HAL.

One of the major attractions at HAL stall will be Su-30 MKI aircraft which has been modified indigenously for integration of air-to-ground BrahMos missile manufactured in India. The missile weighs 2500 kg and has a range of nearly 300 kms.

HAL has to date manufactured 220 Su-30 MKI aircraft and has overhauled over 100 Su-30 MKI.

HAL's Prachand Light Combat Helicopter (LCH) will be on static display. A Make-in-India product built with private participation, LCH is the only attack helicopter in the world which can land and take-off at an altitude of 5000 m (16,400 ft) with considerable load of weapons and fuel meeting the specific requirements of Indian Armed Forces.

HAL has identified over 100 critical items for indigenisation and will display some of them in the show. Besides, the scale models of Su-30, LCA, ALH WSI, HTT40 and Do-228, HAL stall will showcase core competencies and capabilities of Indian industries, opportunities in indigenisation of critical aerospace parts, aggregates, LRUs, materials, and consumables. During the show, HAL will also focus on strategies for strengthening aerospace ecosystem by interacting with Indian industry to open the gateway for the future.

Serentica Renewables Rs 3500 crore loan for Round-the-Clock R.E. Indian Project

DOMINICK RODRIGUES
Mumbai

Serentica Renewables recently announced the signing of its first international and commercial bank foreign currency loan worth Rs 3,500 crores (US\$ 425 million) for its «Round-the-Clock» renewable energy project in India.

The transaction brings together a consortium of three international banks (Rabobank, MUFG Bank and Societe Generale) and three Indian lenders (YES Bank, Export-Import Bank of India, India Infrastructure Finance Company) in a «historic first» for the Indian corporate offtake market. This landmark deal will help Serentica - a leading C&I focused renewable energy developer in India - in funding development of its 530 MW

CIP okays investment for Karnataka 300MW wind project

DOMINICK RODRIGUES
Mumbai

Copenhagen Infrastructure Partners (CIP), through its Growth Markets Fund (CI GMF), have taken final investment decision (FID) on a 300 MW onshore wind project in India together with Vivid Renewables (Vivid) - an Indian developer and balance-of-plant service provider.

The project is located in Karnataka with favourable wind conditions, good site accessibility and an existing grid connection in relative proximity with construction expected to be completed by 2025-end.

«Achieving FID is a significant milestone for CIP and our partnership with Vivid, while also being a testament to our industrial approach and ability to deliver large-scale renewable energy projects with highly-competent partners», Peter Sjötoft, Associate Partner in CIP, said while adding «We look forward



to continuing the successful collaboration and realizing these projects to contribute to local growth and job creation while delivering attractive returns for our fund investors.»

CIP and Vivid will develop and construct the wind farm jointly. Alongside the FID, CIP has signed a turbine supply agreement for the EN 156 3.3MW turbines with Envision Wind Power Technologies Private Limited, and a foundation and crane supply contract with Sanghvi Movers.

Vivid will provide balance-of-plant works and services, while also holding minority ownership in the project, a release stated.

Expressing pride over partnering CIP in leveraging the enormous wind energy potential in Karnataka, RPV Prasad, CEO, Envision Wind Power Technologies India, said «We would be assembling the Nacelle and Hubs at our Pune factory, Blades from our own vendors factory, and sourcing tower components from our manufacturers in Maharashtra.»

«The booming Indian wind energy landscape would play a pivotal role in propelling the country towards net-zero,» he added.

«It has become imperative for us to collaborate and accelerate green energy transition to avert the climate crisis,» Kane Xu, Global Vice-President of Envision Energy and Chairman of Envision Energy India, said while adding «This partnership is a testament to our long-term commitment in solving the challenges for a sustainable future. Together, we can develop reliable renewable energy solutions in India.»

McLaren 750S supercar launched in Indian market at Rs 5.91 crores

DOMINICK RODRIGUES
Mumbai

McLaren Automotive has announced the arrival of its latest supercar in the Indian market by unveiling the new «McLaren 750S» - priced at Rs 5.91 crores - here recently.

Describing the 750S as the «lightest, most powerful» series production with segment-leading power-to-weight ratio of 587PS-per-tonne, Lalit Choudary, Chairman & Managing Director, McLaren Mumbai, said that this car set new performance benchmarks and is poised to delight both connoisseurs and auto enthusiasts while continuing the McLaren legacy.

Replying to questions, Choudary said that the emphasis on sales of McLaren supercars was not volumes but catering to the «elite+ and +gentry+», and that he was looking at sales of 20 McLaren 750S cars per year.

The 750S features a new rear-wheel drive configuration, besides availability in coupe and convertible form. Its technical advances include: weight-saving, powertrain performance, aerodynamics, carbon-fibre-mono-coque-and-shelled-racing seats and lightest wheels.



Capable of achieving 0-100 kmph in 2.8 seconds and also quicker than its closest competitor in this regard, this supercar has a lengthened active rear wing that is 20% larger than the earlier 720S yet 1.6 kgs lighter due to its carbon fibre construction. Built at the state-of-the-art McLaren Composites Technology Centre (MCTC) in Yorkshire, UK, its angle configurations are unique to Coupe and Spider with three main operational positions to improve downforce, reduce drag and the performance of high-speed braking. «At McLaren Racing, every second can make a meaningful difference on the track for our F1 drivers,» Paul Harris, Managing Director - APAC and China, McLaren Automotive stated, adding «For 60 years, our past has fueled our future and we remain committed to delivering on-road comfort of 720S while improving its circuit pedigree to produce the best power-to-weight ratio.»

Inflection Point Ventures Launches accelerator program - IPV Ideaschool batch 1- for early-stage startups

YOGESH KANT
New Delhi

With a motive to boost the advanced entrepreneurs skills for early stage startups, the investing platform Inflection Point Ventures (IPV) is launching an accelerator programme named IPV Idea school. The six week duration nationwide programme has been designed for entrepreneurs looking to take their business from the idea stage to MVP (minimum viable product).

Out of 2000 expected applicants, 100 will be shortlisted for the program initially and 40 of them will then proceed to be an active part of the discussion in the accelerator program. The startups will be evaluated through several rounds across multiple parameters.

At the final stage, the program will culminate in an on-

LIBF EXPO to highlight Indian market beyond geographical boundaries

INDIA'S REAL ESTATE SECTOR TO CROSS US\$1 TRILLION BY 2030

DOMINICK RODRIGUES
Mumbai

In a premier international event designed to foster meaningful business relationships that transcend geographical boundaries, the LIBF EXPO will hold its first edition from January 18 to 24, 2024 at the Helipad Exhibition Centre in Gandhinagar, Gujarat.

The Expo is expected to showcase businesses from over 30 countries alongside participation of over 34 diverse sectors that include Banking & Financial services, Real Estate, Start-ups, Food and Agriculture, among others.

Vijay Karia, Director, LIBF and Chairman of Lohana Business Development Committee, said the Expo would highlight latest technology and youth involvement in business including through start-ups.

He said around 200 exhibitors and sponsors from different countries including the USA, and even the Mehtas and Madhvanis from Uganda were involved in the forthcoming LIBF EXPO, whose objective is to connect Indians to the global market while also enabling the world to tap into the Indian market.

«This Expo will help in drawing support for home-grown industries,» he said while pointing out that around 120 startups are anticipated to join the event in Gujarat. «We are self-sufficient and have not sought subsidy from the Government,» Karia said to a media question.

Mahendra Ghelani, Trustee and Advisory Committee Chairman, Shree Lohana Ma-



hapharishad, said this Expo is being organised here on the heels of its successful «Lohana International Business Forum 2023» held in Africa, where Uganda President Yoweri Museveni had graced the event.

Ghelani said «The Africa event success emboldened us to hold this Expo for drawing the entrepreneurial class of society into business involvement.»

Subhash Thakrar, Past Chairman of the London Chamber of Commerce, said that he was visiting from the UK this international event as India has become a focus for the world.

«This event is highlighting increasing economic awareness and what India has to offer, besides focusing on possible funding, supporting startups. The event in Africa drew lots of participation from China and India needs to get into this also,» he said. Samir Somaiya, President, Somaiya Group and Trusts, said «Many of us are members of different networks seeking to find a common cause and the Africa event was one such event that covered diverse sectors. We are into renewable energy and highlighting this at the Expo.»

Highlighting awareness

about Start-ups' successes, Satish Vithalani, President of the Lohana community, noted that the Lijjat Papad group began with investment of barely Rs 100 and is worth Rs 1,000 crores today.

«The resounding success of the LIBF 2023 'Africa Calling' conference in Uganda - where numerous MOUs were inked - propelled us towards this targeted platform LIBF 2024,» he said, adding «This strategic move is driven by the thriving real estate sector in India which is expected to attain a market size of US\$ 1 trillion by 2030 while also contributing to 13% of the country's GDP by 2025.»

«The exponential growth in retail, hospitality and various other sectors aligns seamlessly with LIBF Expo 2024's mission to actively engage with businesses possessing valuable products and services, besides fostering expansion and market research,» he stated.

The EXPO is highlighting the participation of companies including: Euro Exim Bank, Vinnart, Ravin Group, Madhvani Group, Dharmadev Infrastructure Ltd, Iscon Group, besides also government bodies and top professionals and businesspersons.



ground event, where the top 15 startups will get a chance to showcase their respective business idea to an esteemed jury. The final 5 startups emerging from this set stand to bag Rs 80 lakhs as investment and a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to become part of the IPV portfolio. Applications for this opportunity remain open until January 20th, 2024.

Speaking on the initiative Mitesh Shah, Co-Founder, Inflection Point Ventures says, «IPV Ideaschool- the highly

of quality and potential, shaping the future of groundbreaking ventures and contributing to India's economy»

As part of this program, IPV experts will help startups fine-tune their business plans, suggest pivots if needed to make a commercially viable business idea ready to be funded. IPV will also leverage its own investors' network, ecosystem partners and other VCs to help the startups get access to the required infrastructure and raise additional capital.

The startups will have access to bootcamps, and masterclasses on various subjects helmed by experts on matters related to different areas of businesses that founders should learn about. This program promises to offer a holistic experience and high degree of exposure on how to start building their business for the real world.

Korea-Gujarat Economic Cooperation Forum Takes Center Stage at Vibrant Gujarat Global Summit 2024

FW DESK
Gandhinagar (Gujarat)

With a view to promoting bilateral economic ties and fostering favorable business conditions, the Korea-Gujarat Economic Cooperation Forum took the center stage at the Vibrant Gujarat Global Summit 2024 on January 10. Led by Chang Jae Bok, Ambassador of the Republic of Korea to India, a high level delegation and top management of renowned Korean companies - Hanwha Aerospace (K-9 Vajra T), POSCO, Indian company Zydrus Lifesciences and others attended the 10th edition of Vibrant Gujarat Global Summit 2024.

The forum, organized by the Korean Embassy in India, KOTRA (Korea Trade-Investment Promotion Agency) India-Korea Business Cooperation Center, and CII (Confederation of Indian Industry), brought together approximately 150 key stakeholders, including government officials, industry leaders, and businessmen from South Korea and Gujarat.



South Korea forms the key partner country of the Vibrant Gujarat Global Summit 2024 that also celebrated «20 Years of Vibrant Gujarat as the Summit of Success.» While addressing the Forum, Ambassador Chang Jae Bok said, «Fueled by this deep-rooted entrepreneurial spirit and supported by the state government's business friendly policies, Gujarat has achieved remarkable success. Under the leadership of the Honorable Prime Minister Narendra Modi, Gujarat has emerged as a model state for economic development in India. As Gujarat economy flourishes and its investment environment continues to improve, the interest from Korean

companies is burgeoning. I am confident that Korean Presence in Gujarat is poised for even greater expansion.»

The primary objective of the Korea-Gujarat Economic Cooperation Forum is to build strong ties and explore new avenues for collaboration between two countries. Byung Kwan Kim, Chairman of KOIMA (Korea Importers Association) said, «KOIMA recognizes the significance of the Korea-India relationship and will put together all its capabilities to promote Korea's trade partnership with India by increasing imports and strengthening policy coordination with the Korean government.»

Rajitha Boer Joins UnitedLex as Chief Client Officer



FW DESK
New York

UnitedLex a leading data and professional services company specializing in litigation, intellectual property, contracts, compliance, and legal operations, today announces the hiring of Rajitha Boer as Chief Client Officer. She will focus on global client growth and retention, especially in the European and Asia Pacific regions, and enhancing client experience across all lines of business.

«In my experience, too often legal departments and law firms settle for imperfect solutions that don't solve their challenges completely,» said Rajitha Boer. «UnitedLex's culture of innovation and collaboration aligns closely with my belief that better solutions are not only possible, but absolutely essential to meet the increasing mandate to create business value and mitigate risk.»

Prior to UnitedLex, Rajitha Boer worked at Breakwater assisting with EMEA and APAC operations. In 2013, she founded Yerra Solutions, with the belief that consulting services consist of more than template-based solutions and billable hours, before selling the company to Elevate in 2019. Rajitha Boer has successfully established global operations across three continents and began her career working with the law and intellectual property departments of major international corporations for more than 17 years.

«Rajitha brings decades of experience growing companies through a philosophy that one-size-does-not-fit-all when it comes to strategic client solutions. She has demonstrated a keen understanding that legal departments' and law firms' challenges are not all the same and cannot all be solved with off-the-shelf answers,» said James Schellhase, UnitedLex CEO. «Her wealth of expertise in eDiscovery, IP, and legal managed services will greatly support UnitedLex's enterprise sales and account management efforts.»

Rajitha Boer's hiring continues a string of key hires, including adding James Schellhase as the new CEO. These critical hires will help cultivate next-generation, AI-centric solutions in UnitedLex's innovation incubator, delivered through collaboration with clients and tailored to meet their needs in an evolving legal landscape.

In 16 years, UnitedLex has grown from five employees to more than 3,000 across nine offices in 26 global jurisdictions, including a well-established team of over 1,600 operating across two locations in India, Gurugram and Bengaluru.

Kamdheni Ltd. bestowed with 'Quality Consistency Award' by Bureau of Indian Standards

KULBIR SINGH KALSI
Shimla

Kamdheni Limited, India's largest manufacturer and seller of branded TMT Bars in retail, is proud to announce that it has received the «Quality Consistency Award» from the Bureau of Indian Standards (BIS). BIS has completed 76 glorious years in serving the nation and has entered the 77th year on January 2024. To Commemorate the «BIS Foundation Day» various programs were organised across all its chapters in the country.

BIS Himachal Pradesh chapter while celebrating the 77th Foundation Day honored those manufacturers who have consistently maintained high quality standards of their products. Narendra Singh and Rohit Tiwari, Quality Head of Prime Steel Industries Pvt. Ltd., Baddi, an authorized manufacturer of Kamdheni NXT Brand TMT were honored with «Quality Consistency Award» for maintaining high quality standards in rebar manufacturing.

Expressing delight on receiving the BIS 'Quality Consistency Award' by Prime Steel Industries Pvt. Ltd., Sunil Agarwal, Director Kamdheni Limited said, «We are delighted that our renowned franchisee from Himachal Pradesh M/s Prime Steel Industries Pvt. Ltd., has been honored with «Quality Consistency Award» by BIS for maintaining high quality standards in rebar manufacturing. We are confident that Quality Head, Narendra Singh and Rohit Tiwari, will carry on with the legacy forward.»

SBI Report Rejects Notions of K-Shaped Recovery, Terms Indicators as Biased

NEW DELHI: The current discussion on the potential K-shaped recovery of the national economy after the pandemic appears to be flawed and biased, according to a State Bank of India (SBI) study.

The study, conducted by the Economic Research Department of SBI, emphasises that the ongoing debate seems to favour specific interests that are disapproving of India's remarkable progress. As per the report, relying on outdated indicators such as low two-wheeler sales or fragmented land holdings to portray a negative image of India's performance is questionable. Patterns observed in income, savings, consumption, expenditure, and policies, as highlighted by the report, cast doubt on the credibility of these age-old representations.

«The oft-repeated conundrum debating a K-shaped re-



covery post-pandemic seems at best flawed, prejudiced, ill-considered and fanning interests of select quarters to whom India's remarkable ascendance, signalling more the renaissance of the new global south, is quite unpalatable,» said the SBI report. In the context of a K-shaped recovery, where some sectors of the economy rebound while others face challenges, the SBI report questions the efficacy of using traditional indicators that may not accurately reflect India's overall economic well-being.

The release of the SBI report coincides with the initial advance estimate report from the National Statistical Office (NSO), projecting India's economy to grow at 7.3 per cent in the current financial year.

The SBI report counters the prevalent narrative by highlighting positive indicators such as income-tax data, increasing female labour force participation, and the growing popularity of food-ordering platforms, painting a favourable picture of India's economic health.

Finance Ministry Official Rules Out Tax Rebate Hike in Upcoming Interim Budget

NEW DELHI: A senior official from the finance ministry, on Tuesday, stated that it is unlikely to see a tax rebate increase under the new direct tax regime in the upcoming interim Union Budget.

«There is no such proposal,» stated the official to Moneycontrol. There were widespread speculations that the personal income tax rebate might see an increase from the current Rs 7 lakh to Rs 7.5 lakh in the upcoming vote-on-account.

A vote-on-account allows a government nearing the end of its term to secure funds for its expenditures temporarily until a comprehensive budget is approved.

The budget scheduled for presentation on February 1 will be a vote-on-account, considering the general elections set for April-May 2024.

However, it is likely that the



government will declare an exemption from tax collected at source (TCS) for individual overseas credit and debit card spending, up to Rs 7 lakh per financial year, in the interim budget.

The Union Budget 2023 raised the income-tax rebate threshold for individuals choosing the new direct tax regime from Rs 5 lakh to Rs 7 lakh.

«Growth in direct taxes will surpass the GDP growth rate. A

realistic target of 10.5 per cent growth in direct taxes for 2024-25 is expected.

Buoyancy is likely to remain above one next year,» a senior government official said, as reported by Moneycontrol earlier.

Buoyancy reflects the relative growth in tax revenues corresponding to an increase in national income.

The projected net direct tax collection for the ongoing fiscal year is set at Rs 18.2 lakh crore.

Adani Group to invest Rs 42,768 cr in Tamil Nadu



The multi-business Adani Group has decided to invest a whopping Rs 42,768 crore in Tamil Nadu in renewable energy, cement manufacturing, data centre, city gas distribution and generate 10,300 employment opportunities.

The Group announced this decision during the Tamil Nadu Global Investors Meet 2024 held on Monday.

A Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) was also exchanged at the investors' meeting by Karan Adani, Chief Executive Officer of Adani Ports and SEZ Limited (APSEZ) and the Tamil Nadu government.

The break-up of the investments by different Adani group companies are as follows: Adani Green Rs 24,500 crore (employment 4,000), Ambuja Cements Rs 3,500 crore (5,000), Adani Connex Rs 13,200 crore (1,000) and Adani Total Gas & CNG Rs 1,568 crore (300).

Steady rise in SIP flows in mutual funds

MUMBAI: The latest AMFI Data for December 2023 paints a positive picture of India's mutual fund industry, especially in equities.

The significant rise in equity mutual fund inflows to Rs 17,000 crore, up by 9 per cent, shows that investors strongly believe in the potential of the stock market, said Robin Arya, smallcase Manager & Founder, GoalFi. A notable highlight is the steady increase in monthly



Systematic Investment Plan (SIP) flows, growing by an impressive almost 24 per cent Year-on-Year.

At the same time, SIP Assets under Management (AuM) have jumped by nearly 37 per cent

Year-on-Year, Arya said.

Viraj Gandhi, CEO, SAMCO Mutual Fund said owing to commendable performances, evidenced by a notable 6 per cent rise in Nifty Small-Cap 250 and an almost 7 per cent rise in Nifty Midcap 150 during the month, Mid and Small Cap funds continued to attract significant net inflows, aggregating to Rs 5,250 crore, a staggering growth of 25 per cent on YoY basis. This constituted nearly

one-third of the total net equity-oriented inflow for the month.

In parallel, sectoral/thematic funds emerged as front-runners in garnering the highest net inflows, amounting to Rs 6,005 crore, compared to Rs 1,965 crore in Nov 2023.

Overall, we saw Rs 16,997 crore garnered by equity linked schemes for the month of December 2023, while SIP book for month stands at Rs 17,610 crore, Gandhi said.

Income inequality shrinks, Mobility on the Rise: SBI Research Report

FW DESK

A new study by SBI Research has revealed that income inequality has declined in recent years, supporting the trend of upward migration through increased income and the ascent of the Indian middle class.

The report quoting CBDT data, states that the Income Tax base is widening by the year and the number of persons filing Income Tax Return increased to 74 million in Assessment Year 2022-23 from 70 million in AY 2021-22. For the Assessment Year 2023-24, a total of 82 million Income Tax Returns have been filed till 31 December 2023. The SBI report further observes that ITRs filed by individual taxpayers earning between Rs 5 lakh and Rs 10 lakh climbed by 295% in the assessment years (AY) 2013-14 and 2021-22, showing a positive trend of migration to higher



range of gross total income. The number of ITRs filed by people earning between Rs 10 lakh and Rs 25 lakh has also increased by nearly 3 times (291%) during the same period.

Gini Coefficient is one of the most widely used measures of income inequality. The Gini Coefficient score lies between 0 and 1, where complete equality would result in a Gini Coefficient of zero and complete inequality would result in 1. Using this measure, SBI Research has calculated that Gini Coefficient has declined from 0.472 during Assessment Year 2014-15 to

0.402 for AY 2022-23.

Meanwhile, the share of Top 2.5% tax payers with income more than Rs 10 crores has declined from 2.81% in 2013-14 to 2.28% in 2020-21. The share of Top 1% tax payers with income more than Rs 100 crores has fallen from 1.64% to 0.77% during the similar period.

«The decline in income inequality is because of a great migration at the bottom of the pyramid; 36.3 per cent of individual ITR filers belonging to the lowest income in FY14 have left the lowest income bracket and shifted upwards resulting

in 21.1 per cent more income for such individuals during FY14-FY21,» said the report.

SBI Research Report also highlighted rising female labour force participation, visible highlights in income levels of MSMEs and changing consumption pattern post Covid pandemic like people substituting two-wheelers with four wheelers and increased sale of tractors to underline India's robust economic recovery and bust the myth of the oft repeated 'K' shaped growth, where some select sectors perform well while others keep declining.

Top Taxpayers	FY14	FY21	Reduction in Income Share
Top 2.5% (Taxpayers with income more than 10 Crores)	2.81	2.28	0.53
Top 1% (Taxpayers with income more than 100 Crores)	1.64	0.77	0.87

Source: SBI Research

DLF's luxury residences sold out in 72 hrs; sales worth over Rs 7K cr recorded

GURUGRAM: Real estate major DLF has recorded sales of luxury residences in its latest offering, 'Privana South' here, at over Rs 7,200 crore. This comes as part of its pre-formal launch sales. The units were sold off within 72 hours in its pre-launch phase. DLF on Monday said the residential project is spread across about 25 acres in Sectors 76 and 77, Gurugram. The exclusive enclave will comprise 1,113 luxury residences across seven towers, presenting 4 BHK apartments and penthouses. The project offers a clear view of the Aravalli Range and is in the vicinity of the upcoming Haryana government's Safari Park project spread over 10,000 acres.



India Aims for Global Leadership in Quality Products, 'Zero Defect, Zero Effect' Takes Center Stage

NEW DELHI: Union Minister Piyush Goyal highlighted the government's focus on Quality Control Orders (QCOs), and the «Zero Defect, Zero Effect» motto, transforming the perception of «Made in India» on a global scale.

India is on a determined mission to establish itself as a world leader in delivering high-quality products adhering to the most stringent global standards, reported TOI.

The supply of quality products at competitive rates is a cornerstone of the broader agenda to propel India into the ranks of developed nations by 2047.

The government is taking concrete steps to ensure that «Made in India» becomes synonymous with quality, capturing the admiration of both Indian and foreign consumers alike.

The emphasis on a balanced market, considering the interests of producers and consumers, is evident in the strategic focus on Quality Control Orders (QCOs).

These orders mandate that specific products adhere to the prescribed norms of the Bureau of Indian Standards, instilling confidence in consumers regarding the reliability,



ity, safety, and high quality of the products.

To meet the evolving demands of consumers in both domestic and international markets, finding a delicate equilibrium between product quality, price, and innovation becomes crucial.

This holistic approach is seen as imperative to cater to the expectations of an increasingly discerning customer base. The government's strategic focus extends beyond the domestic market, aiming to develop a robust quality ecosystem that ensures the production and promotion of safe, reliable, and superior-quality goods.

Simultaneously, there is a concerted effort to boost the export of Indian products on the global stage.

The transformative impact of Quality Control Orders (QCOs) is striking. Before May 2014, a mere 14 QCOs covering 106 products were

in place.

However, the government's commitment to quality is evident in the expansion of this list to 148 QCOs, now encompassing 653 products, including household items like ACs, toys, and footwear. This expansion has significantly accelerated the «Make in India for the World» mission.

Quality Control Orders have emerged as a driving force behind the «Make in India for the World» initiative, resulting in the export of various quality-controlled products surpassing their import levels.

Products such as cast-iron items, solar DC cables, door fittings, ceiling fans, helmets, smart meters, hinges, air coolers, and air filters are now exported at higher rates than they are imported.

Notably, around 25 QCOs apply to products where exports exceed imports, showcasing the success of this quality-centric strategy.

Wipro Q3 results: Reports 12 per cent YoY decline in net profit, Announced an interim dividend Re 1 per share

ARUN KUMAR RAO
Bengaluru

Wipro Ltd a leading technology services and consulting company announced Quarter ended December 31, 2023 financial results reported a 11.90 per cent year-on-year (YoY) drop in consolidated net profit at Rs 2,700 crore compared with Rs 3,065 crore in the same quarter last year. The profit degrowth was in line with analyst estimates. Consolidated sales for the quarter came in at Rs 22,205 crore compared with Rs 23,229 crore in the same quarter last year. Offshore revenue as percentage of services stood at 59.8 per cent. Wipro said its dollar revenue came in at \$2.66 billion for the quarter, down 1.7 per cent sequentially and 6.9 per cent on year-on-year basis.



Operating margin for the quarter stood at 16 per cent, down 11 basis points sequentially. The IT major reported total bookings of \$3.8 billion, down 13.5 per cent YoY in CC terms. Large deals wins stood at \$0.9 billion, down 8.3 per cent in CC terms. Attrition for the quarter stood at 14.2 per cent. Wipro announced an interim dividend of Re 1 per share. The IT major set January 24 as the record date for the same. Wipro said it will pay the interim dividend on or before February 10. The IT firm said its voluntary

attrition continued to moderate sequentially, coming in at 10-quarter low of 12.3 per cent in the December quarter.

Thierry Delporte, CEO and Managing Director said during press conference announcing financial results, «Our investments in people, processes, and business operations are continuing to pay off. In a seasonally soft quarter, deal booking momentum remained strong. Our large deals recorded a 20 per cent Year-to-date growth. Further we are starting to see early signs of a return to growth in Consulting, as demonstrated by the double-digit growth in order bookings in our Capco Business,» he added. Further he said, «Under our ai360 strategy, AI is now embedded across most of our existing solutions and client offering.

Crypto Fraud, a Global Concern

SATISH SINGH



Earlier people were becoming victims of fraud during digital transactions and now fraudsters are cheating people by luring them to tripled and quadruple the money through crypto. Most of the people who become victims of crypto fraud are educated, which include doctors, engineers, administrative officers, politicians etc.

There is an international network of crypto fraudsters, which is being operated from India. However, most of the leaders of such networks are living in Chinese cities or Dubai and carrying out fraud incidents. Telegram or WhatsApp groups are also being used for fraud. Often such groups are deleted after committing fraud. One of the main reasons, why Chinese people are getting involved in crypto fraud is the significant decline in workers' wages in China in 2023 compared to 2016 and increasing unemployment. The unemployment rate in China was 13.9 per cent in 2019, which increased to 16.8 per cent in July 2020. Further, it will increase to 19.9 per cent in 2022 and 21.3 per cent in 2023.

To defraud by crypto, fraudsters first open investors' accounts on an app or portal. The small amount invested by investors initially is doubled or tripled. After winning trust, investors are asked to deposit large amounts. As



soon as investors deposit a large amount in the wallet, it is immediately transferred to another account or put on hold. Generally, fraudsters send the defrauded amount abroad. Such people also indulge in money laundering (AML) and counter financing of terrorism (CFT). The Finance Ministry has given notice to many guilty crypto exchanges in the matter. The government is also working towards blocking the URLs being used for fraud.

According to global blockchain platform Chain Analysis, India has become the second largest market in terms of Crypto Currency transactions after the US, leaving behind the UK, Turkey, and Russia. Crypto Currency exchanges like Coin DCX, Coin Switch, Wazir X, Buy-U-coin, Zeb pay, Giotas, Unocoin etc. are operating in India. Crypto exchanges work like stock exchanges, helping investors buy and sell Crypto Currencies.

Registration is necessary for crypto exchanges to operate in India, but only 31 crypto exchanges have registered with

the Financial Intelligence Unit (FIU). Many crypto exchanges are doing their business illegally in India without registration.

According to a report by crypto currency exchange Coin DCX, about 60 per cent of Crypto Currency investors reside in 10 cities of the country. The 5 cities with the highest investment in crypto in India are Delhi, Mumbai, Kolkata, Lucknow, and Patna, where 12, 10, 8, 5 and 5 percent of crypto investors live, respectively. It is noteworthy that Patna and Lucknow have emerged as leading cities among Tier 2 cities investing in crypto.

Indian women are also not behind in investing in crypto. According to a report by Coin DCX, there is a ratio of 7 men for every 1 female investor. The top 5 cities with the highest number of women investors in India are Delhi, Lucknow, Hyderabad, Ahmedabad, and Chennai, respectively. Thirty five percent of female crypto users live in Tier 1 cities. Delhi has the highest number of women investors. It is noteworthy that despite the provision of 30 per cent income

tax on profits, India's investment volume in crypto during July 2022 to June 2023 has been recorded at about \$ 269 billion.

However, now in India, crimes like Cyber Crime, digital fraud, counter financing of terrorism and money laundering are also being carried out through crypto. The increasing popularity of crypto currency has promoted its use in purchasing illegal activities. Today Crypto Currency is being used on a large scale in black marketing.

Crypto Currency is a type of digital currency, which is not available in physical form. It cannot be minted in any mint; hence, its transactions are not legal like other currencies. The regulator has no control on this. Most of its users transact anonymously.

Blockchain technology is used for Crypto Currency. Encryption is used in Crypto Currency, using which there is very little possibility of fraud through the crypto system. Crypto Currencies are present in the world in the form of Bitcoin, Cardano, Ethereum, Ripple, Litecoin, Dash, Dogecoin etc.

Bitcoin is the most popular of these virtual currencies. Crypto Currency was first used on January 3, 2009, but its popularity started increasing in the year 2012. Today, the value of Crypto Currencies is increasing rapidly compared to other currencies like Euro, US Dollar, Pound, etc.

At the speed at which digitalization is taking place across the world, the spread of Crypto Currency cannot be stopped.

Satish Singh, Ahmedabad based Senior Columnist, Views are personal

India-ASEAN to review Modernising Trade Pact in Feb

NEW DELHI: India and the ten-member Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) will start negotiations in February to "modernise" their decade-and-a-half-old free trade agreement (FTA), reported BusinessLine.

The negotiation sets to bring in more balance in the pact currently weighed against New Delhi. India seeks to narrow the trade deficit, currently standing at USD 43.57 billion, by revamping the ASEAN India Trade in Goods Agreement (AITGA) by 2025.

But new areas such as labour, environment, SMEs and gender are likely to be kept out, sources have said, reported BusinessLine.

"There will be a complete re-look at the entire FTA with the broad objective of bringing down the trade deficit for India.



We want to modernise the FTA as a lot has evolved since it was signed almost 15 years back. New elements such as product specific rules and trade remedies will be brought in to make the FTA more efficient," the source told BusinessLine.

The first round of negotia-

tions for reviewing the FTA, officially known as the ASEAN India Trade in Goods Agreement (AITGA), will be on February 18-19 in New Delhi, the source said.

The negotiations will follow a quarterly schedule to wrap up the exercise by 2025.

Donald Trump's civil fraud trial concludes after bomb threat to presiding judge

NEW YORK: Former US President Donald Trump's civil fraud trial in New York has concluded after a bomb threat was made to the presiding judge of the hearing.

Police in the Nassau County responded to a bomb threat to the home of Manhattan Supreme Court Judge Arthur Engoron on Long Island on Thursday reports Xinhua news agency. On the heels of swatting calls targeting the homes of Department of Justice Special Counsel Jack Smith and judge Tanya Chutkan, who presides over a criminal case against Trump, the latest incident didn't interrupt the trial proceeding on Thursday.

Trump was allowed to speak in a courtroom for about five



minutes before the conclusion of closing arguments from his side at 1 p.m. in the civil fraud case that strikes at the heart of the Trump Organization.

On Wednesday however, the judge blocked the former President from making his own closing argument. Calling himself "an innocent

man", Trump said on Thursday the trial was a political witch hunt and he should be compensated for reputation damage rather than to be fined. The former President also claimed that Engoron had his own agenda and accused New York Attorney General Letitia James of hating him and us-

ing him to get elected. Kevin Wallace, a senior enforcement counsel from New York Attorney General's Office, said the defendants have not been able to dispute any of the facts that Trump submitted false financial statements. Trump's statements of financial condition were false every year from 2011 to 2021 with discrepancies as much as \$2.2 billion, according to Wallace. New York State prosecutors are seeking nearly \$370 million of penalty in the case and a lifetime ban on Trump from the real-estate industry in New York State.

The trial began on October 2, 2023 and the judge is expected to issue his verdict in the case in the coming weeks.

US Surgeon General Vivek Murthy renamed country representative on WHO board



WASHINGTON: World Health Organization (WHO) by President Joe Biden. The 46-year-old's nomination was re-sent as his confirmation to the position had been pending in the Senate since October 2022.

He will serve in his new position alongside his continued duties as the country's Surgeon General, the White House said in a statement on Monday.

In March 2021, he was confirmed by the US Senate to serve as the 21st Surgeon General of the US and had previously served on the same post under then President Barack Obama.

As the Nation's Doctor, the Surgeon General's mission is to help lay the foundation for a healthier country, relying on the best scientific information available to provide clear, consistent, and equitable guidance and resources for the public, the White House noted.

The first Surgeon General of Indian descent, Murthy is focused on drawing attention to and working across governments to address a number of critical public health issues. This includes the growing proliferation of health misinformation, the ongoing youth mental health crisis, well-being and burnout in the health worker community, and social isolation and loneliness.

As the Vice Admiral of the US Public Health Service Commissioned Corps, Murthy also commands a uniformed service of over 6,000 dedicated public health officers, serving the most underserved and vulnerable populations. Born to immigrant parents from Karnataka, Murthy was raised in Miami and is a graduate of Harvard, the Yale School of Medicine, and the Yale School of Management.

Before entering government service, Murthy co-founded VISIONS, a global HIV/AIDS education organisation, and the Swasthya Project -- a rural health partnership that trained women in South India to become community health workers and educators.

UK Post Office scandal: Indian-origin postmaster says Kate Middleton stood by him

LONDON: An elderly former postmaster of Indian-origin has revealed that Princess Kate and the Middleton family stood by him when he was accused of stealing 16,000 pounds in the Post Office accounting scandal.

Hasmukh Shingadia, 63, served the Middleton family at the Spar (convenience store) and Post Office in Upper Bucklebury, Berkshire, where Kate and her sister Pippa grew up.

He got suspended in 2010 over a scandal in which hundreds of post office managers across the UK were wrongly accused of theft and fraud because of a software glitch.

According to The Sun, Shingadia would serve sweets to the princess, her sister and even Prince William during the early years of the royal romance.

A grandfather now, Shingadia said Princess Kate, who celebrated her 42nd birthday on January 9, and her family continued to frequent his Spar and Post Office even after his conviction. "Not everybody did that, and some locals shunned me," he said, talking about the hard times. He was even invited to the Royal wedding in 2011 along with his wife, Chandrika. "It meant so much to us. It was a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity which they gave me despite the charges," he told The Sun.

"For them to have done that for us, it was tremendous. I've known them more than 25 years, and they have always been such kind and welcoming people," he said.

PM Modi meets Jose Ramos-Horta, Timor-Leste President a day before VGSS

**FW DESK
Gandhinagar**

Prime Minister Narendra Modi and President Horta met in Gandhinagar. PM extended a warm welcome to President Horta and his delegation to the Vibrant Gujarat Summit on what is the first ever Head of State or Government level visit between the two countries. Prime Minister re-affirmed India's commitment to build a vibrant "Delhi-Dili" connect. In September 2023, he had announced the opening of the Indian Mission in the country. He offered assistance to Timor-Leste in capacity building, human resource development, IT, fintech, energy and healthcare including tradi-



tional medicine and pharma. He also invited Timor-Leste to join the International Solar Alliance (ISA) and the Coalition for Disaster Resilient Infrastructure (CDRI).

He congratulated President Horta for ASEAN's in-principle decision to admit Timor-Leste as its 11th member and

expressed hope for its attainment of full membership soon.

President Horta thanked the Prime Minister for the invitation to participate in the Summit. He sought support from India in meeting its development priorities, particularly in the areas of healthcare and capacity building in IT. The two leaders also

discussed regional issues and developments in the Indo-Pacific.

President Horta expressed strong support for India's permanent membership of the UN Security Council. The leaders committed to continue their excellent cooperation in the multilateral arena. Prime Minister appreciated Timor-Leste's active participation in the two editions of the Voice of Global South Summit. They agreed that countries of the Global South should synergize their position on global issues. The bilateral relationship between India and Timor-Leste is anchored in shared values of democracy and plurality. India was one of the first countries to establish diplomatic ties with Timor-Leste in 2002.

Air-raid alerts across Ukraine over Russian missile launches

Air-raid alerts were sounded across Ukraine on December 8, with the country's Air Force confirming missile launches from Russian Tu-95MS strategic bombers and MiG-31K fighters.

The alerts were sounded at about 6 a.m., and it lasted for over two hours, the Ukrainska Pravda newspaper reported.

"Enemy Su-35/Su-34 activity in the north. The threat of use of aircraft missile weapons," the Ukrainian Air Force said in a social media post.

It went on to say that there



was "missile danger" in the areas where alerts had been

sounded.

"There is a threat of cruise missile launches from Tu-95MS aircraft. A total of 11 Tu-95MS strategic bombers are in the air. Do not ignore the air-raid warning! Take shelter." After more than two hours

later, an all clear was given at 8.24 a.m., the Ukrainska Pravda added.

Last week, 25 people were killed and more than 100 injured in one of the deadliest attacks on Russia since it invaded Ukraine in February 2022.

The attack followed a recent huge wave of Russian strikes on Ukraine, which killed dozens and injured over 160.

Those strikes were described by Kiev as Russia's biggest missile bombardment of the war so far.

Defence Minister Rajnath Singh called on British Prime Minister Rishi Sunak at 10 Downing Street, London, said officials on Thursday, adding that both discussed enhancing defence ties between the two countries.

The meeting took place on Wednesday during which Singh recalled the recent enhancement in bilateral defence engagement, spanning joint exercises, training, capability building, increased interoperability and military-to-military ties especially in the maritime domain.

Sunak fully agreed with Rajnath Singh on the need for UK and India to work in the domains of trade, defence and technology. In particular, he expressed hope that the ongoing Free Trade Agreement (FTA) negotiations could be brought to a successful conclusion soon. He was keen to bolster defence and security pillar of India-UK ties, officials said.

Sunak also underlined his keenness, and that of his government, to strengthen the defence and security pillar of the bilateral relationship, including through government backing for stronger business and technology partnerships with Indian counterpart entities, a Ministry of Defence (MoD) official added. The Ministry of Defence said that Singh emphasised the ongoing efforts to enhance defence industrial cooperation, including in the technology domain.

The meeting was warm and cordial, said the official, adding that the Defence Minister highlighted that both nations have made significant strides in moulding and recrafting the historic ties into a mod-

Wrong to infer I didn't back Rwanda plan as UK Chancellor: Sunak

Ruling out that he had doubts on the Rwanda plan as Chancellor, UK Prime Minister Rishi Sunak has said it was his job to ensure value for money on every proposal while he was in the Treasury.

According to The Evening Standard, Sunak said it was "wrong" to infer that he did not back the scheme to stop channel crossing, following a BBC report, which said he was not convinced of the plan's effectiveness. Citing No 10 papers from March 22, the BBC said last week that Sunak was also concerned about the cost of sending asylum seekers to Africa and wanted to limit the numbers.

Sunak said he has not seen the documents the report was based on as he appeared on the BBC on Sunday. However, he did not rule out having voiced concerns about the cost of sending asylum seekers to the east African country when at the Treasury. "My job (was) to ask probing questions of every proposal that crossed my desk as chancellor," the Conservative Party leader told the BBC.

"You should always ask probing questions, you should always approach things from a position of scepticism to ensure that you get value for money for taxpayers." But to infer from that that I don't believe in the scheme or the principle of deterrence is



wrong. I was doing my job to get good value for money for taxpayers," the Prime Minister added. The documents had said that as Chancellor, Sunak felt "hotels are cheaper" than reception centres to house migrants, and was reluctant to fund "Greek-style reception centres" at a cost of 3.5 million pounds per day. The Rwanda plan, launched in April 2022 by then Prime Minister Boris Johnson, became the core of Sunak's policy to stop the boats -- one of five key priorities, which he set out to achieve when he became the premier in October the same year.

Calling the British Government to publish the No 10 papers, Labour MP Yvette Cooper said: "It is time the Tory Government was honest with the public, and publish both the papers outlining Rishi Sunak's concerns and the full details of the cost of the scheme."

Rajnath calls on Sunak during UK visit, discuss enhancing defence ties

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ern, multifaceted and mutually beneficial partnership, under the direction of the leaders of both the countries.

According to the MoD, Rajnath Singh briefed Sunak about his positive interactions with the UK defence industry and the new positive energy in the bilateral defence relationship.

The Defence Minister stated that the UK and other like-minded countries should work with India for strengthening a peaceful and stable global rules-based order, including through partnering India in its inexorable rise, which can be strengthened, reinforced and speeded up with friendly collaboration.

Rajnath Singh further stated that at the international level, the Government of India is ready to partner with friends like the UK to strengthen the rule-based world order.

Singh gifted a Ram Darbar statue to the UK PM during the meeting, which was also attended by UK National Security Adviser (NSA) Sir Tim Barrow.

Singh also met with the UK's Foreign Minister Lord David Cameron at the Foreign, Commonwealth and Development

Office. The Ministers appreciated the new momentum and direction of the India-UK partnership, symbolised by intense engagements at various levels, the official said.

The India Defence Minister outlined his goal of integrating defence industries of both countries, including through supply chain integration to build resilience. He also emphasised the importance of bilateral startup level interaction, and identification and discussion of joint projects which India and UK could implement together.

Foreign Secretary Cameron reiterated the UK government's desire to collaborate with India in the defence areas, particularly in the field of defence industrial collaboration, as one of the means by which the UK hopes to strengthen the support for a rule-based international order, official added.

Later, Singh interacted with the Indian community at India House, London. Over 160 prominent persons of Indian origin attended the interaction. A number of Indian military ex-servicemen, including few family members of World War II veterans, were also present.

United Airlines finds loose hardware on number of Boeing 737 Max 9s



Chicago-based United Airlines said that it found loose hardware, including bolts in need of "additional tightening", on a number of their Boeing 737 Max 9 fleet during inspections.

The Federal Aviation Administration (FAA)-mandated inspections began on January 5 after an Alaska Airlines Boeing 737 Max 9 had to make an emergency landing the same day in Portland, Oregon, with a window and a part of the fuselage missing.

As a result, certain Boeing 737 Max 9 aircraft still remain grounded across the US. In a statement on Monday, United Airlines confirmed it found the loose bolts on an undisclosed number of its 737 Max 9 aircraft as the company is still conducting the inspections.

"Since we began prelimi-

nary inspections on Saturday (January 5), we have found instances that appear to relate to installation issues in the door plug -- for example, bolts that needed additional tightening," it said.

The door plug is a piece of fuselage with a window that can be used as an emergency exit in certain configurations, reports the BBC.

It was this part of the Alaska Airlines plane which fell off mid-flight and left a gaping hole on the side of the plane as it flew at 16,000 feet shortly after taking off from Portland, carrying 177 people. The refrigerator-sized Boeing 737 Max 9 fuselage door plug eventually landed at a teacher's backyard.

The vast majority of Boeing 737 Max 9s used in the US are operated by United Airlines and Alaska, while Turkish

Airlines, Panama's Copa Airlines and Aeromexico have also grounded aircraft of the same model for inspections.

Also on Monday, Alaska Airlines issued a statement saying that technicians who were preparing to conduct their inspections had seen "some loose hardware was visible on some aircraft".

The formal inspection process of Alaska Airlines' fleet hasn't started yet as they wait for final documentation from Boeing and the FAA, CNN quoted the statement as saying.

As of Monday, United Airlines, which has more Max 9s than any other US carrier, has canceled more than 470 flights due to the ongoing inspections.

It expected significant cancellations on Tuesday as well. The Boeing 737 Max has been described as "the most scrutinised transport aircraft in history" after a series of safety issues.

In late 2018 and early 2019, two of its aircraft were lost in near identical incidents, off the coast of Indonesia and outside the Ethiopian capital Addis Ababa, reports the BBC.

A total of 346 people were killed in both the crashes which were caused by flawed flight control software, which ultimately forced the planes into catastrophic dives, despite the best efforts of the pilots.

As Chancellor, Sunak was not convinced of Rwanda plan's effectiveness



LONDON: During his tenure as the British Chancellor Prime Minister Rishi Sunak had doubts whether the government's scheme of sending migrants to Rwanda would stop channel crossings, documents seen by the BBC suggest.

According to No 10 papers from March 2022, Sunak was not convinced of the plan's effectiveness, which was launched in April 2022 by then Prime Minister Boris Johnson.

In addition, he was also concerned about the cost of sending asylum seekers to Africa and wanted to limit the numbers, The Evening Standard reported, citing the BBC. The then Chancellor felt "hotels are cheaper" than reception centres to house migrants, and was reluctant to fund "Greek-style reception centres" at a cost of 3.5 million pounds per day, the documents revealed.

But when he became the Prime Minister in 2022, the Rwanda Bill became the core of his policy to stop the boats -- one of five key priorities, which Sunak set out to achieve.

Under the plan, anyone who arrived in Britain illegally after

January 1, 2022, faced being sent to Rwanda, some 6,400 km away. In a big setback to his government last year, the UK's Supreme Court rejected plans to send migrants to Rwanda as unlawful as it would put them at risk. Stating that the ruling "was not the outcome we wanted", Sunak said that his "commitment to stopping the boats is unwavering".

Shadow Home Secretary Yvette Cooper told the BBC that as a Chancellor, Sunak resisted the plan as he knew it was incredibly costly and wouldn't work. "But he is so weak he has now agreed to write cheques to Rwanda for 400 million pounds without sending a single person there in a desperate attempt to shore up his leadership," Cooper said. The revelations by the documents come as Sunak grapples with a new crisis after a Conservative MP pledged to stand down "as soon as possible" over a new legislation. The announcement from former Energy Minister Chris Skidmore means the Conservatives will have to defend two seats which could easily swing to Labour in upcoming by-elections.

Australia vs. India: Can the Blue Tigers surprise everyone ?



SUNIL THAPLIYAL
New Delhi

The Indian football team will play its first match against Australia on Saturday in the AFC Asian Cup, which begins on Friday. India has a poor record against Australia, who won this tournament in 2015. The top 24 teams from Asia will compete for the trophy in Qatar. The AFC Asian Cup is the biggest football tournament on the continent.

India has never won this tournament and will be participating for the fifth time. It is the first time that India has qualified for two consecutive

seasons. India's best result in this tournament was in 1964 when they finished second behind Israel.

Team India will face the challenge of the 24 best teams in Asia. The final will be played on 10 February. The teams have been divided into 6 groups, with each team playing 3 matches. The top two teams from each group will advance to the round of 16.

The Aussies are undoubtedly the better team; they have won this title before and have also been runners-up; they have played in the World Cup, and Australian players even play for the top clubs in

Europe, while India, on the other hand, is on the verge of becoming a good team in the near future. Judging by the team performances, Australia will dominate this match and it can be a one-sided game, but no one should rule out the possibility of the Indian team pulling off a miracle.

The Indian team will play in Group B along with Australia (FIFA ranking 25), Uzbekistan (FIFA ranking 68) and Syria (91), with India ranked 102nd in the FIFA rankings. Based on the rankings and statistics, the Indian team looks like an underdog, but in fields like football, anything can happen,

as did Morocco, who not only participated in the recently held FIFA World Cup 2022 despite being underdogs, but also reached the semi-finals.

India have played eight matches against Australia. Australia won five and India won two matches. One match was a draw. India lost four out of six matches against Uzbekistan. Two games were played to a draw. The team played six games against Syria. They have won 3 games, lost 2, and drawn 1 game.

India squad : Goalkeepers: Amrinder Singh, Gurpreet Singh Sandhu, Vishal Kaith.

Defenders : Akash Mishra, Lalchungnunga, Mehtab Singh, Nikhil Poojary, Pritam Kotal, Rahul Bheke, Sandesh Jhingam, Subhashish Bose.

Midfielders : Anirudh Thapa, Brandon Fernandes, Deepak Tangri, Lalengmawia Ralte, Liston Colaco, Naorem Mahesh Singh, Sahal Abdul Samad, Suresh Singh Wangjam, Udanta Singh.

Forwards : Ishan Pandita, Lallianzuala Chhangte, Manvir Singh, Rahul Kan

India schedule : January 13, 2024: Australia vs India (17:00 IST, Ahmad bin Ali Stadium, Al Rayyan)

January 18, 2024: India vs Uzbekistan (20:00 IST, Ahmad bin Ali Stadium, Al Rayyan)

January 23, 2024: Syria vs India (17:00 IST, Al Bayt Stadium, Al Khor)

The matches will be broadcast live in India on Sports 18 and streamed on Jio Cinema.



People purchase kites on the eve of Lohri festival at a market in Amritsar on Friday. The Lohri harvest festival, which falls on January 13 this year, is marked in northern India with celebrations involving the flying and battling of kites
PHOTO: PRABHJOT GILL

Kareena Kapoor says I don't seek validation from social media at all

MUMBAI: Kareena Kapoor Khan has been in the Hindi film industry for over two decades and enjoys a massive fan following for the work she has done over the years. In 2020, the diva made her debut on social media which she enjoys using, and through which she connects with her fans, however, she said that she doesn't seek validation from it.



Kareena currently enjoys a fan following of 11.4 million on Instagram and often shares glimpses of her day-to-day life and updates about her work.

Asked how much importance does social media validation hold for her, Kareena told to media "I enjoy using social media but for me, it is a way to connect with my fans and give them a glimpse into my life. I don't seek validation

from social media at all but I'm happy that I get a lot of love from my fans."

Playing powerful characters on screen is validation enough for the actress, who has given impactful performances in films such as 'Asoka', 'Kabhi Khushi Kabhie Gham...', 'Chameli', 'Dev',

'Omkaara', 'Jab We Met', '3 Idiots', 'Uda Punjab' and 'Bajrangi Bhaijaan' to name a few.

"As an artist, I'm stepping into the shoes of powerful characters, and that's validation enough for me. So, while I appreciate the love on Instagram, my true validation comes from the roles I take on, the stories I tell, and the legacy I'm building as an artist in the world of entertainment," she added.

However, there have been good and bad days in her journey in Hindi cinema, which began in 2000 with 'Refugee'.

Talking about self doubt, Kareena said: "I am only human, I could have days which may not be so good but I don't stop believing in myself. It's been over two decades for me in the industry and I'm sure there will be much more. I know I want to keep doing something new and it's time to try something different constantly." Kareena then revealed the toughest part of being a superstar. Pat came the reply when asked: "Lack of privacy."

The 43-year-old actress, who is married to actor Saif Ali Khan, does agree that the profession comes with a price to pay. "Every profession comes with its price to pay, it only depends on how much are you willing to give in and how you prioritise your life," said the actress.

On the acting front, Kareena, who has lent her voice to Black Widow in 'Marvel Wastelanders: Black Widow', the third installment of the Hindi Audible podcast series, will next be seen in 'The Crew' and 'Singham Again'.

Raveena Tandon: I am experimenting with my characters

Actress Raveena Tandon, who will be seen playing Indrani Kothari in the upcoming show 'Karmma Calling', shared how this character has helped her explore a very different aspect of herself as an artist, adding that it is unlike any roles she has played before. Talking about her



me explore a very different aspect

of myself as an actor, it is unlike any characters I have played before. I am experimenting with my characters." Raveena further decoded her character: "Indrani is powerful, strong-headed and wants to maintain her position in the elitist society. She has secrets to hide but her life is altered in

many ways as Karma Talwar enters the picture but she is not a woman to give in to her Karma that easily." The actress added that 'Karmma Calling' is a tale of the glamorous, powerful Indrani Kothari and the enigmatic Karma Talwar and it'll surely keep the audiences hooked.

'Pro Kabaddi League a massive platform for the sport,' says actor Pankaj Tripathi

KAVITA SHARMA
Mumbai

Bollywood actor Pankaj Tripathi was in attendance during the closely fought Pro Kabaddi League Season 10 clash between Puneri Paltan and Tamil Thalaivas. He also commented during the match and had a memorable 'Le Panga' experience here at the Dome by NSCI in Worli, Mumbai.

Pankaj Tripathi addressed the media before the match and was quoted as saying, "I have a lot of memories associated with this sport. I used to play kabaddi a lot in my

village." Speaking about the ever-increasing popularity of the sport, the 'Main Atal Hoon' actor stated, "I am very happy that kabaddi is getting a massive platform with Pro Kabaddi League and a lot of love from the citizens of India."

Puneri Paltan defeated Tamil Thalaivas by 29-26 continuing their impressive run of form.



Inspired by 'Heeramandi' role, Richa advocates for preservation of classical dance in Indian cinema

MUMBAI: Bollywood actress Richa Chadha has expressed her concern about the lack of awareness and representation of Kathak, a classical dance style, in the film industry, especially in comparison to the prominence of Bharat Natyam among actresses from the South.

As a trained Kathak dancer, Richa has been dedicated to the art form since her childhood.

Richa shared: "Classical dance is not just a form of artistic expression; it's a representation of our rich cultural heritage. While actresses from the South often shine in Bharatanatyam, I am sometimes shocked to see



the limited recognition that Kathak receives in our film industry. Kathak holds a special place in my heart, and my journey as a dancer has been a parallel pursuit alongside my acting career."

"It's crucial for us to celebrate and preserve these classical

dance forms to ensure they continue to enrich our cinematic landscape. I feel as many female actors should learn. Kathak is deeply expressive and even is often used as a medium to use facial expressions to communicate without speaking literal words, something we as actors often learn to do," she added.

Directed by Sanjay Leela Bhansali, 'Heeramandi' brings his majestic signature flair to stories of love and betrayal in the lives of courtesans in pre-independence India.

It also stars Manisha Koirala, Sonakshi Sinha, Aditi Rao Hydari and Sanjeeda Sheikh.

Netflix's ad tier crosses over 23 mn monthly active users

NEW DELHI: Streaming giant Netflix is witnessing strong growth of its advertising-based plan, as the president of advertising, Amy Reinhard, said that the platform has recently crossed more than 23 million global monthly active users, the media reported.

According to Variety, the new numbers come after Netflix about two months ago said that its ad-supported tier had over 15 million monthly active users globally. "The thing we're really excited about is the engagement. Of Netflix's customers on ad-supported plans, 85 per cent are



streaming on the platform for more than two hours per day," Reinhard was quoted as saying.

In an October letter to shareholders, Netflix stated that ad-tier subscriptions accounted for roughly 30 per cent of all new signups in the 12 countries where it has launched the platform, the report mentioned.

Beauty Trends in the Year 2024 : Shahnaz Husain

FW DESK
New Delhi

In the always-changing world of beauty, trends come and go, yet 2024 promises an exquisite fusion of classic beauty and cutting-edge innovation.

Thanks to social media, makeup trends tend to cycle in and out quickly these days. However, there is still freshness about the New Year that inspires many to try something different and ignites new trends, and in 2024, we'll see a mix of viral sensations and classic beauty.

2024 is all set to see beauty enter new realms.

It's that time of the year when we start looking forward to what the next 12 months will have in store in terms of trends

Want to get a jumpstart on the 2024 makeup trends to know about?

From futuristic aesthetics to eco-conscious choices, brace yourself as we delve into the makeup trends that will dominate the beauty scene in 2024. And if you want to get a head start on the beauty trends set to dominate the year, there's plenty to discover.

1. Tech-infused beauty

Artificial Intelligence (AI), once thought to be completely fiction is gaining popularity in the beauty and cosmetic industry. Tech-infused beauty not only addresses individual needs but also fosters a sense of empowerment and inclusivity,

embracing diversity and catering to a wide range of beauty preferences and skin types.

The introduction of Artificial Intelligence and Augmented



Reality technology to the beauty industry has modernized the capabilities of beauty brands and the experiences they can provide a consumer. Beauty enthusiasts are increasingly turning to cutting-edge technologies to enhance their skincare, haircare, and makeup routines.

AI can understand a human's perception of attractiveness, a difficult task even for humans themselves, as beauty is incredibly subjective. Yet it is relatively simple for a machine to discern when an individual finds someone attractive, as their body emits different signals through dopamine.

AI is helping beauty companies develop products that are more sustainable and align with the growing market demand for responsibly created products. By analyzing ingredient data and product lifecycles, AI can suggest eco-friendly alternatives and reduce the environmental footprint of cosmetics and skincare products.

AI tools are monitoring social channels to track brand mentions, customer sentiment, and emerging beauty trends. This real-time feedback helps brands



adjust their strategies and stay ahead of the beauty game. We can anticipate more sophisticated apps that can track changes in skin condition during the year 2024 and adapt skincare routines accordingly, all through a smartphone camera. AI can analyze skin conditions and provide personalized skincare analysis. Brands can develop AI-powered tools that assess factors like skin type, concerns, and environmental influences.

As smartphones became an integral part of our lives, big beauty brands grabbed this chance and offered consumers personalized services and products to cover their individual needs.

2. Virtual Makeup Try-On Software

Most of beauty companies are likely to use technology to enable the virtual try-ons for cosmetics. The application enables customers to virtually try-on multiple brand-related

products in real-time through AR-based facial tracking technologies. They identify users' faces and specific elements to modify them in real-time by applying beauty products along with other pre-built filters. virtual-reality technology makes shopping for make-up and hair colour online an easier feat, allowing you to see exactly how each product will look before making a purchase. People are turning to digital platforms to test out the latest beauty looks, from the comforts of their home.

3. SOFT GLAM MAKE UP

Soft glam makeup is dominating social media and the runways in 2024

Soft glam creates a monochromatic makeup look, meaning the products used on the eyes, lips, and cheeks are all in the same color family. It highlights the best parts of the face without making you look like a different person. Soft glam simply means radiant-looking or diffused makeup, applied in a way that ensures it's perfectly blended into your skin. Most soft glam makeup looks are created using a warm, neutral palette to give your skin a soft effect.

Soft glam usually encourages an element of glamour but the overall finish should be soft, blended, and complimentary. Soft glam is a step up from natural makeup. There shouldn't be harsh lines or heavy finishes. The skin should be glowing, soft, and natural. The eyes softly blended, whilst being enhanced.

One must stay away from bold colors and instead stick with skintoned hues across your eyes, lips, and face mela of a natural look,

4. Blue Make Up

Blue can be a tricky color in makeup. According to Social Media trends, blue makeup is expected to continue to trend well into 2024. The first step to blue makeup actually involves no blue at all, the best pairing for blue makeup is fresh, glowing skin. So, naturally, the look begins with skincare - the brighter the skin, the better. Start with a gentle exfoliator to brighten, followed by a hyaluronic acid applied to slightly damp skin to hydrate, and finish with a glow-boosting moisturizer.

How to get the look : Blue is a universally flattering color, so there's really no one who can't give this trend a try. The key, however, is to pick the right shade of liner for your skin tone

You need to start by colour-correcting and concealing any blemishes on your skin and follow up with a lightweight foundation to get an even tone. Then, pick a bright blue colored kohl pencil and line your upper and lower lash line. Using a mascara in a similar colour, give your lashes two, thick coats to open them up, and run a light brow pencil through your arches. Complete your makeup with a glossy nude balm

Knight Blue Makeup? : Knight blue makeup is simply ultra-bright blue beauty looks. This spans from graphic ultramarine eyeliner and a bold blue lip to hazy cobalt eyeshadow smudged out to the eyebrow line. Whichever feature you pick, the goal is to create a look with a vibrant colour pop befitting this new shade of Burberry blue. The author is an international fame beauty expert and is called the herbal queen of India

Shahid, Kriti groove on 'Laal Peeli Akhiyaan' from 'Teri Baaton Mein Aisa Uljha Jiya'

MUMBAI: Actors Shahid Kapoor and Kriti Sanon are all geared up to set the stage on fire with the track 'Laal Peeli Akhiyaan' from their next 'Teri Baaton Mein Aisa Uljha Jiya'.



The dance number is choreographed by Shaik Jani Basha. The vibrant beats are given by Tanishk Bagchi, known for multiple

chartbusters. Sung by Romy and Tanishk, with lyrics by Neeraj Rajawat, the song is a perfect blend

Does the success of violent films like 'Animal' raises concern

KAVITA SHARMA

The controversy behind the Bollywood film Animal is increasing day by day. Sandeep Vanga Reddy's Film Animal since its release has been facing criticism for its misogynistic themes, toxic dialogues, glorification of violence, regressive depiction of women, bloodshed and masculinity. First the Congress MP Ranjeet Ranjan raised questions in the parliament for the hyper violence and dialogues mentioning how some college girls left the theatre when felt themselves uncomfortable with the dialogues and violent activities. And now the veteran writer and Lyricist Javed Akhtar have taken note of the success of the film calling it a dangerous trend. Despite facing criticism for its misogyny and violence, Animal film has been able to attract the audiences and surpassed \$100 million mark at the box office globally.

What makes Animal Film Controversial

The Ranbir Kapoor and



Rashmika Mandana Starrer film "Animal" is now among the most successful film of 2023. Here Ranbir plays the role of the violent protagonist in the Indian cinema. But some of its dialogues where the main lead of the film Ranbir Kapoor is asking his girlfriend, role played by Tripti Dimri to "lick my shoes" and in another scene he makes sexist statement to his would be wife Rashmika Mandana "your pelvis can hold healthy babies" have raised strong objections. While some people of the industry have praised the film some have raised objections on Sandeep Vanga's handling of toxic masculinity, feminism and sexual statements. Famous poet and writer Javed Akhtar expresses concern over the huge success of the film.

Does the onus lies on the Audiences

The success of such films with objectionable dialogues is a disturbing trend says writer Javed Akhtar. It is a testing time for the young filmmakers and the audiences. Javed believes that audiences should not accept such films rather we should suggest what cinema we need. More than the filmmakers the onus lies with the audiences. Citing example of super hit song of the film Khalnayak "choli ke peeche kya hai" Javed said "We as an audience are responsible for the success of such films and songs. By accepting such movies and making them a super duper hit we are setting a dangerous trend and that is scary. Audiences have a power to reject and accept the content, adds Akhtar.

Are Filmmakers and writers responsible for setting a dangerous Trend. As we all know cinema has always been a powerful means of communication. The writers and the directors are responsible for creating characters with their story.