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**KEJRIWAL'S FAMILY UNDER 'HOUSE ARREST', NOT BEING ALLOWED TO MEET, SAYS GOPAL RAI** 

BANKING & FINANCE



FOURTH QUARTER ADVANCE TAX RECEIPTS RISE BY 6%, INDICATING ECONOMIC **MOMENTUM** 



PM Modi inaugurates modern hospital

**KASHMIR HOSTS MAIDEN FORMULA-4 CAR** RACING EVENT ALONG **DAL LAKE** 

# **Excise policy scam:** Court send Delhi CM **Kejriwal to ED custody till March 28**

A court on Friday sent Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal to the Enforcement Directorate's custody till March 28, a day after his arrest in the excise policy-linked money laundering case.

Special Judge Kaveri Baweja at the Rouse Avenue court said Kejriwal will be produced before the court on March 28 at 2 pm.

The court passed the order on the Enforcement Directorate's (ED) application seeking a 10day custody in the case. During the hearing for remand, the ED said that Kejriwal -- the AAP's national convener -- was a "key conspirator" in the excise policy scam case along with other ministers and party leaders.

Kejriwal was produced in the trial court shortly after he with-



drew from the Supreme Court his plea against his arrest by the agency. The ED told Judge Baweja that Kejriwal received several crores of rupees as kickbacks from the 'South group' for formulating and implementing

the Delhi Excise Policy 2021-22. He demanded Rs 100 crore from some accused from the

'South group' for contesting the Punjab elections, Additional Solicitor General (ASG) SV Raju, who appeared for the agency, told the court.

The law officer said the money trail showed that Rs 45 crore "kickback" used in the Goa elections came from four

the accused and witnesses have been corroborated through Call Detail Records (CDR).

The AAP chief was produced before the court around 2 pm amid tight security on and around the court premises.

'We have given an application for 10 days' remand," ASG Raju told the court.

He said the AAP is not an individual but a company, and every person responsible for the conduct of the company will be held responsible.

Senior Advocate Abhishek Singhvi, who was representing Kejriwal, said this is the first time in the history of India that a sitting chief minister has been arrested.

The power of arrest is not equal to the need of arrest and there was no necessity of arresting this man, he said.

## built with Indian assistance in Bhutan THIMPHU: Prime Minister

Narendra Modi and his Bhutanese counterpart Tshering Tobgay on Saturday inaugurated a modern hospital built with Indian assistance here which will offer quality healthcare for women and children and be a shining example of India-Bhutan development cooperation.

The Gyaltsuen Jetsun Pema Wangchuk Mother and Child Hospital is a state-of-the-art 150-bedded facility that has been built with the assistance of the Government of India in Thimphu.

"Inaugurated the Gyaltsuen Jetsun Pema Wangchuck Mother and Child Hospital, which stands as a beacon of hope for several families, offering quality healthcare," Modi



embodies a commitment to nurturing a healthy future generation.

"A boost to partnership in healthcare. PM @narendramodi together with PM @tsheringtobgay of Bhutan inaugurated the Gyaltsuen Jetsun Pema Mother and Child Hospital in Thimphu.

The 55-year-old Kejriwal

is a shining example of India-Bhutan development cooperation," External Affairs Ministry Spokesperson Randhir Jaiswal said in a post on X.

India has supported the development of the hospital in two phases. The first phase was constructed at a cost of Rs 22 crore and has been

construction of the second phase was taken up in 2019, as part of the 12th Five Year Plan at a cost of Rs 119 crore, and was completed recently, the Ministry of External Affairs said in a press release. It said that the newly con-

operational since 2019. The

structed hospital would add value to the quality of mother and child health services in Bhutan. The new facility will house state-of-the-art facilities for Pediatrics, Gynecology and Obstetrics, Anesthesiology Operation Theatre, Neonatal Intensive Care and Pediatric Intensive Care.

"The Gyaltsuen Jetsun Pema Wangchuk Mother and Child Hospital stands as a shining example of India-Bhutan partnership in health care,"

# of CM Kejriwal": wife Sunita Kejriwal

**OUR CORRESPONDENT** New Delhi

CM Arvind Kejriwal found himself in a maelstrom of controversy as the Enforcement Directorate (ED) apprehended him on allegations of corruption pertaining to the issuance of liquor licenses. This dramatic turn of events prompted a fervent response from his wife, Sunita Kejriwal, who condemned the action as a betrayal of the people of Delhi.

In a public statement, Mrs. Kejriwal expressed unwavering support for her husband, emphasizing his dedication to the welfare of the nation. She underscored Mr. Kejriwal's longstanding commitment to the people, both during his tenure as Chief Minister and beyond.

Arvind Kejriwal's arrest in the ongoing legal battle, stem- governance from jail. Amidst ming from accusations related to money laundering in connection with the excise policy. Despite founding the Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) on an anti-corruption platform, Keiriwal's integrity was called into question as he faced allegations of misconduct.

The Enforcement Directorate's decisive action followed the denial of protection from coercive measures by the Delhi High Court. Kejriwal, flanked by law enforcement officers, reiterated his dedication to the nation as he was led into court. However, uncertainty loomed as the court deliberated on his detention status. Notably, Arvind Kejriwal had previously disregarded multiple summons from the central agency, leading to his eventual arrest. His incarceration paralleled the detention of several senior AAP members awaiting trial in the same case, further intensifying the political storm surrounding the party.

In response to the uproar sparked by Arvind Kejriwal's arrest, AAP vehemently rejected

Minister Arvind Kejriwal by

will happen as per law. The

courts and the government

will decide what is good and

what is not," he said

liquor policies.



claims of impropriety, characterizing the situation as a smear campaign against their leader. Party officials affirmed Kejriwal's unwavering commitment to his role as Chief Minister, asserting his intention to continue governing from behind bars.

However, prison authorities indicated adherence to protocol, hinting at potential chals continued mounting legal battles and public outcry, Delhi Education Minister Atishi Marlena Singh affirmed Arvind Kejriwal's steadfastness in his position, underscoring the party's determination to navigate

Legal proceedings saw the Enforcement Directorate branding Mr. Kejriwal as the alleged mastermind behind the Delhi liquor policy scandal, seeking an extended custody period. In his defense, senior lawyer Abhishek Manu Singhvi decried the arrest as unprecedented and unnecessary, highlighting the absence of

compelling reasons for detention. The gravity of the accusations against Mr. Kejriwal was further compounded by the arrest of BRS leader K Kavitha, with the ED alleging collusion between her and AAP leaders in the manipulation of the excise policy. Allegations of financial impropriety, including substantial bribes, added fuel to the fire engulfing Mr. Kejriwal's administration, casting a shadow over his politi-

## "A desperate attempt to malign the image "Respectfully and humbly disagree with the decision of the court," says Atishi Marlena

Intention behind electoral bonds

scheme was good: Nitin Gadkari

**OUR CORRESPONDENT** New Delhi

Reacting to the court's order sending Arvind Kejriwal to sixday ED custody, AAP leader Atishi Marlena said that they disagree with the decision, and added that the AAP supremo will remain the Delhi chief

Speaking to a news agency, the Delhi education minister said that the party will take all the legal routes possible. "Arvind Kejriwal is and will remain the chief minister of Delhi. There is no constitutional or legal bar on him not Meanwhile, arrested Chief

Also said no party can

**NEW DELHI:** Union min-

ister Nitin Gadkari has said

it was not possible to run a

political party without funds,

and added that the Centre

had introduced the electoral

bonds scheme, now struck

down as unconstitutional by

the Supreme Court, in 2017

The senior Bharatiya Janata

Party (BJP) leader said all politi-

cal parties need to sit together

and deliberate if the Supreme

Court gives any further direction

on the matter. He made the

with a "good intention".

survive sans funds

down only when he is convicted and serves jail sentence of two years.'

She further claimed that the witnesses in the case are being forced into giving false testimants against Kejriwal. We, very respectfully and humbly disagree with the decision of the court. ED has no proof even after 2 years of investigation... ED forced their witnesses to give statements against Arvind Kejriwal... We will explore all possible legal routes... One by one opposition parties are being targetted in front of the judiciary." being the CM. He can step Minister Arvind Kejriwal's reports PTI news agency.

by a media house in GIFT City

near Gandhinagar on Friday.

(Union finance) minister, I was

part of that discussion (regard-

"When Arun Jaitely was



lawyer on Friday told a Delhi court that there was "no material" or "evidence" to show any wrongdoing in excise policy formulation or receipt of any proceeds by the AAP supremo,

can survive without resources.

In some countries, governments

fund political parties. There

is no such system in India.

Thus, we chose this system of

financing political parties," said

Gadkari on a question about

electoral bonds. He noted the

main intention behind intro-

ducing electoral bonds was

that political parties get funds

directly, but the names (of do-

nors) are not disclosed because

'problems arise if the party in

The road transport and high-

ways minister said just like a

media house needs a sponsor

to finance an event, political

power changes"

was arrested by the Enforcement Directorate (ED) on Thursday under the antimoney laundering law from his official residence in the Civil Lines area of Delhi. He was produced on Friday before the Rouse Avenue court, which sent him to the ED's custody till March 28. While opposing the ED's demand for his custody, Kejriwal's lawyer told the court "that the present case is stitched together only on the basis of statements of co-accused and statement of officers who are working under the control of the complainant herein i.e. LG of Delhi".

run their affairs. "You need to

see the ground reality. How

are parties supposed to fight

elections? We brought this sys-

tem of electoral bonds to bring

transparency. So, our inten-

tion was good when we brought

electoral bonds. If the SC finds

any shortcomings in it and asks

us to rectify it, all parties will

sit together and unanimously

deliberate on it," emphasised the former BJP president.

"In the interest of our coun-

try and value-based democracy,

everyone needs to find a trans-

parent way (of financing par-

ties). Because without funds,

parties can't undertake any

## **India extends onion Export** Ban until further notice



**NEW DELHI:** The Indian government has announced the extension of the export ban on onions until further orders. This decision prolongs the prohibition that was initially set until March

According to a notification from the Directorate General of Foreign Trade (DGFT), the export prohibition on onions will remain in effect until March 31, 2024, and will continue until further instructions are issued.

During the April-January period of the fiscal year 2024, India exported onions worth USD 431.78 million, with significant portions sent to Bangladesh (USD 187.5 million) and Sri Lanka (USD 48.12 million).

The export prohibition on onions will remain in effect until March 31, 2024, and will continue until further instructions are issued"

had imposed a ban on onion exports until March 31, 2024. However, exceptions were made for shipments authorised by the central government in response to requests from other countries.

Recently, the government permitted the export of 50,000 tonnes of onions to Bangladesh and 14,400 tonnes to the UAE through Exports Limited.

#### In December of the previ- the National Cooperative ous year, the government

## India seeks MDB collaboration for sustainable development

tilateral Development Banks

The finance ministry rewith MDB representatives on

According to sources fa-

This strategy seeks to leverage MDBs> experience and resources to address challenges such as time and cost overruns, while also facilitating knowlIndia>s outreach to MDBs,

institutions, India aims to attract both public and private investments, bolstered by the credibility and governance

The move aligns with the government's broader agenda of accelerating infrastructure development to

By harnessing the expertise

including stalwarts like the World Bank and the Asian Development Bank, underscores its commitment to streamlining project implementation processes and fostering sustainable development. By collaborating with these

standards upheld by MDBs.

stimulate economic growth and job creation.

of MDBs, India endeavours to chart a path towards achieving its developmental aspirations while fostering international partnerships for mutual prog-

#### comments at an event organised ing electoral bonds). No party parties also require funds to activity," asserted the minister. Finance Ministry forecasts robust Indian Economy driven by Investment & Consumption

#### Arrested because of his **NEW DELHI:** The Indian economy is poised for robust misdeeds: Anna Hazare **NEW DELHI**: Commenting on the arrest of Delhi Chief

the ED, social activist Anna Hazare said that he was upset that the AAP chief was making "I am very upset that Keirihi Deputy CM Manish Sisodia wal, who used to raise his voice against liquor, is now making joined him in the movement, liquor policies. But what will he advised them to always put he do? Nothing works in front nation first but they didn't pay

of power. His arrest is because heed to the advice. of his own deeds. Everything "I have written letters to Kejriwal on this issue," Hazare added. Arvind Kejriwal and Anna Hazare worked together when they were part of the Hazare said that when Ar- anti-corruption movement vind Kejriwal and former Del- from 2010 to 2013.



growth, the finance ministry remains optimistic about India's economic outlook. However, challenges such as the ongoing crisis in the Red Sea and escalating crude oil prices cast shadows over the horizon.

The ministry cautioned that disruptions in shipping due to the crisis could lead to inflationary pressures.

Additionally, grain shipments from key regions like the Russian Federation, Ukraine, and Europe face disruptions, posing risks to



global food security.

The report stated, "Sustained increases in shipping costs due to disruption can drive up inflation. The crisis is also reverberating in global

food prices. Disruptions in grain shipments from the Russian Federation, Ukraine, and Europe pose risks to global food security.

Despite these challenges,

traffic, robust sales of passenger vehicles, growing digital payments, and improved consumer confidence. Furthermore, the up scaling of enterprises and the emergence of sunrise sectors are expected to drive quality

employment opportunities, particularly in the manufacturing sector. The review also highlighted increased demand for residential properties in tier-2 and tier-3 cities, which bodes well for furthering construction activity. In addition, non-farm em-

ployment has seen a revival, signalling improved capacity to absorb labour transitioning from agriculture.

#### goals by 2047 **NEW DELHI**: In a bid to accelerate its journey towards the finance ministry noted becoming a developed nation positive signs of strengthening by 2047, India has initiated private consumption demand, collaborative efforts with Mulciting increasing air passenger

cently convened a meeting March 7 to solicit their expertise in project implementation and strategic planning.

miliar with the discussions. the ministry outlined a comprehensive «budget-plus and finance-plus» strategy, aimed at encompassing all facets of project execution beyond mere financing and planning.

edge and technology transfers. ress.

## PM Modi trying to crush opposition, Kejriwal's family under 'house arrest', savs Arvind Keiriwal's wife not being allowed to meet: Gopal Rai says Arvind Kejriwal's wife

Arvind Kejriwal's wife Sunita Kejriwal on Friday said his arrest was a betrayal with the people of Delhi, and lashed out at Prime Minister Narendra

Kejriwal, the AAP national convener, was arrested by the Enforcement Directorate (ED) on Thursday night in connection with an excise policy-linked money-laundering case.

In a post in Hindi on X, Sunita Kejriwal said, "Modiji got your thrice-elected chief minister arrested due to his arrogance of power and is trying to crush everyone. This is a betrayal with the people of



Delhi. Your chief minister has knows everything. Jai Hind.' always stood with you. Whether inside (jail) or outside, his life is dedicated to the country. The public is supreme and

The ED has produced Kejriwal in a court and sought his 10-day custody. The court's

Gopal Rai said that he is not being allowed to meet Arvind Kejriwal's family, claiming that the family has been placed under 'house arrest':

Yesterday late evening Delhi Chief Minister was arrested by the federal probe agency after searches at his official residence at Flagstaff Road in Civil Lines area of the national capital on Thursday in the money laundering case linked to alleged irregularities in the scrapped Delhi excise policy 2021-22, officials said.

Security was strengthened around the ED office at the A P J Abdul Kalam Road and the CM's official residence with Delhi Police personnel and central armed police forces has alleged that the accused

(CAPFs) personnel putting up additional barricades and throwing a security ring along the waiting press teams and curious onlookers

Arvind Kejriwal's name has been mentioned multiple times in the charge sheets filed by the till now with the ED filing six ED in this case. The agency

were in touch with Kejriwal for formulating the excise policy that resulted in undue benefits to them in return for which they paid kickbacks to the AAP. A total of 16 persons have been arrested in this case chargesheets.

# 'Manohar' and 'Nayab' join hands to support éach other in coming Haryana Lok Sabha & Vidhan Sabha elections

**PARVESH HANDA** 

Although Nayab Singh Saini has replaced Manohar Lal Khattar as chief minister in Haryana state, but they have close political association and likely to support each other in coming Lok Sabha and Vidhan Sabha elections in the state in which former CM Khattar is going to contest for Karnal Lok Sabha seat, whereas Saini is going to contest for Karnal Vidhan Sabha seat in which both leaders will undertake poll campaigns demanding votes for each other.

Information reveals, Khattar has already started his poll campaign to contest for Karnal Lok Sabha seat, as well as other nine Lok Sabha seats in the state along with Nayab Saini under the poll management by Subhash Barala, who has already prepared poll plan for all Lok Sabha seats in the state as well rallies by the Prime National President Nadda failed to attend the rally to be at Gharaunda in Karnal district on Tuesday and also to give green signal to start poll campaign in the state.

According to information, BJP National President J.P. Nadda had to give green signal to the joint team of Khattar and Saini to start BJP polls campaign in Haryana state in full swing and decide the rallies by senior BJP leaders in support of all contesting candidates. This is the first time in the state when former and present chief ministers in Haryana will demand vote for Minister Modi and Home each other in coming polls.

#### IMA Haryana: 536 private hospitals in Haryana not to treat patients under Ayushman Yozna

**SATISH HANDA** 

Office-bearers of Indian Medical Association (IMA) in Haryana in a meeting held on Friday has declared not to provide medical treatment to the patients registered under Aayushman Yoza in Haryana state with effect from 16th March 2024 in as many as 536 private hospitals in Haryana state. According to IMS Haryana, this step has been taken by the private hospitals in view much delayed payment of their bills as well as heavy deduction from their bills in-spite of their repeated requests by the management of private hospitals, as such all 536 private hospitals registered under this scheme will not entertain such patients from this date.

## HSNCB seized over 4 kg opium and 3kg 800 gm poppy husk

Kurukshetra

After the incident of 4 kg opium smuggled from Madhya Pradesh for supply in Punjab, seized by the Ambala police on a secret information on the National highway No. 1 Ambala Cantt, now after about 24 hours Haryana State Narcotic Control Bureau team on a secret information has recovered 4 kg 50 gm opium and 800 kg poppy husk being smuggled from Madhya Pradesh in a canter which was stopped by the police at a police barrier on the National highway near village Buhawa near Shahabad in Kurukshetra district.

According to HSNCB information, the driver of canter Baljit Singh resident of village Muead-



pur in Patiala district managed to flee in the dark, whereas police arrested another persons sitting in the vehicle Gurjinder Singh a resident of village Faridpur in Patiala district told that they had smuggled drugs from Madhya

usual. According to information, during a search by the police over 4 kg of opium was recovered under the driver's seat. A case under NDPS Act was registered at Babain police station and search for the arrest of the

# 700 cases of fake poisonous Sulphas tablets seized

SATISH HANDA

Sonipat

The team of agriculture department led by Dr Pawan Sharma Deputy Director along with the police force from Kundli police station on a secret information raided a manufacturing unit in village Akbarpur Barota in Sonipat district manufacturing highly poisonous Sulphas tablets used to kill rats and worms while storage of agricultural products in the storage godowns. The factory owned by a person from Rohtak was found producing fake Sulphas tablets in the brand name of a reputed Gujarat based firm. The raiding team recovered 700 cases of tablets and 150 cases of urea fertilizer in the factory, seized by the police. Dr Sharma said that nearly 50 persons were working in the factory during the raid, but failed to produce any



document regarding the manufacturing license obtained from the government and bills for the purchase of raw material.

Investigation revealed, the illegal manufacturing unit owned by a person from Rohtak was functioning since past about one and half month ago in a rented premises. He said that Sulphas tablets being highly poisonous were very harmful for the health of the labourers working in the factory and a large number of cases of suicide by taking Sulphas are frequently published in the newspapers.

## Five members of a gang involved in ATM thefts arrested, 2 members yet absconding



PARVESH HANDA

Panipat

CIA staff of police arrested five members of a gang involved in ATM robberies in the state. During preliminary investigation the arrested accused admitted two ATM thefts in Panipat and Karnal, disclosing that on March 8, 2024 night they stolen amount worth Rs 3.69 lakh after cutting the ATM machine at village amount police station about a month ago.

persons that police have recovered a Creta car in which thefts were committed by the accused a gas cutter, a LPG cylinder and a Oxygen gas cylinder. He said that search for another two members of the gang vet absconding arrest is still going on. DSP told media persons that the accused were arrested on a information that five suspicious persons are sitting near the Munak river bridge sus-Nangalkheri in Panipat district pected planning for a theft and worth Rs 6.70 lakh from Axis a raid were identified as Dheeraj Bank ATM counter installed at and Mohit both residents of Rajiv the Mall Road Karnal near the Colony Karnal, Ravi a resident

Sandeep Kumar DSP told media

## 600 foreign nationals in Haryana to become Indian citizens under CAA law at gangster Bhau's native village

**SATISH HANDA** Chandigarh

After the approval CAA rule introduced by the government in centre, over 600 foreign nationals belonging to Hindu religion, which include maximum number of 459 persons migrated from Pakistan are presently residing in the state on Visa basis wil citizenship in the country as per the new Notification by government in centre. Information reveals that as many as 375 such foreign nationals migrated from other countries



seek permanent citizenship, migrated foreigners are residwill now be benefited and the ing in Faridabad district in the state home department has state which include 214 arrived already started preparing their from Pakistan, more than 40 update report with the help from Afghanistan and Banyears ago settled in Haryana of CID, which revealed that state with a ray of hope to the maximum number of such

gladesh and few from other

## Seven hours search operation by 200 policemen **PARVESH HANDA**

Seven hours door-to-door search operation, which started early morning hours at around 4 AM was conducted by nearly 200 policemen from CIA Staff, AVT and Reserve Forces last sunday at the native village of gangster Himanshu alias Bhau ori and Rasulpur in Roht district in Haryana state, in which raids were conducted in the houses of close-associates of the gangster and several youths suspected involved in criminal activities along with Bhau were taken in the custody. The raiding teams also seized a large number of documents related to land and properties illegally encroached by the gangster. Information reveals that police had combed operations twice against gangster Bhau earlier also, against whom as many as 26 FIRs allegedly involving serious criminal offences were registered at several police stations in Rohtak and Jhajjar districts. Police conducted raids at his hideouts in several places in Delhi and Haryana in the months April and June, 2023 and seized several doubtful documents. According to information,

the criminal record of Himanshu alias Bhau started at the younger stage when he was a minor of age below 18, when



he shot dead a youth and was arrested by the police. He was sent to a child reforms centre at Hisar when he managed to slip and meanwhile came in contact with Naveen Bali a member of Neeraj Bawana gang and he was involved in large number of criminal cases including murder, kidnappings, attempts to murder, extorsion, ransom demand and many other cases of serious nature. In order to avoid arrest by the police, Himanshu alias Bhau managed to flee abroad with the help of a fake passport. Information also reveals that presently Bhau is operating his criminal network in India with the help of his associates from America and sometime ago police increased

Rs 25000 to 1.5 lakh. However, police have not disclosed the outcome of the recent highly confidential search operation conducted last Sunday at his native village Ritoli and Rasulpur. However, according to Logesh Kumar ASP, five police teams of 200 policemen seized more than three dozen mobile phones from suspected persons, besides taking in custody few persons suspected involved in criminal activities, and the service-lance report of these mobile phones is being prepared. He said that the search operation was conducted under most confidential manners in which police teams started operations in the villages in early morning hours when residents were in the reward for his arrest from fast sleep.

### Plea challenging Haryana CM's appointment: HC issues notice seeking response of Centre, state government

**TARUN BHAJNI** Chandigarh

The Punjab and Haryana High Court is currently hearing a public interest litigation (PIL) challenging the appointment of Nayab Singh Saini as the new Chief Minister of Haryana. The court has issued notices to several parties, including the Centre, Harvana Government, Vidhan Sabha Speaker, and the Election Commission, asking for their responses.

The division bench, consisting of Acting Chief Justice G S

Sandhawalia and Justice Lapita Banerji, has adjourned the matter until April 30. A detailed order regarding the case is yet to be released by the High Court. The PIL, filed by Advocate Jagmohan Singh Bhatti, also questions the appointment of five new Cabinet ministers in Harvana, Bhatti argues that Navab Singh Saini, the sitting MP of Kurukshetra, was appointed as the Chief Minister without resigning from his parliamentary seat, which he claims is against constitutional

## Haryana cabinet expansion challenged in the High Court

Saini government in Hary-

ana has appointed eight new ministers in the state, seven of them are newcomers. None of the six independent MLAs who have offered their support to the new government in Haryana have been inducted into the new BJP government so far. Former Chief Minister Manohar Lal Khattar, Harvana Governor Bandaru Dattatraya, Ruling Chief Minister Nayab Singh Saini along with the newly inducted state ministers had the oath-taking ceremony at the Raj Bhawan in Chandigarh on Tuesday. A week after Chief Minister Nayab Singh Saini and five Cabinet colleagues took oath following a sudden change in the political leadership in Haryana, the state government expanded its ministry on Tuesday with the induction of eight ministers, seven of them included first-timers

The new ministers included in the Haryana Cabinet are: Badkhal MLA Seema Trikha, Panipat Rural MLA Mahipal Dhanda, Ambala City MLA Aseem Goel, Nangal Chaudhary MLA Abhey Singh Yadav, Thanesar MLA Subhash Sudha, Bawani Khera MLA Bishamber Singh Balmiki



and Sohna MLA Sanjay Singh who were sworn in as ministers of state (independent charge). Kamal Gupta, minister in the previous Khattar government cabinet was the first to be administered oath as a cabinet minister.

A writ has been filed in Punjab and Haryana High Court by an advocate Jagmohan Bhatti demanding immediate hearing in the case as regard illegal expansion of ministers in the state assembly having strength of 90 MLAs in the House, stating that there should be only 15% ministers, as such should have 13 ministers in the state as against 14 ministers took oath at present, which is merely violation of 91st Amendment of the Indian constitution Act. The applicant stated that the

Chief Minister Nayab Singh Saini, too, is against the law and notice in this regard has also been submitted in the court. According to applicant submitted writ in the court, there are 14 newly appointed ministers in the state government took oath, apart from the Advocate General also having rank of a Cabinet Minister, thus identifying total number of 15 ministers in the state as against 13, which is violation of 91st Amendment the Indian Constitution Act 91 of the constitution which require immediate hearing on the writ before the Bench of Acting Chief Justice. The applicant alleged that the expansion of ministers after the code of conduct announced in the

state was illegal.

#### in their mind, they will not dare to do wrong: Anil Vij **PARVESH HANDA** patriotism. Vij also raised slogans of "Inquilab Zindabad". He said Ambala that the statue of Shaheed-e-Former Home and Health Min-Azam Bhagat Singh will always remind people that this country ister of Haryana, Anil Vij said, was liberated by sacrificing lives.

"I believe that if people keep the memory of Shaheed-e-Azam Bhagat Singh in their mind, they will not dare to do wrong". Vij said that Ambala Cantonment pays homage to the martyrs, and our effort is to walk the path shown by the martyrs. Vij was interacting to the media persons on Saturday after unveiling the statue of the immortal martyr Shaheed-e-Azam Bhagat Singh in Ambala Cantonment today. On this occasion, the chant of "Inquilab Zindabad, Shaheed-e-Azam Bhagat Singh

Amar Rahe" filled everyone with

He informed that this statue, costing about 68 lakh rupees, has also been made by the same artists who made the statue of Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel.

Vij said that in the same way, we have also installed a statue of Subhash Chandra Bose in the heart of the Ambala Cantonment. This statue also inspires people to fight against the British government. He worked against the British government and raised arms. A memorial of international level is being built at a cost of 500



If people keep the memory of Shaheed-e-Azam Bhagat Singh

crores to remember them and to pay tribute, because the first freedom struggle started from Ambala in 1857.

Earlier, former Home Minister Anil Vij, addressing the people present on this occasion, said that a 12-foot-high statue of Shaheed-

e-Azam Bhagat Singh has been installed near the entrance gate of Ambala Cantt at a cost of 68 lakh rupees. This statue will communicate patriotism to everyone and will be a source of inspiration for us. He said that this statue has been made by renowned artist Ram V. Sutar. Who had made the statue of Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel in Gujarat. This statue, installed in the courtyard of the secretariat, will evoke feelings of patriotism in everyone. Shaheed-e-Azam Sardar Bhagat Singh stepped into the freedom struggle at a young age.

Vij continued that Shaheed-e-Azam Bhagat Singh had shown courage to fight for independence from a young age, inspiring the people of Hindustan. He introduced his bravery by throwing bombs and distributing leaflets on empty seats of the Parliament in front of the British government. If he had wanted to escape from there at that time, he could have escaped. There was complete security of the British there, but he did not escape, his purpose was to awaken the people of Hindustan for the independence of the country, and he stood there and continued to chant the slogans of revolution. He was later arrested and tried for the murder of British officer John Saunders, on March 23, 1930, Sardar Bhagat Singh, Rajguru and Sukhdev were sentenced to death by that terrorist government and they became martyrs for the country.

# 'Blessings of people with Arvind Kejriwal': AAP's Raghav Chadha on Delhi CM arrest

Rajya Sabha member Raghav Chadha has criticised the arrest of AAP convenor Arvind Kejriwal saying that the person who gave free electricity to lakhs of families and arranged free bus services for women has been

The AAP leader claimed that the blessings and love of 135 crore Indians are with Arvind Kejriwal, who, as per the Chadha, "was arrested under a conspiracy." The Enforcement Directorate arrested Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal in connection with the Delhi excise policy case on Thursday night, in which two senior AAP leaders are already in judicial custody.

The case pertains to alleged irregularities and money laundering in framing and imple-



menting the Delhi excise policy case 2022, which was later scrapped.

In a video message posted on X, the AAP leader said, "The person who gave education to lakhs of children in Delhi, provided better and free treatment

to its senior citizens, gave free electricity to lakhs of families, gave every household access to water, sent senior citizens to Teerth Yatra and arranged free bus services for mothers and sisters. Today that person, Arvind

Kejriwal, has been arrested."

time that Arvind Kejriwal ji would be arrested under a conspiracy. And it has been proven right. In this difficult situation, the love and blessings of 135 crore Indians are with Arvind Kejriwal ji," he said.

Meanwhile, Delhi Minister and AAP leader Gopal Rai announced that the battle has begun and said that the Aam Aadmi Party will hold a nationwide protest against the "illegal" arrest of Arvind Kejriwal.

"If the BJP thinks that they can finish the Aam Aadmi Party and threaten the entire Opposition by arresting Arvind Kejriwal, then they are wrong...A battle has begun. We have decided that we will stage a protest at the BJP headquarters at 10

### Rahul Gandhi Slams Centre for Freezing Elections in J&K Congress accounts, calls it criminal act

**KAVITA SHARMA** 

New Delhi

Former Congress President Rahul Gandhi today questioned the silence of the constitutional bodies like the courts and the Election Commission of India over the freezing of party's bank accounts during General Elections.

"Idea of India being the largest democracy in the world is a lie", said Gandhi in his fierce remarks at a press conference he addressed along with the party president Mallikarjun Kharge and Congress Parliamentary Party Chairperson, Ms Sonia Gandhi.

"Hate filled 'Asura-Shakti' has frozen our bank accounts to murder Indian democracy", he remarked. He said, imagine what will happen if a family or a business account is frozen, the family will starve and business will cripple. "That is precisely what has been done



with the Congress party, literally, two months before elections", he said, while adding, the party is not even able to book advertisement slots.

Gandhi observed that even if the accounts are unfrozen now, the damage has already been done. He pointed out, the party cannot support its workers and candidates nor

even can its leaders travel from one place to another.

Alleging that it has been orchestrated to cripple the party financially during elections, Rahul Gandhi said, it was being done at the behest of the Prime Minister and the Home Minister as nothing can happen in today's India without their knowledge.

before September: **Home Minister** 



**FW DESK** 

Union Minister of Home and Cooperation Amit Shah on Wednesday said that elections in Jammu and Kashmir would be held before Sep-

Speaking at the fourth edition of the CNN-News18 marquee leadership conclave Rising Bharat Summit 2024 - which was held in New Delhi from March 19 to 20, the Home Minister said that the elections in the union territory will be held before September.

Supreme Court has given the government deadline until September this year to hold

Home minister said that the three dynastic parties never Some outsiders entered the allowed democracy to flourish in Kashmir.

> "However, for the first time during the Prime Minister Narendra Modi government, more than 30,000 Panch and Sarpanches have been elected," Shah said. "I want to appeal to the Muslim brothers and sisters in Kashmir that if they want democracy to be deepened then do not vote for the three dynastic parties the Congress, the Peoples

#### **Omar Abdullah wants** simultaneous Lok Sabha, Assembly polls in J&K



Chief Minister Omar Abdullah on Friday urged the Election Commission of India to prioritize the restoration of full democracy in the Union Territory (UT)

Talking to reporters, Abdullah emphasized the importance of scheduling both Parliament and Assembly elections to ensure democratic representation in the region.

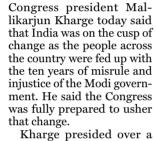
Abdullah expressed his lack of expectations from the Election Commission, asserting that their primary focus should be on facilitating the democratic process in Jammu and Kashmir. He highlighted the prolonged absence of Assembly elections in the region, stressing that it has been a decade since the last such electoral exercise took place.

"We have no expectations from the Election Commission. The Election Commission should play a role in its mission of bringing democracy. It has been ten years since Jammu and Kashmir has seen Assembly elections," Omar said.

Abdullah further questioned and the delay in holding Assembly elections in Jammu

## Congress promises to bring 'Manifesto of Hope' for India

New Delhi



meeting of the Congress Working Committee (CWC) here today. It was attended by the Congress Parliamentary Party Chairperson, Mrs Sonia Gandhi, former Congress President Rahul Gandhi, chief ministers of Himachal Pradesh & Telangana and other senior leaders and party functionaries.

In his opening remarks, Kharge said, the country was fervently seeking a change. He predicted that the guarantees currently being doled out by the Modi government would meet the same fate as that of the "India Shining" slogan of

Referring to the 63 days long Bharat Jodo Nyay Yatra, he said, both he and Rahul Gandhi addressed a number of public rallies in which they promised guarantees and commitments which included and the agenda for the party's the General Secretary Comduct of Lok Sabha elections ers), Yuva Nyay (justice for youth), Naari Nyay (justice for Rahul Gandhi said that the women), Shramik Nyay (jus- Manifesto is not merely a tice for workers) and Hisse- document but the roadmap





share). Every commitment for justice includes five further guarantees each

Congratulating Rahul Gandhi for Bharat Jodo Yatra and Bharat Jodo Nyay Yatra, he said, these were not just "political Yatras", but the largest "mass contact movement in our political history". "One can't ignore the fact

that nobody in our times has undertaken such a massive exercise", he pointed out, while adding, both Yatras immensely helped in bringing the issues concerning the common man on the national centrestage.

Kharge stressed on the need to spell out the five commitments of justice and the 25

dari nyay (justice for rightful based on dialogue with tens of thousands of people during the Bharat Jodo Yatra and Bharat Jodo Nyay Yatra. This is going to change the lives of all Indians through revolutionary guarantees like that of employment and proportionate participation and representation in the decision making process, he added.

Gandhi said, the Congress will fight the elections on the agenda of 'five resolutions of justice' with five guarantees each for every resolution making it a total of '25 guarantees' which will touch every Indian's life.

Briefing reporters after the meeting of the Congress Working Committee, Congress General Secretary, organizaguarantees across the country tion KC Venugopal along with munications Jairam Former Congress president and Pawan Khera said that the 25 guarantees will be the "game changer" of the ensuing

### Jamaat-e-Islami condemns attack on foreign students during namaz in Hostel of Gujarat University

KAVITA SHARMA

**KAVITA SHARMA** 

In a major development that

will have significant bearing

on General Elections in the

states of Uttar Pradesh, Bi-

har, Jharkhand and Jammu

and Kashmir, one sitting, two

former MPs and a sitting MLA

today joined the Congress at the party headquarters.

ers from other pa

Congress spokesperson and

New Delhi

The Vice President of Jamaate-Islami Hind, Prof Salim Engineer has condemned the attack on foreign students in a hostel in the Gujarat University. In a statement to the media, the JIH Vice President said, "Jamaat-e-Islami Hind condemns in the strongest terms the shocking incident that occurred in the campus of Gujarat University on Saturday night, where a group of



foreign students, were brutally assaulted for offering prayers during Ramadan. According to reports, five students were injured and two had to be hospitalized. These foreign students were offering namaz on the premises of the hostel.

Danish Ali from UP and Pappu Yadav

campus and misbehaved with the students followed by stone pelting and vandalism. It was surprising that the police did not act on time and allowed the perpetrators to commit arson within the university campus. Inaction of the police also should be investigated and the responsible officers should be punished. The inaction of the police present at the campus points out why

hatemongers and anti-social Democratic Party, and the National Conference. elements do not fear the law." MSMEs to Drive India's Green Transition, **Carbon Neutrality by 2070** 



Chairman of the Media and They include sitting BSP Publicity in the Communications Department of the AICC MP from Amroha Kanwar Pawan Khera, while briefing the reporters said that the joining of mir Lal Singh and three time going to be a continuous process as the winds of change have MLA and party whip of the started blowing. He pointed out, BJP in Jharkhand assembly



from Rajasthan and Haryana had joined the party earlier and more leaders were to follow.

Indian Micro and Small & Me-Danish Ali, five time MP from dium Enterprises (FISME) Bihar Pappu Yadav, two time organized a landmark international conference on "Climate Change Regulations & Green two sittings BJP MPs, one each Jai Prakash Patel. Delhi today.

Technology To Reduce Carbon Footprints in MSMEs" in New Speaking on the occasion, Mercy Epao, Joint Secretary-SME at the MSME Ministry, announced plans to establish two new institutes - the National Institution of MSMEs and Green Economy Technol-

ogy Centre in Hyderabad. These institutes will handhold MSMEs for documentation, exploring potential markets for green products, and transitioning from non-renewable to renewable sources," she said.

In his welcome address, Rakesh Chhabra, Vice-President, FISME and President, Rai Industries Association. emphasized the need to develop mechanisms to address the carbon footprint burden on MSMEs producing final products. "While assessing the carbon

footprint, the finished product tion and cooperation.

**NEW DELHI:** Under the aegis has to carry the entire carbon of the Ministry of MSME, the footprint accumulated through the value chain. The MSME **RAI Industries Association** (RIA) and the Federation of industry producing the final product is currently carrying this burden. By discussing production processes, we solution.

During the inaugural session, Vanessa Erogbogbo, Chief, Green and Inclusive Value Chains, Division of Sustainable and Inclusive Trade. ITC, Geneva, highlighted that decarbonization and trade are inter-linked concepts.

"Climate change is systematically shaping the trade prospects of countries worldwide. For India to achieve carbon neutrality by 2070, MSMEs will have to be drivers for the green transition," she stated.

The panelists and experts unanimously agreed on the need for internationally recognized certifications, standards, and a global regulatory body to ensure equitable outcomes as countries are at different stages of green technology transition.

They emphasized harmonizing trade and climate policies to drive innovation in the MSME sector through trans-

parent cross-border consulta-

### **Kerala Financial Corporation Raises** Rs 307 Crore For MSME Finance

rate of 8.89 per cent.

Additionally, KFC has outlined plans to further augment its financial resources, aiming to raise approximately Rs 700 crore from the bond market in

the upcoming fiscal year. KFC attributes its ability to

THIRUVANANTHAPURAM: to its distinguished AA credit rating from both the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) and SEBI-

The Kerala Financial Corporation (KFC) has successfully secured Rs 307 crore for financing initiatives aimed at bolstering the Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs) sector within the state. These funds are secured through Non-Convertible Debentures (NCDs) with 10-vear term bond issuance. facilitated via the BSE Electronic Book Platform (EBP), carries a competitive coupon

secure funds at favourable rates

approved rating agencies. Sanjay Kaul, Chairman and Managing Director, KFC, highlighted the market's confidence in the corporation's financial robustness, evident in the successful mobilisation of funds through NCDs. He emphasised that the lower coupon rate and robust investor de-

mand underscore the market's

trust in KFC's sustainability-

driven approach. He stated, "The lower coupon and strong demand from

investors show the market confidence in the financial strength of KFC. It is the success of our sustainabilitydriven strategy.'

## Has BJP deployed RSS to counter farmers' agitation?



portedly anti-farmer statement of RSS

second-in-command, the farmers' union have become so furious that they have even rebuked the RSS by stating – 'the betrayer of freedom struggle, RSS has no right to question the patriotism of farmers.' Vijoo Krishnan General Secretary and Dr Ashok Dhawale

President of All India Kisan Sabha (AIKS), on March 18, referred that in the recently concluded Akhil Bharativa Pratinidhi Sabha of the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS) at Nagpur, Dattatreya Hosabale, its General Secretary, has denigrated the ongoing farmers' protests in Punjab and Haryana by terming them as anti-national. Citing media reports, wherein Hosabale, the second-in-command of the RSS, demonstrated by Hosabale to in his official General Secretary's report, reportedly placed that "disruptive forces" are behind the farm protests. AIKS alleges that Hosabale also added that there are well orchestrated plans imperialism and denigrating the to spread "separatist terrorism" in Punjab under the guise of the farmers' movement. "This of farmers which has forced pro-corporate Farm Acts."

#### Farmer unions unearthing the **RSS history Roots**

Unearthing the history of RSS, AIKS, a major body of farmers, divulges that various official inquiry commission reports have identified the nefarious role of the RSS in inciting communal riots. "This very reason led to its ban in 1948 after Mahatma Gandhi's assassination and in 1992 after the demolition of the Babri Masjid. The role played by the Sangh Parivar functionaries in the 1984 anti-Sikh pogrom as well as in the 2002 Gujarat genocide are well documented. AIKS calls upon all patriotic forces to isolate and expose fascistic elements led by the RSS who are spreading canards against the farmers' movement.

Criticizing RSS over its reportedly anti-farmer stand and statement, All India Kisan Sabha (AIKS), a part of Samyukta Kisan Morcha (SKM) has commented that it is of the firm opinion that the audacity demonise the farmers' movement in general and the Punjab movement in particular is a loyal continuum of the RSS' trajectory of collaborating with British greatest anti-imperialist martyrs like Bhagat Singh

AIKS alleges that when canard spread by the betrayers the entire country was on the of the freedom struggle is out streets condemning the hangof vengeance against the incesing of Bhagat Singh, Rajguru sant SKM-led united movement and Sukhdev, the RSS and other Hindutva outfits were the Narendra Modi-led BJP busy denouncing them. The Government to withdraw the RSS which couldn't produce imperialist block led by the USA a single freedom fighter worth to contain the militant peasant a single freedom fighter in the expose the Corporate-Criminal-



the name opted to belittle the immense sacrifices of these revolutionaries as "failure", as clearly demonstrated in Golwalkar's "Bunch of Thoughts".

AIKS has got outraged to note that the RSS has used the term "disruptive forces" to characterise the patriotic farmers of Punjab and Haryana who are fighting against the corporatisation of agriculture. AIKS alleges that the reality is that it is Hindutva terrorism that is acting as the most disruptive internal threat to the unity and diversity of the country. Hindutva fascistic politics is closely aligned with international finance capital and big business which is threatening Indian farmers. AIKS reminds that RSS should not forget its history of collusion with the imperialist forces and with imperialist agencies like the CIA. CIA Agent J A Curran, who enioved unusual access to the top brass of RSS from 1949 to 1951, in his book had identified RSS as a tool that would help the and workers' movement in independent India. By demonising the farmers' movement against corporatisation, RSS is showing its support for imperialist forces in their project to devour Indian agriculture.

Haryana SKM has also sharply reacted to the RSS stand and criticised this stating the statement as highly ing disruption.

SKM leader, Dr. Inderjeet Sabha of RSS has in his narrative accused that terrorism and separatism were raising their 'ugly head' under the garb of farmers movement in Punjab.

disparaging and outrageous remarks by the RSS in Nagpur branding the farmers struggle of Punjab and Haryana of caus-Singh sharing a statement stated that the General Secretary of Rashtriya Pratinidhi

"While taking a very strong view of RSS insinuations in its bid to tarnish the image of the farmers struggle the SKM has recalled the treacherous role of RSS during freedom struggle as a result of that there is not ranks of BJP and RSS. True to their pro-British collaborationist historical legacy the BJP is still in alliance with the communal -corporate and corrupt nexus", divulged Dr. Singh.

Haryana SKM has also called upon all farmers organisations and sections fighting for the defence of their livelihood to expose the real face of RSS among people and teach them a lesson to save the country.

## Why the RSS in fray to attack

It is pertinent to remind that the farmers are on agitational path for not implementing the agreement with SKM dated 9.12.2021 regarding MSP@ C2+50% with guaranteed procurement to all crops, Comprehensive Loan Waiver for farmers despite 1.00.474 farmers committed suicide (2014-2022), Rapid Privatisation of Electricity, Protecting the Ajay Mishra Teni, Union (MoS) Home Affairs- the Killer of Farmers at Lakhimpur Kheri, as alleged by farmers.

In its letter of Resolution issued at Ramlila Ground Mahapanchayat, on March 14, SKM has called a country wide mass protest against BJP under its slogan- "EXPOSE, PROTEST. PUNISH BJP / BJP KA POLE KHOLO, VIRODH KARO, SA-JAA DO" and Observe 23rd and March 24 as 'Save Democracy Day' in all villages to Protest BJP giving Kheri seat to the alleged killer of Lakhimpur Kheri farmers, Ajay Mishra

Teni Union (MoS) Home and

Corrupt nexus under BJP. Just after two days of farmers' call, RSS has reportedly denigrated the ongoing farmers' protests in Punjab and Haryana by terming them as anti-national.

But BJP leadership is keep-

ing mum over the farmers agi-

tational program. Then why did RSS react so sharply? Doesn't it indicate that BJP has deployed its commanding RSS wing to counter the farmers attack on the party? Political analysts deduce that as BJP, being a political party, fears that attacking the farmers directly at this crucial junction, when the Lok Sabha election clouds are hovering over the country, may further enrage the farmer community and it can harm its vote share. However, how many votes the BJP will fetch, can't be predicted at this time, because farmers remain farmers till they are in Delhi, as and when they come to their villages they convert into the village groups and vote as per their village politics forgetting what they have undertaken in Delhi. That is why, the farmer unions are keeping the iron hot through their regular agitational programs. How much they will succeed in retaining the farmers as farmers till they press the EVM button, which can oust the BJP from reigning the country. Let us see which way the wind blows.

Jag Mohan Thaken is a Senior Journalist, Columnist & Political Analyst, views are personal



## Export leap helps India deal with global headwinds

n a year fraught with economic challenges and logistical nightmares, India's goods exports have delivered a welcome sur-■ prise. With an 11.9% jump in February, reaching a staggering \$41.4 billion, the nation has witnessed its healthiest growth in exports in 20 months. This achievement is not just about numbers; it's a beacon of resilience in uncertain times. February's performance marks only the third time in two years that India's exports have crossed the formidable \$40 billion threshold. This surge is particularly noteworthy, given it outpaced the average \$35.4 billion export tally observed in the first ten months of the fiscal year. The backdrop to this achievement includes daunting challenges such as disruptions in the Red Sea and a droughtstricken Panama Canal, which have constricted key trading routes, elevating both the cost and time of shipment. While recent trade figures might suggest India is navigating these logistical hurdles with ease, the reality could be more complex. Some of February's success could be attributed to earlier dispatches, now reaching their destinations through longer, alternate routes. This scenario suggests a blend of backlogged orders coming to fruition and signs of demand picking up, despite the high interest rates casting a shadow over global market conditions. Despite a challenging narrative for exports in 2023-24, with electronics goods exports barely budging, policymakers remain cautiously optimistic. Yet, the latest readings for electronic components trade and a marginal growth in electronics imports and exports in February underscore the need for vigilance and support for sectors like textiles, and gems and jewellery, which are critical for employment and economic stability. As India celebrates its export milestone, the focus must remain on navigating the lingering challenges in global trade. The trade deficit, though widened by a significant jump in imports, including pricey gold, should not distract from the pressing need to bolster support for exporters.

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"A fertile soil alone does not carry agriculture to perfection." Elias Hasket Derby

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MK NARAYANAN FEARS AI'S INFLUENCE ON 2024'S GLOBAL ELECTIONS COULD UNDERMINE DEMOCRACIES.



## Generative AI puts democracy to test

e rapid development of Artificial Intelligence (AI) models suggests that we are at an inflection point in the history of human progress. The speed with which the development of newer skills is taking place suggests that the day is not far off when Generative Artificial Intelligence (GAI) will transform into Artificial General Intelligence (AGI), which can mimic the capabilities of human beings. Such a

situation could revolutionise our ideas about what to expect from machines. Breakthroughs in the AI domain will bring about a new chapter in human existence, including the way people react to both facts and falsehoods.

The potential of AI is already clear. Many such as Sam Altman of OpenAI in the United States, believe that it is the most important technology in history. AI protagonists further believe that AI is set to turbocharge, and dramatically improve, the standard of living of millions of human beings. It is, however, unclear, as of now, whether, as many Doomsday savers aver, whether AI would undermine human values and that advanced AI could pose 'existential risks'.

#### Al and the electoral landscape

With the seven-phase general election in India having been announced, and to be held from April 19 to June 1, 2024, political parties and the electorate cannot, however, afford to ignore the AI dimension. This year, elections are also scheduled to be held (according to some reports) in as many as 50 other countries across the globe, apart from, and including, India, Mexico, the United Kingdom (by law, the last possible date for a general election is January 28, 2025) and the United States.

These elections are set to alter the fate of millions of people, and policymakers and the electorate need to ponder over the positive and negative impacts of this new technology. Rapid technological breakthroughs in AI (especially its latest manifestation, such as Generative AI, that provides dynamic simulations and mimics real world interactions) carry their own burdens. It may be too early to fully contemplate the possible impact of AGI- AI systems that simulate the capability of human beings — but all this is indicative of yet another dimension to electoral dynamics that cannot be ignored.

It may, hence, not be wrong to consider the



elections of 2024 as a curtain-raiser to whether AI and its offerings (such as Generative AI) would prove to be a game changer. The world is by now aware that AI models such as ChatGPT, Gemini Copilot are being employed in many fields, but 2024 would be a test case as to whether AI's newer models could alter electoral behaviours and verdicts as well. The good news, perhaps, is that those wishing to employ Generative AI to try and transform the electoral landscape do not have adequate time to fine-tune their AI models. It would, however, still be a mistake to underestimate the extent to which AI could impact the electoral landscape this time as well. What might not happen in 2024, may well happen in the next round of elections, both in India and worldwide.

A recently published Pew Survey (if it can be treated as reliable) indicates that a majority of Indians support 'authoritarianism'. Those employing AI could well have a field day in such a milieu to further confuse the electorate. As it is, many people are already referring to the elections in 2024 worldwide as the 'Deep Fake Elections', created by AI software. Whether this is wholly true or not, the Deep Fake syndrome appears inevitable, given that each new election lends itself to newer and newer techniques of propaganda, all with the aim of confusing and confounding the electorate. From this, it is but a short step to the inevitability of Deep Fakes.

#### Tacking AI 'determinism'

AI technology makes it easier to enhance falsehoods and enlarge mistaken beliefs. Disinformation is hardly a new methodology or technology, and has been employed in successive elections previously. What is new is that sophisticated AI tools

will be able to confuse the electorate to an extent not previously known or even envisaged. The use of AI models to produce reams of wrong information, apart from disinformation, accompanied by the creation of near realistic images of something that does not exist, will be a whole new experience. What can be said with some degree of certainty is that in 2024, the quality and quantity of disinformation is all set to overwhelm the electorate. What is more worrying is that the vast majority

of such information would be incorrect. Hyper realistic Deep Fakes employed to sway voters, and micro targeting are set to scale new heights.

The potential of AI to disrupt democracies is, thus, very considerable. Simply being aware of the disruptive nature of AI and AI fakes is not enough. It may be necessary, for democracies in particular, to prevent such tactics from distorting the 'thought behaviour' of the electorate. AI deployed tactics will tend to make voters more mistrustful, and it is important to introduce checks and balances that would obviate efforts at AI 'determinism'. Notwithstanding all this, and while being mindful of the potential of AGI, panic is not warranted. There are many checks and balances available that could be employed to negate some of AI's more dangerous attributes

The wide publicity given to a spate of recent inaccuracies associated with Google is a timely reminder that AI and AGI cannot be trusted in each and every circumstance. There has been public wrath worldwide over Google AI models, including in India, for their portrayal of persons and personalities in a malefic manner, mistakenly or otherwise. These reflect well the dangers of

Inconsistencies and undependability still stalk many AI models and pose inherent dangers to society. As its potential and usage increases in geometric proportion, threat levels are bound to go up. As of now, even as the potential of AI remains very considerable, it tends to be undependable. More so, its 'mischief potential' cannot be ignored.

As nations increasingly depend on AI solutions for their problems, it is again important to recognise what many AI experts label as AI's 'hallucinations'. In simple terms, what these experts are implying endorse AI systems in many instances. What they further imply, specially in the case of AGI, is that it tends at times to make up things in order to solve new problems. These are often probabilistic in character and cannot be accepted ipso factor as accurate. The implication of all of this is that too much reliance on AI systems at this stage of development may be problematic. The stark reality, though, is that there is no backtracking from what AI or AGI promises, even if results are less dependable than one would like.

We cannot also afford to ignore other existential threats associated with AI. The dangers on this account pose an even greater threat than harm arising from bias in design and development. There are real concerns that AI systems, oftentimes, tend to develop certain inherent adversarial capabilities. Suitable concepts and ideas have not yet been developed to mitigate them, as of now. The main types of adversarial capabilities, overshadowing other inbuilt weaknesses are: 'poisoning' that typically degrades an AI model's ability to make relevant predictions; 'back dooring' that causes the model to produce inaccurate or harmful results; and even 'evasion' that entails resulting in a model misclassifying malicious or harmful inputs thus detracting from an AI model's ability to perform its appointed role. There are possibly other problems is well, but it may be too early to enumerate them with any degree of probability.

#### India's handling of Al

Elections apart, India being one of the most advanced countries in the digital arena, again needs to treat AI as an unproven entity. While AI brings benefits, the nation and its leaders should be fully aware of its disruptive potential. This is pecially true of AGI, and they should act with due caution. India's lead in digital public goods could be both a benefit as well as a bane, given that while AGI provides many benefits, it can be

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GAUTAM BAMBAWALE SAYS BHUTAN-INDIA LEADERSHIP TRUST SIGNIFICANTLY STRENGTHENS BILATERAL RELATIONS.

## Ties that epitomise India's neighbourhood first policy

ople have always marvelled at how ittle Bhutan with an area of 38,394 square kilometre and a population of 7.7 lakh as compared with its giant neighbour India with an area of 3.28 million sq.km and a population of 140 crores have been the closest of partners and the best

of friends over the past 50 years and more.

The answer is quite simple. Both nations look to each other as equals, we treat each other with the utmost respect and we have long realised that size does not really make a difference in relations between two sovereign nation states. Thus, India has constantly respected Bhut. nese identity, Bhutan's unique religious practices and its desire to be economically prosperous while retaining its own way of life. On its part, Bhutan has long known that there is no real threat to its sovereignty or identity from its southern flank. Hence, it has looked to India to help it grow, develop and prosper. India has lived up to this expectation. Over the decades this has developed into a unique level of trust amongst the leadership of the two countries. It has been in evidence in the recent past.

#### The Gelephu project

The King of Bhutan paid a visit to India in November 2023 during which he hinted at his plans for a Mindfulness City at Gelephu in southern Bhutan. It is to be like a Special Economic Zone to attract foreign investment and advance prosperity for that nation. Naturally, India, including its business



in this effort. Simultaneously, the Gelephu Mindfulness City is to keep sustainability, well-being and environmental concerns at the forefront. Such a project is expected to lead the people of Bhutan to higher income levels while allaying any concerns about its impact on Bhutan as a carbon negative country. Gelephu city is expected to focus on human well-being too with an emphasis on yoga, rest and recreation, spa therapies and mental relaxation channels.

The visit last week by the Prime Minister of Bhutan to India was a follow-up to the king's earlier visit and there were excellent discussions with Prime Minister Narendra Modi as well as the President of India, Droupadi Murmu. This week, Mr. Modi is to pay a return visit to Bhutan. We must understand that any relationship, whether it is between two individuals or between two nations, needs constant tending, regular dialogue and a lot of care and cooperation. The and India to each other's nations is a manifestation of this attention placed on the relationship by both overnments.

This is a good augury for the continued growth and development of India-Bhutan ties. It epitomises India's Neighbourhood First policy approach.

Prime Ministers of Bhutan

#### is expected to play a significant role The anchor of hydropower cooperation

Hydropower cooperation is the bedrock of India's relations with Bhutan. Several cooperative hydroprojects have been completed and commissioned by the two governments which supply clean electricity to India and provide Thimphu with a stream of revenue due to which it has graduated out of the Least Developed Country status. The delayed Punatsangchhu-II hydropower project is expected to be completed in 2024 — yet another successful example of the government-to-government model of cooperation in hydropower.

In recent years, a new joint venture model was developed for the construction of hydroprojects between India and Bhutan, but none of the proposed five projects has really taken off. Perhaps, it is time to acknowledge that this new proposed model is flawed and there is a need to go back to the drawing board to work out a more practical and potentially successful new model for hydroprojects.

India has also been a major development as-

sistance partner to Bhutan and contributed Rs 5,000 crore to its 12th Five Year Plan which just concluded. Critical in this process of development assistance is the fact that India does not merely undertake projects which are of benefit to it but pays a lot of attention to the priorities of the Bhutanese people so that projects of direct benefit to them are constructed. Such confabulation and discussion is an integral part of the successful partnership for prosperity between New Delhi and Thimphu. It is critical that this model continues in the future too.

#### Measures to consider

India must contribute to the success of the Gelephu Mindfulness City and can perhaps consider the following measures: commence direct flights between Mumbai/Delhi and Gelephu; provide our technology and knowledge in building hard infrastructure to Bhutan (the private sector will take the lead); encourage high-end Indian tourists and businesspersons to visit Gelephu in controlled numbers; Encourage Indian businesses to set up shop in the city.

Gelephu is next to remote parts of West Bengal and Assam and the success of the Mindfulness City will have positive socio-economic spillovers for these geographies as well. It will provide yet another example of the win-win cooperation between India and Bhutan.

Gautam Bambawale is a former Indian Ambassador to Bhutan and is currently the trustee of the think-tank, Pune  $International\ Centre.$ Views are personal.



BOOKS: REVIEW

## New book helps navigate the soul's dark chambers

n the realm of contemporary fiction, Aparna Sanyal's İnstruments of Torture emerges as a haunting anthology that ventures deep into the psychological labyrinths of the human psyche. Published by HarperCollins, this collection of stories is a bold exploration of the dark corners of the mind, where the lines between reality and nightmare blur. Each narrative, ingeniously named after medieval torture devices, serves as a metaphor for the internal torment and existential dread that define the human condition

The thematic brilliance of Sanyal's work lies in its ability to use historical instruments of physical agony as conduits for delving into psychological torment. In stories such as The Rack, where a child is subjected to hormonal treatment to cure dwarfism, or The Judas Cradle, depicting a perilous love affair, Sanyal skillfully intertwines the physical with the psychological, suggesting that the greatest tortures are often self-inflicted or society-imposed. Sanyal's prose is described by Na-

mita Gokhale as carrying "tenderness in its brutality," a testament to the author's ability to navigate the complexities of human emotion with a gentle yet unflinching hand. Sonali Bendre praises the collection for taking readers on a "hypnotic journey to hell and back," highlighting Sanyal's mastery over twisted tales that probe the darkest facets of human nature.

Instruments of Torture is not just a collection of stories; it is an introspective journey that challenges readers to confront their deepest fears and darkest desires. The mirror it holds up to the subconscious reveals not just individual vulnerabilities but also societal flaws—our collective obsession with normativity, the cruelty of unattainable standards, and the violence of suppression and repression. The book's inception, as shared

by Sanyal, traces back to a physical exhibition of medieval torture devices, a macabre inspiration that beautifully encapsulates the essence of the stories within. This origin story adds a layer of intrigue, hinting at the depth of research and the period of gestation these tales underwent in the author's mind before taking shape on paper.

Prerna Gill, commissioning editor t HarperCollins India, aptly describes the book as "serrated yet mesmerizing," a work that draws the reader's imagination towards the wonders and horrors of the human psyche. This sentiment captures the essence of Sanyal's anthology—it is a work that mesmerizes even as it disquiets, a rare feat in contemporary literature.

This anthology marks Sanyal's first foray into fiction, building on her established reputation as a poet with a keen eye for the macabre and the whimsical. Her debut book, Circus Folk & Village Freaks, laid the ground-



Instruments of **Torture** by Aparna Sanyal HarperCollins

work for her exploration of the fringes of society and the mind, themes that she delves into with greater darkness and depth in Instruments of Torture.

The book is a compelling read that does not merely entertain but also provokes thought and introspection. It is a mirror reflecting not just the individual reader's subconscious but the collective psyche of society. With its intricate blend of historical references, psychological insights, and lyrical prose, the book stands out as a significant contribution to contemporary fiction and a must-read for those willing to explore the depths of the human mind and the dark side of human history. As we close the pages of this haunting collection, we are left with a deeper understanding of the complexities of the human soul and the instrumental roles our inner demons play in shaping our realities. Furthermore, Instruments of

Torture transcends the traditional boundaries of fiction, inviting readers into a participatory experience that demands reflection and, at times, selfexamination. The stories, while rooted in the grotesque and the unsettling, are imbued with a profound sense of empathy for the human condition. Sanyal's narrative technique, which seamlessly blends the real with the surreal, compels the reader to question the very nature of reality and the constructs of the mind. This collection not only entertains

but also educates and enlightens, offering a lens through which to view our own lives and the societal norms that bind and sometimes constrict us. Through this intricate tapestry of pain and introspection, Sanyal achieves a rare harmony between the aesthetic and the therapeutic, making Instruments of Torture a seminal work in the exploration of human consciousness and a significant milestone in the landscape of Indian English literature.

## Interest subsidy cap for MSME exporters to remain Rs 2.5 crore in Q1 of FY24-25

will maintain a cap of Rs 2.5 crore on interest subsidies for individual export units during the first quarter of the upcoming fiscal year 2024-25.

The Directorate General of Foreign Trade (DGFT) issued a notification on Wednesday, specifying that the Rs 2.5 crore cap per Importer Exporter Code (IEC) will remain in effect until June 30, 2024, covering the quarter starting from April 1,

President of Federation of Indian Micro and Small &



Prashant Patel has expressed satisfaction on the development. MSMEs to maintain competi-

Medium Enterprises (FISME) "Interest Equalisation Scheme is an important tool for Indian nations in sectors where margins are razor thin in MSME dominated sectors such as apparel and leather", he added.

Bengaluru

Indian market by bringing AI

and hyper connectivity to its

tech-savvy consumers. He also

invited consumers to come and

experience Samsung's latest AI

innovations across its product

portfolio, from televisions and

digital appliances to smart-

"AI will enable cd technolo-

gies to improve people's daily

lives while always remaining

non-intrusive and in the back-

ground. With our model of

open collaboration, we want to

bring AI and hyper-connectiv-

ity to all our consumers. India

is the next big playground for

AI and our flagship Samsung

BKC store is an embodiment

of our 'AI for All' vision and

will showcase 'One Samsung'.

Jong-Hee (JH) Han Said.

This measure falls under the widely utilised Interest Equalisation Scheme (IES) targeting specific sectors and Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs).

This decision follows the continuation of the capping policy introduced earlier in the current fiscal year, aimed at ensuring broader accessibility to the

#### to Tech-savvy Indian Consumers : CEO, JH Han Jong-Hee (JH) Han, Vice Chairman, CEO and Head of the Device eXperience (DX) Division at Samsung Electronics, visited Samsung BKC at Jio World Plaza, Mumbai for the first time since the store's opening and underlined the Company's commitment to the

AI vision in reality and experience how smarter, better experiences will redefine how

Samsung to Bring Al and Hyper Connectivity

Earlier this year, Han unveiled Samsung's 'AI for All' vision at CES, showcasing how AI will enable people to experience their devices more intuitively and conveniently than ever before. As part of its 'AI for All' vision, Samsung in January unveiled Galaxy AI in its new Galaxy S24 smartphone series.

Han said, "India has a large population of tech-savvy young consumers that inspire us to innovate. Here, thousands of young, enterprising youth work At the various zones of the at our R&D centres to bring cut-

AI to the world. We are proud of them,"

Samsung recently inaugu-

rated the connected lifestyle experience store Samsung BKC where consumers can experience 'One Samsung'. This entails Samsung's latest AI innovations and how it powers the Company's connected devices ecosystem. The Company has been in

India for over 28 years, having begun operations here in 1995. Samsung continues to be deeply committed to India with two state-of-the-art manufacturing plants, three R&D centres and one design centre that employ thousands of people.

#### **Mediation Act** 2023 has crucial role in ADR

DOMINICK RODRIGUES

The Mediation Act 2023 will play a crucial role in meeting the argent need for alternative dispute resolution (ADR) methods that are quicker, less costly and more flexible than the traditional adversarial system in India's already burdened judiciary sys-

> Roopa Shetty, Founder, Lex Ïndia with

its dense pop-

tem, according

innumerable disputes that remain backlogged in the judiciary system where the District judiciary alone had 44.79 million pending cases in January 2024, while the High Courts had a backlog of 6.2 million cases in that period and the Supreme Court had 69,766 cases pending by July, 2023.

The Mediation Act 2023 which brought in strategic amendments to the Mediation Bill 2021 -- highlights a significant evolution in India's approach to dispute resolution, which further leverages technology to enhance

#### **ED** action against **Pharma Company** alleged over Rs 1626 crore fraud



**Enforcement Department** (ED) registered a case against a pharmaceuticals Chandigarh based firm Parabolic Drugs Company under Prevention of Money laundering Act (PMLA) against three persons Pranav Gupta, Vineet Gupta both promoters of the company and the Chartered Accountant S.K. Bansal about six months ago. According to a 225 page report submitted by ED, the comapny allegedly cheated 12 banks for amounts worth Rs 1626.74 crore by obtaining loans on the basis of fake documents and failed to pay back the amount, which was invested

ED investigations revealed that most of the firms in which the money was invested were in the names of their near and dears as well as staff members shown as director of the firms and surprisingly according to ED investigation the driver of their firm Harvinder Pal who was totlaly uneducated was shown as director of 14 firms and when he was offered job in the com-

by them in another firm.

# Snapchat's Debut Event in Bengaluru Spotlights Snap's Unique Appeal for Youth to Connect with Friends and Family

ARUN KUMAR RAO

Bengaluru

Snap Inc. hosted its debut event in Bengaluru, underscoring the city's significance as a key growth region and unveiling the platforms unique appeal to the local youth. During the event, Snap leadership delved into the platform>s growth trajectory, distinctive features, leadership in Augmented Reality (AR), and the compelling reasons why brands are increasingly choosing Snapchat to connect with an exclusive and diverse audience. The attendees also got to experience Augmented Reality try-on booths that offered attendees an opportunity to experience this innovative technology firsthand, providing various try-on experiences, including fashion among youth nationwide2.



and beauty

In India, Snapchat boasts of a 200 million strong user base1. A recent YouGov survey found that in Bengaluru, 85% of Snapchatters use the app daily. The study also revealed that 78% of Indians in Bengaluru appreciate Snapchat's ability to facilitate fun connections with friends and family, while 66% commend its role in relieving the pressure of posting content for likes and shares – reaffirming its status as the go-to

Commenting on the Young India opportunity and Snapchat's vision for growth in India, Pulkit Trivedi, Managing Director, India, Snap Inc., said, "India is home to 20% of Gen Z worldwide, presenting an unmatched opportunity for brands and businesses to tap into the priorities and technological engagements of this influential demographic. Snapchat offers a unique platform for engaging these young audiences in creative ways, standing out as a vibrant hub for dynamic users who are not readily accessible on other platforms. Our commitment is to deepen our connection with Young India, making Snapchat their go-to platform for authentic self-expression, real connections, and innovative brand interac-

#### for India as manufacturing hub **NEW DELHI:** Government of India (GoI) has approved a scheme

Gol approves e-vehicle policy

to promote India as a manufacturing destination so that e-vehicles (EV) with the latest technology can be manufactured in the country.

The policy is designed to attract investments in the e-vehicle space by reputed global EV manufac-

This will provide Indian consumers with access to latest technology, boost the Make in India initiative, strengthen the EV ecosystem by promoting healthy competition among EV players leading to high volume of production, economies of scale, lower cost of production, reduce imports of crude oil, lower trade deficit, reduce air pollution, particularly in cities, and will have a positive impact on health and environment.

- The policy entails the following: Minimum Investment required:
- Rs. 4150 Cr (USD 500 Million) No limit on maximum invest-

Timeline for manufacturing: 3 years for setting up manufacturing facilities in India, and to start commercial production of e-vehicles,



addition (DVA) during manufacturing: A localization level of 25% by the 3rd year and 50% by the 5th year will have to be achieved

The customs duty of 15% (as applicable to CKD units) would be applicable on vehicles of minimum CIF value of USD 35,000 and above for a total period of 5 years subject to the manufacturer setting up manufacturing facilities in India within a 3-year

The duty foregone on the total number of EV allowed for import would be limited to the investment made or Rs. 6484 Cr (equal to incentive under PLI scheme) whichever is lower. Maximum 40,000 EVs at the rate of not more than 8,000 per year would be permissible he investment is of USD 800.

#### Indian direct selling takes a leap stride, grows at 12%, crosses Rs. 21000 crores: survey average growth (CAGR) of the

New Delhi

Blooming back with a leap stride, the Indian direct selfing industry has registered Year-On-Year (YOY) growth of more than 12%, with the gross industry turnover at Rs 21,282 crore in 2022-23, according to an annual survey report released by the Indian Direct Selling Association (IDSA) here on

Wednesdav. The survey, compiled by leading market research company KANTAR, released by G. Kamala Vardhan Rao, Chief Executive Officer, Food Safety and Standards Authority of India (FSSAI) in a function here. Shri Rao took this opportunity to congratulate IDSA on releasing this report.

According to the report, there has been a comprehensive improvement in all areas of the direct selling industry and the total sales have increased by Rs was partially marred by the pandemic. The

direct selling business in the four years from the year 2019-20 to 2022-23 has remained at 8.3 percent.

The Northern region continues to take the lead with 30% of turnover, followed by the East with 25%, West 22%, South 15%, and North East 9%. Maharashtra led at the top with 12%, followed by West Bengal and Uttar Pradesh with 10% each among the states, the survey highlights.

Wellness and nutraceutical products remained the preferred segment, accounting for 73.5% and cosmetics and personal care 11.3% of the gross turnover. The industry has recorded an 8.3% CAGR over four years, with the number of active direct sellers reaching around 86 lakhs, from 84 lakh in 2021-22, the survey says. Vivek Katoch, Chairperson, IDSA, said, "The report showcases an encouraging trend for the direct selling industry in 2252 crore compared to the year the country. The growth trajeca surge over the years.

#### Samsung Launch Mid-Premium Segment Galaxy A55 5G, Galaxy A35 in Bengaluru **ARUN KUMAR RAO** Ghufran Alam addressing

Bangalore

Samsung, India's largest consumer electronics brand, announced the launch of Galaxy A55 5G and Galaxy A35 5G with awesome innovations in Bengaluru today. The new A series devices have multiple flagship-like features including Gorilla Glass Victus+ protection, camera features enhanced by AI, and a tamperresistant security solution, the Samsung Knox Vault, amongst many other new features.

During the Launch Ghufran Business, Samsung India, said years, showcasing its immense mid-premium (INR 30,000-INR on the front and back, he added addition (DVA) within 5 years at Million or more.



popularity among India's MZ consumers. The launch of Galaxy A55 5G & A35 5G reinforces our commitment to make flagship-Alam, Senior Director, MX like innovations accessible to all. Galaxy A55 5G & A35 5G will "Galaxy A series has been the help us consolidate our leaderhighest-selling smartphone ship in the 5G smartphone seg-

time, Galaxy A55 5G gets a metal frame and Galaxy A35 5G gets a premium glass back. These phones are available in three trendy colours - Awesome Lilac, Awesome Ice blue and Awesome Navy, and are rated IP67, which means they can withstand up to 30 minutes in 1 meter of fresh water. They are also built to resist dust and sand. With a 6.6-inch FHD+ Super AMOLED Display and minimized bezels, the 120Hz refresh rate provides extremely smooth performance. These smartphones come with Flagship like durability with Corning

Media on Flagship like Design

and Durability said," For the first

ber of manufacturing facilities of pharmaceutical products from almost 2,000 in 1970 to about 24,000 in 1995. Patent Act provisions on Process Patents helped Indian Pharmaceutical Industry to tap the opportunity presented by off-patented drugs. Many blockbuster drugs (patented drug that is able to generate more than US \$1 Bn sales annually) which were patented drugs, became off-patent, e.g., Lipitor of Pfizer, Advair of GlaxoSmithKline, Nexium from AstraZeneca, to name a few. Companies from India tapped opportunities by filing for Abbreviated New Drug Applications (ANDA) approvals. ANDA approval meant that in order to establish safety and efficacy, there was need to primarily demonstrate the bioequivalence of the product. In 1997, share of Indian companies in total number of ANDA approvals was mere 1.7 per cent. In 2003, Indian Pharmaceutical firms filed 73 ANDAs with the U.S. Food and Drug Administration, i.e., 20%

From time to time, many many countries, e.g., in 2001, available at less than \$1 per day

of pharmaceuticals went up Indian pharmaceutical com- API & FDF) registered with C. James (2021, February) in their paper observed that India had price competitiveness in most of the pharmaceutical products over major exporters of pharmaceutical products in 1996. For this analysis, they had clubbed exports of all formula-

tions into twenty one pharmaceutical product groups. The setting up of Pharmaceuticals Export Promotion Council of India (Pharmexcil) on 12.05.2004 by the Ministry of Commerce and Industry with the mandate to promote pharmaceutical exports, played pivotal role. Products and services falling under the purview of the Council include bulk drugs, finished dosage forms, nutraceuticals, surgicals, biologics, collaborative research, contract manufacturing, regulatory services, clinical trials and consultancy. The Council acts as the facilitator of pharmaceutical exports through organizing trade delegations abroad, organization of business meetings in India and abroad, etc. Reports such as Study Report on Market Access Barriers in Key Export Destinations, Market Research Reports, etc. created awareness among organizations focusing on exports of pharmaceutical products.

Setting up of world-class manufacturing facilities gave edge to Indian pharmaceutical companies in international markets. Many pharmaceutical companies from India came up with facilities which fulfilled the requirements of foreign drug regulators, e.g., 741 USFDAapproved facilities as of August 2021. By April 2023, India had 703 manufacturing sites (for

panies. Dinesh Kumar and T. the USFDA which constituted about 20% of the total manufacturing sites registered with the USFDA and situated outside of the USA. The success of Indian pharmaceutical companies in international markets can be gauged from the fact that about two-third of India's pharmaceutical exports goes to NAFTA (North American Free Trade Agreement that established free trade zone between the U.S., Canada and Mexico), Europe and Africa. It is worthwhile to note that over 55% of the exports from India are to the 'highly regulated markets'. For 2021-22, the USA was the largest importer from India with a share of 29%. In April-March FY23, the U.S. share in imports of drugs, pharmaceuticals and fine chemicals from India stood at 29.72%, followed by Belgium (2.82%), South Africa (2.59%), U.K. (2.55%), Brazil (2.53%), Netherland (2.34%), Russia (2.26%), France (2.24%). Germany (2.06%), Nigeria (2.03%), among others. Further, 8 out of 20 global generic

companies are from India. In 2016, 8 out of the top 10 global best-selling drugs were biologics. In that background, pharmaceutical companies in India have to focus on biologics, biosimilars, vaccines and other such drugs. With that transition along with current strength. it will be able to sustain the momentum of exports.

Dr. Anil Kumar Angrish Associate Professor (Finance & Accounting), Department of Pharmaceutical Management,NIPER, SAS Nagar

(Mohali), Punjab. Views are personal and do not represent the views of the Institute.

#### Eicher expands Maharashtra footprint with 4th Dealership



**DOMINICK RODRIGUES** Mumbai

Eicher Trucks & Buses - a business unit of VE Commercial Vehicles Ltd. continued its strategic growth by expanding its footprint in Maharashtra through inauguration of its new 3S dealership in Mumbai recently.

While this is the 4th AV Motors dealership in Mumbai, it is strategically situated alongside NH160, barely 15 kms from Bhiwandi (Asia's largest warehousing hub which contributes significantly to transit of goods and materials in the region) in offering easy accessibility to local and transit vehicles from Nasik to Mumbai and Nhave Seva port, according to Vinod Aggarwal, MD&CEO, VECV.

Emphasizing Eicher's customer-centric approach alongside its continuous expansion, Aggarwal said the goal was to enhance productivity and profitability of customers through vehicle uptime and superior service.

Ëicher takes pride in being the first player to introduce a 100% connected range of vehicles with its advanced telematics solution, he said, adding that the new AV Motors Bhiwandi dealership would operate along with its three other branches in Panvel, Nalasopara and Mira Road in facilitating 'best-in-class' service experience.

## Transition from Import dependent to Net Exporter: Journey of India's Pharmaceutical Industry **ANGRISH**

ndian pharmaceutical sector contributed

about 2 per cent to India's Gross Domestic Product (GDP) and around 8 per cent to India's total merchandise exports by mid-2021 (RBI Bulletin, July 2021). Exports of Drugs and Pharmaceuticals constituted 5.71 per cent of the total exports from India by June 2023. Exports of Drugs and pharmaceutical products grew from Rs. 90,415 Crore in 2013-14 to Rs. 2,04,110 Crore in FY2022-23 with growth of almost 126 per cent. Drug Formulations and Biologicals formed 72.54 per cent of total pharmaceutical exports in FY2022-23, followed by Bulk Drugs and Inceuticals & Fine Chemicals to termediates (18.43%), Vaccines (4.01%), Surgicals (2.54%), and Ayush and Herbal Products

India (Pharmexcil), pharmaceutical exports from India are likely to touch US \$28 Bn in including Intellectual Property 2023-24. It will be almost 10.2 per cent growth as compared to FY2022-23. Data on actual exports and growth rate achieved for the current financial year will emerge in next 10 days, i.e., by March 31, 2024. Export of pharmaceutical products for 2021-22 stood at Rs. 1,74,955 Crore, and imports for the same period amounted to Rs. 60,060 Crore. In FY2021-22, India ceutical market. Output of the exported bulk drugs/drug intermediates worth Rs. 33,320 Crore whereas import of bulk and Rs. 150 Crore by 1965. drugs was Rs. 35,249 Crore for the same period.

gence of Indian Pharmaceutical Industry as a major exporting industry, and the resilience of the sector amid crisis. There was negligible impact on Indian pharmaceutical during economic recession in 2008. During 2020-21, pharmaceutical exports grew by more than 18 per cent due to increase in the demand for Covid-19 related drugs. Amid Covid-19 despair, pharmaceutical industry generated a trade surplus of US \$17.5 Bn. A study by CARE Ratings (2021) pointed out that the contribution of domestic to exports was 47:53 during FY21 which was 52:48 during FY17. This reflected shift in favour of exports. In April-March FY23 as well as in April-March FY22, Indian pharmaceutical companies exported Drugs, Pharma-214 countries

Numerous factors contributed to the emergence of pharmaceutical industry in India as As per the Pharmaceuticals a major foreign exchange earner Export Promotion Council of due to export focus. Entrepre neurship, availability of trained manpower, policy interventions laws, pricing norms, foreign exchange related law, have made immense contribution to make India a net exporter.

In 1947, indigenous production of drugs was worth only Rs. 10 Crore (Rs. 100 mn), and there was domination of western Multinational Companies (MNCs) having control over 80-90% of Indian pharmapharmaceutical industry was valued Rs. 100 Crore by 1962

Sumantra Ghoshal et al. (2002) shared in their popular export of bulk pharmaceutical percentage of total production

India's Pharma Industry work titled - World Class in India: A Case Study of Companies in Transformation that Ranbaxy Laboratories (now, part of Sun Pharmaceuticals) was the

first Indian pharmaceutical company to look for 'an export market' in the 1970s. By the year 1997, Ranbaxy had 16 per cent of the Indian pharmaceutical export market share. The Company also won the Indian Chamber of Commerce 'Trishul' award for export achievements on multiple occasions.

Patent Act of 1970 allowed Indian companies to reproduce patented foreign pharmaceutical products as long as these were produced in a novel way. Many Indian companies developed novel processes to manufacture generic versions, e.g., Ranbaxy had developed a novel process for the manufacture of the antibiotic doxycycline in 1978, and developed a nonpatent infringing process for the antibiotic cefaclor which was a complex molecule of a leading Multinational Corporation (MNC) – Eli Lilly. Ranbaxy started targeting export markets in developing economies. The company focused on the

feedstocks and intermediates. Export emphasis can be gauged from the fact that the company had an average annual growth rate of 34 per cent from the year 1986 to 1996. By mid-1990s, about 50 per cent of company's turnover was from exports. Not only this, the company had entered into joint ventures with various foreign companies in order to establish market presence in foreign markets. Drug (Prices Control) Act,

1979 capped the prices of drugs sold within the country, thereby restricting the profit margins of pharmaceutical companies. Many pharmaceutical companies started catering to foreign markets to achieve growth, e.g., Ranbaxy considered this as an opportunity and became a leading exporter of pharmaceutical products under Davinder Singh Brar who went on to become CEO and Managing Director of Ranbaxy. He had joined the company as a Business Development Manager in 1977. Entire pharmaceutical industry started following the trend which meant focus on exports in addition to local market. Share of exports as a

from just 3.22% in 1980-81 to about 24% in 1994-95. There was a rise in the num-

of the total ANDAs.

Indian pharmaceutical companies came up with innovative pharma products at low cost which catered to patients in CIPLA introduced the world's first ever recommended 3-in-1 fixed dose combination to fight AIDS, and it was made compared to over \$12,000 per patient per year. Price Competitiveness gave an edge to

India Set to become 3rd-Largest Economy

and Stock Market, says Amitabh Kant

NEW DELHI: India's G20

Sherpa and former NITI Aayog

CEO, Amitabh Kant, made a

bold proclamation, on Thurs-

day, stating that within the

next five years. India is poised

to surpass Japan and Germany,

emerging as the third-largest

economy and stock market

During his address at a con-

ference titled "The Deccan Con-

over the last three quarters.

formidable powerhouse.

globally.

## RBI Tightens Supervision on Retail Lending, Warns of High-Risk Areas

Bank of India (RBI) is stepping up its efforts to tackle the "exuberance" in retail lending, expanding its attention to include emerging sectors like mortgage-linked "top-up"

Concerns regarding the rising risks to the financial system have led the central bank to bolster its supervision of the industry and urge individual lenders to limit credit in identified high-risk areas, reported

Though no formal enforcement measures have been implemented yet, the report indicates that the RBI is actively tightening supervision and prodding financial institutions to take proactive measures.

In the past six months, the RBI has rolled out several measures aimed at curbing retail lending by both banks

Structural Demand

monthly bulletin, the Reserve

Bank of India (RBI) projects

that robust structural demand

and healthier corporate and

bank balance sheets will serve as

primary catalysts for sustained

dia's real GDP reaching a six-

quarter peak in the third quarter

of FY24, attributed to robust

momentum, solid indirect tax

revenues, and reduced subsi-

dies. Despite the festive season

coinciding with the third quar-

ter, private final consumption

expenditure remained subdued,

according to the RBI's 'State of

the Economy' report authored

by officials, including MD Pa-

tra. However, the outlook for

premium consumer businesses

remains strong, indicating a no-

table shift in per capita income.

RBI officials emphasised the

burgeoning opportunities in

small towns, fuelling growth

across various lifestyle segments.

these markets early are reaping

ignificant benefits, indicating

a promising trajectory. They

stated, "Small town opportu-

nities are leading to growth of

business across lifestyle seg-

ments, with companies that

entered these markets enjoying

the fruits of being first movers.

High-frequency indicators fur-

ther bolster optimism, pointing

to sustained domestic demand

vigour in February 2024, as

evidenced by e-way bills, toll

collections, and growth in au-

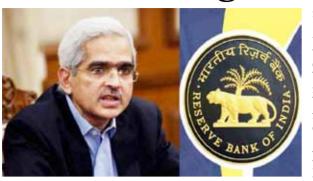
tomobile and retail sales

Companies venturing into

The bulletin highlights In-

economic growth.

**Sheets To Drive** 



and non-bank financial in-

Additionally, it has issued public warnings cautioning against "all forms of exuberance" in lending practices.

This heightened scrutiny, effectively serving as a warning for financial institutions, marks a shift for the central bank. Notably, as recently as September, the RBI had stated that India's credit expansion while also taking action when

did not suggest the emergence of systemic stress.

According to sources cited in the report, the RBI is adopting a four-step approach to supervision, encompassing monitoring, warning, penalis-

ing, and taking action. The aim is to provide entities with an opportunity to rectify their course based on public or specific warnings,

Initially, the RBI generally utilises moral persuasion tactics like delivering speeches, engaging in discussions with bank executives, and holding individual meetings to prompt banks to address concerns before considering more assertive enforcement actions.

The report further reveals that the RBI is cautioning lenders about mortgage topups, advising them on the risks associated with algorithmbased credit models, and encouraging some institutions to moderate co-lending.

RBI Governor Shaktikanta Das, in December, emphasised that the central bank does not wait for the house to catch fire before taking action, particularly when discussing the stricter regulations announced for personal loans.

In a related development,

### RBI injects Rs 75,000 Crore to Offset **Impending Liquidity Crunch**

**NEW DELHI** : The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) bolstered the banking system with a significant infusion of Rs 75,000 crore through a Variable Rate Repo (VRR) auction on Friday. This proactive move aims to counteract the impending liquidity crunch anticipated due to forthcoming advance tax and Goods and Services Tax (GST) payments. Projections indicate that these tax obligations could collectively drain nearly Rs 2.5 trillion from the banking system

Concerns loom over a potential liquidity deficit in the  $\bar{\text{coming}}$ week as these tax payments draw nearer. Expressing this sentiment, a treasury head from a public sector bank emphasised the importance of maintaining sufficient liquidity within the banking system.

The success of Friday's VRR auction underscores the RBI's commitment to ensuring adequate liquidity levels, with indications suggesting the possibility of another VRR auction in the

Of the anticipated outflow, GST payments are estimated at approximately Rs 1.5 trillion, while advance tax payments stand at around Rs 1 trillion. The deadline for advance tax payment was March 15, with GST payments due on March 20. During the seven-day VRR auction held on Friday, banks submitted bids totaling Rs 76,560 crore. The RBI accepted bids at a rate of 6.52 per cent, which is lower than the marginal standing facility rate of 6.75 per cent. This rate differential provides banks with a viable avenue to access liquidity overnight through the RBI's marginal standing facility, particularly in times of

interbank liquidity constraints. Ultimately, the repo auction serves as a strategic mechanism employed by the central bank to inject liquidity into the banking system, mitigating potential liquidity shortages.

#### versations, Accelerating Our Growth Story," Kant highlighted

riculture

He underscored the need for India to enhance learning India's remarkable growth outcomes and skills, aiming to provide 30 per cent of the global trajectory, citing a consistent growth rate of 8.3 per cent plus skilled manpower by 2047.

Additionally, Kant empha-The conference was organised sised the necessity of fostering by the Confederation of Indian a conducive ecosystem for large Industry (Southern Region), companies to thrive, thus supporting the growth of Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises where he emphasised India's resilience during this period, characterizing the nation as a (MSMEs).

He advocated for a signifi-Quoting insights from the cant increase in research and International Monetary Fund development spending from the current 0.7 per cent to at least 5-3 per cent of GDP.

the Start-up India movement, which has witnessed remarkable growth, with the number of start-ups skyrocketing from a mere 150 to 125,000, including

#### (IMF), Kant projected that India would contribute nearly 20 Moreover, Kant highlighted per cent to the world's economic the simplification of business expansion in the coming decade. He stressed the pivotal role procedures at the central level, of South India as the engine resulting in the elimination of 1500 laws. He also commended

driving India's growth narrative towards achieving a USD 35 trillion economy by 2047. Identifying key areas for growth, Kant emphasised the importance of manufacturing, smart urbanisation, and ag-

## MSEs battle Rs 20,000 cr in Pending Payments, Samadhaan Portal Data Reveals

lative amount entangled in pending applications and cases filed by micro and small enterprises (MSEs) against delayed payments from their customers has surpassed Rs 20,000 crore.

According to statistics from the delayed payment monitoring portal, Samadhaan, by the MSME Ministry, a staggering Rs 20,413 crore remains trapped in 82,215 pending delayed payment applications since the portal's inception in October

Among the significant figures reported, the portal has received a total of 1.80 lakh

However, only 34,991 cases, amounting to Rs 6,112 crore, have been disposed of

Typically, an application reviewed by the council undergoes conversion into a case under various stages of hearing. Conversely, 46,438 applications, totalling Rs 9,218 crore, have been reiected thus far.

The outstanding amount defaults attract a daily fine of involved in pending appli- Rs 1,000, up to a maximum cations and cases includes

NEW DELHI: The cumu- Rs 3,094 crore against various state governments, Rs 2,201 crore against different central public sector enterprises, Rs 1,679 crore against multiple state public sector enterprises, Rs 1,964 crore against proprietorship entities, and other miscellaneous entities.

An important provision to highlight is clause h under Section 43B of the Income Tax Act, scheduled to become effective on April

This provision is designed to address delayed payments by prohibiting buyers from claiming expenses on invoices from MSEs unless they are applications, representing a settled within 45 days (with substantial Rs 41,804 crore. an existing agreement) or within 15 agreement in place.

Previously, in January 2019, the government introduced the half-yearly MSME return form or MSME-1 form for buyers who default on payments beyond 45 days.

Failure to submit this form incurs a penalty of Rs 20,000 by the company and every involved party. Subsequent

## Stock markets rise for third session; Sensex climbs 190.75 points to settle at 72,831.94

& Healthy Balance MUMBAI: Benchmark equity indices Sensex and Nifty closed higher for the third **Economic Growth: RBI** straight session on Friday, following gains in index majors L&T, ITC and Maruti and a record rally in the US markets after the Federal Reserve indicated three rate **NEW DELHI:** In its latest

After falling in early trade, markets staged a smart recovery. The 30-share BSE Sensex climbed 190.75 points or 0.26 per cent to settle at 72,831.94. However, a sharp correction in IT and tech stocks limited the rise. During the day, it jumped 474.43



points or 0.65 per cent to

The NSE Nifty advanced 84.80 points or 0.39 per cent ritory.

From the Sensex basket, Sun Pharma, Maruti, IndusInd Bank, Titan, ITC, Tata Motors, Larsen & Toubro and JSW Steel were the major gainers.

On the other hand, Infosys, Wipro, HCL Technologies, Tata Consultancy Services, Tech Mahindra and Bajaj Finserv were among the laggards. The BSE IT index fell 2 per cent.

In Asian markets, Seoul, Shanghai and Hong Kong settled lower, while Tokyo ended in the positive ter-

European markets were trading on a mixed note. Wall Street tapped fresh record peaks on Thursday.

Foreign Institutional Investors (FIIs) offloaded equities worth Rs 1,826.97 crore on Thursday, according to exchange data.

Global oil benchmark Brent crude dipped 0.22 per cent to USD 85.59 a barrel.

The BSE benchmark jumped 539.50 points or .75 per cent to close at 72,641.19 on Thursday. The NSE Nifty climbed 172.85 points or 0.79 per cent to

## Finance Minister meets ADB VP to **Explore Development Collaboration**



NEW DELHI: Finance Min-public and private sector entiister Nirmala Sitharaman ties in India's growth journey, sions with Bhargav Dasgupta, Vice-President, Asian Development Bank (ADB), on Monday to explore avenues for

During the meeting, both parties exchanged perspectives on how ADB could partner with India to advance the

They also delved into strategies for leveraging ADB's convening power to engage other growth.

as highlighted ministry in a post on X. The Finance Ministry.

through a post on X, stated, "Both exchanged views on development collaboration. how @ADB\_HQ may partner with India to further the development agenda. They also discussed harnessing ADB's convening power to development agenda further. crowd in other public and private sector institutions to participate in India's

## **Outward FDI pace ahead Inward FDI in Feb 2024**

MUMBAI: India's outward foreign direct investment (FDI) commitments witnessed a significant rise in February 2024, reaching USD 3.47 billion, as per the latest data released by the Reserve Bank of India (RBI).

This surge marks a notable increase compared to the FDI commitments of USD 2.82 billion recorded in February

The data further revealed that the sequential growth trend continued from the previous month, with FDI from USD 2.18 billion in January 2024.

Breaking down the components of outbound FDI, it consists of equity, loans, and guarantees.

Equity commitments saw a decline to USD 502.14 million in February 2024 from USD 776.79 million the previous year, and notably lower than the USD 764.29 million recorded in January 2024.

Similarly, debt commit-

ments decreased to USD 251.08 million in February 2024, down from USD 334.75 million in February 2023, and also lower than the USD 306.59 million recorded in January 2024.

However, guarantees for overseas units witnessed a substantial increase, swelling to USD 2.71 billion in February 2024 from USD 1.71 billion in February 2023.

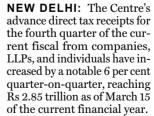
This surge in guarantees

was also markedly higher compared to the USD 1.11 billion recorded in January 2024, as per RBI data.

The surge in outward FDI commitments signals growing confidence among Indian investors in exploring opportunities beyond domestic borders.

This trend reflects positively on India>s expanding presence in the global investment landscape, fostering economic growth and diversification.

## Fourth Quarter Advance Tax Receipts Rise by 6%, Indicating



This sequential rise in advance tax collections in Q4 follows a 19 per cent annual increase in advance tax receipts for the third quarter of FY24, suggesting sustained traction in economic activity.

Advance tax collections serve as a reliable indicator of corporate profitability and individual earnings, with March 15 marking the deadline for fourth-quarter advance tax payments by companies and

Despite experiencing higher refunds during the period leading up to March 15, direct tax receipts (post-refund) amounted to Rs 18.91 trillion, representing 97 per cent of the full-year revised estimate of Rs 19.45 trillion for FY24. This indicates that receipts for the full year are poised to



surpass the revised estimate. The additional collections (post-devolution) are expected

to assist the Centre in maintaining the fiscal deficit within the revised estimate of 5.8 per cent of GDP in FY24, despite a slightly lower nominal GDP size than initially projected. In the budget unveiled on

February 1 this year, the Centre augmented the direct tax receipts target by Rs 1.22 trillion to Rs 19.45 trillion, primarily attributing the increase to buoyancy in personal income

tax receipts. As of March 15 of the current fiscal year, refunds amounted to Rs 3.34 trillion, marking a 9 per cent increase compared to

of FY23, indicating accelerated processing of refunds.

The continuous rise in corporate profitability across diverse sectors contributed to

the sustained buoyancy in the quarterly advance tax mop-up. Advance tax receipts witnessed an upward trajectory, starting from Rs 1.17 trillion in Q1FY24, escalating to Rs 2.39 trillion in Q2, Rs 2.7 trillion in Q3, and finally reaching Rs 2.85 trillion in Q4FY24. The rise in corporate profitability across various sectors led to continued buoyancy in the quarterly advance tax mop-up. Advance tax receipts rose from Rs 1.17 trillion in Q1FY24, Rs 2.39 trillion in Q2, Rs 2.7 trillion Q3 and Rs 2.85 trillion in Q4FY24. Rs 3.07 trillion in the entirety

## Unlocking Financial Security: A Practical Guide to Using Gold Bonds for Emergency Funds and rebalance your portfo-



ing a robust financial safety net is crucial. While traditional options like savings accounts and fixed deposits are value over time, making it a popular choices for emergency relatively stable investment funds, exploring alternative avenues can provide added turbulence flexibility and security. One such option worth considering is investing in gold bonds. In in the secondary market, pro-2023, Indians purchased the largest quantity of sovereign gold bonds (SGBs) at 7.77 tonnes worth a whopping R 4,604 crore in the first series of this fiscal year, underscoring the preference for an asset that acts as a hedge against inflation and a safe-haven are backed by sovereign guarasset at times of global uncertainty.

#### Why Consider Gold Bonds for **Emérgency Funds?**

Gold has long been regarded as a reliable store of value and a hedge against eco- in Gold Bonds for Emergency nomic volatility. Unlike physi- Funds:

cal gold, which comes with storage and security concerns, gold bonds offer a convenient 'n times and secure way to invest in of un- the precious metal. Here are certain- some reasons why gold bonds could be an attractive option for emergency funds: **STABILITY**: Gold has

historically maintained its even during periods of market **LIQUIDITY**: Gold bonds

viding liquidity when needed. DIVERSIFICATION: Adding gold bonds to your

investment portfolio can help diversify risk and reduce overall volatility. Government-backed: Gold bonds issued by governments antee, offering an added layer

of security. Interest Income:

Many gold bonds offer fixed

interest income, providing investors with an additional source of returns. Practical Steps to Investing expenses, income stability,



Research and Evaluate: Begin by researching different gold bond offerings available in the market. Evaluate factors such as interest rates, tenure, and liquidity to find a bond that aligns with your financial goals and risk tolerance.

and potential financial obliga-

tions. Aim to allocate a por-

Assess Your Emergency Fund Needs: Determine the size of your emergency fund based on factors like monthly

tion of your emergency fund to gold bonds to diversify risk. Purchase Gold Bonds: Once

vou've identified suitable gold bonds, proceed to purchase them through authorized channels such as banks, financial institutions, or designated stock exchanges. Pay attention to the application process, documentation requirements, and associated fees

Monitor and Rebalance: Regularly monitor the performance of your gold bonds

lio as needed. Reassess your emergency fund requirements periodically and adjust your gold bond holdings accordingly. Stay Informed: Stay updat-

ed on market developments, economic indicators, and regulatory changes that may impact the performance of gold bonds. Consider seeking advice from financial professionals or conducting thorough research before making investment decisions. Incorporating gold bonds

into your emergency fund strategy can provide a valuable laver of protection and diversification against financial uncertainties. By understanding the benefits of gold bonds and following practical steps for investing in them, you can enhance the resilience of your emergency fund and safeguard your financial well-being in the long run. Remember to conduct thorough research, assess your needs, and stay informed to make informed investment choices

Author Sumit Sharma is Founder of Radian Finserv Pvt Limited

# **Economic Momentum**

individuals.

# 140 dead, 100 injured in Russia concert hall attack; Ireland's Indian-origin PM Leo Varadkar

into a large concert hall in Moscow on Friday and sprayed the crowd with gunfire, killing over 140 people, injuring more than 100 and setting fire to the venue in a brazen attack just days after President Vladimir Putin cemented his grip on power in a highly orchestrated electoral

The Islamic State group claimed responsibility for the attack in a statement posted on affiliated channels on social media. A US intelligence official told The Associated Press that US intelligence agencies had learned the group's branch in Afghanistan was planning an attack in Moscow and shared the information with Russian officials. It wasn't immediately clear what happened to the attackers after the raid, which state investigators were investigating as terrorism.

The attack, which left the concert hall in flames with a collapsing roof, was the deadliest in Russia in years and came as the country's war in Ukraine dragged into a third year. Moscow Mayor Sergei Sobyanin called the raid a "huge tragedy." The Kremlin said Putin was informed minutes after the assailants burst into Crocus City Hall, a large music venue on Moscow's western edge that can accommodate 6,200 people.



Islamic State group claims responsibility

gathered for a performance by the Russian rock band Picnic. The Investigative Committee. the top state criminal investigation agency, reported early Saturday that more than 140 people were killed. Health authorities released a list of 100 injured including five children.

Some Russian news reports suggested more victims could have been trapped by the blaze that erupted after the assailants threw explosives.

Video showed the building on fire, with a huge cloud of smoke rising through the night sky. The street was lit up by the blinking blue lights of dozens of firetrucks, ambulances and other emergency vehicles, as fire helicopters buzzed overhead to dump water on the blaze that took hours to contain.

The prosecutor's office said several men in combat fatigues entered the concert hall and fired on concertgoers. Dave Primov. who was in the hall during the attack, described panic and chaos

when the attack began.

"There were volleys of gunfire," Primov told the AP. "We all got up and tried to move toward the aisles. People began to panic, started to run and collided with each other. Some fell down and others trampled on them." Videos posted by Russian media and on messaging app channels showed men toting assault rifles shooting screaming people at point-blank range. One video showed a man in the auditorium saying the assailants had set it on fire, as gunshots rang out incessantly.

Guards at the concert hall didn't have guns, and some could

attack, Russian media reported. Some Russian news outlets suggested the assailants fled before special forces and riot police arrived. Reports said police patrols were looking for several vehicles the attackers could have used to escape.

In a statement posted by its Aamaq news agency, the Islamic State group said it attacked a large gathering of "Christians' in Krasnogorsk on Moscow's outskirts, killing and wounding hundreds. It was not immediately possible to verify the authenticity of the claim.

However, US intelligence officials confirmed the claim by the Islamic State group's branch based in Afghanistan that it was responsible for the Moscow attack, a US official told the AP.

The official said US intelligence agencies had gathered information in recent weeks that the IS branch was planning an attack in Moscow. He said U.S. officials privately shared the intelligence earlier this month with Russian officials. The official was briefed on the matter but was not authorized to publicly discuss the intelligence information and spoke to the AP on condition of

Noting that the IS statement cast its claim as an attack targeting Christians, Aymenn Jawad al-Tamimi, an expert on the ter-

rorist group, said it appeared to reflect the group's strategy of "striking wherever they can as part of a global fight the infidels and apostates everywhere." In October 2015, a bomb planted by IS downed a Russian passenger plane over Sinai, killing all 224 people on board, most of them Russian vacation-goers returning from Egypt. The group, which operates mainly in Syria and Iraq but also in Afghanistan and Africa, also has claimed several attacks in Russia's volatile Caucasus and other regions in the past years. It recruited fighters from Russia and other parts of former Soviet Union.

On March 7, Russia's top security agency said it thwarted an attack on a synagogue in Moscow by an Islamic State cell, killing several of its members in the Kaluga region near the Russian capital. A few days earlier, Russian authorities said six alleged IS members were killed in a shootout in Ingushetia in Russia's Caucasus region.

On Friday, statements of outrage, shock and support for those affected by the concert call attack streamed in from around

Some commentators on Russian social media questioned how authorities, who relentlessly surveil and pressure Kremlin critics, failed to identify the threat and prevent the attack.

resigns for 'personal, political reasons' origin Prime Minister, Leo Varadkar, on Wednesday sent shockwaves across the country by announcing his sudden res-

leadership contest. The 45-year-old Taoiseach, as the Irish Prime Minister is known, made the announcement in an emotional statement delivered from the steps of the government buildings in Dublin. Varadkar said he believed a new leader "will be better placed than me" to gain seats for his party Fine Gael in the next general election, scheduled for next year.

ignation citing "personal and

political reasons", triggering a

"My reasons for stepping down now are personal and political, but mainly political... After seven years in office, I don't feel I'm the best person for this job anymore," said Varadkar.

"There are loyal colleagues and good friends contesting local European elections, and I want to give them the best chance possible. On a personal level, I've enjoyed being Taoiseach... However, politicians are human beings and we have our limitations. We give it everything until we can't anymore. And then we have to move on. he said.

"That's it. I have nothing else lined up or in mind. No definite



personal or political plans, but I am looking forward to having the time to think about them. he added

Varadkar was born in Ire-

land to a Mumbai-born father and Irish mother and has led the Fine Gael party since 2017, when aged 38 he became the country's youngest and first openly gay Prime Minister, and has served as Taoiseach twice since.

In his speech, Varadkar added that he was proud that the country is "more equal and more modern place when it comes to the rights of children, the LGBT community, equality for women and their bodily autonomy".

Last month, he joined Britain's Indian-origin Prime Minister to unveil a historic powersharing pact when Varadkar and Sunak agreed that a "stable, effective and successful" Northern Ireland – part of the United Kingdom and sharing a

ted the UK-Irish relationship immensely.

Varadkar's first stint leading Ireland lasted from 2017 to 2020, before he took up the role as Tanaiste, or Deputy Prime Minister, from 2020 until December 2022. He has been in a "rotating Taoiseach" agreement that underpinned a three-party coalition with Fianna Fail and the Green Party.

After a party leadership contest, a new Taoiseach is set to be in place when the Irish Parliament Dail returns after Easter next month. Varadkar has said he plans to carry on as a member of parliament for his Dublin West constituency.

His announcement on Wednesday does not automatically trigger a general election in Ireland, which must be held by March 2025, five years after the last election. Meanwhile, Ireland's political parties are facing local government and European Parliament elections in June.

Tanaiste Micheal Martin paid tribute to Varadkar, adding that he was "very surprised" about his resignation which he was informed about on Tuesday evening. "I want to take this opportunity again to wish him the very best in his personal life and in his career into the future," he said.

#### **British Army celebrates** Sikh festival of Holla Mohalla



LONDON: The British Army celebrated the Sikh festival of Holla Mohalla with several British Sikh officers from the Defence Sikh Network (DSN) organising the annual spring festivities that showcase the spirit of courage, preparation and readiness.

The festival dates back to the 18th century when it was initiated by Guru Gobind Singh as a celebration of military prowess during which martial skills are honed and exhibited in fierce but well-natured com-

This year's British Army Sikh Holla Mohalla event took place at the Ash Ranges in Hampshire, south-east England, on Tuesday and involved traditional games such as tug of war as an ode to the military forebears who played these games.

Defence Sikh Network said its members, mainly the soldiers from the British Army, celebrated the Sikh Military Festival by taking part in the military shooting competition, traditional Sikh martial arts and traditional Sikh military games and finally finished the festival with rang, the throwing of coloured powder as a mark

The network is the official organisation within the UK's Ministry of Defence (MoD) that supports inclusion from a Sikh perspective. The network said the festival particularly resonates with the Sikhs within the country's armed forces and, therefore, it began celebrating it in the British Army in 2021.

"We feel this should be one of the premier events in the Sikh calendar to ensure our martial tradition continues."

### In fresh offensive, Israeli forces kill 9 in West Bank Israeli forces killed two Pales-

tinians in separate incidents in the occupied West Bank on Thursday, increasing to nine the number of Palestinians killed in the territory over 24 hours, a Palestinian news agency reported. Since the Gaza war began,

Israel has stepped up military raids in the West Bank, where violence had already been surging for over a year. UN records show Israeli forces or settlers have killed hundreds of Palestinians in the West bank since Hamas' October 7 attack on Israel that triggered the Gaza war. A 19-year-old Palestinian died after being shot by Israeli

forces in El Bireh near Ramalwounded during confrontations with Israeli forces.

South of Bethlehem, Israeli forces shot dead a 63-year-old



Palestinian near settlement of El'azar, it reported.

The Israeli military said soldiers had fired shots towards "a Palestinian who aroused their lah on Thursday morning, the suspicion at the El'azar Junc-focused on the Al Shifa hoshit was identified and said. The agency said he was he was later pronounced dead," it said, adding that military police had opened an investigation into the incident.

Palestinians in the Nur Shams refugee camp in the West Bank

city of Tulkarm overnight, the Palestinian Red Crescent said. In Gaza, Israel's offensive

pital. Israel said its troops had killed more than 50 Hamas gunmen over the previous day, taking those killed around the hospital to 140, along with two Israeli forces also killed four Israeli soldiers.

## **Gurpatwant Pannun 'murder' plot: US federal prosecutors** say Nikhil Gupta had agreed to 'pay an assassin US\$1,00,000'

**NEW YORK:** The United States is working with the Indian government to hold accountable those behind a plot to kill Khalistani separatist Gurpatwant Singh Pannun on American soil, according to the Biden administration. An Indian national, Nikhil

Gupta, was charged by federal prosecutors in November last year in connection with his involvement in a foiled plot to assassinate Pannun, who holds dual citizenship of the US and US federal prosecutors have

charged that Gupta was working with an Indian government employee and had agreed to pay an assassin US\$ 1,00,000 to kill Pannun, who lives in New

During a Congressional hearing on Wednesday, Assistant Secretary of State for South and



between the United States and India. The Department of Justice has alleged that an Indian citizen at the behest of someone working in the Indian government has attempted to kill an American citizen on American India has already constituted soil. We take this in the admina probe committee to investigate istration incredibly seriously levels with India.'

"We are at the moment working with India to encourage Central Asia Donald Lu told India to hold accountable, those members of the House Foreign responsible for this terrible to kill Pannun.



India itself has announced that they have created a committee of inquiry to look into this matter and we ask them to work quickly and transparently to make sure justice is done," Lu said.

Lu was responding to a question from Congressman Dean Phillips from Minnesota, who asked if sanctions similar to individuals relating to the killing of Lexie Navalny in Russia are being considered for those believed to be behind the plot

#### **IMF and Pakistan** reach deal on bailout review



ISLAMABAD: The IMF on Wednesday said it has reached a staff-level agreement with the new government in cashstrapped Pakistan on the final review of a \$3 billion bailout, paving the way for the release of the last \$1.1 billion tranche from the global lender.

The agreement, however, is subject to the approval of the Executive Board of the International Monetary Fund (IMF) to be held in April.

Pakistan's new finance minister Muhammad Aurangzeb, who assumed charge last week, to start negotiations with the Washington-based IMF to bail out the country from its

### **Hyderabad student** goes 'missing' in US, family receives 'ransom' call



NEW DELHI: A 25-yearold student from Hyderabad, studying in the US, has gone missing there since March 7 and his family here said they received a "ransom" call.

Mohammed Abdul, a resident of Nacharam here, went to the US in May 2023 to pursue a Masters in IT from Cleveland University and was staying in Cleveland, his family said.

Mohammed Saleem, Abdul's father, said his son last spoke to him on March 7, and since then he was not in touch with his family and his mobile phone was switched off. Abdul's roommates in the US informed him that they have lodged a missing complaint with Cleveland Police.

However, on March 19, Abdul's family received a call from an unidentified person, who claimed that Abdul had been kidnapped allegedly by a gang selling drugs and demanded \$1,200 to "release" him. The caller also threatened to sell Abdul's kidneys if the ransom wasn't paid, his father said.

# Amritsar likely to have US consulate: Ex-ambassador

Amritsar may soon get the US consulate. This was disclosed by former Ambassador of India to the US Dr Taranjit Singh Sandhu, who is considered to be one of the BJP probables for the Amritsar seat. Dr Sandhu had a meeting

with External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar and claimed that Amritsar could be chosen as the destination for setting up an American consulate. As an Ambassador, Dr Sand-

hu had to his credit the opening of the Indian consulate in Seattle, USA, during his stint in November 2023.

The decision to open a consulate here was taken seven years Modi and then US President Ukraine in 1992, after the dis-



Indian-origin Kashmiri Pandit couple, daughter

killed in 'suspicious' fire in Canada's Brampton

Under the reciprocal plan to open new consulates in both countries, two new consulates are to be opened by the USA in India. Earlier, Dr Sandhu had the honour of opening the Indian ago in 2016 by PM Narendra Embassy in Kiev, the capital of

He said with the opening of the American consulate in Amritsar, the people of the border area would get many facilities to get visa from here and traders might expand their businesses.

Two new consulates are proposed to be opened in India by the USA. The Foreign Minister has assured me that efforts will be made to open one in the holy city," he said

Meanwhile, Dr Sandhu also discussed with him initiating cargo services from Sri Guru Ram Dass Jee International Airport, Amritsar, and increase ing air connectivity. Underlining that Amritsar's growth potential will increase manifold with the improved connectivity, he said.

## **CARBOGEN AMCIS announces successful ANVISA audit of its facility in China**



LAND): Switzerland-based CARBOGEN AMCIS, a pharmaceutical process development and Active Pharmaceutical Ingredient (API) manufacturing company, announces the successful completion of its first Brazilian Regulatory Authority Agency (ANVISA) routine inspection of its facility in

was undertaken, which concluded successfully with no critical and no major observations raised. A Good Manufacturing Practice (GMP) certificate has been granted to the site by the authority.

Pascal Villemagne, CEO of CARBOGEN AMCIS, said: "I want to congratulate the Shanghai team on their first

successful independent regulatory inspection, and for being commended by the inspectors for their transparent and open approach. The GMP certification is a reflection of our high-quality standards and the commitment of our teams at this important site."

CARBOGEN AMCIS' Shanghai site employs 140 people and specializes in arge-scale manufacturing Between 6-10th November of raw materials, intermedi-2023, a five-day inspection ates and API; manufacturing of highly potent chemicals up to category III; GMP product release and analytical support for development activities.

The ANVISA audit was focused on areas including utilities, maintenance and calibration, production, qual-

ity control and assurance. Harry Wong, General

Manager of CARBOGEN

"We are delighted to establish ourselves as a crucial part of the CARBOGEN AMICS CDMO network, meeting the same high standards our clients expect globally. We are an integral part of the company supply chain, offering the group great possibilities in terms of capacity and geographical flexibility.

AMCIS' Shanghai site, said:

Martin Schneider, Vice President Quality & ESH of CARBOGEN AMCIS, said: 'I was pleased to support the Shanghai site through their first international authority inspection and impressed by how professional the inspection was prepared and hosted. This success adds to our history of positive global inspections at our facilities around the world,

team can be very proud of."

which we are, and the local

#### igin couple and their teen- time. The charred remains age daughter were killed in were on Friday identified as a "suspicious" fire which tore those of three family members: 51-year-old Rajiv Warikoo; through their home last week his wife, 47-year-old Shilpa in Canada's Ontario province, police said on Friday. Kotha; and their 16-year-old A fire engulfed a home at daughter, Mahek Warikoo. Police said that they resided the Big Sky Way and Van Kirk Drive area of Brampton on at the address before the fire.

March 7, a press release by Peel police Constable Taryn Young on Friday said the fire the Peel Police said. After the blaze was put out, had been deemed suspicious, investigators located what was the CTV news channel re-

OTTAWA: An Indian-or- couldn't be ascertained at the

believed to be human remains within the gutted house, but "At this time, we are investigating this with our homicide the number of people killed



bureau, and we are deeming this as suspicious as the Ontario Fire Marshal has deemed that this fire was not acciden-

tal," the report quoted Young as saying.
"There's not much left to it," Young said when asked about

the possible cause of the fire. "Looking into something like that as a fire marshal, I'm sure it's very tough when there is not much left to look at. But we are exhausting all avenues,

she said.

The deceased family's neighbour, Kenneth Yousaf, said that the family had lived on the street for about 15 years, and he never noticed any problems with them.

Kashmir

hosts maiden Formula-4

car racing event along

Dal Lake



Hindu devotees celebrate Holi, the spring festival of colours, with flower petals during the festival celebrations at a temple in Amritsar on Thursday. Holi is the Hindu religious spring festival celebrated by Hindus as a

#### D'Cruz's Do Aur Do Pyaar teaser out now



Vidya Balan, Ileana

MUMBAI: Makers of the upcoming film Do Aur Do Pyaar, starring Vidhya Balan and Ileana D'Cruz, unveiled its official

teaser on Thursday. On its official Instagram, Applause Entertainment released a video clip introducing the audience to the world of two couples, Vidya Balan-Sendhil Ramamurthy and Ileana D'Cruz-Pratik Gandhi. The video provides a peek into the dynamics of modern-day relationships with a perfect blend of romance, humour, and relatable storytelling.

She has been a catalyst in the Who helps you reach the newly attained upper-tier positions by boosting your self-worth and selflife coaching space since her

So are you ready to get coached Life is full of miracles and tribulation but it needs to be embraced by Upassna??? And growing your to the fullest to eradicate the fear funds in just a fraction of days??? of striking out which is keeping Upassna is a right business and you far away from the distorted lifestyle coach with extensive decades of experience, has a power game of time and money. The FOMO(fear of missing out) the to breathe life into your ideas and idea of perfection is ugly and has the ability to make all the makes your anxiety go through table turns that drives strategic the roof in this game as it is said growth and positive financial that — time is the only penny of outcome. The arena of business is life. But Upassna says, we need ever-evolving, and achievements to strike the right chords because often hinge on the guidance one physical and mental health is acquires along the way. In a counthe only penny if you insert it try like India, with a booming spirit of entrepreneurship, the in the narrow hole of your life bank will bring you peace and role and involvement of the coach prosperity. The value of health is extremely critical than ever. It plays a major role in determinis all about conceptualizing the ing how much wealth you can right coach who can make change store in your kitty. Business and and difference in the world of business and stereotypes and lifestyle coach Upassna can aid professionals in any number of standstill during the battle you leadership roles — from CEOs to are enduring to come to terms CFOs, to department leaders etc. with the arrow of time. Accord-



pass", should not be the phrase to comfort yourself during difficult times. As a connoisseur, I'll put you through making the go-to choice of "evolve" — to seek to excel and to be the first-rate version of yourself.

If it is taking you quite a longtime to develop your own niche in the industry being a business and a lifestyle coach, Upassna will not only help you stand-out as a prominent figure but will make you achieve your goals and destiny. Here are some of the tips by Upassna how she can help business entrepreneurs going through a rough time in finding the phase in their life and

1. Sculpting high-end plan of action: A coach can help you improve operations, culture, financial performance and more. A coach can fabricate a plan to achieve your desired income level by initiating proper financial goals and reflecting upon challenges and doing in-depth research to discover vision and mission statement towards business.

Concrete creativity: A coach can help in making you comprehend and understand your own skills, instill a marvel conscience and elevate your creative outlook as a leader.

The art of communication to influence: A coach will help to channelise the art of communication by making a move towards explaining the value to subtle communication with stakeholders or clients without using any jargons and acronyms and speak fluently about the strategy and how

they can make the company more powerful, competitive or implement a new business

Relationship management - At its core, a coach enables collaboration through relationship management expertise. And this aspect is at most imperative because the work needs to be done through other people or powerful executives. To sculpt that a coach examines issues through others' prisms, build a holistic environment and trust.

Time Management - Remember one thing, there's always time to do our task even if we are late because the only thing you need is a smart plan and let go of any sort of fears or embarrassments that you are too late to take up a career endeavor. A coach will help you set some realistic goals with a self paced approach and eliminate unnecessary

car racing event. The

captivating spectators with a

The racing demonstration

along the banks of the Dal

Lake was held to promote

motorsports in Jammu and

Kashmir. Prime Minister Nar-

endra Modi, in a social media

post, appreciated the efforts

of the organisers of the rac-

see. It will help further show-

case the beauty of Jammu and

Kashmir. India offers great

opportunities for motorsports

This is very heartening to

thrilling spectacle.

on Sunday played **Divisional Commissioner** host to the region's Kashmir, Vijay Kumar Bidfirst-ever Formula-4 huri, lauded the occasion as a symbol of the Valley's progress, picturesque Boulevard road expressing optimism about its witnessed sleek racing cars potential to elevate Kashmir's roaring against the backdrop profile, attract tourists, and stimulate the local economy. of the majestic Zabarwan Hills,

Director of Tourism Kashmir, Raja Yaqoob, echoed this sentiment, emphasizing the region's growing reputation as an adventure tourism destination and its commitment to nurturing local talent.

"With the introduction of high-octane events like this, we are not only entertaining but also investing in the future of Kashmir's youth and tourism industry," Yaqoob said.

He further highlighted that the race would serve as a platform for local talent, nurturto thrive and Srinagar is right ing a new generation of sports on top of the places where it can happen!" PM Modi said to compete on a global scale. enthusiasts with aspirations

# Priyanka Chopra, Nick Jonas offer prayers at Ram Mandir with daughter Malti



AYODHYA: Priyanka Chopra, Nick Jonas offer prayers at Ram Mandir with daughter Malti

Priyanka Chopra, who is currently in India, offered prayers at Ram Janmabhoomi Temple in Avodhya with her husband, singer Nick Jonas and daughter Malti Marie. In the videos captured by the paparazzi, the temple premises with her family.

The ace actor can be seen wearing a yellow sari. Nick, too, opted for

the ethnic outfit. Meanwhile, on the work front, Priyanka will be seen in Heads of State, alongside John Cena and Idris Elba. She is also set to lend her voice to Disnevnature's upcoming film Tiger. She will also be seen in Farhan Akhtar directorial Jee Le Zaraa.



## Kareena Kapoor

## lauds Kunal Khemu's directional debut film **Madgaon Express**

**MUMBAI**: Kareena Kapoor Khan shared her thoughts on brother-in-law Kunal Khemu's directorial debut, Madgaon Express. The Jab We Met actress posted the film's poster on her Instagram story and praised Kunal's directing skills.

"So, so funny and brilliantly directed. So, so proud of vou, Kunal Khemu. Outstanding performances. Bravo, guys," she wrote.

The film marks Kunal's directorial debut. It features Divyenndu, Pratik Gandhi and Nora Fatehi.

#### Diljit Dosanjh drops song 'Khutti' with 'ice girl' Saweetie: says she 'just landed in Panjab'



MUMBAI: Punjabi rapper and actor Diljit Dosanjh has joined has 'just landed in Panjab'. Taking to Instagram, Diljit shared a glimpse of the music video, where the two are seen twinning in yellow and pink. Saweetie is seen rapping in English, while the 'Lover' hit maker is seen mouthing his lines in Punjabi. For the caption, Diljit wrote, 'Khutti out now with ice girl @saweetie. Just landed in Panjab. #bayarea.' On the work front, Diljit will be seen in 'Crew' alongside Kareena Kapoor Khan, Tabu

## Srinagar's tulip garden, Asia's largest, set to open on March 23



Asia's largest Tulip Garden, also recognized as the Indira Gandhi Memorial Tulip Garden, located at Srinagar in Jammu and Kashmir is gearing up to welcome visitors from forces with Saweetie for the March 23, 2024. Nestled at additions. To accommodate song 'Khutti' and he quipped the base of the Zabarwan the expanded collection, the mountain range, offering a picturesque view of the iconic Dal Lake, this garden promises to be a visual delight.

With an anticipated display of 1.7 million tulips, the upcoming tulip festival 2024 in Srinagar is expected to draw crowds of both local and international tourists. The Department of Floriculture, headed by Commissioner Secretary Sheikh Favaz Ahmad, has confirmed the completion of groundwork to ensure a seamless experience for visitors. An additional four kanals (0.5

acres) of land have been allocated for parking to accommodate the influx of guests.

This year, the tulip garden boasts a total of 73 varieties of tulips, including five new accordingly. Beyond tulips, visitors can revel in the beauty of other flowers, enhancing the garden's allure.

Spanning approximately 15 hectares, the Indira Gandhi Memorial Tulip Garden first opened its gates to the public in 2008. Commonly referred to as 'Siraj Bagh', the garden, adorned with various unique tulip varieties, is poised to secure its place as the secondlargest tulip garden globally after its inclusion in the World Book of Records (London).

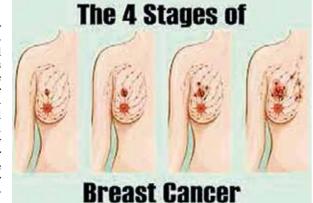
## 62 Year Old Woman, Given a Year to Live; Beats Stage 4 Cancer 100 Years, 123 Feet Dosa: MTR celebrates 100 years with

**OUR CORRESPONDENT** New Delhi

In a remarkable story of courage and resilience, 62-year-old Sunita Chibber from Delhi has emerged victorious in her battle against cancer. Just one year ago, Sunita received a devastating prognosis from local doctors, who gave her a grim outlook with a life expectancy of not more than a year as her cancer was in stage 4. Despite the discouraging feedback, her determination to live and the intervention of a dedicated medical team led by Dr. Vineet Nakra at Max Hospital Delhi turned the tide in her favor.

Sunita's journey began when she was diagnosed with breast cancer. Local doctors in her hometown painted a bleak picture, citing minimal chances of survival even with treatment. The demoralizing news could have crushed anyone's spirit, but Sunita found a glimmer of hope when she encountered Dr. Vineet Nakra and his team.

Dr. Vineet Nakra, Senior Radiation Oncologist at Max Hospital Delhi, became the beacon of hope for Sunita. His expertise and unique approach to patient care instilled confidence in her, motivating her determination to reclaim



her to embark on a challenging treatment journey. The comprehensive plan included surgery, chemotherapy, and sessions of radiation therapy, offering a holistic approach to combat the aggressive disease.

Sunita, a retired teacher with 35 years of teaching experience, faced the challenge head-on, driven by her selfmotivation and the desire to overcome cancer. To maintain her spirits during the treatin various hobbies and activities, particularly art and craft. These pursuits not only served as a distraction but also fueled

her life.

Six months after completing her treatment, Sunita stands as a testament to the power of resilience and self-motivation. Her daughter, Shivangi, expressed her gratitude, stating, "My mother could recover because of the excellent effort by Dr. Vineet Nakra and the team. Dr. Nakra's unique way of handling patients has given

my mother a new lease of life." Dr. Vineet Nakra , Radiament, she immersed herself tion Oncologist at Max Super speciality Hospital New Delhi highlighted the importance of radiation therapy in patient treatment. He said, "Radiation therapy plays a crucial role in Sunita's remarkable recovery.

combating cancer, targeting and destroying cancer cells while preserving surrounding healthy tissues. It is a vital component of our comprehensive approach to ensure the best possible outcomes for our patients. This patient was once declared incurable and was suggested for palliative care, but our efforts and use of latest technology in treating her cancer helped her beat cancer and win over it, we are happy that she is now cancer free and leading a normal and diseases free life "

Sunita, now cancer-free, has rediscovered her love for art and craft activities. Her journey serves as an inspiration to others, proving that even at an advanced age, overcoming cancer is possible with the right medical care, personal determination, and a supportive environment.

In conclusion, Sunita Chibber's triumphant story reminds us that hope and resilience can conquer even the most formidable challenges. Dr. Vineet Nakra and his team at Max Hospital Delhi have not only provided medical expertise but have also instilled a renewed sense of life in their patients, exemplified by

# a Guinness World Records title for the longest Dosa



**ARUN KUMAR RAO** 

Celebrating it's 100-year journey, MTR Foods announced that they are now the new GUINNESS WORLD RE-CORDS title holder for the Longest Dosa in partnership with Lorman Kitchen Equipment's. MTR's signature Red Rice batter was used to prepare this monumental dosa at its Bommasandra Factory. The record was created by a team of 75 chefs, comprising of both seasoned experts and budding culinary talent, under the guidance of MTR's Cui-

record-breaking endeavour epitomizes the brand's mastery of culinary craftsmanship and demonstrates its expertise in

South Indian food. The dosa holds a cherished place in the hearts and palates of people across India, serving as the perfect centrepiece for this historic occasion. As Mr. Sunay Bhasin, CEO of MTR, said, "This is a moment of immense pride for us. We were attempting for a 100 feet dosa, however, we have outdone ourselves and have created a 123 feet dosa. This monumental dosa is a celebration of our sine Centre of Excellence. This heritage and the love we have

been receiving for generations. are highly efficient, sustain-Dosa has been a part of MTR's legacy from the very beginning and it continues to be one of the most loved products of MTR even today. From being a humble South Indian dish, it is now recognized and loved worldwide. The longest dosa world record is a celebration of our bond with our consumers

and their favourite dish." Chandra Mouli, MD, Lorman Kitchen Equipment Pvt. Ltd. added, "World's Longest Dosa is being cooked on a specially built induction stove, the biggest ever from Lorman. Induction cooking equipment

able, and eco-friendly, creating a safer ecosystem for chefs, we are proud to be partnering with MTR on this remarkable This creation also serves

as a symbol of community spirit, bringing together food enthusiasts. This culinary marvel was shared not only with MTR's dedicated employees but also with children from local schools and members of the surrounding communities. With this, MTR broke the previous world record title of longest dosa of 16.68 m (54 ft 8.69 in).