

How can an IAS officer join party? Punjab CM warns of ramifications

CHANDIGARH: Hours after Shiromani Akali Dal's (SAD) leader Sikandar Singh Maluka's daughter-in-law Parampal Sidhu joined BJP in Delhi on Thursday, Punjab Chief Minister Bhagwant Mann said that her resignation as a bureaucrat has not been accepted by the government.

The official order issued by Department of Personnel and Training would confirm that a bureaucrat is relieved of their duties.

In a post on X, Mann asked her to understand the procedure for acceptance of voluntary retirement.

He also warned Sidhu that joining a political party with



out her resignation having been accepted could land her in trouble.

Last week, Sidhu, a 2011 batch officer of Punjab cadre, took voluntary retirement from the Indian Administrative Ser-

vice (IAS). There is speculation that she may get the ticket to contest from the Bathinda parliamentary seat, currently represented by SAD leader Harsimrat Kaur Badal, wife of Akali Dal chief Sukhbir Badal.

Punjab and Haryana High Court issues notice to Punjab Government on woman's in-laws assaulting her and parading her half-naked

**TARUN BHAJNI
Chandigarh**

The incident described involving the assault and public humiliation of a 55-year-old woman in Tarn Taran is deeply disturbing and calls for urgent action. It's heartening to see that the Punjab and Haryana High Court has taken suo-motu cognizance of the matter, treating it as a Public Interest Litigation (PIL) after Administrative Judge Justice Sanjay Vashisth referred it to the Acting Chief Justice Gurmeet Singh Sandhawalia for consideration.

Justice Vashisth's note, drawing parallels to the historical event of Draupadi's humiliation in the Mahabharata,



underscores the gravity of the situation and the need for immediate intervention by the judicial system. The fact that the incident was captured on video and circulated on social media adds to its egregiousness.

The delay in police action, as highlighted in the note, raises serious concerns about the effectiveness of law enforcement in addressing such heinous crimes promptly. The High Court's decision to issue notice to the State of Punjab indicates

Shaheed Beant Singh's Son to contest lok sabha election from Faridkot

CHANDIGARH: One of the assassins of late Prime Minister, Indira Gandhi, is contesting the parliamentary elections in Punjab from the Faridkot (Reserved) constituency as an Independent. A class XII dropout, Sarbjit Singh Khalsa (45) is the son of Beant Singh, one of the two assassins of the late Prime Minister. In 2014 and 2009, Sarbjit Singh Khalsa unsuccessfully contested the Lok Sabha polls from the Fatehgarh Sahib (Reserved) and Bathinda seats, respectively. In 2019, he was the Bahujan Samaj Party candidate. Beant Singh and Satwant Singh, bodyguards of then PM Indira Gandhi, had riddled her with bullets on October 31, 1984 at her residence.



Maluka's daughter-in-law joins BJP, likely to contest against Badal's daughter-in-law



CHANDIGARH: In a big jolt to the Shiromani Akali Dal (SAD), its senior leader Sikandar Singh Maluka's daughter-in-law and former bureaucrat Parampal Sidhu on Thursday joined the BJP in Delhi.

Sources said she is likely to be fielded against Akali leader and former Union Minister Harsimrat Kaur Badal.

Last week the 2011 batch officer of the Punjab cadre took voluntary retirement from the Indian Administrative Service (IAS). There is speculation that she may get the ticket to contest from the Bathinda parliamentary seat, currently represented by SAD leader Harsimrat Kaur Badal, wife of Akali Dal chief Sukhbir Badal.

Maluka's son Gurpreet Singh also joined the saffron party in the presence of the party's general secretary Vinod Tawde, Union Minister Hardeep Puri and other leaders.

Bhupinder Singh Hooda says Saini is merely a 'dummy CM' in Haryana

SATISH HANDA

Targeting the ruling BJP government in Haryana state on the stage during 'Jan Aakrosh Rally' at Beri in Jhajjar district, Congress leader Bhupinder Singh former Chief Minister in the state Bhupinder Singh Hooda on Sunday termed Nayab Singh Saini a merely a "dummy CM", saying there is nothing in his hands and he replaced Manohar Lal Khattar in a swift change claiming that the state had fallen behind on various developmental parameters, per capita income during the last nearly 10 years rule in the state. Hooda said, "Nayab Singh toh naam ka mukhya mantri hai, ye toh dummy mukhya mantri hai. Iske bus ka kuchh nahi hai (Nayab Saini is a dummy chief minister. There is nothing in his hand)." Reminding past, Hooda said, "Earlier too, such an experiment took place when Ch. Om Prakash (Chautala) had made Master Hukam Singh chief minister in 1990-91). Similarly, Saini) has been made the CM", he said while addressing the rally.

Former CM appealed to the electorate of Beri to ensure that this time his son Deepender Hooda wins by a margin of more than one lakh votes from the Rohtak



seat. Deepender Hooda, a Congress Rajya Sabha member, had failed to retain the Rohtak seat in the 2019 general elections and lost to BJP's Arvind Sharma, and made an appeal for Deepender victory by a margin of more than one lakh votes since both Beri and Kilo assembly segments are part of the Rohtak parliamentary constituency in which polling for the Lok Sabha seats will be held in sixth phase of the seven phase general elections on May 25. Hooda said that in 2014, Haryana, which was number one in per capita income, per capita investment, in giving jobs to unemployed, in spite of the fact two lakh government jobs are lying vacant in the state, on the law and order front, the situation is bad, in sports but has fallen

behind during the last 10 years, Hooda said making an attacking the BJP, "today, Haryana is number one in unemployment, in inflation and in crime," the former chief minister said. that the BJP assured of doubling farmers' income by 2022, that did not happen, but input costs of agriculture have doubled due to diesel and fertilizer prices as well as the labor cost has been drastically rising. Bhupinder Singh Hooda said, the situation of crime today has become bad to worst, the ransom demand calls to traders and businessmen have become common, smuggling of drugs in the state fast increasing, an atmosphere of fear prevails and it appears that the government does not exist in the state.

Sanjay Tandon is BJP's candidate from Chandigarh



CHANDIGARH: BJP (Bharatiya Janata Party) announced former party's Chandigarh President Sanjay Tandon as its Lok Sabha candidate from the Union Territory of Chandigarh.

He replaced two-time MP Kirron Kher. Four-time MP former union minister Pawan Kumar Bansal is likely to be fielded by the Congress.

The AAP and the Congress, both constituents of the INDIA bloc, have decided to allot the Lok Sabha seat to the latter.

After the BJP-JJP govt alliance break, JJP now on the verge of collapse



**PARVESH HANDA
Chandigarh**

After running government in alliance with BJP in Haryana state for about four and half years, JJP seems to be now moving ahead towards collapse when senior leaders of JJP including state president Nishan Singh, the state general secretary Kamlesh Saini, secretary Ramesh Godara, MLA Satvinder Rana have already submitted their resignation from the party, and several other JJP senior leaders as well as MLAs are likely to say goodbye to the party and join BJP.

Past scenario reveals that JJP led by Dushyant Chautala son of Ajay Singh Chautala and grandson of the former Hary-

those JJP MLAs suspected to join BJP anytime include the names of Devinder Babli former Panchayat Minister in the state, Ram Kumar Gautam, Ram Niwas Surajkheda, Ch. Ishwar Singh and Jogi Ram Sihag as a result BJP is likely to be benefited prior to the coming Lok Sabha and Vidhan Sabha polls this year.

Information reveals that Dushyant Chautala has been unsuccessful to convince his party's dis-satisfied MLAs. Meanwhile, while talking to media persons, JJP National President Ajay Singh Chautala said it is better to be defeated, rather than having fight with the dis-satisfied MLAs within the party. Moreover, we are not worried over our MLAs leaving the party at this crucial stage prior to the elections, Ajay Singh Chautala said that INLD is a political party many times started from class I and reached up to graduation in the past also. Ajay Chautala said that in case our Supreme Om Parkash Chautala permits, we may unite again to join the INLD network once again, but on the other hand INLD National General Secretary Abhay Singh Chautala refused to join hands with JJP now.

Health Survey: Every fifth pregnant woman in Haryana anemic

SATISH HANDA

According to a recent health survey report, every fifth pregnant woman in the state have been found anemic, having a shortage of blood in their body. Information reveals that on an average nearly 18000 pregnant women are having treatment in the government hospitals in Haryana state every month, of them more than 7200 women are identified anemic, and every fifth woman attending OPD at the government hospitals in the state found having shortage of blood in her body. Moreover, according to the National Family Health Survey Report, in the age group 18 to 49 years more than 60% women in the state have shortage of blood in their body, which include more than 40% (nearly 7200) pregnant women found suffering from anemia and many of them have even less than 7 gm blood and require more



than 200 unit blood arranged by the health department every month.

Health department information in twin city Ambala every month on a specific day checks the health of pregnant in female wards, suggesting them use of medicines and the diet taken by them. According to the doctors, nearly 200 pregnant women are visiting OPD daily in the maternity ward, of whom nearly 40% females have hemoglobin less than 11 gm and nearly 25% females have HB quantity hardly

4 to 5 gm. According to a health department lady doctor in the civil hospital Ambala, in most of the cases they need to inject blood in their body. Most of the health experts advise intake of healthy diet during pregnancy period, rather getting injected blood to increase blood units in their body. While having medical check up of pregnant during OPD in maternity ward it has been observed that most of the women are not taking care of the diet taken by them during the pregnancy, since human body needs enough quantity of vitamins, minerals, fiber and iron during this period for the health of woman and unborn child in her womb.

Amritpal's mother arrested in Amritsar



**JAGMOHAN SINGH
Amritsar**

Balwinder Kaur the mother of Amritpal Singh has been arrested in Amritsar in view of 'Chetna March' which was scheduled to be organized tomorrow demanding to shift Singh in Punjab Jail who is currently imprisoned in Assam's Dibrugarh jail along with nine others

under the National Security Act (NSA)

Confirming the arrest of Amritpal Singh, Deputy Commissioner of Police (Law & Order) Alam Vijay Singh said that she was arrested and sent to judicial custody. He said that it was a preventive arrest and refused to divulge more details about her arrest.

The uncle of Amritpal Singh

Sukhchain Singh and three others were also arrested by Police along with Kaur.

Kaur had planned to carry out the Chetna March (consciousness procession to disseminate a message in favour of Amritpal Singh) from Dam Dama Sahib to Akal Takht Amritsar but they were arrested the day before the planned Chetna March.

It may be added here that Balwinder Kaur and kin of other detainees were on hunger strike since February 22 near the Golden Temple at Heritage Street in Amritsar. Earlier, she had said that they would continue the hunger strike till Amritpal and other detainees were brought to the Punjab jail. The nine associates of Amritpal Singh who were booked under the NSA were Daljeet Singh Kalsi, Papalpreet Singh, Kulwant Singh Dhaliwal, Varinder Singh Johal, Gurmeet Singh Bukkanwala, Harjit Singh, Bhagwant Singh, Basant Singh and Gurinderpal Singh Aujla.

CM Saini seeks vote for Ambala LS candidate Banto Kataria during Vijay Sankalp Rally



**SATISH HANDA
Ambala**

Haryana Chief Minister Nayab Singh Saini, while addressing a large gathering in Vijay Sankalp rally in support of BJP candidate Banto Kataria in Ambala City on Thursday, called upon the party workers to help Banto Kataria to win Ambala Lok Sabha seat. Saini said, he is grateful to all party workers and leaders always supported him ensuring that the respect of the party workers will always be maintained after the model code of conduct is lifted after present Lok Sabha elections, if any party workers approach any official for public work the officials do their work sincerely. He said that his door is open for everyone and will be honored.

Saini highlighted the achievements and welfare policies of the present government in the state and initiated several projects in past about 10 years for which his government has prepared a roadmap for the future. He said, double-engine government has worked for the welfare of the people of Haryana and focused on strengthening the road and rail network and did a lot in health care, farmers' welfare and education sectors. He made an appeal to take a pledge to make Banto Kataria win the coming Lok Sabha polls from Ambala seat as well as play a vital role in

making the Modi government win for the third time.

Pointing at Congress, Saini said that Congress always misguided people making false assurances, aiming no developments except corruption everywhere and people in the state cannot forget when they were forced to wait in long queues for getting even a LPG cylinder. He said, all essential amenities are now and available at the door in the state under good governance policy by the ruling government, and people below poverty line are getting free health services under 'Ayushman' and 'Chirayu' schemes, nearly 12.5 crore farmers in the country are getting benefits under 'Pradhan Mantri Kisan Samman Nidhi scheme' and Haryana is only state across the country in which government procuring 14 type of crops from the farmers on minimum support prices fixed by the government.

Among those present at the occasion were state minister Aseem Goel, BJP district president Mandeep Rana, BJP press incharge Raj Singh, former MLAs Santosh Sarwan, Rajbir Barara, Pawan Saini and BJP Lok Sabha candidate contesting from Ambala constituency Banto Kataria. However, in spite of the long wait former home & health minister Anil Vij was not present in this 'Sankalp Rally'.

CM Nayab Saini's 'Sankalp Rallies' at Rohtak and Hisar

PARVESH HANDA

Addressing the 'Vijay Sankalp' rally in Rohtak and Hisar districts in support of BJP contestants in the state, Chief Minister Nayab Singh Saini tried to woo women voters and farmers for the upcoming Lok Sabha polls by propagating the policies executed by the Modi Government in the past decade rule in the country. Saini said that during the past decade of the Congress regime, Rs 1,100 cr compensation for crop losses was given to farmers while the BJP government has provided Rs 12,000 cr in the past nine and a half years rule. Accusing Congress of disrespecting women and giving no relief to the farmers and other section



of society during its two successive regimes at the Centre and in Haryana state only tried

to grab votes from people but did nothing for their welfare, and their government tried only grab votes but did nothing for their welfare but only to break the country and the states. The prices of urea and DAP used to increase every year during the previous Congress regimes and the farmers were compelled to buy it at high rates but the Modi government decided to provide urea and DAP to the farmers at the earlier price, he pointed out. Saini said that Congress did nothing while ruling in the country for 55 years.

After becoming the CM, it was Saini's first rally in the Rohtak parliamentary constituency in support of Dr Arvind Sharma, considered to be the

victory base of former Chief Minister Bhupinder Hooda seeking votes for BJP nominee Arvind Sharma. Briefing the welfare activities of the work done by the BJP government in favour of farmers, the CM pointed out that Prime Minister Modi had distributed a total Rs 3 lakh crore among farmers under the Pradhan Mantri Kisan Samman Nidhi Yojana, besides providing adequate compensation to the farmers for their crop losses. Expressing deep concern over rising criminal activities against women, on-drug smuggling, and cases of drug-smuggling, Saini warned criminals in the state either to leave crimes or Haryana state immediately.



Electoral bonds expose flaws in political funding

The revelation by the State Bank of India, as mandated by the Supreme Court of India, regarding the details of donations via electoral bonds to political parties has sparked a significant controversy, challenging the integrity of political financing in India. Instituted by the BJP-led government in 2018, the electoral bonds scheme was touted as a step towards transparency in political donations. However, recent investigations, including a notable one by The Hindu, have unveiled unsettling facts that not only question the scheme's transparency but also its very purpose. Remarkably, companies incurring aggregate losses exceeding Rs 1 lakh crore between 2016-17 and 2022-23 were found to have donated nearly Rs 582 crore, with 75% of this amount benefiting the ruling BJP. The anomalies don't end here; profit-making firms donated sums surpassing their profits, while others, bereft of any profit or loss data, raised suspicions of being mere fronts for laundering money. Questions about the legitimacy of such donations and the potential evasion of tax by profitable firms failing to report net direct taxes have further muddied the waters. The scheme's critics, including officials from the Reserve Bank of India and the Election Commission of India, had forewarned about its potential misuse for money laundering and tax evasion. Yet, these concerns were overlooked by the Union Finance Ministry. Now, with thousands of crores encashed by political parties under this scheme—predominantly by the BJP—the Supreme Court's intervention has shed light on the murky underbelly of political financing in India. As India gears up for the general election, this controversy serves as a crucial juncture for the electorate to reflect on the implications of the electoral bonds scheme. Beyond the elections, it is imperative for Parliament and regulatory bodies to undertake a comprehensive investigation into these donations, scrutinizing the legality of the funds and their sources. The judiciary's role in prompting such an examination cannot be understated.

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“ I NEVER DREAMED OF SUCCESS. I WORKED FOR IT. ”
ESTÉE LAUDER

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COLONEL SHASHANK RANJAN (RETIRED) ON WHY SUSTAINING TECH ABSORPTION IN INDIAN REMAINS CHALLENGING

Marching ahead with technology



The Indian Army is observing the year 2024 as the 'Year of Technology Absorption'. This theme underscores the Army's steadfast focus on embracing technology to transform itself so as to keep ahead of adversaries in the context of the evolving character of warfare. The means and end in this regard are visualised under the umbrella of Atmanirbharta.

The absorption will be mainly in terms of disruptive technology (DT) comprising artificial intelligence, autonomous weapon systems such as drones, sensors, robotics, space technology, and hypersonic weapon systems. Several nations, led by the United States and China, have remarkable accomplishments in the field of DTs. The strategic competition and engagements in the future are going to be inevitably decided by the edge a nation possesses in absorbing these technologies.

In military parlance, absorption implies the acquisition, adaptation and integration of technologies into existing structures called legacy systems. These cover various nuances that are usually not apparent to the uninitiated. In addition, a few misconceptions prevail vis-à-vis the absorption of DTs. Certain facets are enumerated below for a nuanced understanding of the issue.

To begin with, time-tested weapon platforms and tactics are here to stay, even with the induction of DTs. It is more about discovering a practical use of the new discoveries rather than about the discovery per se. As said, integration as part of absorption wherein the new DTs complement existing platforms is crucial. Discarding the prevailing systems to be substituted by the new will not necessarily be the way ahead.

Complimenting legacy systems

Although the new technologies could significantly alter the character of future wars we must still refrain from being lulled into complacency because of the mere

acquisition of technology. The strategies that military organisations use to employ technologies will be critical in understanding their effects on the battlefield.

Analysts who see a military revolution in technology, usually argue that new technologies have made the modern battlefield more lethal. However, it is brought out that 'realised lethality', as opposed to the visualised 'potential lethality' in recent wars such as Russia-Ukraine and Armenia-Azerbaijan (Nagorno-Karabakh), is not very much different from that seen in wars of an earlier era. This corroborates the fact that technological advances will not be the sole determinative in war and are only a part of what shapes outcomes.

Also, as we have seen in the ongoing Russia-Ukraine war, the initial benefits that Ukraine could muster no longer gained traction as the war progressed. One of the reasons behind 'advantage Russia' on the battlefield now is in the Russian army employing traditional methodologies to fight the war. Aspects such as consolidating traditional defence lines and a stronger military industrial base are

what matter finally. The Indian military by focusing on DTs and indigenous upgrades in defence manufacture in tandem, is certainly striking the way ahead.

Adapting to new conditions is crucial

Technical countermeasures in wars quickly limit the performance of new technology-enabled weapons employed by an adversary. The most important adaptations are often not technological but operational and tactical, i.e., how a military fights at various levels. They involve changes in the way armies use the tools at their disposal. Over a century ago, armies developed tactics that reduced their exposure to enemy fire by exploiting dispersion, cover and concealment. Such practices hold even more importance in the current era.

In present battle conditions, weapon platforms such as tanks must adapt to become more survivable. This will require a change in tactics and a greater integration of different types of capabilities. With a plethora of sensors on the battlefield, it has become almost impossible to hide. Tanks, for example, will have to operate widely

dispersed, accompanied by electronic warfare units to detect and jam aerial platforms of the enemy. Similarly, the infantry on the battlefield, while operating dispersed will need an excellent standard of junior leadership to lead men in compartmentalised and high-tech battles.

Planning ahead

Rather than discarding conventional platforms in favour of purely digital solutions, the technology and its attributes need to be at the centre of planning for future plans. This will be a process that starts with the acknowledgement of vulnerabilities and sensitivities and the gap between them.

An understanding of the latest technologies, their potential, and the context in which they can be utilised are essential. The absorption will have to visibly manifest itself at the unit levels, as against being controlled only at the higher levels. This democratisation in employing technology at cutting-edge levels is an imperative to usher in true transformation.

Technology absorption will also necessarily include several macro level aspects such as organisational restructuring, the management of human resources and cultivating specialists not merely at the higher levels but also decentralised at execution levels, civil military fusion, having a structure and policies to ensure data integrity, and having a procurement policy that is applicable to DTs.

The Indian military is moving in the desired direction but the challenge will be to sustain this with a nuanced understanding of the requirements as applicable. In this context, there are many lessons from recent and ongoing wars, and should not be lost sight of.

Colonel Shashank Ranjan (retired) is an Infantry Officer having served in the Indian Army for almost 33 years. He teaches at the O.P. Jindal Global University, Sonapat, Haryana



ARUNA BHATTACHARYA EXPLAINS HOW UNIVERSAL HEALTH COVERAGE ENSURES ACCESSIBLE, QUALITY HEALTH FOR ALL

The road to universal health Coverage: Challenges and solutions

Universal health coverage (UHC) signifies universal accessibility to comprehensive, high-quality health services, without financial hardship. UHC ensures that people receive care whenever and where ever they need it. It covers the full continuum of essential health services, from health promotion to prevention, treatment, rehabilitation, and palliative care. The delivery of these services relies on strong, efficient, and equitable health systems deeply rooted in the communities. UHC is built on the ethos of strengthening primary healthcare to ensure that all health needs are addressed in an integrated manner, supported by a well-equipped health and care workforce.

On December, 12, 2012, the UN General Assembly unanimously endorsed a resolution urging countries to accelerate progress towards UHC. In India, the high level expert group report, submitted to the Planning Commission in 2011, outlined a government intent to increase public financing for health to 2.5% of India's GDP during the 12th Plan (2012-17). The economic growth of the country makes this increase feasible. The National Health Policy, 2017 articulates "the attainment of the highest possible level of good health and well-being, and universal access to good quality health care services without anyone having to face financial hardship as a consequence" as its goal, which aligns with the UHC target.

Right to health

India lacks a constitutional provision for the fundamental right to basic health. However, the Directive Principles of State Policy in Part IV of the Constitution provides a basis for the



right to health. Article 39 (e) of the Constitution directs the state to secure the health of workers; Article 42 emphasises just and humane conditions of work and maternity relief; and Article 47 casts a duty on the state to raise the nutrition levels and standard of living, and to improve public health. The Constitution not only mandates the state to enhance public health but also endows the panchayats and municipalities to strengthen public health under Article 243G.

The theme of International UHC day is 'Health for all: Time for Action' and of World Health Day is 'my health - my right'. How should access to health be envisaged? Given that health is a state subject and the UHC policy is envisaged at the national level, there is a need for discourses on implementation. India has a large migrant population: the total number of inter-State migrant workers was about 41 million (Census 2011), and the total migration rate was 28.9% (Periodic Labour Force Survey, 2020-21). With 49% of the population living in urban slums, according to UN-Habitat/World Bank, the focus

should be on ensuring the availability and accessibility of primary health services.

Isaiah Berlin spoke about two types of freedom. The first is 'freedom from' or negative freedom; the second is 'freedom to' or positive freedom. 'Freedom from' means the absence of obstacles or constraints, whereas 'freedom to' recognises the possibility of autonomously determining and achieving individual or collective purposes. The discourse on health as a human right must be seen as the second freedom, where every citizen has the possibility to achieve health and wellness as part of their rights to access to public health. The constitutional right to health is critical to breaking the vicious cycle of poverty and poor health that will otherwise continue to perpetuate inequality in all spheres of life, including education, opportunity, wealth, and social mobility.

The two critical components of the UHC policy - strengthening primary healthcare and reducing out-of-pocket expenditure - demand focused attention. To align electoral mandates with UHC implementation, political leaders should consider the following suggestions.

Four suggestions

The first is to address urban migrants' health needs, and reforms in informal sectors. Given the surge in migration and mobility, primary healthcare needs a shift in vision.

There is a need to include the element of mobility and portability of access to health care services to aid continuity of treatment.

The second is to simplify the reimbursement processes for reducing out-of-pocket expenditure. The design of cash transfers and reimbursement in India's public healthcare system needs adaptation for migrant and marginalised communities.

The third is to create inclusive health systems. We need to integrate health management information system dashboards with both public and private systems and ensure better information systems considering language barriers and diversity in the urban context. The fourth is to implement community-based primary healthcare in urban and peri-urban areas with seamless referral systems. We need to foster integration of services at the primary healthcare level, ensuring follow-up and adherence to healthcare.

A healthy population is an empowered population. The lighter the disease burden, the better the country's financial health. This election, UHC can be a transformative offering of political parties. Committing to investing in health systems and effectively implementing UHC necessitates political will, substantial investment, and a clear, long-term vision. Establishing a coherent policy pathway to execute the national UHC policy consistently across States is imperative for its success.

Aruna Bhattacharya leads the urban health/public health domain at the School of Human Development, Indian Institute for Human Settlements, Bengaluru. Views are personal.

BOOKS: REVIEW

Technofeudalism: A new face of capitalism in digital age

In "Technofeudalism: What Killed Capitalism," Yanis Varoufakis, a prominent economist and former Greek finance minister, presents a grim autopsy of capitalism's demise, attributing its death to the rise of what he terms "cloud capitalists" or "cloudalists." These new-age barons, according to Varoufakis, have ushered in an era that echoes the feudal past, creating a landscape dominated by market monopolies, unpaid labor, and rent-seeking, thus undermining the foundational capitalist principles of market competition and profit-seeking.

Varoufakis's thesis is built on the premise that the digital revolution has transformed capitalism into a system resembling feudalism, where a few tech-enabled entities control vast resources and data, much like medieval lords dominated land and agricultural output.

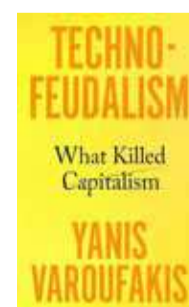
This comparison is not novel; writers and thinkers, including science fiction author Bruce Sterling, have previously suggested that modern digital networks and relentless data capture are leading to a new form of feudalism. However, Varoufakis adds depth to this discussion by linking three significant developments—the privatization of the internet, sustained quantitative easing post-2008 financial crisis, and China's economic ascent—as catalysts in this transformative process.

The book insightfully explains how companies like Amazon and Google have established "cloud fiefs," analogous to feudal territories, where they accumulate wealth not through the production of goods but through the extraction of rents. This rent derives from their monopolistic control over platforms that are crucial gateways

for commerce and information. Varoufakis uses the term "vassal capitalists" to describe businesses that, while operating within these platforms, pay rent to the cloudalists, much like peasants once paid dues to medieval lords.

However, Varoufakis's argument has its contentious points. He equates the appropriation of user data on digital platforms with the feudal lords' entitlement to peasant produce, which might oversimplify the complex dynamics at play in digital economies. These platforms, unlike their feudal counterparts, invest heavily in research and development and continuously innovate—activities that are not typically associated with feudal lords.

Furthermore, Varoufakis critiques the modern neoliberal strain of capitalism, which he argues has become particularly exploitative



Technofeudalism: What Killed Capitalism
By Yanis Varoufakis
Bodley Head,
304 pages; Rs 799.

and is characterized by significant intellectual property rights that restrict competition. He sees these rights as modern enclosures, paralleling the historical enclosures that privatized common lands and catalyzed the rise of capitalist markets.

The book's proposed solutions, including an alliance between "cloud serfs" (users and workers) and "vassal capitalists" (smaller businesses operating under the cloudalists), suggest a unified front against the cloudalists. This is perhaps one of the more provocative aspects of Varoufakis's argument, positing a convergence of interests where traditional class divisions might not so cleanly apply.

Despite the compelling narrative

and the thorough historical context provided, Varoufakis's prognosis for counter-politics feels somewhat underdeveloped. While he excels in diagnosing the issues with stark clarity, his strategic solutions appear less convincing, perhaps reflective of his own challenging experiences confronting Europe's financial authorities. The notion that disparate groups affected by technofeudalism could coalesce into a coherent oppositional force remains an optimistic, if not idealistic, scenario.

"Technofeudalism: What Killed Capitalism" is an essential read for those intrigued by the evolving nature of capitalism in the age of digital technology. Varoufakis offers a deep dive into the mechanisms through which contemporary capitalism is mutating and the possible social and economic repercussions of these changes. While readers may find some of his analogies and solutions debatable, the book undeniably provides a provocative analysis that challenges the status quo and invites a critical examination of what the future holds for global economic systems.

INTERNATIONAL

Biz tycoon Truong My Lan sentenced to death in Vietnam's largest fraud case

HANOI (VIETNAM): Real estate tycoon Truong My Lan was sentenced on Thursday to death by a court in Ho Chi Minh City in southern Vietnam in the country's largest financial fraud case ever, state media Vietnam Net said.

The 67-year-old chair of the real estate company Van Thinh Phat was formally charged with fraud amounting to \$12.5 billion, nearly 3 per cent of the country's 2022 GDP.

Lan illegally controlled Saigon Joint Stock Commercial Bank between 2012 and 2022 and allowed 2,500 loans that resulted in losses of \$27 billion to the bank, reported state media VnExpress. The court asked her to compensate the bank \$26.9 million.

Despite mitigating circumstances, this was a first-time offense and Lan participated in charity activities — the court attributed its harsh sentence to the seriousness of the case, say-



Lan was at the helm of an orchestrated and sophisticated criminal enterprise that had serious consequences with no possibility of the money being recovered, VnExpress said.

Her actions "not only violate the property management rights of individuals and organizations but also push SCB (Saigon Joint Stock Commercial Bank) into a state of special control; eroding people's trust in the leadership

of the Party and State," VnExpress quoted the judgement as saying.

Her niece, Truong Hue Van, the chief executive of Van Thinh Phat, was sentenced to 17 years in prison for aiding her aunt. Lan and her family established the Van Thing Phat company in 1992 after Vietnam shed its state-run economy in favor of a more market-oriented approach that was open to foreigners.

She had started out helping her mother, a Chinese businesswoman, to sell cosmetics in Ho Chi Minh City's oldest market, according to state media Tien Phong.

Van Thinh Phat would grow to become one of Vietnam's richest real estate firms, with projects including luxury residential buildings, offices, hotels and shopping centers. This made her a key player in the country's financial industry. She orchestrated the 2011 merger of the beleaguered SCB bank with two other lenders in coordination with Vietnam's central bank. The court found that she used this approach to tap SCB for cash. She indirectly owned more than 90 per cent of the bank — a charge she denied — and approved thousands of loans to "ghost companies," according to government documents. These loans then found their way back to her, state media VnExpress reported, citing the court's findings.

Multinationals view India as alternative manufacturing base ; investments 'strong': UN



UNITED NATIONS: India remains a "strong" recipient of foreign investments as multinationals recognise it as an alternative manufacturing base for supply chains, according to the United Nations.

"India is benefiting by growing interest from multinationals, which see the country as an alternative manufacturing base in the context of developed economies' supply chain diversification strategies," according to the Financing for Sustainable Development 2024 Report.

The report released on Tuesday said that in contrast to large swathes of the developing coun-

tries, "investment in South Asia, particularly in India, remains strong."

While discussing India's role for multinationals as an "alternative manufacturing base," the report did not directly mention China, which is the motivating factor behind the development because of geopolitical issues.

In contrast to India and some other countries, the report said the developing world as a whole was facing a "sustainable development crisis" because of "staggering debt burdens and sky-high borrowing costs."

These "prevent developing countries from responding to

the confluence of crises they face," it said.

Deputy Secretary-General Amina J. Mohammed said, "We are truly at a crossroads and time is running out. Leaders must go beyond mere rhetoric and deliver on their promises. Without adequate financing, the 2030 (UN sustainable development) targets cannot be met."

"We're experiencing a sustainable development crisis, to which inequalities, inflation, debt, conflicts and climate disasters have all contributed," she added while speaking at a news conference on the report's release.

Mohammed said that the global financial institutions created after World War II were no longer relevant and needed urgent reforms to meet the contemporary challenges.

The report said that New Development Bank (NDB), created by BRICS is planning to issue between 2022 and 2026, 30 per cent of its loans in national currencies, including Indian rupee-denominated bonds.

China tried to interfere but Canadians decided the polls in 2019, 2021: Justin Trudeau



OTTAWA: Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau has said China tried to meddle in the election process in his country twice — 2019 and 2021, but asserted that it was fair.

The elections were decided by Canadians, Trudeau said on Wednesday in his testimony before a commission probing alleged foreign interference in the polls.

The commission was set up last year after media reports about China's interference in the polls.

However, the Chinese Embassy in Canada denied any interference in Canadian affairs.

The commission is set to complete its initial report by May 3 and final report by 2024 end, The Guardian reported.

Earlier, India was accused of meddling in the polls and later the allegation was ruled out by Canada.

Canadian Security Intelligence Service (CSIS) on Monday said that China has "clandestinely and deceptively" interfered in the Canadian elections.

"We know that the Peoples' Republic of China (PRC) clandestinely and deceptively interfered in both the 2019 and 2021 elections," CSIS said during a briefing to the commission.

Trudeau's Liberal Party had won both the elections.

Australia appoints special advisor to examine Israeli airstrike investigation

CANBERRA: A former head of the Australian Defence Force (ADF) has been appointed as the country's special advisor on Israel's response to strikes that killed aid workers in Gaza.

Penny Wong, Australian minister for foreign affairs, on Monday announced that retired Air Chief Marshal (ACM) Mark Binskin will oversee official investigations into the strikes that killed seven World Central Kitchen (WCK) staff in Gaza, Xinhua news agency reported.

Australian citizen Zomi Frankcom was among the WCK humanitarian workers who were killed when the convoy they were travelling in was hit by an Israel Defense Force (IDF) airstrike in central Gaza on April 1 local time.

Sikhs in Canada observe April as Heritage Month

SURREY: With eight lakh Sikhs calling Canada their home, April is observed as Sikh Heritage Month to celebrate the rich history and contributions of the community there.

As per the Canadian encyclopedia, Sikhism is a major world religion that arose from the teachings of Guru Nanak. There are about 27 million Sikhs worldwide, making Sikhism the fifth-largest religion.

"Throughout the month, we'll feature prominent Sikh Canadians and events related to the Sikh community that had a strong impact on Canadian history," said Historica Canada, a non-profit Canadian organisation dedicated to enhancing awareness of Canadian history.

According to City of Surrey's official account on X, "It is an opportunity to remember, celebrate, and educate about the vital role Sikhs have played, and continue to play, in our communities."

This year's Vaisakhi Parade is on April 20.



The official page of Veterans Affairs Canada says: "Today, we remember Buckam Singh — one of the first Sikhs in Canada to enlist in our military."

Son of Badan and Chandni Kaur Singh and husband of Pritam Kaur of Jalandhar, Buckam Singh was in Canadian Infantry (Eastern Ontario Regiment). His enlistment was on April 23, 1915.

Mayor of Brampton, Patrick Brown, said: "Brampton is proud to be home to so many people of Sikh heritage making a tremendous contribution to the success of our city, Ontario and Canada."

Progressive Intercultural Community Services (PICS) Society President and CEO Satbir Singh Cheema said that the month of April "is an acknowledgement that gives us the opportunity to celebrate the contributions and efforts of the Sikh community in the past and in the present to make Canada a more inclusive place."

PICS is a registered non-profit society that has been serving the local community in British Columbia since 1987, providing a broad spectrum of programmes and services that assist new immigrants, seniors, women and youth.

China sanctions 2 US firms over 'support for arms sales to Taiwan'

Beijing: China on Thursday announced sanctions against two US defence companies over what it says is their support for arms sales to Taiwan, the self-governing island democracy Beijing claims as its own territory to be recovered by force if necessary.

The announcement freezes the assets of General Atomics Aeronautical Systems and General Dynamics Land Systems held within China. The measure also bars the companies' management from enter-



ing the country.

Files show General Dynamics operates a half-dozen Gulfstream and jet aviation

services operations in China, which remains heavily reliant on foreign aerospace technology even as it attempts to build its own presence in the field. The company helps make the Abrams tank being purchased by Taiwan.

UN chief voices concern over reports of Israel using AI to identify targets in Gaza

UNITED NATIONS: UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres has voiced concern over reports about the Israeli military using artificial intelligence (AI) in its bombing spree in Gaza.

Reports showed that AI was used to identify targets, particularly in "densely populated residential areas, resulting in a high level of civilian casu-



alties", he told reporters on Friday.

"No part of life-and-death

decisions, which impact entire families, should be delegated to the cold calculation of algorithms," he said at a press encounter, as the Hamas-Israel conflict is nearly six months.

The Israeli military campaign has reportedly killed more than 32,000 and injured more than 75,000 others, the vast majority of them women and children, Guterres was quoted as saying by Xinhua news agency.

More than half of the population in Gaza — over a million people — are facing catastrophic hunger, with children dying for lack of food and water, he said.

"Nothing can justify the collective punishment of the Palestinian people," said the UN chief.

Ukraine parliament passes law to boost troop numbers

KYIV: Ukraine's parliament passed a controversial law on Thursday that will govern how the country calls up new soldiers at a time when it needs to replenish depleted forces who are increasingly struggling to fend off Russia's advance.

The law was passed amid escalating Russian campaign that has devastated Ukraine's energy infrastructure in recent weeks. The country desperately needs more troops — and they need more ammunition — at



a time when doubts about the supply of Western aid are increasing. The law — which was

watered down from its original form — will make it easier to identify every draft-eligible man in the country. Under the law, men aged 18 to 60 will be required to carry documents showing they have registered with the military and present them when asked, according to Oksana Zabolotna, an analyst for Center for United Actions.

Power plant destroyed - A massive missile and drone attack destroyed Ukraine's Trypill-ska power unit, one of the largest plants. The attack was part of a renewed Russian campaign targeting energy infrastructure.

Nijjar killing: 'We have stood up for Canadians', PM Justin Trudeau tells public inquiry panel

Trudeau accuses the previous Conservative government in the country of being 'cosy' with current Indian government

OTTAWA: Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau who testified at a public inquiry looking into foreign interference in Canada's electoral process said that his government was firm on the issue of protecting Canadians, including addressing the killing of Khalistani extremist Hardeep Singh Nijjar, who was shot dead in Surrey last June.

During a hearing of the Foreign Interference Commission which is headed by Quebec judge Marie-Josée Hogue, Trudeau accused the previous Conservative government in the country of being "cosy" with the current Indian government.

Asked about foreign interference during the 2019 elections and redacted parts in the 2019 annual report of the NSI, Trudeau said, "In a public setting, I can't speak to redactions made for national security. But, I will say that the principle

that anyone who comes to Canada from anywhere in the world has all the rights of a Canadian to be free from extortion, coercion, interference from a country that they left behind and how we have stood up for Canadians, including in the very serious case that I brought forward to Parliament of the killing of Nijjar, demonstrates our government's commitment to defending the rights and freedoms of Canadians."

"And the suggestion that we haven't and we won't do everything we can to defend Canadian rules and values and defend Canadians from foreign interference is simply misplaced," Trudeau is heard in a video of the inquiry proceedings shared by Canadian newspaper The Global and Mail. "Our government has always stood up to defend minorities in Canada and the rights of minorities to speak out even if it irritates their home countries overseas," Trudeau said.

An investigation into the allegations of foreign meddling in Canadian politics was triggered by several media reports that cited unnamed sources and leaked docu-



ments.

A briefing document from the Canadian Security Intelligence Service (CSIS) says that China "clandestinely and deceptively" interfered in the last two federal elections.

Trudeau appeared before the national public inquiry after several days of testimony from members of his cabinet, political party representatives, intelligence officials and senior bureaucrats.

During the hearing, the Canadian Prime Minister spoke about the measures his government had taken to address foreign interference since assuming power in 2015.

Asked whether appropriate steps were not taken to expose foreign interference, Trudeau said, "I think that's certainly a question one needs to ask of the previous conservative government that was known for its very cosy relationship with the current Indian government. Whereas our government has always stood up to defend minorities in Canada and the rights of minorities to speak out, even if it irritates their home countries overseas," according to the video shared by The Global and Mail.

In a classified February in-

terview with the Commission of Inquiry, Trudeau called it extremely damaging to the confidence of the people of Canada in the democratic process. A public summary of the interview was revealed at the inquiry on Wednesday, where Trudeau testified at an open hearing.

Trudeau expressed his frustration that intelligence leaked to media had been "sensationalized" and taken out of context, Canada-based CTV News reported.

According to the summary, Trudeau noted that these leaks were "particularly frustrating" as the Liberal government had placed robust mechanisms to track and combat interference, however, it was "painted as negligent in the media."

Trudeau also considered that the leaks showcase the dangers of making conclusions based on a single piece of intelligence, without sufficient context and without analysing its reliability.

Allegations of foreign interference in the past two general elections — suggestions triggered by anonymous leaks to the media resulted in calls for a public inquiry.

Imran Khan's jail security measures cost Rs 1.2 million monthly: Report

ISLAMABAD: Former Pakistan prime minister Imran Khan's jail security measures at the Adiala Jail in Rawalpindi are costing a hefty monthly bill of over Rs 1.2 million (12 lakh), according to prison authorities.

According to the report submitted by the jail superintendent to the Lahore High Court (LHC), the specialised facilities provided to Khan, 71, within the prison premises include a separate CCTV camera system installed for Rs 500,000, distinct from the system overseeing the 7,000 other prisoners.

Khan's meals are prepared in a dedicated kitchen under the watchful eye of the assistant superintendent and are subject to inspection by a medical officer or deputy superintendent before being served. The Express Tribune newspaper reported.

A team of over six doctors from Holy Family Hospital is stationed to provide medical care to the former prime minister, with additional specialist teams conducting regular check-ups.

Khan occupies two of the seven special cells available, while the remaining five are



kept closed for security reasons. Typically, 35 prisoners are accommodated in these cells.

Access to Khan's cell is tightly restricted, requiring permission for entry, and professionally trained personnel are assigned to ensure the security of his ward.

While Adiala Jail typically assigns one personnel for every ten prisoners, Khan's security detail comprises 15 personnel, including two security officers and three dedicated to his personal security.

Moreover, a designated area within the jail premises is allocated for Imran Khan's recreational walks, equipped with exercise machines and other amenities.

Strict regulations are enforced for visitors, and comprehensive security protocols are implemented during court proceedings.

The report reveals the collaborative efforts of jail police, Rangers, and district police in ensuring the security of Adiala Jail, including regular search operations and mock drills.

Additional police forces, Rangers, and elite personnel are deployed both within and around Adiala Jail to maintain a secure environment for Imran Khan and all inmates.

