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DELHI CM ARVIND KEJRIWAL AND PUNJAB CM BHAGWANT MANN PAID OBEISANCE AT SRI HARIMANDIR SAHIB



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BRAVE GIRL OF HARYANA GAVE NEW LEASE OF LIFE TO FOUR CRITICALLY ILL PATIENT AFTER HER TRAGIC DEATH



Arvind Kejriwal, Bhagwant Mann held a meeting with party leaders and workers in Amritsar

BJP thinks that by arresting me they will finish Aam Aadmi Party, but my arrest will not make any difference to the party, every worker here is Kejriwal

JAGMOHAN SINGH
Amritsar

Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) National Convenor and Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal and Punjab Chief Minister Bhagwant Mann held a meeting with party leaders and workers in Amritsar. In the meeting, Kejriwal and Bhagwant Mann praised the party workers for their hard work and discussed the election strategies.

Addressing the workers, Arvind Kejriwal said that I had no special agenda to come to Punjab this time. I have come here this time to meet the people of Punjab and my workers. I used to miss you all a lot in jail. Whenever I met Bhagwant Mann in jail, I used to ask about you. Launching an attack on the BJP, Kejriwal said that the BJP thought that by arresting me, they will finish the Aam Aadmi Party. But my arrest is



not going to make any difference to the party because the Aam Aadmi Party is a family and when trouble comes in the family, everyone comes together. You also did the same, you all came together. This sent a message to them that arresting one Kejriwal will not work. Every worker of the Aam Aadmi Party is Kejriwal. Here every worker will stand up and take charge and will not let Punjab and the country down in any situation.

Kejriwal said that the jail authorities deliberately did not allow me and Bhagwant Mann to meet in the room, whereas according to the jail manual, they

could have allowed a meeting of us in a single room as Chief Ministers. All this is written in the jail manual, this is the provision. From here, the Punjab Police and Chief Minister's Office used to write that the CM of Punjab is coming to meet the CM of Delhi, but they did not arrange a meeting with me in the room. I used to stand on one side of the jail's bars and Bhagwant Mann on the other side and talk. They thought that by doing this they are insulting Kejriwal, but Kejriwal is not insulted by these small things. As long as Bharat Mata's head is high, Kejriwal's head is high.

He said that there were two CCTV cameras installed outside my barrack in the jail to monitor me. 13 jail officers kept an eye on me 24 hours a day, the footage of cameras was also shared with the PMO. These people kept an eye on my every activity, but they did not find anything. I have nothing to hide. Even in jail, I used to do my work and read books.

He said that the BJP people tried everything to break me in the jail. I have been suffering from diabetes for 20 years. For the last ten years, I have been taking 52 units of insulin every day, knowing this, they stopped my insulin in the jail. Due to which my sugar level increased a lot. If a person's sugar level remains high for a long time, then his liver and kidney can also get damaged. But the Supreme Court showed mercy on me and granted me bail for 21 days. Now, in these 21 days, I will work every moment to eliminate this dictatorial government from our country.

Kejriwal appealed to AAP workers that there are still 10-12 days left for the election campaign. Work so hard in these 10-12 days that the party wins all 13 seats in Punjab. On June

4, the day of election results, I will be in jail but I will watch the election results on TV. I am fully confident that you will not disappoint me. Arvind Kejriwal is a tireless and brave leader, BJP cannot intimidate him by putting him in jail - Bhagwant Mann praised AAP workers, said - Due to your hard work, Aam Aadmi Party is at number 1 in the election campaign across the country According to the report, BJP is losing in all the four phases, it will not cross 400, their ship is sinking - Mann

Addressing the workers, Chief Minister Bhagwant Mann said that I thank all of you for your support in this hour of crisis. I salute you for the kind of unity and mutual brotherhood you have shown. Mann said that the next 12-13 days are very important. In these 12-13 days, we have to work hard and contribute to saving the constitution and democracy of the country. He told the workers to devote these 12-13 days to Punjab. He said that when the history of the country will be written, it will also be written that when the fight to save the country was going on, Punjab and the Aam Aadmi Party made the biggest contribution.

India forex reserves surge by \$2.56 bn to \$644.15 bn

NEW DELHI: India's foreign exchange reserves surged by \$2.56 billion to \$644.15 billion during the week ended May 10, the latest data released by the RBI showed on Friday.

This is the second consecutive week during which the country's forex kitty has expanded after registering a \$3.66 billion rise to \$641.59 billion for the week ended on May 3.

India's foreign exchange reserves had touched a lifetime high of \$648.562 billion in April after which they had declined for three weeks in a row by \$10.6 billion as the RBI actively intervened in the market to buy dollars to stabilise the rupee.

RBI Governor Shaktikanta Das had recently referred to the record foreign exchange reserves as a reflection of the strength of the Indian economy.

"It is our prime focus to build a strong buffer in the form of a substantial quantum of forex reserves which will help us when the cycle turns," he remarked while unveiling the first monetary policy review of



the current financial year that began on April 1.

Rising foreign exchange reserves are positive for the economy as they reflect an ample supply of dollars that help to strengthen the rupee. An increase in the foreign exchange reserves gives the RBI more headroom to stabilise the rupee when it turns volatile.

This is because the RBI intervenes in the spot and forward currency markets by releasing more dollars to prevent the rupee from going into a free fall.

Conversely, a declining forex kitty leaves the RBI less space to intervene in the market to prop up the rupee.

India's forex reserves, including the central bank's forward holdings, can now cover more than 11 months of imports, which is a two-year high.

E-com giants back govt move on rules against fake reviews



NEW DELHI: Major e-commerce companies in India on Wednesday backed the government's proposal to make mandatory compliance with quality norms for consumer reviews, the Consumer Affairs Department said on Wednesday.

At a meeting held here, representatives from Amazon, Flipkart, Google and Meta, among others, endorsed the proposed quality control order to implement the IS 19000:2022 standard on 'online consumer reviews', according to the department.

There was a consensus that the order is important to protect consumer interests from misleading reviews on shopping websites and apps, it said, adding that the draft order will be put up for public consultation.

Chairing the meeting, Consumer Affairs Secretary Nidhi Khare said the standard was important as online shoppers heavily depend on reviews for purchases they cannot physically inspect. "The presence of fake reviews online jeopardises the trustworthiness of platforms and can lead to wrong purchase decisions," the statement said.

The standard prescribes specific responsibilities for review authors and administrators. It requires review authors to be identified, bars editing of reviews to alter messaging, and prohibits preventing or discouraging negative reviews.

The move comes after a voluntary push failed to effectively curb fake reviews. The department also saw a surge in e-commerce-related consumer complaints to 4,44,034 in 2023 from just 95,270 in 2018, making up 43 per cent of the total grievances registered.

India should sign more FTAs, cut tariffs: Niti CEO



NEW DELHI: India needs to sign many more free trade agreements (FTAs) with other countries and reduce tariffs to compete with the rest of the world, Niti Aayog CEO BVR Subrahmanyam said on Friday.

Addressing the captains of the Indian industry at a CII Annual Business Summit, Subrahmanyam said the government should not protect any sector from competition. "I think we should be very, very confident about our capabilities about India actually being able to be competitive with the rest of the world," he said.

Subrahmanyam also noted that there has to be a concerted effort to make India part of global value chains. "To get into global value chains means a fundamental change in a lot of things. It means low tariffs, low procedures and no protectionism," he said.

Highlighting the need for reforms in financial services, he said India needs its own JP Morgans and Citibanks and that requires a very, very forward-looking thinking.

"We need much bigger banks, we need much more global players and we need a financial sector which has the muscle to service firms not just in India but across the world," he said. Pointing out the industrial transformation unleashed after the 1991 economic reforms, he said 90 per cent of the companies that exist today are here in their size because of what happened then.

Ramp up manufacturing- Addressing the captains of the industry in New Delhi, Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman on Friday said the country needed to ramp up its manufacturing sector to increase its share in the global value chain and become 'Atmanirbhar'. She also underlined the policy support to attain this objective.

Assault case at CM's House: Swati Maliwal arrives at Delhi CM's residence for scene recreation

OUR CORRESPONDENT
New Delhi

AAP MP Swati Maliwal visited the Delhi Chief Minister's residence to reenact the events of May 13 as part of the ongoing investigation into her alleged assault. Sources from the Delhi Police confirmed that Additional DCP Delhi North, Civil Line Police Station SHO, and a forensic team were present with the mapping of the drawing room. Maliwal was questioned about the incident, including the number of people present at the time.

Earlier, the AAP criticized Maliwal over a video clip from the CM's residence on the day of the alleged assault. Shared by a news channel, the video



purportedly showed Maliwal arguing with the security personnel. This marks the first instance of the AAP opposing Maliwal in this case, contradicting earlier support from AAP MP Sanjay Singh, who had stated that CM Kejriwal was taking strict action and

the party stood with Maliwal. Responding to the video, Maliwal accused an unnamed individual of attempting to protect himself by disseminating the video out of context. She stated on X that the truth would emerge once the CCTV footage from the residence

was reviewed. "Who makes a video of someone being beaten up? The truth will be revealed to everyone as soon as the CCTV footage of the house and the room is checked. Fall to whatever level you can, God is watching everything. One day everyone's truth will come out in front of the world," Maliwal remarked.

The Delhi Police filed an FIR based on Maliwal's complaint, revealing disturbing details. According to the FIR, Maliwal alleged that Kejriwal's personal secretary, Bibhav Kumar, assaulted her by slapping her "at least seven to eight times," dragging, and kicking her in the "chest, stomach, and pelvis area" while she screamed for help.

Sonia Gandhi makes an emotional appeal for Rahul in Raebareli



RAEBARELI: Former Congress president Sonia Gandhi on Friday made an emotional appeal to the people of Raebareli for her son Rahul Gandhi who is contesting the seat.

Sonia Gandhi arrived halfway through a joint rally, addressed by Rahul Gandhi and Samajwadi Party chief Akhilesh Yadav, in Raebareli in Uttar Pradesh and started her speech with, "My head bows before you because you allowed me to serve you as MP. Raebareli is family for me - just like Amethi."

She said that she had many pleasant memories of her family's old relationship with Raebareli. "These memories are pious like Ganga

Maa. Indira ji had a special place for Raebareli in her heart. I gave Rahul and Priyanka the same lessons that I had learnt from Indira ji and Raebareli, the foremost being compassion for the poor." She added, "I have taught them not to fear if they encounter difficulties in serving the people."

She ended her speech with "Today, I am giving my son you. Please treat him like your own and Rahul will not let you down. Mera aanchal aapke pyar aur ashirwad se bhara hai."

Carry documents for cash above Rs. 50,000 while travelling: Punjab CEO Sibin C



CHANDIGARH: With the Model Code of Conduct in force in Punjab for the Lok Sabha elections 2024, Punjab Chief Electoral Officer (CEO) Sibin C advised citizens on Friday not to carry cash more than Rs. 50, 000 without supporting documents, such as bank withdrawal receipts and receipt books for traders, while travelling in the state.

During a second Facebook live session, <Talk to your CEO Punjab>, Sibin C addressed various queries from voters and urged them to report any violations through the C-vigil app, the 1950 toll-free number and the National Grievance Service Portal (NGSP) of the ECI to ensure smooth and fair elections.

Replying to a query on carrying mobiles to polling booths, the CEO said that the Election Commission of India explicitly prohibits voters from carrying mobile phones and other communication gadgets inside polling booths on election days.

On another question about publicity by political parties, the CEO said that flex boards and hoardings can only be placed at designated locations after seeking permission from the DEOs or the CEO's office till the MCC is in force.

The Chief Electoral Officer further said that no political party or candidate can seek votes based on religion, as this is a clear violation of the MCC. He urged people to report such violations im-

mediately via the C-vigil app, assuring that the CEO's office will take action against violators within 100 minutes.

A resident also thanked the CEO for deploying female staff on polling duty near their residences. The CEO said that, following the directions of the ECI, special attention has been given this time to appoint female staff at the nearest polling booths.

In response to a query regarding whether government employees can canvass for any political party or leader, the CEO unequivocally said that no government employee can campaign for political parties. Stern action will be initiated, including lodging an FIR against violators.

Amid rising temperatures, Sibin C said various initiatives have been taken to increase voter turnout and provide relief at polling stations from the heatwave. He said that each polling station will have water coolers, fans, seating arrangements and sheds to provide relief to voters from the heat.

The CEO informed that there are a total of 2.14 crore registered voters, including 1.89 lakh voters aged 85+, 1, 614 NRIs, 1.58 lakh PWD and 5.38 lakh first-time voters, who will cast their votes at 24, 451 polling stations across the state on June 1.

Defence Industrial Corridor will transform Bundelkhand: PM Modi

HAMIRPUR (UP) : Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Friday highlighted the significance of some major projects, including the establishment of a Defence Industrial Corridor (DIC), that will transform the entire Bundelkhand region in Uttar Pradesh.

Laying out his detailed vision for the development of Bundelkhand, PM Modi asserted that he wants the region to become the centre of industry and employment.

"The BJP government is building two defence corridors in the country. Modi decided that a defence corridor would be built in Bundelkhand, the land of heroes. Our effort is that the youth do not have to leave Bundelkhand. Our resolve is that Bundelkhand should become the centre of industry and employment," the Prime Minister said while addressing a public meeting in Hamirpur.

It was in February 2018 that Prime Minister Modi announced that one of the country's two Defence Industrial Corridors (DICs) will be set up in the Bundelkhand region passing through six nodes of Agra, Aligarh, Lucknow, Kanpur, Jhansi and Chitrakoot.

"There is a possibility of Rs 20, 000 crore investment in this corridor, providing employment to almost 2.5 lakh



There is a possibility of Rs 20, 000 crore investment in this corridor, providing employment to almost 2.5 lakh people. Yogi ji's government is also going to industrialise Purvanchal and Bundelkhand by creating Purvanchal Expressway and Bundelkhand Expressway"

people. Yogi ji's government is also going to industrialise Purvanchal and Bundelkhand by creating Purvanchal Expressway and Bundelkhand Expressway," said PM Modi.

On Friday, even as he mentioned the importance of the two defence corridors - the second one is coming up in Tamil Nadu - in providing a solid ecosystem to the defence industry, the Prime Minister slammed the Congress and opposition parties for demanding respect for Pakistan just because it has nuclear weapons. "They say that Pakistan has a nuclear bomb... Those giv-

ing these threats do not know that the country does not even have the money to maintain it. They also say that they (Pakistan) have missiles... I want them to know that the defence corridor that we are building in Bundelkhand is also for the same purpose and not for manufacturing firecrackers," said PM Modi.

As it inches closer to its goal of achieving 'Aatmanirbhar' in defence, the government led by Prime Minister Modi believes that setting up of the two DICs will add to the momentum of becoming completely self-reliant in the sector.

Mumbai hoarding crash: Death toll rises to 16 as two more bodies recovered



MUMBAI: Two more bodies were recovered here from the debris at the site of the giant hoarding crash of May 13, taking the toll to 16, the BMC Disaster Control said here on Thursday. The bodies of a male and a female were found in a highly decomposed state and have been identified as Manoj Chansoria, 60, and Anita Chansoria, 59. The rescue work is still underway at the site of Chhedha Nagar for the fourth day after the monstrous hoarding collapse. The rescue operation on Wednesday also led to the recovery of several vehicles buried under the debris, raising fears of more casualties. The incident sent shockwaves in Mumbai which is dotted by 1025 big and small hoardings, besides many others on railways properties. The BMC has started yanking off all illegal or oversized hoardings violating the permissible size of 40x40 feet (1600 sq feet). The civic body has also slapped notices to the Central Railway and Western Railway to immediately identify and remove all illegal hoardings on its properties immediately.

Arvind Kejriwal and Bhagwant Mann paid obeisance at Sri Harimandir Sahib

JAGMOHAN SINGH
Amritsar

The Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) national convener and Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal and Punjab Chief Minister Bhagwant Mann on Thursday paid obeisance at Sri Harimandir Sahib (Golden Temple) on May 16.

While talking to the media outside Sri Darbar Sahib, Kejriwal said that he has come here to pray for the peace and welfare of Punjab. Sachkhand Sri Harimandir Sahib is the center of devotion for crores of people. It is a matter of good fortune for me to be here.

Arvind Kejriwal has come to Punjab for the first time after coming out of jail. On this occasion, Aam Aadmi Party candidate from Amritsar Kuldeep Singh Dhaliwal and a large number of party supporters were also present. Later he also paid obeisance



at Sri Durgiana Temple in Amritsar and received the blessings of the goddess.

Talking to the media outside the temple, Kejriwal said that he offered prayers at Sri Durgiana Temple for the peace and prosperity of Punjab. We prayed to the goddess for the progress and happiness of the

people of Punjab. It is my wish that the blessings of the goddess always remain with the people.

After coming out of jail, Arvind Kejriwal has come to Punjab for the first time. He also did a road show with Bhagwant Mann in Amritsar.

Arvind Kejriwal and Bhagwant Mann paid obeisance at Bhagwan Sri Valmiki Teerath S'than

JAGMOHAN SINGH
Amritsar

Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) national convener and Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal and Punjab Chief Minister Bhagwant Mann on Friday paid obeisance at Bhagwan Sri Valmiki Teerath S'than in Amritsar and prayed for the prosperity of Punjab. Yesterday the AAP leaders bowed heads at Golden temple and Durgiana Mandir where they prayed for Punjab's peace and prayed to God to bring our country back on the right track. A large number of AAP supporters were present with them.

LS polls 2024: 80% police force, 250 companies of central forces to ensure free and fair polls in Punjab



JAGMOHAN SINGH
Amritsar

In order to ensure free, fair and peaceful forthcoming Lok Sabha elections in the border state, Special Director General of Police (Spl DGP) Law and Order Arpit Shukla on Wednesday said that 80 per cent police force is being mobilised and at least 225 more companies of Central Forces will be arriving soon in the state to instil confidence among the general public as well as to dominate sensitive and hyper-sensitive areas. Notably, 25 companies of Central Forces have already

been deployed in the state.

In a statement issued here today, the Special DGP was on a tour of Amritsar and Jalandhar to hold Range-level meetings with Border Range IGP/DIG, CPs, and SSPs of both the ranges to review the security arrangements and take stock of preparations for General Parliamentary Elections-2024. Deputy Inspector General of Police (DIG) Border Range Rakesh Kumar Kaushal and Commissioner of Police (CP) Amritsar Gurpreet Singh Bhullar were present in the Amritsar meeting, while, the meeting of Jalandhar range was

attended by Inspector General of Police (IGP) Jalandhar range S Boopathi and CP Jalandhar Swapan Sharma.

Emphasising on the need to build a positive environment in the state, Spl DGP Arpit Shukla directed all the police officers to do professional policing and not let anyone to disturb the hard-earned peace and harmony in the state. He ordered officers to intensify the checking of vehicles, especially commercial vehicles, entering and exiting the state to check the influx of narcotics and illicit liquor. He also directed all the officers to make special efforts to nab accused persons involved in heinous crimes, drug smuggling and bootlegging, besides, expediting the investigation and prosecution of cases of election-related offences. He informed that Punjab Police have recovered Rs 5.45 crores unaccounted cash, 11.49 lakh litres liquor and 99.62 Kg drugs since the inception of the Model Code of Conduct.

3500 intoxicated injection seized with arrest of supplier and the buyer



SATISH HANDA
Panipat

Anti Narcotic Cell led by Sub Inspector Satbir on a clue conducted a raid at village Ganjbad and arrested Rajpal from whom 3500 intoxicated injections of value worth over Rs two lakh were recovered. On his information police team also arrested the buyer of these injections identified as Yudhvir, also a resident of the same village used to supply intoxicated drugs in the area for a long time. The stocks of intoxicated injections were kept by the supplier in a room where the stocks of animal feed was kept. Rajpal said that he used to procure stocks of intoxicants injections from a drugs supplier Dushyant at the price of Rs 70 to 80 each and supplying at the price ranging between Rs 100 to Rs 120 each. Police team also informed Drug Control Officer Vijay Raje reached at the spot during arrest of the accused.

CM Bhagwant Mann campaigns in Nawanshahr, asked the people to vote against the dictatorship



NAWANSHAHR: Chief Minister Bhagwant Mann, on Monday, campaigned for Anandpur Sahib Lok Sabha candidate Malvinder Singh Kang in Nawanshahr. CM Mann, along with AAP candidate Malvinder Singh Kang, deputy speaker Jai Kishan Singh Rouri and AAP MLA Dinesh Chadha, took out a massive road show in Nawanshahr and urged the voters to vote against the dictatorship.

Addressing the people, CM Bhagwant Mann said that we are like you and we are with you. We value your votes, but if you vote for 'rajwade'

politicians then your votes are wasted. Because they don't come to people after getting their votes, they stay in their palaces and live luxurious lives at the expense of your tax money.

Mann asked the voters to give their vote to 'jharoo', to Arvind Kejriwal, who is fighting to save our democracy, to Malvinder Kang, who will be the voice of the people of Anandpur Sahib in the parliament. He asked the voters to vote against the dictatorship and polarisation. He said, vote to save our democracy, the constitution of Baba Sa-

heb Ambedkar and for the future of your children.

During the road show, Bhagwant Mann got his eye injured in the flower shower but the AAP leader said that he is blessed. Mostly, politicians get slippers, he is getting showers of flowers wherever he is going. He had to cut his speech short because of the pain in his eye, but he asked the people to not worry about him, only think about Punjab. He said that he will get his eye checked later. He urged the people to vote for the AAP candidate Malvinder Singh Kang.

Before Nawanshahr, CM Mann had done two roadshows for Malvinder Kang in Kharar and Ropar where he got the similar support. Malvinder Kang appears to be the strongest candidate in Anandpur Sahib, he is getting positive response wherever he is going for his campaign. The party also has two cabinet ministers, Harjot Singh Bains (Anandpur Sahib) and Anmol Gagan Maan (Kharar), both have important portfolios in the Mann government, from this Lok Sabha constituency.

Gang involved in 154 transformer thefts in Haryana in 300 days busted

SATISH HANDA
Kaithal

Police arrested four persons of a family: father Raj Kumar (42), two sons Karan Singh (19) and Vikram Singh (21) all residents of Tibba Basti, Patra in Patiala district (Punjab) and son-in-law Amandeep (23) resident of Chhoi Hindoli in Sangrur district allegedly involved in a

transformer thefts gang, who during preliminary investigation after arrest admitted as many as 154 cases of transformers in agriculture land and submersible motors at tubewell theft in the area and sold copper wire to disposal goods dealers at different places. Raj Kumar used to visit various transformer locations during day time on his motorcycle.

Talking to media persons, Upasana, Superintendent of Police, Kaithal said that the police arrested Amandeep Singh and Vikram on May 7 and took their eight-day police remand. Based on their inputs, the police arrested the remaining two on May 10 and they were also remanded to police custody for five-day. The arrested accused said that they used to sell most

of the stolen copper wires to a scrap dealer in Patra in Patiala who was also taken into custody by the police. SP said that a complaint was lodged by Roshan Lal a resident of village Duser Pur at Guhla police station on May 1 this year that unidentified burglars had stolen copper wire from three transformers installed in his agriculture farms on May 1 night.

This time people will vote for Congress, its sting will be felt by BJP- Hooda

Youth forced to leave the country due to severe unemployment; BJP's policies have distanced young children from their old parents, home, family and country- Hooda

PARVESH HANDA
Ambala

Former Chief Minister and Leader of Opposition Bhupinder Singh Hooda has said that the people of Haryana would vote for MSP guarantees, not for lathi-bullet to the farmer, for 32 lakh government jobs, not for record breaking unemployment, for annual apprenticeship guarantee of Rs 1,00,000, and not for sending youth to work as labour in war zone Israel. He said the people



of Haryana are going to vote not for fear and crime, but for guarantee of security.

Hooda, who had come from Ambala today to campaign for Congress candidate Varun Mullana, addressed many programs and appealed to the people to vote for the Congress. State Congress president Chaudhary Udaibhan and

senior leader Nirmal Singh were also present along with Hooda. Addressing the election meeting, Hooda said this time the choices are very clear before the public. "On one hand, Congress is asking for votes in the name of development and welfare schemes, while on the other hand, BJP is asking for votes without show-

ing any work, or telling any future plan. It is obvious that this time the public vote will go to Congress, and the sting of these votes would be felt by the BJP," he said.

Hooda said there is anger in the entire state, including North Haryana that the BJP government has forced our youth to leave the country by spreading massive unemployment. "The youth is convinced that they have no future in the country under the BJP government. That's why every second youth wants to go abroad through the donkey route, or any other means. BJP's policies have separated young children from their old parents. Congress wants to make Haryana a state from where no youth is forced to

migrate from the country," he stated.

In his address, Congress president in the state Chaudhary Udaibhan said BJP wants to make India an undemocratic country like China and Russia by strangulating the Constitution. "Now BJP does not care at all about bringing back black money, bullet train, smart city, rising prices of diesel-petrol, gas cylinder rates and double income of farmers, nor does BJP want any party to talk about the grassroots issues of the people. That is why those in power spread lies about the 5 justices and 25 guarantees of the Congress, but now the manifesto of Congress has reached the hands and hearts of the people," he said.

'Science City' Ambala crying for govt attention since a long time

SATISH HANDA
Ambala

'Science City' Ambala Cantt presently having more than 2100 micro, small and medium industrial units manufacturing scientific instruments used in educational institutes, microscopes, incubators, glasswares being supplied to the industry and research centres including Defence Research and Develop-

ment Organization (DRDO) and exports all over the world, having annual turnover more than Rs 3000 crore and providing employment to more than 20000 persons. The local units have been manufacturing and supplying scientific instruments since 1914, not only in the country but all over the world, yet crying for immediate government attention to set up a Research and Design Centre, a

Kaushal Vikas Institute for skill development and a Tool Room Centre to boost the quality of products. The entrepreneurs of this industry in the town are awaiting government to declare Ambala having a status of 'Science City' because of having over 40% share in manufacturing and supply of scientific instruments in the country, which can further increase the business in domestic as well as in export

markets by nearly hundred percent, also giving a severe dent to the scientific instruments industry in China.

Umesh Gupta President of Scientific Apparatus Manufacturers Association said that a Tool Centre with the investment of Rs 100 crore was approved by the government to be set up in Saha Industrial Growth Centre near the town over a decade ago but the project is still hanging

on fire without any action since after the inauguration in spite of repeated requests by the local entrepreneurs, who have now left all hopes as regard this project will ever come up. Ashwani Goel of Haryana Chamber of Commerce & Industry expressed regrets over the political leaders also making tall claims for developing this as well as many other similar projects to boost scientific industry in the

town prior to the elections, but took no action after coming to power. According to Sanjay Gupta, a former President of another association ASIMA, in spite of being Asia's biggest scientific instrument manufacturing hub in Asia, Ambala is deprived of having a status of 'Science City' so far, adversely affecting the reputation not only in domestic as well as export markets.

More than 600 milk dairies functioning in thickly populated residential areas & posh colonies at Ambala

PARVESH HANDA
Ambala

Two dairy complex were developed outside the twin city Ambala to shift all milk dairies mushrooming inside the town in thickly populated residential areas as well as in the posh, when the district administration developed 204 plots at village Khatauli near Ambala Cantonment and 148 plots developed at village Kanwali near Ambala City to be allotted to the owners of the milk dairies at subsidized rates. According to information, most of the dairy owners shifted to these authorized dairy complexes in 2003 started shifting back their milk dairy units inside the town due to lack of amenities in the dairy complexes like the absence of free supply of water, irregular electric supply, no drainage system, lack of cleanliness arrangement causing heaps of garbage and cow dung scattered all around inside the complex, non availability of a doctor to take health care of the animals and no electric poles inside the complex as such the area remains dark and unsafe during night hours, as all such facilities were assured to be provided to the dairy owners prior to allotment of plots; as such they were compelled to shift back their milk dairies inside the town in past three to four years in the absence of assured amenities.

Information reveals, there are nearly 90 milk dairies left in Khatauli complex and 58 plots are lying vacant. Similarly, in the Kanwla dairy complex out of a total number of 72 plots nearly 40 plots are lying vacant. A recent survey reveals that more than 200 milk dairies are presently functioning in thickly populated residential areas and posh colonies at present spreading cow dung and heaps of garbage scattered all around in these areas.

According to information, large number of milk dairies are located in Sadar area Ambala Cantt and it was a dream project of the former Home & Health Minister Anil Vij, also MLA of the constituency to shift all milk dairies from thickly populated Sadar area to an authorized complex and for this project 21 acre land was procured by the Sadar Municipal Committee to shift all milk dairies from Sadar area to Brahman Majra in 2023 and a tender to hire a consultancy agency for this project was also floated and a layout for the same was prepared by an agency which was submitted for the approval, but no further action was taken by the district administration in this regard so far and the project is hanging on fire without action.

There were many as 217 milk dairies functioning in the residential areas in Ambala City in 2001, and proposal to shift milk dairies was made in year 2003 and draw for the allotment of plots were held and in a short period all 148 plots at Khatauli were occupied by milk dairy owners who shifted there in due course of time.

Renowned Poet and Padma Shri Awardee Dr. Surjit Patar Passes Away at 79

TARUN BHAJANI
Chandigarh

Renowned poet and Padma Shri awardee, Dr. Surjit Patar, known for his impactful contributions to Punjabi literature, peacefully passed away in his sleep at the age of 79. Dr. Patar, who began his poetic journey in his mid-sixties, leaves behind a legacy of profound works



including «Hawa vich Likhe Harf», «Birkh Arz Kare», and «Hanere Vich Sulagdi Varmma-la.» His leadership as the president of Punjabi Sahit Akademi and his Padma Shri recognition in 2012 underscore his immense influence and dedication to literature. Dr. Patar, hailing from Patar Kalan village in Jalandhar and retiring as a professor of Punjabi from Punjab Agricultural University, leaves behind a void in the literary world that will be deeply felt by admirers and peers alike.

Sukhbir Badal appeals to voters to understand the conspiracy under which Bhai Amritpal was being fielded as an independent candidate

JAGMOHAN SINGH
Jandiala (Amritsar)

Shiromani Akali Dal (Badal) president Sukhbir Singh Badal today appealed to Punjabis to understand the conspiracy under which Bhai Amritpal Singh was being fielded as an independent candidate from Khadoor Sahib constituency even as he asked Sikhs to determine whether a person who had acquired Sikh saroop (disguised) one year earlier was fit to lead them or their own 103 years old party which was steeped in the blood of their forefathers.

The SAD president, who held public meetings here and at Baba Bakala in favour of party candidate Virsa Singh Valtaha, said "how can a person who wears a 'chola' (traditional Sikh warrior dress like Nighang) and partakes (turban)'amrit' one year back represent the Panth and not a 103 year old party which has a consistent track record of safeguarding panthic values». Urging the people to evaluate if Amritpal had been propped up by central agencies, he said "what other explanation can be that a person who



was first propped up, then projected, then arrested and is now being kept in safe custody only to be used as a candidate in the parliamentary elections to counter the popularity of the SAD». He also pointed out the dichotomy in Amritpal's earlier stand that he did not want to enter politics and was only interested in 'amrit parchar' (to disseminate Message of Sikh Masters) religious and fighting the drug menace. "It is also a fact that Amritpal was facilitated to file his nomination papers despite being incarcerated under the NSA in Dibrugarh", Badal added.

Going further, the SAD president questioned how Amritpal could think of leading the 'qoum' (Sikh community) when he could not remain in jail for one year also. "Our family did not hold dharnas to free Parkash Singh Badal when he remained in jail for 16 years», Badal asserted adding "Akali leaders themselves courted arrested and never disguised themselves to avoid being caught as had been done by Amritpal». Mr Badal also made it clear that Amritpal was contesting elections to free himself and not the Bandi Singhs. "All families of Bandi Singhs are with the SAD", he added.

Ambala cop, aide held for accepting bribe in cash and a second hand AC

SATISH HANDA
Ambala

After verifying the facts, an ACB team from Panchkula laid a trap on Tuesday late evening and arrested an ASI Angrez posted in Baldev Nagar police post accepted Rs Rs 8000 cash and a second hand AC of value worth Rs 17000 which was found installed in the police post incharge Vijay. Police personnel had demanded an amount worth Rs 25000 to withdraw his name from the case when the deal was finalized with him at Rs 8000 cash and a second hand AC of value Rs 17000.

The complainant Maninder Singh alias Laadi against whom a case was registered along with three others Shivam Arora, Prabhjot Singh alias Shooter and Gurpreet Singh alias Goldi allegedly in beatings and attempted to murder on 14th December last. The trouble started when the four youths were urinating in the park near the residence of Praveen Sood working in



Income tax department who requested them not to urinate inside the park a public place when the angry youths made an attack on him with a iron rod and injured his nephew Deepak severely bleeding from head who had arrived for his rescue and a case was registered with Baldev Nagar police post.

Maninder had sought an anticipatory bail from the High Court. Subhash Chand ACB Inspector said that a case under the Prevention of Corruption Act was registered and after verifying the facts ACB team registered a case against police post in-charge Vijay also. Ambala superintendent of police. Arrested police personnel were produced in the court on Wednesday.

CAA comes to fruition: Home Ministry hands over first citizenship certificates to 14 individuals

NEW DELHI: The Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA) on Wednesday issued the first set of citizenship certificates to at least 14 applicants under the Citizenship Amendment Act (CAA).

"The certificates were handed over by Union Home Secretary Ajay Kumar Bhalla in the national capital," the MHA said in a press note.

Notably, the Centre notified the CAA rules for implementation on March 11, 2024, as the law remained in the 'dormant' state for a couple of years.

The applications for citizenship under the CAA were



moved from persons belonging to Hindu, Sikh, Jain, Buddhist, Parsi and Christian communities from Pakistan, Bangladesh and Afghanistan, who entered

India till December 31, 2014, on account of religious persecution. The Empowered Committee headed by Director (Census Operation) after

due scrutiny of papers granted citizenship to 14 applicants.

The CAA, seeking to give Indian citizenship to persecuted minorities from neighbouring nations including Pakistan, Afghanistan and Bangladesh was passed by the Parliament in 2019. The law, however, after enactment by the Parliament, got embroiled in controversy as demonstrations and protests mushroomed across the country.

First, the violent protests and then the outbreak of the Covid pandemic apparently led to long delays in the notification of CAA.

Former INS President Naresh Mohan passes away at the age 82



NEW DELHI: Former President of Indian Newspaper Society, Mr. Naresh Mohan, passed away on Thursday at the age of 82. Mr. Naresh Mohan served as the president of the organisation in 1990-91. Mr. Naresh Mohan was in the intensive care unit of a local hospital in New Delhi. He suffered multi-organ failure.

On behalf of The Indian Newspaper Society, Mr. Rakesh Sharma, President, condoles the death of the media veteran Mr. Naresh Mohan, who passed away this morning.

He further stated that the Society had immensely benefited from his vision and leadership during his tenure. His passing away is an irreparable loss to the entire print media industry.

Mr. Rakesh Sharma conveyed his heartfelt condolences to the family members and prayed that the Almighty grant them strength and courage to bear this irreparable loss.

INS President Rakesh Sharma also highlighted the invaluable contributions made by him during his tenure. Offering sympathies to Mohan's bereaved family, Sharma extended heartfelt condolences, praying for strength and fortitude during this challenging time.

Union Minister Anurag Thakur also paid his tributes to the late media veteran. "Sadness by the demise of Naresh Mohan ji, a distinguished media personality who, in his career spanning decades, held numerous posts and left an indelible impact through his works and erudition. My deepest condolences to his family members in this hour of grief. May his soul rest in peace. Om Shanti," the Information and Broadcasting minister said in a post on 'X'.

Amit Shah: BJP to field candidates on all 90 J&K Assembly seats in future polls

FW DESK

Union Home Minister Amit Shah announced during his ongoing visit to Srinagar that the BJP intends to compete for all 90 seats in the upcoming Jammu and Kashmir assembly elections. Shah's two-day visit to Srinagar included meetings with state BJP representatives at the Lalit Palace hotel on May 16, where he emphasized the party's preparedness for the forthcoming elections later this year.

During the discussions, Shah expressed remorse over the BJP's absence from the Lok Sabha elections in three crucial Kashmir constituencies - Srinagar, Baramulla, and Anantnag-Rajouri. He urged party members to work towards eliminating the political dominance of regional parties like the Jammu and



Kashmir National Conference (NC), J&K Peoples Democratic Party (PDP), and the Congress in the Union Territory. Shah's visit coincided with a notable turnout of 38.49 per cent in the recent Srinagar Lok Sabha constituency elections, the highest since 1996.

However, Shah's visit drew criticism from regional political parties, questioning

its timing amidst ongoing Lok Sabha elections in the valley, where the BJP is not contesting. Omar Abdullah, the National Conference chief and candidate for Baramulla, raised concerns about the Home Minister's departure from election campaigning to visit a region where his party isn't participating in the polls.

PM Modi working 18-19 hours every day to transform India: Hardeep Puri



NEW DELHI: Terming it a "once in a lifetime" experience to work with Prime Minister Narendra Modi, Union Minister for Petroleum and Natural Gas Hardeep Singh Puri said on Tuesday that the PM remains committed to the 'Viksit Bharat' mission, working tirelessly with full passion for 18-19 hours every day to transform India.

"I am not the kind of person who drops names. But, I have had the privilege of knowing Prime Minister Modi much earlier. I have known him not only when I was a diplomat but before I became a civil servant. I can only tell you that in my 50-plus years of public life, I still have to come across any

individual who comes within even close range," Puri told the social media channel of Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP).

"He is totally dedicated and works 18-19 hours a day, that too non-stop, seven days a week, 12 months a year. He has a commitment to the country and follows it with full passion. As a result of which, you can see the huge transformation that is taking place in India. The India of 2014 and India of 2024 are very different and, at the rate that we are going, the India of 2029 will be even more different," added Puri.

Also India's Union Minister for Housing and Urban Affairs, Puri credited PM Modi for his

unyielding commitment and foresight.

"Not just the economic progress alone, but also I think the vision he has. Green energy is a case in point, you see the transformation that is taking place and is felt in the tier-2 and tier-3 cities and our rural areas. That is encompassed in his vision of a 'Viksit Bharat'. That sums it up... this is now the mission statement and that 'Viksit Bharat' journey which he started in 2014 will continue for another five years under his leadership," said Puri.

Even though Prime Minister Modi himself has attributed the rise of India to the efforts of 140 crore people of the country, Puri lauded PM Modi's vision for the huge transformation that is taking place in the country.

"India has slowly moved on from being the 10th largest economy in 2014 to the fifth largest right now. I can say with a reasonable degree of confidence that by 2027, we will be one of the top three economies," he assured.

PM Modi files nomination from Varanasi



VARANASI: Prime Minister Narendra Modi filed his nomination on Tuesday from Varanasi Lok Sabha seat, aiming for a larger victory margin compared to his previous two wins in 2014 and then in 2019.

The Prime Minister got down from his car at the gates of the district collectorate and walked to the office where he filed his nomination papers. The four proposers of his nomination were Pandit Gyaneshwar Shastri, who has played a key role in the consecration ceremony of Ram temple, Baijnath Patel, Lalchand Kushwaha and Sanjay Sonkar.

UP Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath also accompanied the Prime Minister when he filed the nomination papers. Ahead of filing his nomination, PM Modi had posted on X about his relationship with Kashi - "My relationship with my Kashi is amazing, inseparable, and incomparable... all I can say is that it cannot be expressed in words."

PM Modi followed a similar schedule of holding a massive roadshow in Varanasi the

day before filing his nomination papers in the 2019 Lok Sabha elections. Earlier in the day, the Prime Minister did 'Ganga Pujan' at Dashashwamedh Ghat and then boarded the cruise ship to NaMo Ghat. He visited the Kaal Bhairav temple and then went to file his nomination papers.

On Monday, PM Modi also held an extravagant roadshow in Varanasi on a five-kilometre stretch, surrounded by what can be described as a "sea" of over 100,000 saffron supporters. He was accompanied by

CM Adityanath and BJP state president Chaudhary Bhupendra Singh.

Besides, several Union ministers, including Defence Minister Rajnath Singh and Home Minister Amit Shah, BJP president J. P. Nadda and presidents of various NDA members were present for the occasion.

Those present included CM Adityanath, Uttarakhand Chief Minister Pushkar Singh Dhami, MP Chief Minister Mohan Yadav, his Chhattisgarh counterpart Vishnu Deo Sai and Maharashtra Chief Minister Eknath Shinde.

Besides, Rajasthan Chief Minister Bhajanlal Sharma, his Assam counterpart Himanta Biswa Sarma, Haryana Chief Minister Nayab Singh Saini, his Goa counterpart Pramod Sawant, Sikkim Chief Minister Prem Singh Tamang and his Tripura counterpart Manik Saha were also there.

Leaders of NDA constituents RLD chief Jayant Chaudhary, Lok Janshakti Party (Ram Vilas) chief Chirag Paswan, Apna Dal (S) president Anupriya Patel and SBSP president Om Prakash Rajbhar and other leaders were also present on the occasion.

PM Modi briefly interacted with the guests after filing his nomination papers.

Later, Prime Minister went to the Rudraksh Convention Centre where he interacted with local party workers.

Varanasi will go to polls in the final phase of the ongoing Lok Sabha elections, scheduled for June 1.

Jamaat-e-Islami Hind Condemns Voter Suppression Targeting Muslims and Marginalized Communities in India



KAVITA SHARMA
New Delhi

The Vice President of Jamaat-e-Islami Hind (JIH), Malik Moatasim Khan has condemned the disturbing incidents of voter suppression targeting Muslims and marginalized sections during recent elections in India.

In a statement to the media, the JIH Vice President said, "Jamaat-e-Islami Hind condemns the disturbing incidents of voter suppression targeting Muslims and other marginalized sections during recent elections in India. Media reports suggest that in Uttar Pradesh's Sambhal district, people in at least four Muslim-concentrated villages complained that the state police resorted to unprovoked lathi-charge at polling booths, resulting in injuries to hundreds of voters. In the Aliganj Assembly segment in the Farukhabad Lok Sabha constituency as well as in Aonla Lok Sabha constituency many eligible voters were reportedly prevented from casting their vote. Additionally, there are other alarming reports of bogus voting in the Rasulabad Assembly segment of the Kanauj Lok Sabha constituency.

Malik Moatasim Khan stated, "This heavy-handed police action on innocent voters undermines the basic democratic right of citizens to participate freely in the electoral process. In a democracy, it is essential that every citizen, irrespective of their background or beliefs, be encouraged and facilitated to cast their vote without fear or obstruction. However, the incidents highlighted above represent a troubling trend where Muslims and other marginalized communities are systematically targeted and disenfranchised. Jamaat-e-Islami Hind calls upon the Election Commission of India to thoroughly investigate these incidents and take immediate corrective measures to ensure that such incidents are not repeated in future electoral phases."

Several railway workshop employees trapped in CBI net in iron scrap scam

SATISH HANDA
Jagadhari

The case of iron scrap fraud detected in Jagadhari railway workshop being investigated by Railway Vigilance Department has been forwarded to CBI for further investigation and action against those involved in this scam going on since a long time, in which the officers as well as the concerned railway workshop employees have been supplying iron scrap to the buyers in much lesser weight for their self-vested financial interest. The mystery of underweight supply of scrap exposed when on a clue the railway vigilance team from the railways headquarter during a surprise raid conducted on three trucks loaded with the



iron scrap parked outside the railway workshop in which 10 ton scrap was found less in a truck, 7 ton scrap was found less in second truck and 40 kg scrap was found less in the third truck as compared to the quantity mentioned in the gate pass.

The vigilance team suspected embezzlements were going on in the railway workshop since

a long time and during a thorough checking on the order of General Manager Northern Railways Headquarter Mr Shobhan when it was observed that a chip was affixed in the weighing machine installed inside the railway workshop on this practice was going on since a long time, when the case was handed over to the CBI for investigation and action by the General Manager who also ordered suspension of few senior workshop employees and many others were transferred to other places.

BSF fires at Pakistani drone along IB in J&K's Samba, second incident this week

FW DESK

BSF personnel opened fire on a Pakistani drone near the International Border (IB) in Jammu and Kashmir's Samba district on Friday night, marking the second such incident in a week, reports said.

According to reports, the drone, which was detected in Narayanpur, Ramgarh sector, on Saturday morning to ensure that the drone hadn't dropped any weapons or narcotics. This comes in the



wake of recent incidents along the India-Pakistan border in Punjab, where a drone and two packets of heroin were recovered separately. The BSF

found a China-made DJI Mavic 3 Classic drone in a broken condition in Tarn Taran district's Kalia village. In another incident, BSF troops recovered a packet of heroin weighing 460 grams along with a small torch attached to it from a field adjacent to Hardeo Ratan village in Amritsar. Acting on a tip-off, a search operation was initiated by the BSF leading to the discovery of another packet of heroin weighing 406 grams in Tarn Taran district's Sankatara village on Friday.

Priyanka Bats for Kishori in Amethi and jibes at Irani for doing politics of lies and drama

KAVITA SHARMA
Amethi

Congress general secretary Priyanka Gandhi today urged the people of Amethi to send a clear message that they do not want the politics of lies, drama and theatrics.

"We don't want drama or theatrics. We want real politics of service to people and not the politics of lies. We do not need a crybaby, who will always count her own grievances instead of listening her achievements", Priyanka said in an obvious jibe at sitting Amethi MP and union minister Smriti Irani, without mentioning her name.

Priyanka was addressing a largely attended public rally in support of the party candidate Kishori Lal Sharma. She pointed out, Sharma has been there with them for about 40 years. She said, like he has been loyal to their family, he is also loyal to the people of



Amethi, who has always been available for them round the clock.

"Imagine, someone who has been with you for 40 years, becoming your MP", she told the crowd while appealing to them to send him to the parliament for their own good.

She recalled her family's long association with Amethi, saying how her father late Rajiv Gandhi served the

people while being the Prime Minister. She recalled how he mixed and mingled with people and listened to their grievances.

Compared to that, she asked, has Prime Minister Narendra Modi ever met a common man or a poor man. She said, only lies were being told that Modi did in ten years what could not be done in 70 years.

But, she revealed, the fact is that unemployment is at a 45 year high in the country, while prices of all essential commodities have skyrocketed. She pointed out, when the prices of gas cylinders were Rs 400, the present local MP then would stage protests in Delhi and now when the same price has gone to 1200, she was keeping quiet.

Priyanka Gandhi said, while Modi had worked for just a few billionaires, the Congress government was going to create crores of millionaires by paying Rs 8500 to one woman in every poor family.

She also said, every fresh graduate and a diploma holder will be provided a guaranteed apprenticeship for one year with an assured income of Rs one lakh. For the farmers, she said, loans will be waived off and there will be legal guarantee for the MSP.

Amit Shah slams Uddhav Thackeray for backing Congress' agenda

DHULE (MAHARASHTRA): Targeting Shiv Sena (UBT) chief Uddhav Thackeray, Home Minister Amit Shah on Monday asked the former Maharashtra chief minister if he was backing the Congress which "supports" Pakistani terrorist Ajmal Kasab who was involved in the 2008 Mumbai terror attack.

Speaking at a rally in Maharashtra's Dhule Lok Sabha constituency to garner support for Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) nominee Subhash Bhamre, HM Shah, posed several questions for Uddhav Thackeray.

"Congress leaders are supporting Kasab. I ask Uddhav Thackeray -- are you with the Congress leaders? The Congress wants to bring back Muslim Personal Law, are you with them? Rahul Gandhi opposes Veer Savarkar, do you agree



with him? Uddhayanidhi Stalin opposes Sanatan Dharma, are you supporting him?" he asked

Uddhav Thackeray's Shiv Sena (UBT) is an alliance partner of the Congress -- the principal opposition party.

Addressing the rally, HM Shah also wondered why the Congress as well as Uddhav Thackeray, despite being invited for the January 22 Pran Partishta ceremony of Ram

Mandir in Ayodhya, did not turn up.

"Because they were scared of losing their vote bank, but we are not afraid," the Home Minister said.

"Prime Minister Narendra Modi built the Kashi Vishwanath corridor which was destroyed by Aurangzeb. Bomb blasts were happening almost every day when the Manmohan Singh-led government was in

Prime Minister Narendra Modi built the Kashi Vishwanath corridor which was destroyed by Aurangzeb. Bomb blasts were happening almost every day when the Manmohan Singh-led government was in the Centre"

the Centre. Mumbai was also shaken by explosions. When Prime Minister Narendra Modi was in power, terrorists attacked Uri and Pulwama. In just 10 days, our military forces entered Pakistan and carried out surgical strikes and air strikes, and wiped out the terrorists," HM Amit Shah said.

Revving up export engine is crucial for India's economy

India's merchandise exports witnessed a modest rebound in April 2024, offering a glimmer of hope after a challenging 2023-24 marked by geopolitical and logistical disruptions. The country's outbound shipments recorded \$34.99 billion, a slight increase of 1.07% compared to the previous year. This uptick, amounting to \$370 million, is a positive sign, yet it remains fragile. Of the top 30 export items, 17 experienced year-on-year declines, up from 13 in the preceding month. Notably, this growth comes against a weak base—April 2023 saw a 12.7% decline in exports, with 20 of the top 30 items showing decreased values. The minor growth last month was propelled by pharmaceuticals, chemicals, electronics, and notably, petroleum products, which rebounded from a 35% contraction in March, aided by rising global oil prices. However, this recovery was offset by a surge in oil and gold prices, pushing India's import bill up by 10.25% to over \$54 billion. Consequently, April's trade deficit soared to a four-month high of \$19.1 billion, a 22.5% increase from March. If the OPEC+ decides to extend output cuts in June, oil prices could reach \$100 per barrel. Additionally, a persistent global rush to gold as a safe haven may drive prices higher, further straining India's trade balance and the rupee. The World Trade Organization projects a 2.6% rise in global trade volumes this year, following a 1.2% decline in 2023. The Indian government is optimistic that key western markets will experience lower inflation and improved growth rates, boosting demand. However, India must refine its strategy to capitalize on this potential upswing, ensuring broad-based economic gains. Agricultural exports, currently restricted to combat inflation, should be rejuvenated. The incoming government must act swiftly to invigorate export growth and maintain manageable trade balances. By addressing these challenges, India can harness the potential of global trade recovery to foster domestic economic wealth.

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PRABHASH RANJAN ON WHY THE COUNTRY NEEDS CLEAR POLICIES FOR FREE TRADE AGREEMENTS

Lessons in India-EFTA trade deal



India's free trade agreement (FTA) negotiations with countries such as the United Kingdom and the European Union (EU) seem to be on ice due to the ongoing parliamentary elections in India. However, before election fever gripped the country, India managed to clinch a historic trade deal, in March, with the European Free Trade Association (EFTA), comprising Iceland, Liechtenstein, Norway and Switzerland. The newly minted Trade and Economic Partnership Agreement (which we refer to as FTA) between India and EFTA is expected to give a much-needed leg-up to the low levels of extant trade between the two sides. The FTA between India and EFTA is also important because, as economist Biswajit Dhar has argued, India has agreed to include issues such as environment and labour, which it has traditionally opposed incorporating in trade agreements.

Another reason sets this FTA apart from those India signed recently with countries such as Australia, the United Arab Emirates (UAE), and Mauritius. The India-EFTA FTA includes a somewhat detailed investment chapter, which is missing in the other recent Indian FTAs. This chapter focuses on investment facilitation issues, not investment protection. But it has a remarkable and unprecedented characteristic. India has managed to extract a promise from the EFTA countries that they shall "aim to" increase foreign direct investment (FDI) to India to \$50 billion within 10 years of the FTA coming into force, followed by another \$50 billion in the succeeding five years. Likewise, Article 7.1(3)(b) of the investment chapter provides that the EFTA states shall "aim to" facilitate the generation of one million jobs in India. In legal terms, these articles codify what is known as an obligation of conduct — an obligation to make an honest endeavour towards achieving a

goal, notwithstanding the outcome or the result. This differs from an obligation of result, which would require achieving a specified outcome. In other words, the EFTA countries are legally obligated to make an honest effort to invest \$100 billion and generate one million jobs in India. They are not required to realise these outcomes. Nonetheless, the Indian negotiators need to be complimented for incorporating such path-breaking specified obligations of conduct in the investment chapter, which are typically not found in FTAs or investment treaties. Notably, this creates a template worth emulating in the ongoing negotiations with the U.K., the EU, and other countries.

Trade and investment

Economic theory has long demonstrated the inextricable linkage between trade and investment. This is truer in a world where the production process is scattered along global supply/value chains, a function of trade and investment. Thus, unsurprisingly, FTAs routinely contain binding

rules on both trade and investment. India's FTAs signed in the first decade of this century with countries such as Japan, Korea, Malaysia and Singapore are based on this economic logic. In addition to binding trade rules, they all contain an investment chapter with provisions for protecting investment. However, India departed from this model as part of its FTA 2.0 approach. In other words, India decoupled international trade law from international investment law. This is evident in its FTAs with Australia, Mauritius, and the UAE which contain binding trade but not investment rules. India's approach seems to be to have separate agreements on trade and investment with the same country. This is most markedly seen in the case of the UAE. After signing the FTA with the UAE in 2022, New Delhi and Abu Dhabi entered into a bilateral investment treaty earlier this year. India follows a similar decoupling approach to the U.K., where trade and investment agreements are seemingly negotiated as two disparate treaties.

In this context, the India-EFTA FTA, which contains an investment chapter within the trade agreement, assumes pivotal significance. Can it be said that India has decided to move away from the decoupling of trade and investment law in its FTAs and is going back to the template followed in the early 2000s? It is too early to say that the India-EFTA FTA will be a bellwether for future FTAs.

India needs a clear FTA policy, especially in dealing with international trade and foreign investment laws. Suppose India expects not just trade but also higher investment flows from a particular country, which is undoubtedly true with most of its FTA-negotiating partners. In that case, two critical elements must be incorporated into its FTA policy. First, India should negotiate trade and investment as part of one comprehensive economic treaty. Decoupling trade from investment is not a good idea. Combining the two would give India a clear negotiating leverage to strike a beneficial deal. For example, India can argue that it needs more concessions in trade in return for offering something on investment or vice-versa. Second, India should consider expanding the scope of investment issues from mere facilitation to effective protection, with an efficacious dispute settlement mechanism under international law. Providing enforceable legal protection to foreign investors under international law will boost their confidence. This is critical at a time when foreign direct investment levels in India have dropped. A clear and comprehensive FTA policy is imperative for launching India to a higher economic growth trajectory.

Prabhash Ranjan is a Humboldt Fellow, Max Planck Institute, Heidelberg, and Professor, Jindal Global Law School. Views are personal.



ASHWIN RAVI EXPLORES HOW CONCISE SOCIAL MEDIA CONTENT CAN SWAY POLITICAL OUTCOMES

Brief social content affects political dynamics

The nature of information dissemination is changing rapidly and India is not immune to these sweeping changes. Traditional analyses of information consumption, which focus on the medium, often overlook the profound shifts in human psychology, driven by the rise of social media. This shift has led to instant gratification becoming the norm, impacting political narratives, with the potential to alter election outcomes. In India, growing social media use in the vernacular languages, combined with a largely unregulated digital space and a highly competitive, polarised political environment, necessitates vigilance to manage disruptive misinformation.

Recent studies such as "Accelerating Dynamics of Collective Attention" which was published in Nature, highlight a dramatic decline in human attention spans — from 2.5 minutes two decades ago to just 45 seconds today. This decline is mirrored in the popularity of concise social media content, i.e., short videos of less than a minute and 'articles' that span less than 200 characters. Short and snappy content is easier to produce. The focus is on the potential of the content to go viral rather than the content itself. Such content, which is much easier to produce and designed for 'viral spread' rather than depth, enables previously obscure figures to become influential by catering to short attention spans. Social media algorithms exacerbate this by promoting viral content, which often drowns out more substantial, factual narratives. Thus, it is entirely possible that factually unsonant content travels around the world several times faster before rebuttals can even be thought of.

This new reality is not lost on political



parties. The potential for this new paradigm to significantly reduce the asymmetry in social media power among political outfits is immense. In India, it is assumed that the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) has a much higher and more effective social media presence than the Congress. In fact, many analysts on both sides of the political spectrum attribute the BJP's political dominance since 2014 to a significant first mover advantage. While the Congress relied on rallies and long-winding speeches, the BJP switched to new age media, dominating Facebook, Twitter (now X) and WhatsApp. It is only since the 2019 general election that the Congress has invested significantly in social media. Analysis of follower counts and engagement statistics across platforms prove that the BJP still has the edge. But there is significant churn underway.

An inversion of roles

Viral political content is a strong indicator of how quickly political narratives can be set and propagated. As an example, a recent video by vlogger Dhruv Rathee,

titled "Is India Becoming a Dictatorship", went viral, becoming a topic of discussion on several forums. This is significantly larger than any video posted by the political Opposition. An analysis of the video reveals that the information presented is not new — these are commonly traded political accusations often treated as par for the course in political debates. But the content was designed to go viral — different parts of the 30-minute video can be easily edited into simple one-minute sections and tailored to appeal to shortening attention spans.

Such context free splicing of content did happen — arguments were shortened, facts were pushed aside and context was ignored. Hundreds of 'shorts' spawned from the main video resulting in a narrative firestorm that BJP sympathisers struggled to keep up with. This article is an illustration of how algorithms and low attention spans allow specific types of content to organically propagate at an astounding rate.

The political Opposition was quick to latch on and the video remained in popular con-

sciousness for well over two weeks. For the first time in many months the BJP seemed to be on the back foot. What is unique about this case is that the narrative was set by an apparently independent content creator and then amplified by political parties. This is a marked inversion from earlier when politicians delivered the talking points and other agents took on the role of amplification. This 'inversion' of roles is becoming more apparent in the social media strategies of the Opposition — a marked reliance on supposedly independent social media influencers to generate 'viral' content followed by an amplification powered by political leaders.

Analysis is more difficult now

This 'inversion' of roles is bound to have a significant impact. The checks and balances in the media, which have already eroded significantly, will continue on their path to irrelevance. Democratization of content creation and algorithms that seek to capitalise on shrinking attention spans has resulted in a truly level playing field, where large pockets for social media spends matter less than having content that is tailored to gratify instantly. This makes analysis of the political headwinds more difficult. Merely analysing election time utterances is no longer sufficient. Conventional messaging is now under-girded by social media where narratives are generated on a whim, influencing millions in their wake. The party that can bring a semblance of control over this tumult will reap the benefits and it is not clear who is winning this battle for attention.

Ashwin Ravi is a practising data scientist who tracks social and demographic trends. Views are personal.

BOOKS: REVIEW

Beyond Berlin Wall: Erpenbeck tells a tale of love and loss

The end of World War II heralded a new era, one filled with hope for a society that transcended mere commerce. Germany's post-war division into East and West epitomized the ideological rift of the Cold War era, with East Germany aligning with the Soviet bloc and West Germany with the Western allies. The Berlin Wall, erected in 1961, became a stark symbol of this divide, physically separating East Berlin from West Berlin to prevent mass emigration to the West. This historical backdrop sets the stage for Jenny Erpenbeck's International Booker Prize-shortlisted novel "Kairos," translated from German by Michael Hofmann.

Erpenbeck, a distinguished author often tipped for the Nobel Prize in Literature, was born in East Germany before the fall

of the Berlin Wall in 1989. Her novel, "Kairos," marks a departure from her previous works that grappled directly with themes of mortality and historical reckoning. Instead, "Kairos" melds love and politics in a narrative that is as compelling as it is poignant.

The novel is structured in an archaic fashion, divided into a Prologue, Box I and II, an intermezzo, and an Epilogue. It chronicles the intense, unexpected romance between Katharina and Hans. Initially, their love story might seem like the stuff of popular fiction, but "Kairos" soon reveals itself as a profound national allegory, reflecting the hopes and constraints of East German socialism. The passionate relationship between 19-year-old Katharina and the significantly older Hans, who is in his 50s, serves as a conduit for exploring the utopian dreams of

communism and the international solidarity against fascism.

Erpenbeck's narrative is like a museum exhibit, meticulously capturing the material conditions that foster the bond between Katharina and Hans—books, music, art, and cafes are as much a part of their love story as their personal interactions. This "psychological materialism" invites readers to consider the tangible influences on their romance, all while the novel critically examines the triumphs and failures of East German society. Despite the oppressive surveillance of the Stasi, East Germany achieved notable advancements in gender equality and political representation.

East Berlin, in Erpenbeck's hands, is not merely a setting but a dynamic character that underscores the fleeting nature of love and socialist ideals. Katharina's



Kairos
By Jenny Erpenbeck,
Translated by Michael Hofmann
New Directions
293 pages; Rs. 1,040.

visit to West Berlin, where she encounters a sex store and is overwhelmed by the freedom it represents, starkly contrasts with her life in the East. This experience highlights the cultural and ideological chasms between the two Germans.

Erpenbeck's operatic background lends a symphonic quality to the novel. Her prose, rich with multiple voices and devoid of quotation marks, draws readers into the narrative, making them participants in the unfolding drama. What begins as a seemingly idyllic love story deteriorates into a portrait of shifting power dynamics and disillusionment. Language, in this context, be-

comes a manipulative tool, masking the harsh realities beneath.

One of the most striking images in the novel is of Hans making love to Katharina to the strains of Mozart's "Requiem for the Dead." This scene, reminiscent of John Donne's metaphysical poetry, underscores the novel's meditation on loss and decay. Figures like Brecht, Lenin, and Trotsky haunt the narrative, representing a bygone era of communist idealism that seems to have died with the Berlin Wall's collapse.

"Kairos" is a masterful exploration of love, politics, and the human condition set against the backdrop of a divided Germany. Erpenbeck's incisive critique of East German socialism, combined with her poignant depiction of personal relationships, makes this novel a significant contribution to contemporary literature. As the world continues to grapple with ideological divides and the legacy of the Cold War, "Kairos" offers a powerful reminder of the complexities and contradictions inherent in any utopian vision.

Govt to Strengthen Underwriting Model to Enhance MSME Loan Accessibility

NEW DELHI: The Indian government is taking steps to bolster the underwriting model for micro, small, and medium enterprises (MSMEs) to facilitate easier access to loans for these businesses.

Underwriting is the process through which lenders evaluate risks to safeguard their interests, and the proposed development aims to reduce defaults by MSMEs while increasing financing opportunities for smaller businesses, reported Mint.

According to sources familiar with the matter, a sub-group has been recently formed to strengthen the underwriting model and expand the use of digital public infrastructure for MSMEs and self-help groups. This sub-group falls under



the purview of a working group established by the Department of Expenditure, Ministry of Finance, to enhance responsible lending for MSMEs.

One source stated, "There is no collateral as such in terms of

lending towards small businesses. This is what the group is looking at - how the risk can be assessed and covered."

The lack of collateral has been a significant hurdle for micro-enterprises, predominantly

operating in the unorganised sector, in accessing credit.

Another source confirmed that the sub-group would specifically focus on developing underwriting methods for businesses in the unorganised sector, which often face challenges in securing loans due to a lack of collateral.

The government's initiative aims to address the challenges faced by MSMEs in obtaining financing by strengthening the underwriting process and leveraging digital infrastructure.

By enhancing the risk assessment and mitigation mechanisms, the move is expected to increase lenders' confidence in extending loans to smaller businesses, thereby fostering growth and development in the MSME sector.

Aztec Fluids & Machinery Listed at BSE SME Platform with Premium

NEW DELHI: Aztec Fluids & Machinery, a provider of industrial printers, consumables, and spares, witnessed a robust listing on the BSE SME platform on May 17th.

The company's shares commenced trading at Rs 90, marking a 34 per cent premium over the issue price of Rs 67.

While the listing gains were significant, they fell short of the expectations in the unofficial grey market, where the shares were trading at a premium exceeding 80 per cent ahead of the debut.

The Rs 24.12 crore initial public offering, consisting solely of a fresh issue of 36 lakh shares, garnered substantial investor interest.

The issue was oversubscribed by a remarkable 218



times, with non-institutional investors applying for 342 times their reserved portion, followed by retail investors who subscribed 228 times their allotted quota.

Qualified institutional buyers also participated actively, subscribing 108 times their allocation.

Established in April 2010, Aztec Fluids & Machinery ca-

ters to a diverse array of industries, including personal care, food and beverages, pharmaceuticals, construction materials, cables, wires, pipes, metals, automotive and electronics, agrochemicals, as

well as chemicals and petrochemicals, through its range of printers, printer consumables, and printer spares.

The company intends to utilise the proceeds from the public issue to acquire Jet Inks Pvt Ltd, repay outstanding debt, and fund general corporate purposes. The price band for the issue was set at Rs 63-67 per share.

Textile City's dyeing sector facing severe neglect crying for attention



PARVESH HANDA
Panipat

Industrial areas in the Textile City especially Sector 29 Part-2 lacks basic amenities such as choked sewerage, supply of potable water, blocked drains, defective street lights during night, worst road infrastructure and other basic amenities. In-spite of crying for the attention by the industry owners in the area the concerned government authorities. With defunct streetlights, choked sewerage, blocked drains, no supply of potable water and broken roads, the sector lacks basic amenities, rue industrialists that the main reason behind the poor condition of the area is that it has been divided under three separate departments: HSPV, HSIIDC and the Municipal Corporation, said Nitin Arora, President of Panipat Dyers' Association that due to the blocked sewerage at various places, the untreated effluents from the units flow on to the streets leaving a bad smell all around. The industry entrepreneurs in the area said that the situation turned worst after their sector was put under the control of three different departments, earlier it was under the Haryana Shahari Vikas Pradhikaran (HSPV).

Apollo Tyres Q4 net profit dips 14 pc



NEW DELHI: Apollo Tyres on Tuesday reported a 13.7 per cent decline in net profit at Rs 354 crore for the Jan-March quarter of 2023-24 compared with the corresponding figure of Rs 410.30 crore for the same period of the previous year. The Apollo Tyres board has recommended a dividend of Rs 6 per equity share (i.e. 600 per cent) on the face value of Rs 1 each for FY24, subject to the approval of the shareholders at the ensuing AGM of the company, which shall be paid/ dispatched on or before 30 days from the conclusion of the AGM, the company said in a stock exchange filing.

India's electronic goods exports up 25.8 pc YoY in April

NEW DELHI: India's electronic goods exports increased by 25.8 per cent in the month of April (Year-on-Year), from \$2.11 billion in April 2023 to \$2.65 billion this year, the Ministry of Commerce and Industry said on Wednesday. Overall, India's total exports (merchandise and services combined) in April is estimated to be \$64.56 billion, clocking a growth of 6.88 per cent over April last year.

Acer Launches "Acerpure" in India: New Era of TVs, Air Purifiers, and Personal Care Devices

ARUN KUMAR RAO
Bengaluru

Acer Group, a global leader in IT and technology solutions, has announced its entry into the consumer electronics market with the launch of the "Acerpure" brand in India at a spectacular event in Bengaluru. Acerpure India aims to revolutionize the industry by offering a range of innovative and advanced consumer electronics and home appliances designed to meet the unique needs of Indian consumers. The launch event was attended by prominent figures including Mr. Andrew Hou, President of Pan-Asia Pacific Operations at Acer Group; Mr. Harish Kohli, President & Managing Director of Acer India; Sudhir Goel, Chief Business Officer of Acer India; Stanley Kao, President of Acerpure Inc.; Vasudeva G., Director of Acerpure India; and Sunil Vachani, Co-founder and Executive Chairman of Dixon Technologies.

Acerpure India introduces an extensive range of consumer appliance products, each meticulously crafted to enhance everyday living. From the captivating allure of "pure vision" represented by state-of-the-art TVs, to the refreshing "pure breath" provided by advanced Acerpure Cool Air Purifiers, every product is designed with excellence in mind. The Ac-



erpure Amrit Water Purifiers ensure not just hydration, but the assurance of "pure water." Meanwhile, the sophisticated Acerpure Cozy Air Circulator Fans and the impeccable cleanliness delivered by Acerpure Clean Vacuum Cleaners evoke sensations of "pure comfort" and "pure feel." Acerpure India's innovative lineup sets a new benchmark in consumer appliances for the discerning Indian market.

At the launch event, Acerpure unveiled its flagship product, the Acerpure TV, featuring state-of-the-art technology for an immersive viewing experience. Available in four sizes—32, 43, 55, and 65 inches—the Acerpure TV brings life to the screen with breathtaking clarity and vibrant colors. It boasts exceptional sound quality with Dolby Atmos, a sleek thin bezel design, multiple connectivity options, and a powerful processor. With a future roadmap that

includes OLED TVs, Mini LED TVs, Gaming TVs, and more, the Acerpure TV series is set to revolutionize the Smart TV market in India.

Additionally, Acerpure showcased a diverse range of consumer electronics, including air circulator fans, water purifiers, handheld vacuum cleaners, robotic vacuum cleaners, a hair dryer, and a hair styler, emphasizing its commitment to comprehensive solutions for modern living. Looking ahead, Acerpure India plans to expand its offerings with a variety of new products, including refrigerators, air conditioners, washing machines, and more.

Commenting on Acerpure's launch in the Indian market, Andrew Hou, President of Pan-Asia Pacific Operations at Acer Group, said, "We are thrilled to introduce Acerpure in India. The Indian market holds immense potential for Acerpure's growth and innovation."

VCI Global Provides Preliminary Funding for Saudi Project



FW DESK
Kuala Lumpur (Malaysia)

VCI Global Limited, is pleased to announce plans to facilitate the Capital Raising of no less than US\$210 million for Magnum Mining & Exploration Limited (ASX: MGU) ("Magnum") through its subsidiary, V Capital Consulting Limited (VCLL).

The agreement with VCLL and 2x1.Digital Private Limited ("2x1.Digital") is to undertake a capital raising of no less than US\$210 million ("Capital Raising") to advance Magnum's Green Pig Iron Project (the "Project") in Saudi Arabia. Magnum is to receive no less than US\$10 million as working capital, and the remaining amount, no less than US\$200 million, is to be provided as 50% of the capital for the Midmetal Hismelt plant. The remaining 50% funding for the Midmetal Hismelt plant will be matched by the Saudi Investment Development Fund ("SIDF").

Kreativ Onboards Abhijit Bhaduri as Advisor, Expands Career Solutions in HR Tech

FW DESK
Plano (Texas)

Kreativ, a next generation platform for career development and personal branding, is excited to announce the onboarding of Abhijit Bhaduri as an advisor. Abhijit, the former GM of Learning & Development at Microsoft and ex-Chief Learning Officer at Wipro, is recognized as a LinkedIn Top 10 Voice and brings extensive experience and insight to Kreativ.

Kreativ builds users' personal brand and influence in a highly competitive market by narrating their career experiences and skills. The Kreativ suite offers numerous capabilities,



including a storytelling blog, white-label personalized branding for businesses, and upskilling events with live courses led by industry leaders. A key strength of Kreativ is its ability to package all user writings with Generative AI summaries, resumes, and profiles into a unified experience tailored for recruiting professionals. This comprehensive approach ensures that users can present a cohesive and compelling narrative about their career journey, making them more attractive to potential employers.

SHIVALIC eyeing IPO amidst growing global demand for LT/HT electrical panels

DOMINICK RODRIGUES
Mumbai

The global market growth for LT and HT electrical panels is expected to be huge even as United Nations statistics highlight urbanisation expanding to over 250 crores people in cities by 2050. With decarbonisation witnessing Net Zero targets boosting electricity around 20% to 27% by 2030, industrialisation is expected to see over 50% energy consumption by 2050.

Amit Kanwar Jindal, Founder and Managing Director, SHIVALIC, said he is upbeat about the company's growth alongside the future growth of the



electrical industry and market. Having achieved a Rs 102-crore Revenue and now the sky being the limit for growth opportunities in the LT and HT electricals market, SHIVALIC may be going in for an IPO soon this year.

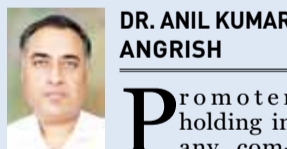
Highlighting SHIVALIC's development growth phase since its incorporation in 2004 and commencing LV panel assembly, Jindal told *The Financial World* over telephone recently, "The

company later bought 5,500 sq. yards land in IMT Faridabad and partnered with Siemens (for IEC 61439 SIEPAN), Schneider (for Prisma IPM), L&T (for IEC 61439) and Epcos (TDC) for AHF before bagging its largest single order of the RBI Data Centre from HP worth Rs 28 crores."

He said the company's latest products featured the latest technology and IOT in line with global standards, while being manufactured in India and through tie-ups. SHIVALIC's present focus is on "Green Energy, Sustainability and Net Zero," with latest technology involved for CNG and Solar while using "zero-welded panels."

SKIN IN THE GAME

Promoter Holding in Indian Pharmaceutical Companies



DR. ANIL KUMAR ANGRISH

Promoter holding in any company is considered an important indicator of good corporate governance as it is expected that promoters understand their company 'inside out'. Promoters are well-placed to assess the 'financial condition' of the company as they are major shareholders. Any increase of stake by promoters is considered a positive sign as it bolsters the confidence of other shareholders. Promoters tend to increase their stake if they believe that their company's share is undervalued, or their stake is less than the desired level for control purpose. Increase in promoter stake is also attributed to restructuring exercise. Decline in promoter stake in a specific company is attributed to multiple reasons such as stake sale and use of funds for other business considered promising, regulatory requirements, stake sale and use of funds for lowering debt, sale of pledged shares by bankers, among others.

Pharmaceutical sector in India is dominated by family-owned companies. Higher promoter stake in Indian pharmaceutical companies allowed promoters to dilute their stake to raise the funds as and when needed, facilitated retention of their control in the company, entitled the family members of promoters to remain on the driving seat in the company, kept them in a better bargaining position whenever promoters wanted to dilute their stake partially, and permitted promoters to

counter any hostile bid.

In many pharmaceutical companies, the decline in promoters' stake has acted as a precursor to loss of control for promoters, or acted as a signal for exit by promoters over a period. Most recent case in this regard is of Bharat Serums and Vaccines (BSV) which was incorporated in 1971. In February 2020, US-based Private Equity (PE) firm Advent International acquired 74 per cent stake of BSV which resulted into partial exit of the promoter - Daftary family, and a complete exit of PE investors - Kotak PE and Orbimed Asia. In a short span of time, Advent International acquired the remaining 26 per cent of Daftary family. Bharat Vinod Daftary, the Chairman and Founder passed away on December 7, 2023.

Pharmaceutical companies in India have different levels of promoter ownership. The first category is of companies in which promoters hold stake anywhere from 75 per cent to 100 per cent. In companies like Macleods Pharma which was set up in 1989, Serum Institute of India which was incorporated in 1966 as partnership firm, to name a few, promoters hold significant majority. Macleods and Serum Institute of India are unlisted companies so dilution of promoter stake in such companies is possible through stake sale to PE firms, or to opt for Initial Public Offer (IPO). Macleods deferred listing plans in September 2022. A recent example in this context is of Emcure Pharmaceuticals, 13th largest pharmaceutical company in India, in which promoters hold 82.97 per cent stake. In December



2023, preliminary papers were filed with the SEBI for raising the funds via IPO route. The company intends to utilize the proceeds mainly for 'repayment of debts' to the tune of Rs. 640 crore, apart from general corporate purposes. Namita Thapar, Executive Director of Emcure Pharma on February 10, 2024 shared about the company's plans to go public within three months, and to launch a direct-to-consumer (D2C) product. Intas Pharmaceuticals also falls in this category. In Intas Pharma, Chudgar family as the promoters held 83.84 per cent by November 30, 2023.

Second category of companies is the one in which promoters hold majority stake but that is below 75 per cent, e.g., in Torrent Pharmaceuticals, promoters held 71.25 per cent stake in March 2024 quarter. In Zyclus Lifesciences too, promoters held 74.98 per cent stake in March 2024 quarter. In September 2023, Torrent Pharma was contemplating acquisition of majority stake in Cipla. At that time, 'partial divestment' of holding by promoters in Torrent Pharma to raise funds, and 'pledging a portion of promoter stake' in Torrent Power, were consid-

ered as a means for financing. There are occasions when promoters dilute their stake so as to meet regulatory requirements as the SEBI guidelines require all listed firms should maintain a minimum public shareholding (MPS) of 25 per cent. In February 2024 Mankind Pharma promoters divested part of their stake to meet SEBI's MPS norms. Aggregate promoter and promoter group shareholding was 76.5 per cent of the total paid-up equity share capital of the company as on February 7, 2024. Sheetal Arora, Arjun Juneja and Puja Juneja as promoters decided to sell a combined stake of 1.62 per cent in the company to comply with regulatory requirements. Post completion of the stake sale, aggregate promoter holding came down to 74.88 per cent.

In Bharat Biotech too, promoter family - Dr. Krishna Ella and family, has around 73 per cent stake. Two PE firms namely MindTree Trading Company and Vistra ITCL India hold 7.56 per cent and 7.4 per cent stake respectively. Multiple entities hold the balance equity of about 12 per cent and each entity holds less than 5 per cent stake. If

promoter stake is close to 75 per cent then promoters remain in comfortable position even if they want to dilute a small percentage of their stake, or need funds for some purpose, e.g., without any major change in controlling stake, promoters of Dabur India, a prominent player in FMHG/Wellness segment, sold 1 per cent stake on December 20, 2022 for a consideration of Rs. 1,089 crore. As on September 30, 2022, promoter and promoter group that comprised 26 shareholders held 67.24 per cent stake in Dabur India, and stake went down to 66.25 per cent by March 2024.

Companies such as Alembic Pharmaceuticals, FDC Limited, Ajanta Pharma, Albert David Limited, Jagsonol Pharmaceuticals, RPG Life Sciences, and Gufic BioSciences fall in second category. By March 2024, promoters held 69.61 per cent stake in Alembic Pharma, 69.66 per cent in FDC Limited, 66.21 per cent in Ajanta Pharma, 62.13 per cent in Albert David, 68.09 per cent in Jagsonol Pharma, 72.81 per cent in RPG Life Sciences, and 72.51 per cent in Gufic Biosciences. In these pharmaceutical/biopharmaceutical companies, promoters own significant stake thereby putting them in a comfortable position so far as control is concerned.

Third category is of those pharmaceutical companies in which promoter/founder family hold little more than 51 per cent stake. Companies such as Sun Pharma, Eris Lifesciences, Alkem Labs, Emami, and Indoco Remedies, fall in this category. By March 2024 quarter, promoter and promoter group held 54.90 per

cent stake in Eris Lifesciences, (up from 52.66 per cent on December 31, 2021), 56.7 per cent in Alkem Labs, 54.84 per cent in Emami Limited, and 58.72 per cent in Indoco Remedies. In this category of companies, promoters have to ensure that their stake does not go below a threshold, i.e., majority control. Even in case of acquisitions, promoters opt for debt financing rather than offering shares. Otherwise, promoters become concerned due to dilution of equity due to acquisition. An interesting case is of Sun Pharmaceuticals. In April 2014, Sun Pharma acquired controlling stake (63.4 per cent) in Ranbaxy Labs from Daiichi Sankyo. Sun Pharma offered 0.8 Sun Pharma shares for every Ranbaxy share held by Daiichi Sankyo. Due to this transaction, Daiichi Sankyo held 8.93 per cent share in the merged entity, and as a result, promoter stake fell to 54.7 per cent from 64 per cent. Through bulk deal, Daiichi Sankyo sold its entire stake in April 2015. Promoters did not buy any shares in this transaction. Promoter stake in Sun Pharma remained 54.48 per cent by March 2024 quarter. Another prominent example is of J.B. Pharma which was a promoter-driven company till July 2020 when PE firm KKR acquired 54 per cent stake. Mody family held just 1.9 per cent stake after stake sale to PE firm thereby losing the stake as well as management control. Decline in promoter holding has been observed in case of Wockhardt Limited too. Promoters held 51.60 per cent stake in the company by March 2024 that was 67.1 per cent in December 2021, and 74 per cent in July 2014.

51 per cent stake or 75 per cent stake has relevance given the provisions of the Companies Act, 2013 as Ordinary Resolutions require the approval of at least 75 per cent of members in order to be passed. Special Resolution is one that requires the approval of at least 75 per cent of the members voting in favour of the resolution.

Fourth category is of those pharmaceutical companies where promoter stake is more than 25 per cent but less than 50 per cent. These companies become vulnerable to shift in controlling stake. Companies like Dr. Reddy's Laboratories (DRL), Cipla, Lupin, IPCA, Natco Pharma, Jenburkt, Glenmark Pharma and Lincoln Pharma fall in this category. By March 2024 quarter, promoters held 26.65 per cent stake in DRL, 33.4 per cent in Cipla, 47.01 per cent in Lupin, 46.3 per cent in IPCA Lab, 49.71 per cent in Natco Pharma, 47.23 per cent in Jenburkt Pharma, 46.64 per cent in Glenmark Pharma and 49.53 per cent in Lincoln Pharma. Vulnerability of shift in control can be observed from the example of Cipla in which the promoter group holds 33.47 per cent stake. On May 14, 2024 a news item stated that Cipla promoters and promoter group entities were looking to sell up to 2.53 per cent stake in Cipla. Before this, in later part of 2023, Cipla remained in news due to exit plans of promoters. Exit plan of promoters in any case can be attributed to the absence of a successor, reluctance of the successor, or even infighting among promoter family. Another example is of Curatio Healthcare which fell in this category before its acquisi-

tion by Torrent Pharma. By January 2022, Sequoia and Chryscapital held 33 per cent and 20 per cent stake respectively in Curatio Healthcare. Promoters, including G. K. Ramani, and the management held the rest. Due to PE investment, and decline in percentage holding of promoters, it became vulnerable, and finally, it was acquired by Torrent Pharma in September 2022. Those pharmaceutical companies in which promoter holding is below 25 per cent are soft target for acquirers.

In India, there are many examples from different sectors where promoters remained on the driving seat even with a minority stake, e.g., Goenka hold just 3.99 per cent stake in Zee Entertainment in January 2024 and Punit Goenka could retain his position as CEO, Zee Entertainment. Activist shareholder Invesco tried to remove Punit Goenka as MD and CEO but failed. Finally, Invesco divested its shares in Zee. Corporate history offers another parallel in case of B. Ramalinga Raju (of Satyam fame). Raju's family held just 8.61 per cent stake in Satyam Computer Services by September 2008, and still, Ramalinga Raju remained the Chairman till he resigned after admitting fraud. In pharmaceutical sector in India, skin in the game as observed in the form of promoter stake directly affects the management control. **Dr. Anil Kumar Angrish,** Associate Professor (Finance and Accounting), Department of Pharmaceutical Management, NIPER, SAS Nagar (Mohali), Punjab **DISCLAIMER:** Views are personal and do not represent the views of the Institute.

Modi govt's policies resulted in exponential & unprecedented infra creation: FM

NEW DELHI: Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman said on Wednesday that Prime Minister Narendra Modi-led government's policies in the last 10 years have resulted in an "exponential and unprecedented" infrastructure creation in the country across the roads, power, railway, ports and aviation sectors.

Taking to X, the Finance Minister cited statistics to drive home her point and criticise the erstwhile Congress government on its economic performance.

The Finance Minister said that a staggering 3.74 lakh km of rural roads have been built since 2014 under PM Gram Sadak Yojana which was almost double the figure of rural roads built earlier.

"Our government has worked to ensure stable, reliable power for all, impacting lives and driving economic growth. Under PM Modi, India has transformed from power-deficient to power-sufficient by adding 193 GW of generation capacity (249 GW to 442 GW)," Nirmala Sitharaman pointed out.



Investments in upgrades, grid modernisation, and smart technologies are being done to help reduce power outages, voltage fluctuations, and disruptions, the Finance Minister remarked. "As of November 2023, the availability of power in rural areas increased from 12 hours in 2015 to 20.6 hours, and in urban areas, it increased to 23.8 hours while 100 per cent rural electrification was achieved in 2018," she pointed out. Nirmala Sitharaman also highlighted the fact that the share of renewable energy sources in total installed capacity has increased from 14.1 per cent to 32.5 per cent.

art 'Namoo Bharat' train with a design speed of 180 kmph has been introduced in the Delhi-Meerut RRTS corridor.

Highlighting the government's achievements in the aviation sector, the Finance Minister said: "India's skies are now more connected than ever due to our government's efforts, making air travel accessible and boosting regional connectivity."

The Union Minister said that India's aviation network has doubled with the construction of 83 new airports since 2014.

Operational airports have gone up from 74 in 2014 to 157 in 2024, while passenger traffic has increased from 169 MPPA (Million Passengers Per Annum) in 2014 to 376 MPPA in 2024. As many as 559 routes were operationalised under UDAN Scheme, which improved air connectivity to underserved regions, she added.

Listing the achievements in the ports sector, Sitharaman said the BJP-led government has actively engaged in improving India's maritime sector to promote the blue economy.

RBI holds meeting in J&K and Ladakh to address MSME Issues



SRINAGAR: The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) convened a crucial meeting on Wednesday to address pressing issues faced by the Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs) sector in the Union Territories of Jammu & Kashmir and Ladakh.

The 62nd Empowered Committee Meeting on MSMEs, held in Jammu, brought together representatives from various banks operating in the region, along with industry associations, to deliberate on challenges hindering the growth of small businesses.

Chaired by Chandra Shekhar Azad, Regional Director

for J&K and Ladakh, RBI, the meeting witnessed active participation from banking officials and industry leaders, including representatives from the PHD Chamber of Commerce & Industry (PHDCCI) Jammu and Kashmir chapters.

During the discussions, Rahul Sahai, Chair, PHDCCI Jammu chapter, highlighted several key issues faced by MSMEs.

He emphasised the challenges related to funding for MSMEs with low credit scores, suggesting that bank branch managers should be empowered to take calculated risks based on a comprehensive

assessment of the enterprise's actual position.

Sahai also stressed the importance of financial discipline and proposed organising awareness sessions on topics such as Udyam registrations, Treds platforms, and start-up funding schemes within educational institutions.

Additionally, he recommended introducing a dedicated funding product for solar plants with easy and affordable EMIs, enhancing the accessibility of the RBI Ombudsman department, and involving industry associations in discussions before declaring an MSME as a non-performing asset (NPA).

Mushtaq Mir, Convenor, PHDCCI Kashmir, highlighted issues specific to the Kashmir region, emphasising the need for handholding stressed or NPA accounts to help resolve their financial challenges. Chandra Shekhar Azad acknowledged the concerns raised and assured the attendees that their issues would be addressed.

NBFC Loan Growth Fuels Moody's 6.6% Growth Outlook for Indian Economy



NEW DELHI: Moody's Ratings, a prominent credit rating agency, released its economic projections for India on Tuesday.

According to their assessment, the Indian economy is anticipated to expand by 6.6 per cent during the current fiscal year 2024-2025 (FY25), followed by a 6.2 per cent growth rate in the subsequent fiscal year.

A key factor underpinning this forecast is the robust credit demand fuelled by the country's strong economic growth, which is anticipated to bolster the profitability of the Non-Banking Financial Company (NBFC) sector.

Moody's highlighted that the prevailing robust economic conditions will aid in preserving the asset quality of NBFCs, even as rising interest rates increase the debt burdens of their customers.

"Funding costs for NBFCs in India are rising, but strong credit demand fuelled by the country's robust economic growth will support the sector's profitability," the agency stated.

Loan growth at NBFCs has gained momentum, with aggregate year-on-year loan growth accelerating to 20.8 per cent in September 2023, up from 10.8 per cent a year earlier. This surge has been driven by robust demand for retail loans, including housing and automobile financing.

Looking ahead, Moody's anticipates loans at NBFCs to grow by approximately 15 per cent over the next 12-18 months, propelled by various lending segments, such as infrastructure financing by large government-owned NBFCs and loans to small and medium-sized enterprises.

While acknowledging that growth in unsecured retail loans may slow after the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) increased the risk weight of such credit assets for both banks and NBFCs in December 2023, the agency underscored the vital role NBFCs play in meeting credit needs across India's vast economy.

Moody's projections for India's GDP growth in FY25 are lower than those of the RBI and some other agencies but align with the forecast by Deloitte.

MoneyHero Appoints Hao Qian Chief Financial Officer

SINGAPORE: MoneyHero Limited, a market-leading personal finance and digital insurance aggregation and comparison platform in Greater Southeast Asia, today announced the appointment of Hao Qian as the Company's



new permanent Chief Financial Officer ("CFO"), effective immediately. Reporting directly to MoneyHero's Chief Executive Officer ("CEO"), Rohith Murthy, and the Company's Board of Directors, Qian will be based at MoneyHero's headquarters in Singapore. Qian brings 17-plus years of diverse financial and leadership experience to MoneyHero. In his role as CFO, Qian will oversee all the Company's financial systems and teams, including accounting, capital markets, compliance, and investor relations. Additionally, Qian will play a key role in strategic finance initiatives, including M&A and commercial partnerships. "After conducting a thorough and competitive search process for our next CFO, we ultimately identified Hao as being the clear choice for our Company," said Murthy. "Hao is a proven finance executive who has worked at globally respected organizations, including APAC-centric businesses and companies that are publicly traded on U.S. exchanges.

Energy Mission Machineries India Lists At 165% Premium



NEW DELHI: Energy Mission Machineries India, a manufacturer of metal-forming machines, made a stellar debut on the NSE SME platform. The company's shares commenced trading at Rs 366, marking a staggering premium of 165.21 per cent over the issue price of Rs 138.

The impressive listing gains surpassed expectations from the grey market, where the shares were commanding a premium of 93 per cent ahead of the listing. Energy Mission Machineries India's Rs 41-crore initial public offering (IPO), comprising a fresh issue of 29.82 lakh shares, received an exceptional response from investors. The issue was oversubscribed by a remarkable 320.67 times on the final day of bidding. The robust demand was evident across all investor categories. Qualified Institutional Buyers (QIBs) subscribed 161.92 times, while Non-Institutional Investors (NIIs) subscribed a staggering 605.19 times. Retail investors also showcased significant interest, subscribing to 279 times their allocated portion. Established in 2011, Energy Mission Machineries India specialises in designing and manufacturing a diverse range of metal-forming machines, including press brakes, shearing machines, plate rolling equipment, ironworkers, hydraulic presses, and busbar bending, cutting, and punching machines.

Centre Likely to Boost MGNREGS Budget by over Rs 5,000 Cr in 2024-25

NEW DELHI: The government is expected to increase the budgetary allocation for the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme (MGNREGS) by more than Rs 5,000 crore in the upcoming 2024-25 full Budget.

According to an official, this substantial hike is anticipated due to an expected rise in demand for work under the scheme, driven by the government's plan to construct an additional 20 million houses in rural areas under the Pradhan Mantri Awaas Yojana-Gramin (PMAY-G) over the next five years, reported FE.

In the interim Budget for 2024-25, the allocation for MGNREGS was set at Rs 86,000 crore, which was also



the revised estimate for the previous year 2023-24.

However, the demand for work under the scheme witnessed a 10 per cent year-on-year decline in April, indicating a moderation in the initial months of the current fiscal year. The official cited an internal

assessment that anticipates a rise in demand for work, necessitating a higher budgetary allocation.

The MGNREGS, a demand-driven program, aims to provide at least 100 days of guaranteed wage employment in a financial year to every rural household whose adult members volunteer for unskilled manual work, primarily during off-seasons.

To address potential leakages, estimated to be around 30 per cent of annual spending, the government has implemented various measures. From January 1, 2024, the Aadhaar-Based Payment System (ABPS) has been made mandatory for wage payments, linking workers' Aadhaar numbers with their MGNREGS job cards and bank accounts. Additionally, the adoption of Direct Benefit Transfer (DBT) has resulted in an estimated 10 per cent savings on wages due to the deletion of duplicate, fake, non-existent, and ineligible beneficiaries as of March 2022.

MSME Interest Cannot be claimed to Meet IBC Threshold Post-Appointed Date: NCLT Mumbai

MUMBAI: The Mumbai Bench of the National Company Law Tribunal (NCLT) has delivered a significant ruling concerning the applicability of interest under the Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises Development Act, 2006 (MSMED Act) in the context of the Insolvency and Bankruptcy Code, 2016 (IBC).

The NCLT, comprising Justice Reeta Kohli and Madhu Sinha, has held that an Operational Creditor cannot combine the interest under the MSMED Act with the principal amount to meet the threshold limit under Section 4 of the IBC if the MSME certificate was obtained post the appointed date as per Section 16 read with Section 2(b) of the MSMED Act.

The case in question involved SHAARC Projects Limited (Operational Creditor) and Hindustan Construction Company (Corporate Debtor).



The Operational Creditor had supplied goods and rendered construction-related services to the Corporate Debtor between 2012 and 2015, raising various sales bills during this period.

Subsequently, the Operational Creditor filed an application under Section 9 of the IBC to initiate the Corporate Insolvency Resolution Process (CIRP) against the Corporate Debtor.

The claimed Opera-

tional Debt amounted to Rs 1,15,95,819, which included the principal amount and interest under the MSMED Act.

The Operational Creditor argued that MSME interest could be claimed even if not included in the invoices, citing provisions of the MSMED Act, including Sections 15, 16, and 17, and a Notification issued by the Ministry of Corporate Affairs in 2018.

However, the Corporate

India's Debt Position Stronger than Global Counterparts: Nirmala Sitharaman



NEW DELHI: Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman asserted on Monday that India's government debt, including that of states, is safe and prudent according to debt sustainability norms and that India finds itself in a better position compared to other countries.

Providing comparative figures, Sitharaman highlighted that India's debt-to-GDP ratio stood at 81 per cent in the fiscal year 2022, significantly lower than Japan's 260.1 per cent, the US's 121.3 per cent, France's 111.8 per cent, and the UK's 101.9 per cent.

In a comparative analysis with other low and middle-income countries, the Finance Minister claimed that India's external debt scenario was robust.

She pointed out that India's share of short-term debt in its total external debt is 18.7 per cent, which is lower than countries like China, Thailand, Turkey, Vietnam, South Africa, and Bangladesh.

A lower proportion of short-term debt is advantageous as it implies less immediate repayment pressure.

When considering the ra-

Food and Energy Prices Push India's Wholesale Inflation to 1.26% in April

NEW DELHI: India's wholesale price inflation surged to a 13-month high of 1.26 per cent in April, accelerating from 0.53 per cent in March, according to provisional data released by the Ministry of Commerce & Industry.

The spike in the Wholesale Price Index (WPI) exceeded Reuters estimates of 1 per cent and was primarily driven by mounting prices of food articles, electricity, crude petroleum & natural gas, manufactured food products, and other manufactured items.

On a month-on-month basis, the WPI index rose by 0.79 per cent in April compared to March.

Food inflation emerged as a significant contributor, with prices of food articles climbing 7.74 per cent in April, up from 6.88 per cent in the previous month.

Vegetables witnessed a steep inflation rate of 23.60 per cent, while wheat and pulses registered price rises of 5.69 per cent and 16.58 per cent, respectively. Milk



inflation eased marginally to 4.30 per cent from 4.73 per cent in March, but potato and onion prices skyrocketed by 71.97 per cent and 59.75 per cent, respectively.

The fuel and power segment also exerted inflationary pressure, with inflation in this category rising to 1.38 per cent in April from -0.77 per cent in March.

Crude petroleum and natural gas prices surged by 4.97 per cent during the month, while crude petroleum alone witnessed a 6.52 per cent increase.

In contrast, non-food articles reported a wholesale deflation of -4.41 per cent.

The uptick in wholesale inflation comes on the heels of India's retail inflation, based on the Consumer Price Index (CPI), easing to an 11-month low of 4.83 per cent year-on-year in April, primarily due to lower core inflation and higher deflation in fuel and food.

As food and energy prices continue to mount, their impact on overall inflation remains a concern for policymakers and consumers alike.

The Devastating Impact of Cryptocurrency Trading on Families: A Call for Govt Intervention

PARMINDER KAUR

In recent years, the rise of cryptocurrency trading has brought both excitement and peril to families worldwide. While some have experienced substantial gains, many others have faced dire consequences, leading to profound financial losses and, in some cases, plunging into deep depression. This issue demands urgent attention, with a pressing need for robust governmental intervention to protect vulnerable families from the pitfalls of crypto trading.

Cryptocurrency markets are notoriously volatile, characterized by rapid price fluctuations and speculative fervor. While this volatility presents opportunities for profit, it also exposes traders to significant risks, especially those lacking financial literacy or investment experience. Families, often enticed by promises of quick riches, may invest their savings or borrow money to enter the crypto market, unaware of the potential consequences.



The consequences of crypto trading gone awry can be devastating. Families may find themselves in precarious financial situations, struggling to repay debts or facing bankruptcy. The emotional toll is equally profound, as individuals grapple with feelings of guilt, shame, and despair over their financial losses. For some, the impact extends beyond the realm of finance, leading to strained relationships, marital discord, and even breakdowns in familial bonds.

The mental health implications of financial distress cannot be overstated. Research has shown a clear link between financial hardship and mental health disorders, including depression and anxiety. The

vesting should be prioritized, equipping individuals with the knowledge and skills needed to navigate the complex world of finance.

Furthermore, governments must ensure access to mental health support services for those affected by financial losses. This includes counseling, therapy, and other forms of assistance to help individuals cope with the psychological impact of their experiences. By addressing both the financial and emotional dimensions of this issue, governments can mitigate the harm caused by crypto trading and provide a lifeline to those in need.

In conclusion, the proliferation of cryptocurrency trading has brought unprecedented risks to families around the world. The toll of financial losses and mental health struggles cannot be ignored. It is incumbent upon governments to take proactive measures to protect vulnerable families and provide support to those in crisis. Only through collective action can we mitigate the harms of crypto trading and ensure a safer, more resilient future for all.

Russia-China relations continue to develop despite challenging international situation, says Putin

MOSCOW: On the eve of his two-day state visit to China, which starts on Thursday, Russian President Vladimir Putin stated in a written interview with Xinhua that Russia and China are promoting the prosperity of both nations through expanded equal and mutually beneficial cooperation in economic and cultural fields.

In the interview, Putin emphasised that the coordination of foreign policies between the two countries is propelling the establishment of a fair multipolar world order, which underpins the future success of the Russia-China comprehensive strategic partnership of coordination for the new era.

Putin highlighted that contemporary Russia-China relations transcend ideology and are a strategic choice made independently by the two countries regardless of the political situation. This choice is grounded in the extensive common interests, deep mutual trust, strong public support, and genuine friendship between



the people of the two countries. Both nations are jointly committed to safeguarding sovereignty, territorial integrity, and security.

"In a broader sense, we are working to contribute to the development and prosperity of Russia and China by enhancing equal, mutually beneficial economic and humanitarian cooperation and strengthening foreign policy coordination in the interests of building a just

and equitable multipolar world order. All this is the key to the future success of our comprehensive strategic partnership of coordination for the new era," said Putin.

He noted that the partnership between Russia and China is always based on equality and mutual trust, mutual respect for sovereignty, and consideration of each other's interests.

President Xi Jinping, a wise and visionary leader, plays a

special and prominent role in the development of bilateral relations, he added.

"We first met back in March 2010, and we have been seeing and calling each other regularly ever since. President Xi maintains a respectful, friendly, open and at the same time business-like style of communication," Putin said, adding that each meeting was not only a dialogue between old friends but also a fruitful exchange of views on bilateral and international agendas. Putin recalled that in 2013, President Xi chose Russia as the first destination of his state visit as China's head of state. After being re-elected as Chinese President in March last year, his first state visit was again to Russia. They spent nearly five hours together, holding one-on-one in-depth talks, followed by a day of substantive official events.

"This unprecedented level of strategic partnership between our countries determined my choice of China as the first state to be visited after the official inauguration as the president of

the Russian Federation," Putin emphasised.

He pointed out that the deep and long-standing friendship and cooperation between the peoples of Russia and China has established one of the most important pillars of bilateral relations.

Today, relations between Russia and China have reached their highest level in history, and despite a challenging international situation, the relationship continues to develop, he added.

Putin underscored that this year is special for both countries, noting that October marks the 75th anniversary of the founding of the People's Republic of China, which is celebrating this significant historical moment with outstanding achievements. As a long-standing and reliable friend, Russia welcomes China's accomplishments, he said, adding that for three-quarters of a century, the two countries have navigated a long and sometimes difficult path, drawing lessons from different stages of their relations.

US-China Trade War Escalation May Push Beijing to Dump Goods in India: GTRI

NEW DELHI: The escalating trade war between the United States and China could lead Beijing to dump goods like electric vehicles, batteries and other technology products in the Indian market, according to economic think tank Global Trade Research Initiative (GTRI).

In a statement on Tuesday, GTRI warned that the US announcement of proposed new tariff hikes on Chinese imports including EVs, batteries and various other goods may prompt China to offload these products at discounted prices in markets like India. "The raising of tariffs on EVs, batteries and many other new technology items by the US may push China to dump these products in other markets including India," GTRI said.

The think tank called on India's Directorate General of Trade Remedies (DGTR) to remain vigilant against such dumping.



However, GTRI noted the higher US duties on Chinese face masks, syringes, needles, medical gloves and natural graphite present an opportunity for India to ramp up production and boost exports of these in-demand items to the American market.

The latest salvo in the long-running US-China trade battle comes as the United States and European Union take active measures to reduce reliance on China across key sectors.

While India's exports to

China have stagnated at around USD 16.7 billion annually from 2019-2024, imports from China surged 44.7 per cent to USD 101.75 billion over the same period.

"With the routine tariff increases that go beyond WTO commitments and large subsidy programs to ramp up local production, the developed countries are in full protectionist mode," said Ajay Srivastava, co-founder of GTRI. He urged India to develop an active strategy to handle trade with China.

Pakistan High Court grants bail to Imran in corruption case



ISLAMABAD: A high court in Pakistan on Wednesday granted bail to Imran Khan in the 190 million pounds corruption case, in which the jailed former prime minister and his wife are accused of receiving land worth billions of rupees as a bribe from a real estate businessman.

On Wednesday, the court asked Khan to submit a surety bond of Rs 1 million in order to secure bail. However, the order will not result in the ex-premier's release from Adiala jail since his sentences in the Iddat and cypher cases are yet to be suspended.

India Extends Budgetary Support to Maldives with USD 50 Million Treasury Bill

NEW DELHI: India has decided to continue its budgetary support to the Maldives government by rolling over a USD 50 million treasury bill for another year.

The move comes after a special request from Maldivian Foreign Minister Moosa Zameer during his visit to India last week.

The State Bank of India (SBI) has subscribed to the USD 50 million Government Treasury Bill issued by the Maldives' Ministry of Finance for one more year upon the maturity of the previous subscription.

This unique government-to-government arrangement allows Maldives to secure interest-free budgetary support from India.

Zameer expressed gratitude to Indian External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar and the Indian government for this "true gesture of goodwill" that signifies the long-standing friendship between the two countries.



According to the Maldivian Foreign Ministry, the treasury bill rollover was requested by Zameer during his official bilateral visit to India from May 8-10.

India's decision came after discussions between Zameer and Jaishankar on expediting various infrastructure and community development projects

underway in Maldives with Indian assistance.

Several projects are being built in Maldives under the Exim Bank of India's USD 800 million line of credit, with some key projects set for inauguration in the coming months. In August 2022, India had announced financial assistance of over USD 250

million for Maldives, one of the main beneficiaries of India's 'Neighbourhood First' policy. The two countries signed six agreements last year, including on cybersecurity and a network of police facilities in Maldives. India also provided an additional USD 100 million in financial aid in November 2022.

Chabahar Port to Benefit 'Entire Region,' Jaishankar says after U.S. Sanctions Warning

KOLKATA: India's External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar has defended the country's decision to operate Iran's Chabahar port, stating the strategic project "will benefit the entire region" despite a U.S. warning about potential sanctions risk.

Speaking in Kolkata this week, Jaishankar pushed back against recent remarks from Washington after the U.S. cautioned that any countries doing business with Iran could face sanctions enforcement. "I don't think people should take a narrow view of it. And, they have not done so in the past," Jaishankar said, noting previous U.S. administrations recognised Chabahar's broader regional significance.

India on Monday finalised a 10-year contract between Indian Ports Global Limited and Iran's Port and Maritime Organisation to run operations at the port located on Iran's southern coast along the Gulf of Oman.

The deal allows India to take over operations at Chabahar, providing a gateway for Indian goods to reach landlocked Afghanistan and Central Asian nations via a



multi-modal transportation corridor while bypassing Pakistan.

"We had a long association with Chabahar port but could never sign a long-term agreement. Finally, we were able to sort this out and get the agreement done," Jaishankar stated.

"A long-term deal is necessary because without it we cannot improve port operations. And the port, we believe, will benefit the entire region," the minister added.

The Chabahar project has been touted as a key link for the International North-South Transport Corridor, a 7,200-km transit route designed to facilitate

freight movement between India, Iran, Afghanistan, Russia, Central Asia and Europe.

However, the US State Department maintained that "U.S. sanctions on Iran remain in place and we'll continue to enforce them." Deputy Spokesperson Vedant Patel cautioned any entities considering deals with Iran "need to be aware of the potential risk of sanctions."

Development of the port had been slowed by previous U.S. sanctions over Iran's nuclear program. India first proposed taking over operations in 2003.

Vladimir Putin approves structure of Russia's new government

MOSCOW: Russian President Vladimir Putin approved the structure of Russia's new government, which will consist of one first deputy prime minister and nine deputy prime ministers.

According to the new decree "On the Structure of Federal Executive Bodies," which Putin signed, the new government will see a shift in the distribution of responsibilities among the deputies, one of whom will act as the Russian Federation and Presidential Plenipotentiary Envoy to the Far Eastern Federal District, Xinhua news agency reported.

There is also a Deputy Prime Minister, who will assume the role of Chief of Staff of the Government Executive Office.

The reappointed Prime Minister Mikhail Mishustin is required to submit his deputy candidates for consideration to the State Duma or lower house



of parliament.

He must also propose candidates for federal ministers, excluding the heads of security agencies and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, whose nominations will be presented by the president for consultation with senators of the Russian Federation. The Russian government resigned in accordance with the law after the inauguration of the president on May 7. Nevertheless, its members will continue to perform their duties until the formation of a new government.

Putin arrives in Beijing for state visit

Russian President Vladimir Putin arrived in Beijing early on Thursday for a two-day state visit.

Putin will hold a meeting with his Chinese counterpart Xi Jinping. He is also slated to travel to the Chinese industrial city of Harbin and visit a Russian-Chinese trade fair there.

It is Putin's first trip abroad since the start of his fifth term in office just over a week ago. While in China he expects to conclude several cooperation agreements, news agency dpa reported.

The choice of Beijing as the first destination is also symbolic, as Russia was the first country Xi visited after taking office for a third term. The two nuclear powers have close economic ties.

Wildfires continue to spread in Canada



OTTAWA: Ten new wildfires were reported on Monday, pushing the total number of active fires to 140 nationwide, said the Canadian Interagency Forest Fire Center.

Most of the active fires were in the western part of the country, with 46 from British Columbia (BC) and 47 from Alberta, while a total of 41 fires were categorised as out of control, reports Xinhua news agency.

The most serious one is within just a few kilometres of the northern BC town of

Fort Nelson, where 4, 700 people have been ordered to leave.

The fires have prompted air quality warnings in western Canada, Northwestern Ontario and several northern American states. Smoke from the wildfires in BC and Alberta is expected to arrive in the capital city of Ottawa on Tuesday, local media reported.

The Canadian government warned that above-normal temperatures nationwide could lead to greater wildfire risks.

India to Develop SOPs for Free Trade Agreement Negotiations

NEW DELHI: India is gearing up to formulate standard operating procedures (SOPs) for negotiating free trade agreements (FTAs) as the country engages with multiple trade partners for such pacts, according to a senior government official.

The move comes amid a flurry of FTA negotiations with countries like the UK, the European Union (EU), Peru, and a comprehensive trade deal with Australia, as well as talks with the Eurasian Economic Union, reported BS.

To chart out a comprehensive strategy, the Ministry of Commerce is organising a two-day 'Chintan Shivir' (brainstorming session) on FTA strategy and SOPs for trade negotiations, scheduled for May 16-17 in Neemrana, Rajasthan.



The deliberations will see participation from former commerce secretaries, industry experts, and government officials.

Key issues on the agenda include India's trade strategy and vision for 2047, economic assessment and modelling of FTAs, inclusion of new disciplines like labour, environment, gender, and indigenous people, services and digital trade, and SOPs for FTA ne-

gotiations. Participants will also discuss industry experiences in utilising existing FTAs.

A separate session will focus on leveraging India's FTAs to address emerging challenges such as carbon border adjustment mechanisms (CBAM), supply chain disruptions, critical minerals, and artificial intelligence.

The official from the ministry stated, "We are doing many FTAs, and we are making an SOP on how to go about them." He mentioned, "The Chintan Shivir is on that only. How we will do capacity building, how to approach different countries, and how to do economic analysis.

"So these are technical issues, and we will have discussions on these issues," he further added.

US plans \$1 bn Israel arms delivery despite Rafah assault

WASHINGTON: The United States is planning a new arms delivery to Israel worth more than \$1 billion, local media reported.

US President Joe Biden's administration has informed Congress of this, the Wall Street Journal reported on Tuesday, citing unnamed sources.

According to the report, the package contains tank ammunition, tactical vehicles and mortar shells.

According to other US media reports, the government has also initiated the authorisation process in Congress, which is still at an early stage, according to television channel CNN.

The US government is currently withholding delivery of so-called heavy bombs due to



Israel's actions in Rafah, in the south of the Gaza Strip.

Last week, Biden threatened Israel that an Israeli of-

fensive in the city, which is overcrowded with internally

displaced persons from other parts of the Gaza Strip, could have consequences for US arms deliveries.

The White House subsequently endeavoured to make it clear that the US government would not abandon Israel and that only this one delivery had been paused.

On Monday, Biden's security advisor, Jake Sullivan, said Washington would continue to provide military assistance to Israel.

Biden's spokeswoman Karine Jean-Pierre said on Tuesday, when asked about Israel's actions in Rafah, that Washington had been assured that the Israeli army was carrying out a limited operation and not a major ground operation in Rafah.

UNSC calls for investigator access to mass graves in Gaza

UNITED NATIONS: The UN Security Council has called for investigators to be allowed unimpeded access to mass graves in Gaza.

In a press statement on Friday, the Council members expressed their deep concern over reports of the discovery of mass graves in and around the Nasser and Al Shifa medical facilities in Gaza, where several hundred bodies, including women, children, and elderly persons, were buried, Xinhua news agency reported.

They stressed the need for accountability for violations of international law and called for investigators to be allowed unimpeded access to all locations of mass graves in Gaza to conduct immediate, independent, thorough, comprehensive, transparent, and impartial investigations to establish the circumstances behind the graves.



The Council members reiterated their demand that all parties scrupulously comply with their obligations under international law, including international humanitarian law and international human rights law, in particular, regarding the protection of civilians and civilian objects.

They reaffirmed the im-

portance of allowing families to know the fate and whereabouts of their missing relatives, consistent with international humanitarian law. They also emphasised the imperative of all parties to immediately and fully implement Security Council resolutions on a humanitarian cease-fire and humanitarian relief in Gaza.

Sunanda Sharma calls her presence at Cannes a victory for entire Punjabi community



CHANDIGARH: Punjabi singer Sunanda Sharma promoted Punjabi culture at the ongoing prestigious 77th Cannes Film Festival 2024.

Dressed in exquisite traditional Punjabi attire, she showcased the rich heritage of Punjab.

The singer wore an ivory-coloured salwar kameez. She completed her look with a nose ring and a 'maang teeka'.

Sunanda said: "It is an incredible honour to represent my culture and roots at the Cannes Film Festival. Being here is not just a personal achievement, but a victory for the entire Punjabi community. I hope this moment inspires others to embrace and celebrate their heritage proudly."

Sunanda made her singing debut with the song 'Billi Akh'. She ventured into acting with 'Sajjan Singh Rangroot' in 2018 with Diljit Dosanjh and Yograj Singh.

The 32-year-old started her Bollywood career with the 'Tere Naal Nachna' song.

She then gave her voice for the song 'Poster Lagwa Do' for the Kartik Aaryan 'Luka Chuppi' and for the track 'Mummy Nu Pasand' from the film 'Jai Mummy Di'.

In 2021, she lent her vocal prowess for B Praak's 'Baarish Ki Jaaye' starring Nawazuddin Siddiqui.

It is an incredible honour to represent my culture and roots at the Cannes Film Festival. Being here is not just a personal achievement, but a victory for the entire Punjabi community

Brave girl of Haryana gave new lease of life to four critically ill patient after her tragic death



FW DESK

The brave girl from Haryana gave a new lease of life to four critically ill patients after her tragic death. In a deeply moving display of generosity and compassion, the family of an 18-year-old girl, Preet, daughter of Joginder Pal Singh and Pinky Rani, residents of Jind, who tragically met with an accident on April 29, 2024, and was declared brain dead on May 11, 2024, at Alchemist Hospital in Panchkula, chose to donate

her organs.

The donated organs were harvested as follows: the liver was sent to Max Hospital Saket, the pancreas and one kidney to PGIMER Chandigarh, and one kidney was donated to a critical kidney failure patient at Alchemist Hospital, Panchkula. A green corridor was created on Sunday between Alchemist Hospital, Panchkula, and Max Hospital Saket, New Delhi, as well as PGIMER Chandigarh.

Dr. Neeraj Goyal, Associate Director of Kidney Transplant at

Alchemist Hospital, Panchkula, highlighted the significance of organ transplantation in restoring health and vitality to patients. Dr. Paramjit Singh Maan, Medical Superintendent at Alchemist Hospital, emphasized the importance of awareness regarding organ donation, noting that many precious lives can be saved through transplantation. Unfortunately, India is struggling with an acute shortage of organs for transplantation. This selfless act has brought hope and renewed life to multiple individuals in need.

Dr. Randeep Singh Punia, Director-General of Health Services (DGHS), commended the family for their noble gesture, emphasizing the life-saving importance of organ dona-

tion. Dr. Mukta, Civil Surgeon at Sec 6 Panchkula, expressed deep gratitude for the family's decision, recognizing the profound impact it would have on the recipients and their families. Amidst their profound grief, the family found solace in knowing that their daughter's spirit would live on through the lives she saved. Their decision underscores her loving and giving nature, inspiring others to consider organ donation.

With the coordination of DCP Panchkula, Himadri Kaushik, and the whole Haryana police, the organs reached their destinations on time, ensuring that the life-saving transplant surgeries could proceed without delay.



SAIYAMI KHER says she's drawn to roles that take everything out of her



MUMBAI: Actress Saiyami Kher, who is gearing up for her upcoming film 'Agni', has shared that she likes to do roles that challenge her and push her out of her comfort zone.

In 'Agni', she portrays the character of a fire-fighter. The actress, who is known for 'Mirzya', 'Ghoomer', 'Special OPS', and 'Breathe', expressed her contentment with being recognised as an actor capable of handling rugged and challenging roles in Bollywood. Elaborating on the subject, she said: "I am incredibly grateful for the opportunities I've had to portray strong characters in the work I have done so far. It's immensely fulfilling to be recognised for my ability to take on roles that push me out of my comfort zone and demand physical and emotional dedication. I've always been drawn to roles that demand everything from me because, in return, they give me so much. My attempt has always been to lose myself in the character."

"So when someone says, 'Oh, the 'Ghoomer girl' is the same girl from 'Choked'? I take it as a compliment because, as an actor, it feels great not to find the same person in every character. My journey as an actor has been one of constant learning, growth, and I am grateful for every opportunity to challenge myself and inspire and touch people's lives. Acting is a very powerful medium. So when people come back and say your film inspired me, taught me, or moved me, I feel it's a big success for me," she added.

Infosys Science Foundation Announces a New Direction for the Infosys Prize

ARUN KUMAR RAO
Bengaluru (India)

The Infosys Science Foundation (ISF) announced that it is steering the Infosys Prize in a new direction by transitioning from a mid-career prize to an early-career prize, with the objective of rewarding potential and recognizing the promise of future achievement. The upper age limit for prize winners is being revised to 40 years to enable a transformative impact.

The fundamental objective of the Infosys Prize continues to be to recognize the best research that benefits humanity and creates role models for young scholars and aspiring scientists in India. To further its objective of fostering col-



laboration and access, the ISF now requires all winners who are based outside India at the time of winning the prize to spend time at Indian institutes of their choice. Winners who are not based in India will be requested to spend 30 days (in a maximum of 2 trips) at a

host institute in India, to build networks and spark conversations with research groups here. The Science Foundation hopes that these early collaborations can transform into mutually beneficial long-term partnerships.

The categories that the In-

fosys Prize recognizes would broadly stay the same. Economics, however, will now be a separate category in the Infosys Prize. Previously, it was awarded under the Social Sciences category. From 2024, the six categories that the Infosys Prize will be awarded in are: Economics, Engineering & Computer Science, Humanities & Social Sciences, Life Sciences, Mathematical Sciences, and Physical Sciences.

Highlighting the rationale behind this change, Kris Gopalakrishnan, President, Infosys Science Foundation, said, "Since its inception 15 years ago, ISF has recognized and awarded 92 brilliant minds across disciplines in a demanding global environment.



Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal and Punjab's Chief Minister Bhagwant Mann offer prayers at the Bhagwan Sri Valmiki Tirtha Sthal, the holy place of Sri Amritsar Sahib, on Friday. PHOTO: PRABHJOT GILL

Rashmika, Ayushmann, Ananya wish 'maharaj' Vicky Kaushal on his 36th birthday



MUMBAI: Celebrities like Rashmika Mandanna, Ananya Panday, and Ayushmann Khurrana on Thursday showered love on actor Vicky Kaushal on his 36th birthday.

Taking to Instagram stories, Rashmika, who is set to star alongside Vicky in the upcoming movie 'Chhaava', shared a solo picture of the birthday boy and penned a heartwarming note.

The caption read: "Vickyyyy... we are a film old and I still don't have a selfie with you to post on your birthday man... Happiest birthday Maharaj. @vickykaushalog Wish the best for you always."

Ananya shared a throwback picture with the 'Uri' actor, where Sara Ali Khan also posed with the duo.

The 'Gehraiyaan' actress wrote: "Happy birthday Vicky Kaushal."

Ayushmann shared a candid picture with Vicky, wherein both can be seen making weird faces. He wrote: "Happy b'day Vicky veere."

On the work front, Vicky last featured in the Shah Rukh Khan-starrer 'Dunki'. He next has 'Bad Newz' in the pipeline.

Saif Ali Khan modifies Kareena's tattoo that he sports on his forearm



MUMBAI: Actor Saif Ali Khan, who will be seen making his Telugu debut with 'Devara', has modified his wife Kareena Kapoor Khan's tattoo on his forearm.

The actor was recently spotted at Mumbai airport when he caught the attention of the shutterbugs.

Saif had inked his wife's name on his left forearm in Hindi while they were dating. The new tattoo design seems to have covered up Kareena's name.

However, it's unclear if Saif modified the tattoo as per the demand of his character in a film or if it's a temporary

modification.

Saif and Kareena tied the knot in 2012, and are parents to Taimur Ali Khan and Jehangir Ali Khan.

Meanwhile, on the work front, Saif will be seen essaying the role of a cop in 'Devara' which also stars Jr NTR and Janhvi Kapoor.

Kartik Aaryan appears in a new out-of-this-world avatar for Sony Sports Network's UEFA EURO 2024 campaign film



The film showcases how the UEFA EUROs, the biggest football festival of 2024 is attracting fans from planets beyond Earth.

KAVITA SHARMA
Mumbai

30 days ahead of UEFA EURO 2024, the biggest football festival of the year, Sony Sports Network has launched its blockbuster campaign "Universe Ka Sabse Bada Football Festival of 2024" featuring their brand ambassador for football, Bollywood sensation Kartik Aaryan. The champion can be seen assuming a dual role in the enthralling campaign film which raises the bar of anticipation for the quadrennial tournament.

The campaign film which is high on visual effects encapsulates the level of enthusiasm of fans for UEFA EURO 2024 and provides a glimpse of what 'the biggest footballing event of the universe' will bring to the table.

The film is a visual delight on Indian television and features Kartik Aaryan, who for the first time dons the avatar of an alien from the outer space, intrigued by the celebrations on Earth and decides to join the festival of football. The alien finds his identical self in a human form. The duo then joins hands along with thousands of other fans to celebrate their favourite European

teams and players participating in the tournament.

A continental spectacle, UEFA EURO 2024 is one of the most eagerly-awaited sporting events of the year. The competition will feature 8 out of the top 10 FIFA-ranked countries including reigning champions Italy, France, Spain, Portugal, Belgium, England, Netherlands and Croatia vying for the coveted title. Undoubtedly, the best players and coaches, not just in Europe but across the world will be seen in action as international football takes over the mantle from club football for a month. Fan favourites Cristiano Ronaldo, Kylian Mbappe, Harry Kane, Thomas Mueller, Virgil van Dijk, Luka Modric and others will don their national colours, showcase their magic on the pitch and aim for the ultimate prize.

"It's a pleasure to be associated with Sony Sports Network for this amazing campaign for the UEFA EURO which is the biggest footballing event of 2024. Being a football fan, this campaign is particularly close to my heart. I really enjoyed playing an alien for the first time in my life and for this spectacular campaign. The countdown begins for UEFA EURO 2024 which is going to be a fantastic experience for all audiences in India." Bollywood superstar Kartik Aaryan said.

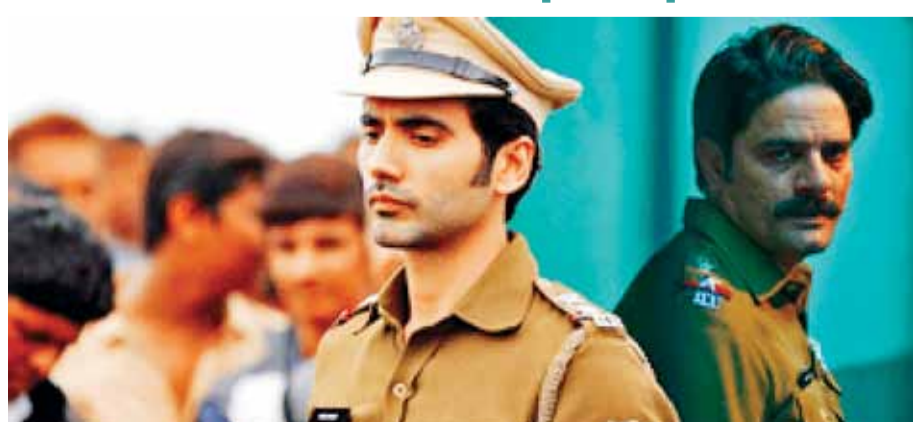
As 'Paatal Lok' turns 4, Ishwak Singh recalls filming viral scene where Jaideep slaps bookie

MUMBAI: Actor Ishwak Singh, who is known for his work in 'Paatal Lok', 'Rocket Boys' and others, is celebrating the 4th anniversary of the superhit streaming series 'Paatal Lok' on Wednesday.

On the occasion, Ishwak recalled the viral scene from the show where Jaideep Ahlawat's lead character goes to a local goon to return the gun, and slaps the bookie while on his way back.

Ishwak essayed the role of police officer Imran Ansari in the series and served as the perfect buddy cop to Jaideep's character of Hathiram Chaudhary.

Ishwak said "We were pretty zoned in while filming that scene. It was a very cold night in Delhi, and we knew that the



clock was ticking. At the end of the scene, Jaideep slapped the bookie as we made the dash. Everyone cracked up because that was unexpected and spontaneous, even the actor at the

receiving end of it laughed. Jaideep is a great actor and a true team leader."

Talking about how the show changed things for him as an actor, he said: "It's the show

that brought me on the map and while I've worked in blockbusters like 'Rocket Boys' that gave me a huge fan base, 'Paatal Lok' has left an indelible impression in the minds of audiences."

HINA KHAN says her 'Shinda Shinda No Papa' character is torn between husband and son

Actress Hina Khan, who has made her Punjabi cinema debut with the Gippy Grewal-starrer 'Shinda Shinda No Papa', has shared that her character in the film is torn between the dilemma of her husband and son.

Hina plays the role of Gippy's wife and the mother of Shinda Grewal in the film. Sharing the thought process of her character in the film, the actress told IANS that children can be taught with love and respect by their parents, and the film focuses on the same message. Elaborating on her role, Hina told IANS: "I play the character of Nikki, Shinda's mother, in the film. Nikki is always torn between the dilemma of her husband and son. She is of the thought process that children can be



taught with love and respect by their parents.

Her core belief of life is to give love and get it back." The actress further mentioned that while the comedy element in the film is strong, the movie also sheds light on the relationship between parents and children, with a twist which is eventually brought in by Shinda (Gippy's son).