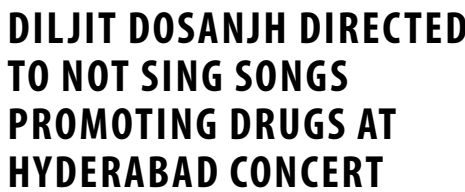


8



GDP growth may slip to 6.5 %: ICRA

There is considerable headroom for the GoI's capital expenditure, which needs to expand by 52 per cent in Y-o-Y terms in H2 FY2025 to meet the budget estimate for the full year, Nayar added.

Jingwen Yang, Information Management Officer at the UNFCCC, said Shubb exemplifies the power of art to raise awareness about the importance of preserving endangered archival collections documenting the history and legacy of the climate change process. "His commitment aligns seamlessly with the mission of the Digital Climate Library, ensuring this invaluable knowledge remains available to inspire and guide global action. We are honoured to have him join us in this vital initiative and look forward to the transformative impact his involvement will bring," he added. Globally, celebrities such as Leonardo DiCaprio, David Beckham, Coldplay, BTS, Billie Eilish, Don Cheadle, Shailene Woodley, Prince Harry and Meghan Markle work with the UNFCCC on climate change initiatives.

BJP spokesperson G.L. Raina, after meeting the affected families, criticized the demolition. "This visibly seems to be a revenge action soon after the return of the NC-Congress government headed by Chief Minister Omar Abdullah. JDA should have provided alternatives to these families. The government must stop targeting this hapless community," he said.

Punjab State Cooperative Bank takes leap forward for women empowerment

CHANDIGARH: In a leap forward towards women empowerment, the Patiala Foundation, OMED e.V. Germany, and the Punjab State Cooperative Bank Ltd., joined hand towards significant milestone in driving digital inclusion and economic empowerment for women.

During the function to mark historic tie up Chairman, The Punjab State Cooperative Bank Ltd. Jagdev Singh Bam and Managing Director, The Punjab State Cooperative Bank Ltd. Anindita Mitra along CEO, OMED e.V. Germany Dr. Jens H. Fischer and CEO, Patiala Foundation Ravee Singh Ahluwalia were present.

Divulging details Anindita Mitra said that this initiative seeks to provide SHGs with the tools, skills, and a secure digital platform to help them market their products, exchange ideas, and address challenges collaboratively. She said that leveraging digital tools and strategies, the



project aims to bridge the digital divide, enabling SHGs to reach broader markets and improve their livelihoods. She said that under this project SHG members will be provided with secure, password-protected digital spaces to communicate, collaborate, and share resources.

Likewise, Anindita Mitra said that this initiative fosters a barter system where members can share tips, strategies, and resources to collectively grow and innovate. She said that the platform allows members to raise issues and highlight fraudulent activities,

creating an environment of trust and vigilance. She said that the women will be trained in digital marketing, product presentation, and content creation to establish a strong online presence and expand their networks.

Anindita Mitra said spaces will be shared for discussions, idea exchange, and showcasing success stories to inspire and empower SHGs. She said that this project is expected to impact hundreds of women across 10 SHGs initially, with plans to scale and include more groups in the future. She said that by

combining digital literacy with collaborative support, it aims to create a replicable model for sustainable development and women's empowerment across the region and beyond.

Anindita Mitra envisioned that This project creates a safe and inclusive space for women SHGs to grow, communicate, and support each other. By fostering collaboration and providing them with tools to navigate the digital landscape, we are enabling them to take charge of their economic futures, she added.

Meanwhile, Chairman, Punjab State Cooperative Bank Ltd. Jagdev Singh Bam Commended the efforts that went behind the conceptualization of this Project. He said that such projects are the need of the hour and we should encourage such initiatives which empower women. 'Economic independence is the best way to empower women and we should promote such projects', he added.

Cancer spreading rapidly in Haryana is becoming a cause of death: Kumari Selja



SATISH HANDA
Chandigarh

The General Secretary of the All India Congress Committee, former Union Minister, and MP of Sirsa, Kumari Selja said that for the past decade, cancer has been spreading rapidly in the districts of Haryana, particularly in those falling under the Ghaggar River belt, such as Sirsa, Fatehabad, Kaithal, and Ambala. Every month, three thousand new patients are emerging. In Haryana, 1500 cancer patients die every month, bringing the annual death toll to 18,000. Kumari Selja said that the government should provide cancer treatment facilities at district hospitals in the affected districts to prevent the deaths of cancer patients due to lack of treatment.

In a statement released to the media, Kumari Selja said that cancer is spreading rapidly not only in Haryana but also in Punjab. The number of new patients is increasing, as well as the number of deaths. The situation in Haryana is dire, with cancer becoming a deadly threat. According to statistics, 2,916 new cancer patients are reported every month in the state, with the annual number nearing 35,000. Talking about cancer-related deaths, 1,500 patients die every month in Haryana, with the yearly figure reaching 18,000. Shockingly, among the population above 30 years of age, symptoms of cancer are found in 102 out of every 100,000 people. In Haryana, districts in the Ghaggar belt like Sirsa, Fatehabad, Kaithal, and Ambala are witnessing a rapid spread of cancer.

The origin of this issue lies in the hilly region of Sirmour in Himachal Pradesh. The river Ghaggar enters Haryana from Kalka in the Shivalik Hills, then flows from Mohali in Punjab to Ambala, Patiala, Kaithal, Sangrur, Fatehabad, Mansa, Sirsa, Hanumangarh, and Anoopgarh before reaching Pakistan. About 320 kilometers long, the river Ghaggar becomes polluted after Panchkula. Samples taken at various points in the river in recent years, under the orders of the National Green Tribunal's task force, have revealed the presence of toxic elements in the river, which is extremely dangerous for human health. Successful treatment for the first and second stages of cancer is possible, but it requires the government to conduct health check-ups to prevent cancer in time.

Cancer treatment is currently available at Atal Care Center in Ambala, the National Cancer Institute in Jhajjar, and PGI Rohtak. This facility should be made available at every district headquarters. People have to travel to Acharya Tulsi Cancer Hospital and Research Center in Bikaner, Rajasthan, and PGI Rohtak for treatment. Many cancer patients die due to lack of treatment. She said the government to take serious steps in this direction.

CM Saini performed Bhoomi Pujan of Medical College in Sirsa, announced to build a modern cancer institute

PARVESH HANDA
Sirsa

Haryana Chief Minister Nayab Singh Saini performed the Bhoomi Pujan of Baba Sarasainath Medical College in Sirsa on Thursday. This college will have 100 seats and will be ready in two years. Saini said, along with this college, a modern cancer center will also be built on five and a half acres of land. He said, nursing and physiotherapy and paramedical colleges will also be established in the new medical college. Making a new announcement on this occasion, the CM said that along with this medical college, a modern cancer center will also be built on five and a half acres of land. He said that Haryana has taken the initiative to make the country a medical hub and to realize



the vision of Prime Minister Narendra Modi's Fit India and the government has taken the initiative to establish a medical college in every district.

According to health department data, so far nine new medical colleges have been opened in the state, whereas before 2014, there were only six medical colleges in the state. Now the

number of medical colleges in the state has increased to 15. This is the vision of the double engine government. We will provide good health services in every district. "I am proud that the third phase of government has been formed in Haryana which will work with the PM to develop the state rapidly. MBBS and PG seats will also increase,"

Statement of FCI on Foodgrains procurement from Punjab

CHANDIGARH: Food Corporation of India procures around 250 Lakh MT of rice and wheat from Punjab region for central Pool every year and conducts inspection of food grains through Quality Control Cells on regular basis to ensure that only quality food grains are distributed under PDS.

There is a multi-layered quality checking system in FCI to provide quality foodgrains to beneficiaries under PDS. There is a robust system of quality check of rice at FCI i.e. regular & squad inspection of rice are carried out by all levels of FCI during the procurement of rice.



Whenever the grains are procured by FCI, initial inspection is conducted at the time of receipt of rice in Depot in

Procuring State. Then another round of inspection is conducted before dispatching the grains to recipient State/Consuming

BJP slams Kejriwal, Bhagwant Mann for appointing Bibhav Kumar to top post in Punjab



NEW DELHI: BJP National General Secretary Tarun Chugh launched a scathing attack on former Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal and Punjab Chief Minister Bhagwant Mann on Thursday for appointing Bibhav Kumar on a top administrative post, even though he has been accused of assaulting former Delhi Commission for Women (DCW) Chairperson Swati Maliwal.

Chugh's remarks came in response to Maliwal's post on social media platform X, in which she claimed that Kejriwal had rewarded Kumar by appointing him as the Chief Advisor to Punjab's Chief Minister.

Maliwal claimed that the assault, which allegedly took place at Kejriwal's residence on May 13, was followed by Kumar's promotion to a top administrative position in Punjab, highlighting the 'true face' of the AAP in its treatment of women. She criticised Kejriwal and accused him of "rewarding Kumar", despite the Supreme Court labelling him a 'goon.' Talking to media, Chugh condemned the actions of the AAP leaders, calling them indicative of

their mindset. "Bibhav Kumar, who assaulted Swati Maliwal, now holds a senior position in Punjab. This is how the AAP treats women. The fact that the police and Punjab's DGP will report to him is deeply troubling," Chugh said. He urged for the safety of women and children in Punjab, stating, "Please God save our women and children from such individuals."

The controversy surrounds Kumar's role as a close aide and Personal Assistant to Arvind Kejriwal when the latter was the Chief Minister of Delhi. Kumar was arrested on May 18 for the alleged assault and was later granted bail by the Supreme Court after spending over 100 days in judicial custody.

Chugh also responded to Jammu and Kashmir (J&K) Lieutenant Governor Manoj Sinha's recent statement on internal security, reiterating the BJP's stance on zero tolerance for terrorism. "Under PM Modi's leadership, we will ensure strong borders and internal security. We are determined to make J&K terrorism free as we are committed towards it," he affirmed.

NGT slaps Rs 5 crore interim fine on Punjab pharma unit for flouting norms

CHANDIGARH: The National Green Tribunal (NGT) has imposed an interim fine of Rs 5 crore on a pharmaceutical unit in Punjab for "violation of environmental norms".

While denouncing the conduct of the Punjab State Pollution Control Board (PSPCB) for failing to discharge its statutory functions effectively, the NGT directed the board to initiate criminal proceedings against the bulk drug manufacturing unit, besides determining the final compensation amount.

The green body was hearing a plea on Nector Life Sciences Limited, located at Haibatpur village in Sahibzada Ajit Singh Nagar district, reportedly discharging highly-polluted chemical effluent in the agricultural fields, causing damage to crops and land. In an order passed on Thursday, an NGT bench comprising its chairperson Justice Prakash Shrivastava, said, "Considering the entire record,



we are clearly of the view that the industry has failed to comply with the provisions of environmental laws, particularly the Water Act, and has consistently violated its provisions while its zero liquid discharge (ZLD) status has not been achieved till date."

The bench also comprising judicial member Justice Sudhir Agarwal and expert member Afroz Ahmad said the PSPCB "failed to discharge its statutory functions adequately and effectively". The PSPCB did not take stringent action by imposing adequate environmental compensation, nor did it initiate

criminal action for prosecution of the violator, the bench noted. The tribunal also said the reports before it merely examined the effluent discharged by the unit to assess water quality and pollution levels. The unit mainly manufactured antibiotics and waste water containing antibiotics, such as cephalosporins antibiotics, could be highly toxic and difficult to degrade. "It is thus necessary to examine the effluent or waste water generated by an industrial unit to see the whether treated water contains the residue of the above antibiotic medicine or not," the tribunal said.

Haryana was No. 1 in country under Congress Govt, whereas it has become No. 1 in poverty during BJP rule: Hooda



SATISH HANDA
Chandigarh

Addressing a press conference at his Chandigarh residence, former Haryana Chief minister Bhopinder Singh Hooda strongly condemned ruling BJP government in the state for making false claims and misleading the people during recent Haryana Vidhan Sabha session that there is no shortage of fertilizers and easy availability of the same to farmers in the state, whereas the situation for supply of the same is adverse and it is first time in the history of Haryana state the fertilizers are being supplied to the farmers under police security.

Reminding poll promises, former chief minister said that BJP government had promised prior to the assembly polls to supply paddy crop at the minimum support price (MSP) Rs 3100 per quintal, whereas the farmers are now compelled to sell their crop at Rs 200 to 400 lesser price than the assured MSP. Hooda said that the BJP government has failed to fulfill their poll manifesto promises to pay Rs 2100 monthly to every woman and came to power due to EVM cheatings. Hooda said the BJP government has also failed to implement satisfactory policies as regards transparency in reservations, merits in employment sector under Haryana Kaushal Rozgar Nigam. He said, BJP had assured to provide two lakh jobs to youths in the state, on which action was yet awaited.

Expressing deep concern Hooda said nearly 70% population in Haryana state have reached below the poverty line at present. "It is an unsuccessful report card of the ruling government in the state that Haryana is burdened under debt for amount worth Rs 4.5 lakh crore and every newborn child in Haryana state at the time of birth is burdened under debt for amount worth Rs 2,28,530 each.

INLD dissolved its organization

Also discussed the defeat in the assembly elections, passed new resolution

CHANDIGARH: After the defeat in the Haryana assembly elections, the Indian National Lok Dal (INLD) has dissolved the organization. The party leaders will now go among the farmers and the public. Four resolutions were passed in the meeting, including opposition to giving land in exchange for land for the assembly. Abhay Chautala said that Chandigarh belongs to Haryana and we will not let it go to Punjab at any cost.

Indian National Lok Dal's (INLD) national and state executive meeting discussed the reasons for defeat in the recent assembly elections in the state, along with this dissolved organization. In the meeting four resolutions were also passed on issues like law and order, stubble burning cases, rising dengue and opposition to the land given in exchange for the assembly. After the meeting, Abhay Singh Chautala said that the people of the state have come to know that Bhupendra Hooda, who used to call us the B team of BJP, is the one who has brought BJP to power. Hooda was afraid that if INLD came to power, difficult times would begin for him, as such instead of defeating BJP, Hooda was busy defeating INLD. He said, after



reorganizing the organization, the party leaders will go among the farmers.

On the issue of Chandigarh, Chautalae said, Chandigarh belongs to Haryana as was clearly written in the Shah Commission report that either Chandigarh or 107 Hindi speaking villages should be given to Haryana. We will not let Chandigarh go to Punjab at any cost. Hesaid, Chief Minister Nayab Singh Saini should apologize on the issue of shortage of DAP fertilizer in the state falsely claiming that there is no shortage of fertilizer in the state. He claimed that Congress will be finished by the next assembly elections. In the meeting, party members and candidates who contested the assembly elections spoke openly on the reasons for the defeat. In the meeting chaired by former Chief Minister Chaudhary Om Prakash Chautala, State President Rampal Majra, Principal General Secretary Abhay Chautala along with officials RS Chaudhary, Mahendra Singh Malik, Prakash Bharti, MLAs Aditya Devi Lal and Arjun Chautala were also present.

Punjab police busts arms smuggling module backed by foreign

JAGMOHAN SINGH
Amritsar

Commissionerate Police has busted trans-border Arms smuggling module backed by foreign based smugglers with the arrest of six persons and recovered 10 Pistols including three sophisticated 9MM Glock pistols along with ten cartridges from their possession, said Director General of Police (DGP) Punjab Gaurav Yadav here on Friday.

Those arrested have been identified as Vinod Kumar alias Rangeela of Putlighar, Yuvraj Singh of village Roriwala in Amritsar, Surkhap Singh of village Roriwala in Amritsar, Jugraj Singh alias Jaggu of Plah Sahib road in Amritsar, Amritpal Singh of village Sherpur in Batala and Prabhdeep Singh alias Harman of village Mumrai in Batala.



DGP said that preliminary investigation has revealed that the arrested accused have been in contact with foreign-based smuggler, who has been pushing huge consignments of weapons into Indian territory via drones and other means.

He said that further investigations are going on to establish backward and forward linkages in this case.

Sharing more details, Commissioner of Police (CP) Amrit-

sar Gurpreet Singh Bhullar said that following reliable inputs about the involvement of accused Amritpal in smuggling of weapons, Police teams from CIA Amritsar laid a trap and arrested him along with Prabhdeep from Batala road in Amritsar. On their disclosure, Police teams have recovered two 9MM Glock pistols and five .32 bore pistols along with six cartridges from the location pinpointed by them near Verka Bye Pass.

Sukhbir Singh Badal resigns as President of Shiromani Akali Dal

CHANDIGARH: Sukhbir Singh Badal resigned as President of Shiromani Akali Dal (SAD), party spokesperson Daljeet Singh Cheema said.

"The SAD President Sukhbir Singh Badal submitted his resignation to the working Committee of the party today to pave the way for the election of new President. He thanked all the party leaders and workers for expressing confidence in his leadership and extending wholehearted support and cooperation throughout the tenure," he said on X. Cheema said the Akali Dal Working Committee President Balwinder S Bhundar has called an emergency meeting of the party's working committee on November 18 in Chandigarh. The committee will consider the resignation of Sukhbir



Badal and will decide further course of action. The elections for the post of President, office-bearers and Working Committee members are due on December 14 when the five-year term of the present office-bearers expires. Within 24 hours of being declared a "sinner" for "damaging Sikh interests", both as the Shiromani Akali Dal (SAD) chief and as the former Deputy Chief Minister of Punjab, Sukhbir Badal appeared before the Akal Takht, the supreme temporal seat of Sikhs, on August 31 and requested to call an early meeting of five Sikh head priests to give him an opportunity to rectify his mistakes.

Haryana Agriculture Minister Shyam Singh Rana Visits BJP State Office, Discusses Membership Drive

GULSHAN KUMAR
Chandigarh

Haryana Agriculture Minister Shyam Singh Rana on Saturday visited the Bharatiya Janata Party's (BJP) state headquarters in Rohtak, marking a significant gesture as he became the first cabinet minister to do so since the BJP formed its third consecutive government in the state.

During his visit, Rana held a detailed discussion with Phanindranath Sharma, the party's State General Secretary (Organisation), regard-



ing the ongoing membership drive launched by the BJP in Haryana. Sharma extended a warm welcome to the minister and expressed his gratitude for Rana's visit. "Your proactive

approach and visit to the headquarters reflect your commitment to the party's growth and outreach initiatives," Sharma remarked.

Highlighting the success of

the membership campaign, Rana noted the overwhelming response it had received across the state. He assured Sharma that the BJP was on track to achieve its ambitious target of enrolling 50 lakh new members within a week. The minister emphasized the party's strategic efforts to strengthen its grassroots presence, particularly in its constituency.

"In the Radour assembly segment alone, we are confident of inducting 20,000 fresh members, which will significantly bolster the party's base in Yamunanagar district,"

Rana stated. The BJP's membership drive was officially inaugurated with the renewal of Chief Minister Nayab Singh Saini's membership. The campaign aims to reinforce the party's position in Haryana by engaging new members and consolidating its organizational strength ahead of the upcoming electoral challenges.

Rana's visit to the party office and his commitment to the drive underline the BJP's focus on solidifying its support at the local level while building a robust political machinery across the state.

SC requests President to decide Balwant Singh Rajoana's Mercy Plea in two weeks

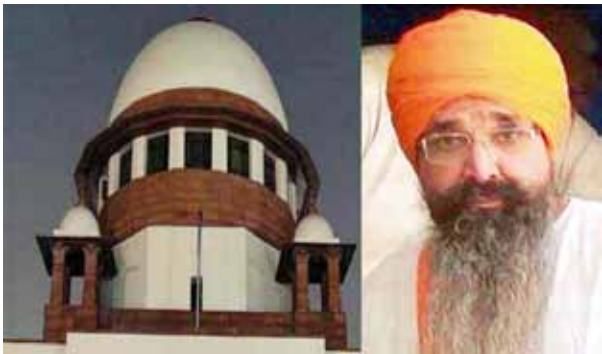
NEW DELHI: The Supreme Court on Monday asked the Secretary to the President of India to place before President Droupadi Murmu the mercy petition filed by Balwant Singh Rajoana, a death row convict in the 1995 assassination case of former Punjab Chief Minister Beant Singh.

A special bench headed by Justice B.R. Gavai requested President Murmu to consider Rajoana's mercy plea within two weeks.

The Bench, also comprising Justices P.K. Mishra and K.V. Viswanathan, was hearing a writ petition filed by Rajoana challenging a 12-year-long delay in deciding the mercy petition seeking commutation of his death penalty.

The apex court clarified that if Rajoana's mercy plea is not decided within two weeks, it will proceed to consider his application for interim release.

It expressed dismay over the non-filing of a response by the Union government in the matter and recorded that on the last



date, the plea was adjourned to enable the Solicitor General to obtain instructions from the President's office.

In the previous hearing, the top court had granted two more weeks to the government to file its response and told Rajoana's counsel that it was not inclined to grant him interim relief at this stage.

Before this, in May last year, the Supreme Court had turned down Rajoana's plea seeking commutation of his death penalty and had said, "It is within the domain of the executive to

take a call on such sensitive issues".

It was noted that the Rajoana himself never submitted any mercy petition and the alleged mercy petition of 2012, was filed by the Shiromani Gurdwara Parbandhak Committee (SGPC).

Disposing of the plea, the apex court had directed that the competent authority, in due course of time, would again as and when it is deemed necessary, deal with the mercy petition, and take a further decision.

Former Punjab Chief Minister

Beant Singh, along with 16 others, lost their lives while a dozen others were injured in a bomb blast in August 1995. Rajoana was arrested on January 27, 1996. Rajoana, along with eight others, who had hatched a conspiracy and had executed the bomb blast, were put to trial.

In July 2007, the trial court convicted Rajoana along with co-accused Jagtar Singh Hawara, Gurmeet Singh, Lakhwinder Singh, Shamsher Singh and Nasib Singh. The petitioner along with co-accused Jagtar Singh Hawara was awarded the death sentence.

In death reference, the high court vide judgment dated December 10, 2010, confirmed the conviction and sentence of the petitioner. However, while confirming the conviction of co-accused Jagtar Singh, it commuted the death sentence to life imprisonment.

The other co-accused preferred to appeal before the top court. However, Rajoana did not file any appeal after the judgment of the high court.

India Positions Itself as Future Global Hydrogen Energy Leader: Hardeep Singh Puri



NEW DELHI: India is set to become a global leader in hydrogen energy production and exports, according to Union Minister for Petroleum and Natural Gas Hardeep Singh Puri.

Speaking at the 6th South Asian Geoscience Conference and Exhibition, Puri highlighted initiatives including hydrogen blending in natural gas pipelines, localization of electrolyzer technologies, and bio-pathways for green hydrogen production as key drivers of this advancement.

The nation's energy consumption continues to surge, with daily oil consumption currently at 5.4 million barrels and projected to reach 7 million barrels by 2030.

Notably, India's fuel demand is growing at three times the global average, with daily petrol pump visits reaching 67 million people—equivalent to the combined population of the UK, France, and Italy.

India is expected to account for 25 percent of the global energy demand increase over the next two decades.

Minister Puri emphasised that the country is successfully managing the triple challenges of energy availability, affordability, and sustainability, supported by comprehensive exploration and production efforts. Despite being the world's third-largest crude oil consumer, India's exploration potential remains largely untapped.

The country possesses 651.8 million metric tons of recoverable crude oil reserves and 1138.6 billion cubic metres of recoverable natural gas reserves.

Exploration coverage of sedimentary basins has increased from 6 percent in 2014 to 10 percent currently, with plans to reach 16 percent by 2025 through Open Acreage Licensing Policy rounds.

The GEO India 2024 conference, expected to attract approximately 2,000 participants, will feature over 20 conference sessions, 4 plenary discussions, 200+ technical papers, and 50+ exhibition booths.

Minister Puri expressed confidence in geoscientists' innovative capabilities to drive India's energy revolution, aiming to ensure energy security for all citizens while addressing future challenges.

The government has set an ambitious target to expand India's exploration acreage to 1 million square kilometres by 2030.

Supreme Court directs J&K to frame policy for premature prisoner release

FW DESK
New Delhi

The Supreme Court of India has directed the Jammu and Kashmir administration to draft a policy for the premature release of prisoners, a report said.

The order came after a plea from a former security personnel, convicted in 2006 for killing three colleagues, sought early release after spending over 18 years in prison. The J&K government opposed the request, citing the absence of a policy governing premature



releases in the region.

The court instructed the Union Territory to coordinate with the relevant authorities, develop the required policy, and submit a compliance re-

port.

Jammu and Kashmir, which was reorganized into a Union Territory in 2019, held its first election in 2024 to establish its union territory government.

Rahul Gandhi asks Telangana CM to make effective law for gig workers

HYDERABAD: Congress leader Rahul Gandhi has asked Telangana Chief Minister A. Revanth Reddy to make an effective law for gig workers by holding state-wide public consultations.

The Leader of Opposition in Lok Sabha has written a letter to the Chief Minister, requesting him to conduct public consultation for the draft legislation for gig workers.

"Hearing from all parties will ensure that the law is robust, effective, and meaningful. The process can also help anchor future regulations for this sector," reads the letter dated November 11. Rahul Gandhi also offered to be part of this consultative process. He exuded confidence that Telangana will lead the way in building a sustainable gig economy for the future.

The Chief Minister posted the letter on the social media platform 'X' on Wednesday and assured Rahul Gandhi that the state government would make gig workers' policy comprehensive, inclusive, and fair in line with his vision.

"All of our work is inspired by your vision, ideas and work. It gives us more energy that the Telangana Caste Survey has



made you feel proud. We will make the Telangana State Gig Workers' Policy comprehensive, inclusive, fair, and pioneering, in line with your vision & promise," wrote the Chief Minister. In his letter, Rahul Gandhi mentioned that the Congress stands for the well-being of workers, especially in contractual roles.

"Our manifesto committed to framing a law to protect gig workers and enhance social security. The states we govern have taken several steps in this direction with the Congress government in Rajasthan becoming the first state to legislate the

welfare of gig workers. I am pleased that you too are moving forward with a draft law, honouring our guarantee to the people of Telangana, and offer a suggestion," wrote Rahul Gandhi, who had interacted with gig workers in Hyderabad during the Assembly elections campaign last year.

The Congress MP said during his recent visit to Hyderabad, he was impressed by the vibrant consultative process for the socio-economic, educational, employment, political and caste survey. It offers a valuable model to ensure lawmakers hear directly from the people, he

NC-led J&K Government flaunts special status, statehood resolutions on completing one month in power

SRINAGAR: The resolutions calling for restoration of special constitutional status and statehood figured as top achievements as the National Conference-led J&K coalition government completed its first month in power on November 18.

Tanvir Sadiq, the party's chief spokesman said the two resolutions were the fulfillment of the party's manifesto.

"In line with our party's manifesto, Omar Abdullah-led government passed a resolution on special status in J&K Assembly and another on statehood in the cabinet in the first month itself," Sadiq said. "Omar Sahab went to Delhi to present the statehood resolution to prime minister Narendra Modi who has given a favourable response".

Other achievements that Sadiq outlined were the res-



toration of the annual exam session for Class 1-9 back in November and the relaxation in age eligibility to youth for applying for government jobs.

On November 6, the Jammu and Kashmir Legislative Assembly passed a resolution urging the central government to engage with regional representatives to restore the special status that was revoked in 2019.

The resolution, introduced by Deputy Chief Minister Surinder Choudhary, reasserted the significance of the former special provisions, emphasizing their role in preserving the region's identity, culture, and rights. The resolution also highlighted that any discussions on restoration should balance national unity with the legitimate aspirations of the people of Jammu and

AI is an essential tool but must be used optimally with responsible handling, says Union Minister



AI is an essential tool but must be used optimally with responsible handling, says Union Minister Jitendra Singh at ASSOCHAM AI Leadership Meet 2024

FW DESK
New Delhi

"Artificial Intelligence (AI) is an essential tool but must be used optimally with responsible handling," stated Union Minister Jitendra Singh at the 7th Edition of the ASSOCHAM AI Leadership Meet 2024. The event, themed "AI for India: Advancing India's AI Development - Innovation, Ethics, and Governance," showcased India's strategic roadmap for harnessing the transformative potential of Artificial Intelligence (AI).

The Government headed by Prime Minister Narendra Modi has enabled initiation of AI driven programmes as also the launch of Quantum Missions.

In his address, the Minister emphasized the pivotal role of AI in reshaping various sectors, including governance, business, healthcare, education, and space exploration. He highlighted AI as the backbone of India's future development, capable of driving economic growth and addressing pressing challenges such as climate change, public service delivery, and national security.

A significant announcement made by Dr. Jitendra Singh was the introduction of India's first practical AI Data Bank. This initiative aims to accelerate technological growth and innovation by providing researchers, startups, and developers access to high-quality, diverse datasets essential for creating scalable and inclusive AI solutions. The Minister underscored the strategic importance of the AI Data Bank in enhancing national security through real-time analytics of satellite, drone, and IoT data. This step aligns with India's goal to utilize AI for predictive analytics in disaster management and cybersecurity.

India's National Strategy for AI is guided by a comprehensive approach focused on innovation, ethical governance, and global collaboration. The government is fostering partnerships between academia, private enterprises, and startups to propel AI applications in critical sectors such as healthcare, agriculture, smart cities, and space exploration.

Dr. Jitendra Singh reaffirmed India's commitment to ensuring transparent and fair AI systems, with robust governance frameworks being developed to address challenges like algorithmic bias and data privacy. He also emphasized the need for India to actively participate in global platforms such as the United Nations and

G20 to promote a rules-based AI framework.

The Minister highlighted the government's focus on using AI to empower citizens and ensure equitable access to the benefits of this transformative technology. He stated that AI must bridge divides rather than create them and must empower people without replacing them.

Dr. Jitendra Singh envisioned a promising future where India emerges as a global AI leader by 2047, emphasizing responsible and inclusive AI development. He called for collaborative efforts from all stakeholders to ensure AI's integration for sustainable and inclusive development.

The event served as a platform for thought leaders, policymakers, and industry experts to exchange insights and chart a responsible path for AI adoption in India.

Archana Vohra, MD, Commerce & Payments, Google and Co-Chair, ASSOCHAM AI Task Force said, the Indian government's collaborative and forward-looking approach to AI democratization is commendable – exemplified by initiatives such as the India AI mission, Project Bhashini, and the Startup India Seed Fund. These programs, with substantial funding and strategic partnerships, have empowered startups, fostered entrepreneurship, and broken-down language barriers. Google is proud to support these initiatives and believes that public-private partnerships are essential for accelerating research, creating shared resources, and supporting researchers across academia and civil society."

Manish Prasad, Chair, ASSOCHAM IT/ITeS Council said how Artificial Intelligence (AI) is reshaping global business practices and societal dynamics.

BJP's "ek hain to safe hain" serves Modi-Adani duo interest says Rahul Gandhi



KAVITA SHARMA
Mumbai

Leader of Opposition in the Lok Sabha Rahul Gandhi today said that the redevelopment of Dharavi will be decided by the stakeholders living and working there and not by one billionaire, Adani. He supported the stand of Shiv Sena (UBT) chief Uddhav Thackeray who had said that once the MVA government is formed, the Dharavi tender will be cancelled. Addressing a press conference on the last day of the election campaign here today, Gandhi also demonstrated a 'safe' (cash chest), while explaining Modi's slogan "ek hain toh safe hain", taking out a poster of Adani and Modi along with a map of Dharavi. He remarked, Adani with Modi is always safe. He said, Modi's slogan of 'ek hain toh safe hain' fits Modi-Adani duo the most. The senior Congress leader said that everyone knows about the tendering process involving Adani and how ED, CBI and IT are used to help him. He said, Prime Minister Narendra Modi was handing over everything to a single man. He said, whether it is the Mumbai airport, ports, defence industry and now the Dharavi land – everything was given to a single person.

After caste census, all classes in country will get justice: Rahul Gandhi

RANCHI: Congress MP and Leader of the Opposition in the Lok Sabha (LoP), Rahul

Gandhi, at a press conference here on Monday, said that the caste census will fundamentally change the country's politics and social systems and all classes in India will get justice. Describing the importance of data in today's time, Rahul Gandhi said that the census would reveal the extent of participation of Backward Classes, Dalits, and tribals in India's power structures and institutions. "Once we have accurate data, we can develop policies to ensure justice for all sections," he said. According to him, the current lack of data on Backward Classes hinders effective policymaking and equitable distribution. LoP Gandhi noted that Congress-led state governments, like those in Karnataka and Telangana, are already engaging with citizens to discuss what questions should be included in the caste census.

India's Vision for a Free, Secure Maritime Network Gains Global Support: PM Modi

NEW DELHI: Prime Minister Narendra Modi emphasized India's commitment to a "free, open, and secure maritime network" in a statement for 'Sagarmanthan, The Ocean's Dialogue', the country's inaugural maritime event. The Prime Minister highlighted that India's vision for the Indian Ocean and Indo-Pacific regions is resonating worldwide, fostering unity and cooperation among nations.

PM Modi expressed that the 'Indo Pacific Oceans Initiative' aims to position marine resources as crucial to economic growth. This dialogue, he noted, strengthens the rules-based global order while promoting peace, trust, and friendship across borders.

The Prime Minister, addressing the event remotely from Nigeria, emphasized the role



of initiatives like Sagarmanthan in building partnerships that contribute to a prosperous future. "As we strive to realise the vision of a Viksit Bharat by 2047, dialogues such as Sagarmanthan are invaluable to build consensus, partnerships, and most importantly, a prosperous future," he stated, expressing confidence that these discussions would have a lasting impact worldwide.

Reflecting on India's ancient maritime heritage, PM Modi cited the significance of historic port cities like Lothal and Dholavira, the maritime prowess of the Chola dynasty, and the contributions of Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj.

Jamaat's All India Members Conclave passed Comprehensive Resolutions on important National, Community & International Issues

HYDERABAD: The All-India Members Conclave of Jamaat-e-Islami Hind (JIH) concluded successfully with the gathering passing comprehensive resolutions on some of the critical national, community, and international issues confronting the nation and the world. The three-day event, which drew together 15,000 JIH members, featured comprehensive discussions on



social, educational, and economic issues and covering areas such as spirituality, interfaith dialogue, human rights, academia, healthcare, and education.

PDP chief Mehbooba tells party MLAs, fight for special status in J&K Assembly



FW DESK
Srinagar

PDP president Mehbooba Mufti on Tuesday lauded three party legislators who raised the issue of abrogation of Articles 370 and 35A during the first session of Jammu and Kashmir Assembly

earlier this month.

"Party President Mehbooba Mufti lauded the efforts of PDP MLAs for their efforts in legislative assembly at party headquarters in Srinagar today," the PDP posted on its X handle after a meeting chaired by Mehbooba.

"These elections were about

defending J&K's identity & dignity. Our MLAs have raised the people's deep concerns over the unilateral abrogation of Articles 370 & 35A. The fight for our rights continues in legislatures & public outreach," the PDP president said. Besides the three party MLAs — Waheed Para, Rafiq Naik and Mir Mohammad Fayaz, senior leaders like Nayeem Akhtar, Abdul Rehman Veeru, Ghulam Nabi Lone, Khurshed Alam, Basharat Bukhari, Asiya Naqash and Zahoor Mir attended the meeting. Talking to reporters after the meeting, PDP legislature party leader Waheed Para said the party MLAs will continue to remind the National Conference government of the promises the ruling party had made during the election campaign.



Time for India to renew Global South strategy

Prime Minister Narendra Modi’s recent diplomatic engagements, including his visit to Nigeria, participation in the G-20 summit in Brazil, and tour of Guyana, underscore India’s commitment to deepening ties with the Global South. These efforts are not merely about bilateral relations but signify India’s role as a leader among developing nations. In Abuja, Modi and Nigerian President Bola Ahmed Tinubu reaffirmed their strategic partnership, focusing on defense cooperation, counter-terrorism, and economic collaboration. Modi offered India’s experience in agriculture, transportation, affordable medicine, renewable energy, and digital transformation to Nigeria, highlighting areas for potential cooperation. The conferment of Nigeria’s ‘Grand Commander of the Order of the Niger’ on Modi, making him the second foreign dignitary to receive this honor, reflects the deep-rooted friendship between the two nations. India’s longstanding contributions to Nigeria’s development, including sending teachers and doctors post-independence and fostering a 60,000-strong diaspora, have strengthened this bond. Economically, India’s \$27 billion investments across 200 companies in sectors like healthcare, energy, and agriculture demonstrate shared priorities in addressing poverty, pollution, and population challenges. Nigeria, as Africa’s largest economy, offers a strategic partnership for India in a region where it has faced criticism for under-engagement. However, India’s broader commitment to the Global South has sometimes lacked consistent follow-through. The India-Africa Forum Summit, last held in 2015, is overdue, and the “Voice of the Global South” (VoGS) conference has seen tepid participation. As the Foreign Secretary hints at a summit next year, this could be an opportunity to reinvigorate India’s Africa policy with tangible outcomes and better coordination. As India pushes for reforms in global governance and addresses issues like food, health, and energy security, it must balance lofty ideals with concrete actions. Modi’s recent travels exemplify India’s intent. The challenge now lies in ensuring sustained, visible presence and delivering on promises to strengthen ties across the developing world effectively.

LETTERBOX

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RUCHI GUPTA EXPLAINS HOW POLITICAL STRUCTURE HINDERS SPECIALISED SCHOOL ESTABLISHMENT

Education policy needs reform



Why is it that the world’s largest democracy has yet to produce a world-class public policy institution? The United States and Europe boast of institutions such as the John F. Kennedy School of Government (Harvard Kennedy School) and the London School of Economics which train leaders who shape not only national but global governance. Yet, India, with its complex democratic structure and urgent developmental challenges, sends its finest to be trained abroad. This is not for lack of policy schools — India has many — but it has to do with the structure of India’s political and institutional landscape.

The executive has the reins
Public policy institutions thrive only when they influence power and decision-making. However, in India, there are limited access points for public policy commentators, academics, and civil society groups to influence policy. This is because much of the decision-making power is vested in the executive and operationalised primarily through the political elite, government officials and bureaucrats rather than through a deliberative legislative process. The oversight role of the legislature over the executive too is limited, leading to a fundamentally different policy ecosystem than in other major democracies. In the U.S., Congress’ power to craft legislation independently of the executive creates space for a thriving policy ecosystem based on analysis, debate, and expertise, with each public representative providing a possible entry point into the deliberative process. This decentralised process sustains a vibrant ecosystem of policy schools, think tanks, and advocacy groups, that can secure funding and find paying clients because their analysis and expertise can meaningfully influence lawmaking.

But in India, the centralisation of power within the executive — and of party leadership within political parties — diminishes the influence of these groups unless they have access to top leadership and are aligned with their political priorities. The weak formalisation of the Indian state further creates a disconnect between politics and policy, relegating policy discourse to a downstream role rather than making it constituent of the larger political platform. Consequently policy professionals lack the top-tier influence of other countries.

The power factor and where the wind blows
Further, influence on decision-making is closely tied to who is in power. The executive’s ability to realign the public sphere when power changes hands is more extreme in India than in more institutionalised democracies. This creates fragility in public life, where those central to decision-making can find themselves sidelined when regimes change. In more institutionalised democracies, think tanks, media and civil society groups can maintain relative influence re-

gardless of who is in power, which helps stabilise the policy ecosystem. These factors are unique to India among other large democracies and demand a different approach to policy education. To create a top-tier public policy school in India, we must design an institution suited to our political reality — where power is informal, personalised, and heavily dependent on executive control. Such an institution must serve dual purposes: first, equipping students with both traditional policy expertise and an understanding of India’s unique power dynamics; and second, facilitating a more stable policy ecosystem. Unlike western policy schools that focus on formal institutions and assume straightforward paths to influence, an Indian institution must teach students to navigate a complex web of informal networks, regional power structures, and social dynamics. The curriculum must go beyond traditional policy education to map how power actually works — through relationships, caste hierarchies, regional elites, and grassroots movements. Students need to learn not just policy theory but also how to be effective in a system where power is opaque and unevenly distributed, where idealism must meet pragmatism and the ability to adapt to local conditions to create real change. Most importantly, to truly train development leaders who want to do good for their country, the school must select for, and cultivate, empathy for the people of

our country. Too often, empathy for the lived reality of people’s lives is overlooked and leads to top-down diktats that can wreak havoc in people’s lives. **The need for space** Finally, the current situation where political legitimacy and influence are tied too closely to the executive leads to sycophancy, opportunism and instability. A school focused on nation-building must thus facilitate a broad institutional space in which legitimacy and influence would be based on the depth and the quality of public interventions instead of proximity to power. At its deep end, this would require a series of structural reforms in our politics and governance, but a foundation could be built through diverse partnerships and the identification of nation-builders across the political spectrum and sectors. Such a network cutting across politics, bureaucracy, civil society, academia, think tanks, and media would provide depth as well as opportunities for influence and collaboration across all regimes. By creating this non-partisan, yet politically aware, space, the institution could nurture development professionals who maintain relevance despite regime changes. This would create more stable channels for policy input, improving the quality of public debate and governance in India. It is this dual role that would allow the school and its graduates to influence power instead of operating at lower levels. Such an institution would set an example for other developing nations and gain global prominence by demonstrating that effective policy education must arise from local realities rather than mirror western models.

Ruchi Gupta is Executive Director of the Future of India Foundation. Views are personal.



AS PANNEERSELVAN EXAMINES THE GUARDIAN’S DECISION TO LEAVE X AS A STEP TOWARD PUBLIC ACCOUNTABILITY

Reimagining accountability in digital spaces



It is important to understand that the freedom of speech is not a laissez-faire act where anything goes, but a democratically enabling idea that shuns censorship and the curbing of ideas being debated in the public sphere. Recently, the British media outlet, The Guardian, took a decision to stop posting on the social media platform X(formerly Twitter), from its official handles. The British legacy media organisation issued a statement that needs to be read carefully. It read: “This is something we have been considering for a while given the often-disturbing content promoted or found on the platform, including far-right conspiracy theories and racism. The U.S. presidential election campaign served only to underline what we have considered for a long time: that X is a toxic media platform and that its owner, Elon Musk, has been able to use its influence to shape political discourse.” **Not the first case** It is pertinent to remember that The Guardian is not the first major news organisation to leave the social media platform. In the United States, the NPR became the first major English-language news outlet to leave X in April 2023, in protest at Musk’s ownership. Another public broadcaster PBS followed suit. A report in the Nieman Lab, based on an internal memo of the NPR, revealed that traffic had dropped by only a single percentage point as a result of leaving X. In September 2023, Mashable carried a report that explained how X is losing its daily active users under the leadership of Mr. Musk.

Why should we look at this development closely and unpack the arguments put forth by Mr. Musk? First, it is not just some of the legacy media organisations such as NPR, PBS and The Guardian that have left the social media platform due to its intrinsic toxic content. Hate speech watchdog, The Center for Countering Digital Hate, (CCDH), quit the platform citing concerns that “upcoming changes to the platform’s terms of service could hinder the nonprofit’s ability to prevail in court battles”. Under the new terms, all legal disputes related to X will be brought exclusively in the U.S. District Court for the Northern District of Texas or state courts in Tarrant County, Texas. The CCDH’s statement reveals the looming danger: “Now, the billionaire will be able to bring lawsuits to friendly courts against whoever disagrees with him on his platform. We made the decision to leave X because the platform has declined further.” These developments are happening

information, misinformation and chaos. Most of the retweets of Mr. Musk prioritise free speech over truth and social responsibility. The idea of reconciling freedom and responsibility is absent in his narrative. **Democracy and credible information** There is an organic relationship between a vibrant democracy and a credible information ecology. This writer has written extensively elsewhere on the role played by the media in helping people make informed choices. The idea of choosing something based on evidence is central to legacy media; and the idea of pushing someone’s whims and fancies through technological manipulations is the operative element of social media platforms. When we are talking about the pitfalls of the algorithm-driven social media, we are not whitewashing the failures of legacy media. The blinkers in the legacy media are manifold: the echo chamber, the

revenue crunch, the shift from extensive reporting to focus on opinions, and its strategic silences on key issues. The strategic silences vary for different countries: it can be Gaza for the western media and the dilution of Article 370 for the Indian media. But social media platforms do not provide an answer to these vexatious questions. On the other hand they tend to conflate issues, eradicate the space for reconciliation and healing, and valorise the aggrandisement of power at the cost of empowerment. It is indeed true that legacy media does get influenced by the immense reach of social media. **Findings of a study** A study by Julia Cagé, Professor, Department of Economics, Sciences Po, Paris, and her team showed how X sets the agenda for the mainstream media and how journalists’ reliance on X might distort the information they produce when compared to what citizens actually need. This study casts doubts on the business model of the legacy media as well as on the welfare effects of the platforms. It questioned whether citizens would be better informed in the absence of X, and whether social media may be harmful to both journalism and democracy. By weaponising social media as a vital symbol of freedom of speech, we are undermining a crucial aspect that governs our public sphere — accountability. The Guardian’s decision may be a first step towards restoring accountability.

AS.Panneerselvam is a Fellow at Raja Muthiah Research Library, Chennai. Views are personal.

BOOKS: REVIEW

Roots of Environmentalism: A journey through green pioneers

Environmentalism is more than a philosophy or an ideology—it is an active pursuit, a call to engage with the world around us. This is the central message of Ramachandra Guha’s latest work, *Speaking With Nature*, a fascinating exploration of ten individuals who shaped the contours of environmental thought in India. In this book, Guha shines a light on the lives and contributions of thinkers, naturalists, and writers, weaving a tapestry that illustrates how their insights remain deeply relevant in today’s world of ecological challenges. At first glance, the roster of personalities might catch the reader off guard. Instead of focusing solely on expected figures such as tribal leaders or professional conservationists, Guha opts for an eclectic group, including poet and philosopher Rabindranath Tagore, sociologist Radhakamal Mukherjee, Hindu-

tva thinker K.M. Munshi, Gandhi follower Mira Behn, naturalist M. Krishnan, and anthropologist Verrier Elwin. By doing so, he emphasizes that environmentalism in India is not the domain of any single discipline or ideology. Instead, it is a multidimensional narrative that ties nature to economics, politics, culture, and spirituality. **Environmentalism as a Social Idea** One of the book’s most compelling themes is its challenge to the Western notion of “full-stomach environmentalism”—the idea that environmental consciousness emerges only from material prosperity. Guha dismantles this reductive view by presenting the Indian perspective, where the individuals he profiles linked environmental thought to broader social and political movements. By rooting environmentalism in India’s diverse intellectual traditions, the book highlights a vision that extends beyond mere preserva-

tion to encompass justice, equity, and coexistence. Each of the ten profiles offers unique insights, showcasing not only the individuals’ perspectives but also the broader issues they engaged with. Guha’s reliance on a wide variety of sources—letters, essays, speeches, and historical accounts—adds depth and authenticity to these narratives. The approach is reminiscent of Jairam Ramesh’s *Indira Gandhi: A Life in Nature*, but Guha’s work distinguishes itself by focusing on figures who might not traditionally be seen as environmentalists. **Illuminating Portraits** Particularly intriguing is the chapter on Mira Behn, the only woman to receive a standalone profile in the book (the other woman, Gabrielle Howard, is featured alongside her husband in a joint narrative about ecological agriculture). Mira’s concerns about the ecological degradation of the Himalayas—such as the intrusion of pine trees into native



Speaking With Nature By Ramachandra Guha; Fourth Estate; 440 pages; Rs 799.

wildlife and celebrated the grandeur of both the common and the rare. Guha aptly dubs him “India’s John Muir,” drawing a parallel between Krishnan’s advocacy for unspoiled nature and Muir’s iconic legacy in American conservation. **Bridging Disciplines** One of the book’s greatest strengths is its interdisciplinary approach. Environmentalism, as framed by Guha, is not an abstract or aesthetic concept but a deeply practical one tied to agriculture, economics, and public policy. By situating his subjects within these broader contexts, Guha reminds readers of the urgent need for an ecological path to development—one that moves beyond token gestures and addresses the roots of environmental degradation. The banyan tree, a recurring symbol in the book, underscores this integrative perspective. Both Tagore and Mukherjee admired the banyan for its coiling, interconnected branches—a metaphor for the interconnectedness of life and knowledge. This framing resonates with Guha’s method of bringing diverse intellectual traditions into dialogue, creating a narrative that feels at once grounded and expansive.

Net worth of Central PSEs shot up by 82 pc in 9 years: Hardeep Singh Puri

NEW DELHI: Petroleum Minister Hardeep Singh Puri on November 14 highlighted the role of Public Sector Enterprises (PSEs) in driving India's remarkable growth story as the country is headed to become the third largest economy in the world.

Sharing key statistics to illustrate the remarkable performance, the minister said that the net worth of Central Public Sector Enterprises (CPSEs) has increased by 82 per cent, from Rs 9.5 lakh crore in FY14 to Rs 17.33 lakh crore in FY23.

Addressing the CII's PSE summit here, the minister said that the contribution of CPSEs to the national exchequer - through excise duties, taxes, and dividends - has more than doubled, rising from Rs 2.20 lakh crore in FY14 to Rs 4.58 lakh crore in FY23. He also highlighted that the net profit of profit-making CPSEs grew by 87 per cent, from Rs 1.29 lakh crore in FY14 to Rs 2.41 lakh crore in FY23. Furthermore, the



total market capitalisation of all 81 listed PSEs has grown by 225 per cent under the leadership of Prime Minister Narendra Modi, outpacing both the PSE index and the BSE Sensex over the past decade.

The minister praised the resilience and performance of the PSEs over the last decade, noting that their contributions have been integral to India's economic stability and progress. "As we look to the future, the

next few years will be critical in laying the groundwork for India's next leap forward," he said. The Minister outlined a vision for India's energy sector, emphasising three key principles: availability, affordability, and sustainability. "Sustainability is the cornerstone of our energy strategy and aligns directly with our larger vision of transforming PSEs into engines of sustainable growth," he said. As an example of India's focus on sustainability,

Puri highlighted the significant progress in bioethanol blending. "From 1.53 per cent in 2014, ethanol blending has surged to 15 per cent in 2024, with the government advancing the target of 20 per cent blending to 2025 - five years ahead of schedule," he said.

The Minister also revealed that discussions have already started on developing a roadmap for the post-2025 phase i.e. after the attainment of the 20 per cent ethanol blending target, ensuring continued growth in the bioethanol sector, and advancing India's renewable energy goals. On the subject of fossil fuels, the Minister acknowledged that while India is steadily transitioning to cleaner energy sources, fossil fuels will continue to be part of the energy mix for the foreseeable future. He highlighted that the government's approach would be to balance the energy transition while ensuring energy security, stability, and affordability for all citizens.

FISME and Korean Herald Media Join Forces to Facilitate Strategic SME Partnerships



NEWDELHI: The Federation of Indian Micro and Small & Medium Enterprises (FISME) and The Herald Media Group are set to sign a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) aimed at fostering strategic collaborations between Indian and Korean small and medium enterprises.

The landmark agreement, to be signed on November 22nd, 2024, represents a pivotal effort to bridge the economic corridors between India and South Korea by creating robust platforms for business interaction, information exchange, and mutual growth.

FISME President Sandeep Kishore Jain and The Herald Media Group CEO Choi Jin-young will formalise the partnership, signalling a commitment to enhancing cross-border business opportunities.

Under the terms of the MoU, both organisations will work collaboratively to facilitate strategic partnerships, joint ventures, and business connections between Indian and Korean companies.

The initiative focuses on providing comprehensive support to small and medium enterprises, including matchmaking services, legal guidance, and networking opportunities across

both markets.

Key objectives of the partnership include establishing a comprehensive platform for connecting businesses, facilitating information exchange, and supporting SMEs in navigating international trade landscapes.

FISME will offer critical services such as hosting business delegations, organising B2B meetings, and assisting Korean companies in understanding India's regulatory environment.

Correspondingly, The Herald Group will leverage its extensive media network to share information about trade exhibitions, facilitate strategic partnerships, and create channels for Indian SMEs to engage with South Korean government and public institutions.

The memorandum emphasises mutual cooperation, with both parties agreeing to maintain transparent communication, exchange relevant content, and coordinate delegation visits to maximise potential business opportunities.

ASSOCHAM seeks rate rationalization for TDS, in Budget for 2025-26



FW DESK
New Delhi

Seeking rationalization of TDS rates, ASSOCHAM in its pre-Budget memorandum to the Finance Ministry has pressed for a single/ uniform rate of 1% or 2% for all payments made to resident assesses to avoid litigation on interpretational issues and ensure ease of tax compliance.

The suggestions in the presentation relating to direct taxes also sought decriminalisation of certain TDS (Tax Deduction at Source) defaults, as the provisions relating to the same are quite severe in nature. It said Section 276 B provides for imprisonment up to seven years if a person fails to ensure compliance with some of the TDS provisions.

"Criminal proceedings should apply only when the taxpayer has enriched himself at the expense of the Government, and not to cases where certain payments / benefits are made or provided without applying TDS. We expect tax reforms aimed at reducing litigation, easy and better compliance to be part of the Union Budget for 2025-26. Corporate India is giving some constructive recommendations in this regard. India Inc is also looking for measures which would boost both investment and consumption, said Sanjay Nayar President ASSOCHAM.

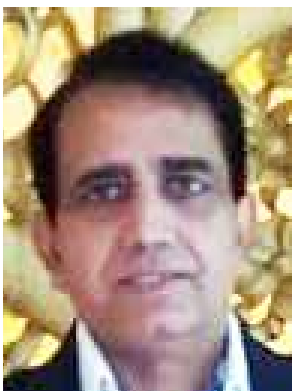
Modifications should be considered to enable taxpayers to make additional claims in the course of assessment proceedings. Similarly, taxpayers should be able to withdraw claims made in the return at the time of assessment, and such a withdrawal should result in an immunity from penalty.

Ease of tax compliance is one of the critical constituents of Ease of doing business. The ASSOCHAM pre- Budget memorandum makes several specific suggestions to the government to rationalise TDS rates and bring in flexible system of filing tax returns.

India's Services Sector set to Overtake Merchandise Exports by 2030: GTRI

NEWDELHI: India stands on the cusp of a transformative economic milestone, with its services sector projected to surpass merchandise exports by fiscal year 2030, reaching an impressive USD 618 billion, according to a comprehensive report by the Global Trade Research Initiative (GTRI) released Wednesday.

The trajectory of India's export landscape reveals a compelling narrative of growth and potential.



OBS, encompassing diverse professional services such as legal, accounting, tax consultancy, and management consulting, generated USD 102.8 billion in 2023-24, constituting 33.2 percent of total services exports.

The software and IT services segment emerges as a particularly robust contributor, generating USD 190.7 billion in exports during 2023-24 and accounting for 56.2 percent of total services exports.

Notably, approximately 80 percent of these services are delivered digitally, reflecting the sector's technological sophistication and global reach.

Smog Crisis Disrupts MSME Operations across Northern India



NEW DELHI: Northern India's micro, small, and medium enterprises (MSMEs) are bearing the brunt of the severe smog crisis engulfing Delhi-NCR and neighbouring states.

The dense haze has disrupted operations across 3.4 million MSMEs in Punjab, Haryana, and Delhi, impacting nearly 7 million workers, according to a report by the Economic Times.

The PHD Chamber of Commerce and Industry (PHDCCI) has flagged escalating costs and operational challenges for MSMEs as they struggle to cope with the hazardous air quality.

Hemant Jain, PHDCCI president, highlighted that enforcement of Stage IV of the Graded Response Action Plan (GRAP) has halted construction and

demolition activities in the National Capital Region (NCR), further straining industrial operations. Former President of Federation of Indian Micro and Small & Medium Enterprises (FISME), Dr Animesh Saxena whose garment factory is located in Gurgaon, says that frequent breakdown in power during the season rubs the sold on the wound of most small units as they cannot afford gas based power generators.

"In spite of the recurring issue every year, the gas pipelines have not been laid across NCR and the MSMEs in these areas continue to suffer every year", he added. Another victim of the GRAP restrictions is on all construction activities.

"In factories expansion, erection, commission and installation of new machinery are ongoing exercises, but the GRAP prohibits all construction work affecting the normal functioning of industry", says Neeraj Kedia, Chairman of Banking and Finance Committee of FISME.

Transportation bottlenecks caused by poor visibility and health-related absenteeism among workers have delayed supply chains and reduced productivity. Jain noted that industries have been forced to adopt expensive mitigation measures such as air purification systems, cleaner fuels, and protective masks to ensure continuity of operations. "Prolonged exposure to the smog is not only affecting workers' health but also extending production delays, pushing costs higher for small and medium businesses," said Jain.

The long-term outlook for MSMEs in the region is concerning, as poor air quality could deter potential investors and clients. Jaideep Aahuja, chairman of the Confederation of Indian Industry (CII) Delhi state, expressed fears that sustained pollution levels may undermine the region's competitiveness, discouraging multinational companies and start-ups from engaging with local businesses.

India's Electronics Sector Set to Create 12 Million Jobs amid Skill Hunting: Report

NEW DELHI: As India's electronics industry witnesses unprecedented growth, it is set to create 12 million (1.2 crore) jobs at a compound annual growth rate (CAGR) of 25-30 per cent, according to a report on Monday.



The projections indicate the creation of 12 million jobs, encompassing 3 million direct and 9 million indirect roles, according to a report by TeamLease Degree Apprenticeship.

However, a pressing deficit of 10 million trained professionals underscores the urgent need to bridge this gap to sustain and amplify India's growth in the electronics sector, it added.

The electronics manufacturing industry is surging, inspired by Prime Minister Narendra Modi's vision of making the country a \$500 billion electronics manufacturing hub by 2030.

As the industry diversifies into areas such as communication and broadcast electronics, consumer electronics, industrial electronics and aerospace and defence electronics, the demand for specialised skills has surged.

The growing requirements for components like semiconductors and electromechanical parts further intensify this challenge. India is on the cusp

of becoming a global leader in electronics manufacturing, with domestic production reaching \$101 billion in FY23, driven by segments such as mobile phones (43 per cent), consumer electronics (12 per cent), industrial electronics (12 per cent), and auto electronics (8 per cent).

"By FY 2027-28, the industry will require 12 million professionals — 3 million in direct roles and 9 million in indirect roles, yet a staggering skills gap of 10 million persists. Bridging this gap demands a robust focus on skill development, blending classroom learning with hands-on training through apprenticeships," said A.R. Ramesh, CEO of TeamLease Degree Apprenticeship. Scaling the apprenticeship ecosystem, currently growing at a 55 per cent CAGR and projected to reach 1 million apprentices by 2027 to 2 million apprentices, can create a steady talent pipeline to meet industry needs, he added.

CULTIVATING INTRAPRENEURSHIP

Lessons from Leading Pharmaceutical Companies



DR. ANIL KUMAR ANGRISH

Intrapreneurship is considered as an act of entrepreneurship within an organization. Across the sectors, firms have recognized the potential of intrapreneurship. Pharmaceutical sector is not an exception in this regard. Those companies which are leaders in their domain today, had their origin as a start-up so their founders understand that entrepreneurial mindset is required to keep the momentum. Promoters who are in the driving seat understand that professional managers are engrossed in day-to-day operations of organization or are reluctant to change the status quo. Therefore, to reignite the entrepreneurial spirit and nurture entrepreneurial mindset, founders/promoters take up intrapreneurial initiatives.

Intrapreneurship is distinctively recognized from terms such as 'Skunk Works', 'Bootlegging', and 'Moonlighting' as it is not a clandestine activity and it is not unbudgeted, unofficial or non-programmed, and it is not at the cost of the organization to benefit employees only. In September 2022, Wipro Chairman Rishad Premji said that his company fired 300 workers for moonlighting after it was found that they were working for competitors secretly. His tweet became the topic of debate when he said - There is a lot of chatter about people moonlighting in the tech industry. This is

cheating - plain and simple. Moonlighting had its proponents too, e.g., Tech Mahindra Managing Director & CEO C. P. Gurnami supported the idea when he said that he would introduce policies to enable employees to be more open about it. In contrast to this, bigger corporations support intrapreneurship through proper direction, space and support by allowing employees to spend part of their time, say 10%-20% on innovative ideas of their own along with providing resources and creating enabling environment. British Petroleum came up with Corporate Entrepreneurship model that asked for finding balance between constraints and chaos through proper 'direction', 'space', 'boundaries', and 'support'.

Pharmaceutical sector is capital-intensive in nature and is highly regulated at each step of the value chain. In that background, intrapreneurial initiatives which can be applied in other sectors, may not be suitable in pharmaceutical sector. Pharmaceutical companies which have sufficient resources to support intrapreneurial initiatives are well-positioned to take up these initiatives. Global pharmaceutical companies which figure among top 20 have taken up one or other type of intrapreneurial initiative, and their initiatives are not restricted to parent company's headquarters only, e.g., Novartis which is otherwise based in Switzerland had taken up Bottom of the Pyramid (BoP) initiative. An



initiative, 'Arogya Parivar' was launched as a pilot program in South India by Novartis way back in 2007. Similarly, Sanofi India took up 'Lakshya' Initiative in India.

Top global pharmaceutical companies have shown the ways to nurture intrapreneurship. Pfizer (USA) came up with PfizerWorks, AbbVie (USA) initiated AbbVie Innovation Center. Janssen which is an associate of Johnson & Johnson (USA) started Entrepreneurial Boot Camp, and JLABS. Eli Lilly (USA) had initiated 'InnoCentive' which became a standalone initiative later. Mylan, another prominent company from the USA, started 'Hackathons' and Lion's Den with specific focus on Innovation.

Many prominent pharmaceutical companies from Europe took intrapreneurial plunge. GSK (UK) pursued PULSE and Centres of Excellence for Drug Discovery (CEDDs). AstraZeneca, another prominent pharmaceutical company from UK came up with Innovative Medicines Units (iMeds). Bayer AG (Germany) initiated Triple-I where "I" stood for 'Inspiration, Ideas

and Innovation'. The company also came up with CATALYST fund. Boehringer Ingelheim (Germany) launched 'Making More Health' (MMH) initiative. Novo Nordisk (Denmark) pursued 'Innovation Culture Initiative'. UCB (Belgium) pursued Team of Accelerators for Innovative Solutions (TAXIS) initiative. Roche (Switzerland) came up with Genentech Research and early Development (gRED), Pharma Research and Early Development (pRED). Merck KGaA (Germany) pursued Innospire, a word composition from "Innovation" and "Inspiration".

Japanese pharmaceutical companies also recognized the potential of intrapreneurial initiatives. Takeda launched Dragon's Den and Technology Accelerator. Eisai (Japan) launched E-elite Program which stood for Eisai Emerging Leaders in Talent Evolution Program, and the key objective was to create intrapreneurs. Daiichi Sankyo (Japan) launched Venture Science Laboratories (VSL). Other notable pharmaceutical companies from Japan which took up intrapreneurial initiatives include Chugai Pharmaceuticals and Sumitomo Dainippon Pharma. Chugai Pharma came up with ACCEL 15 as a mid-term business plan besides Innovation Beyond Innovation 18 (IBI 18) as a new mid-term business plan. Sumitomo Dainippon had introduced Work-style Innovations.

Above examples point out that these pharmaceutical companies made a conscious effort to come up with an intrapreneurial initiative. Most of these initiatives have been taken up by these pharmaceutical companies in last two decades. Novartis came up with Arogya Parivar initiative in 2007. Pfizer initiated PfizerWorks in 2008, Roche implemented Genentech Research and Early Development which was renamed as gRED in 2009 post-acquisition of Genentech. Pharma Research and Early Development (pRED) of Roche came up in 2013. Lakshya initiative of Sanofi was launched in 2008. Innospire from Merck KGaA was initiated in late 2008 and could become operational in 2009. JLABS as the Incubator Division of J&J came up in January 2012 with first location in San Diego. Janssen Campus Office (JCO) came up little earlier in 2009 that had a specific emphasis on 'open innovation' and 'sustainability'.

Centres of Excellence for Drug Discovery (CEDDs) of GSK were formed in 2001 and PUSE initiative from GSK came up in 2009. Innovation Medicines units (iMeds) of

AstraZeneca came up in 2010. Triple-I of Bayer AG came up in 2010. Other initiatives from Bayer AG such as We-Solve and CATALYST fund came up in 2014 and 2017 respectively. Eli Lilly launched InnoCentive in 2001 which was later spun out of Eli Lilly in 2005. 'Making More Health' of Boehringer Ingelheim was launched in 2010 with specific focus on Innovation, Social Intrapreneurship and Back to Future - Ideas. Innovation Culture Initiative of Novo Nordisk came up in 2009 but it was abandoned in late 2012. Venture Science Laboratories (VSL) was set up as an in-house start-up organization by Daiichi Sankyo in 2013. TAXIS from UCB was initiated in 2017.

Dragon's Den and Shark Tank have left impact on pharmaceutical companies too as is evident from initiatives of Takeda and Mylan. 'The Tigers of Money' for which format is owned by Nippon TV originated in Japan in 2001. In contrast to this, Dragons' Den premiered on January 4, 2005 and Shark Tank premiered on August 9, 2009. Takeda (Japan) launched Dragon's Den initiative in 2015. Mylan came up with Hackathons and Lions' Den which was touted as an internal version of the TV show 'Shark Tank' by Michael Smith who served as Chief Information Officer, Mylan. On the lighter note, it seems that Indian companies in general and pharmaceutical companies in particular seem to be late entrants as

Shark Tank India premiered on December 20, 2021.

Focus of intrapreneurial initiatives in pharmaceutical companies was not uniform. PfizerWorks emphasized on outsourcing of non-core jobs related to R&D, strategic management, and other related areas. Novartis focused on marketing domain with specific emphasis on rural markets. Less than one-third companies out of top 20 comprising Roche, AbbVie, GSK, AstraZeneca, and Daiichi Sankyo focused on R&D with specific emphasis on R&D productivity. Higher emphasis of intrapreneurial initiatives was on innovation resulting into new products and new services as prominent pharmaceutical companies comprising Eisai, UCB, Novo Nordisk, Sumitomo Dainippon, Chugai Pharmaceuticals, Merck KGaA, and Bayer laid emphasis on these areas under their intrapreneurial initiative. Other areas of emphasis under intrapreneurial initiative comprised 'digitalization' (by Takeda and AbbVie), Crowd-sourcing and Open Innovation (by Eli Lilly), Development of Business Solutions (by Bayer, Merck KGaA), Cross-functional areas (by Sanofi), and Overall Business Plan by pharmaceutical companies like Janssen, J&J, Takeda, Boehringer Ingelheim and Mylan.

R&D intensive intrapreneurial initiatives of these pharmaceutical companies allowed scientists to pursue projects of their individual interest and at the same time,

help the pharmaceutical company to meet its R&D goals. CEDDs in GSK were focused on fostering innovative output by enabling accountability and creativity. Similarly, Innovative Medicine units (iMeds) of AstraZeneca encouraged early-stage research. Innovation-centric intrapreneurial initiatives encouraged employees to submit ideas for new products and develop business solutions. Entrepreneurial Boot Camps, e.g., JLABS of Janssen consisted of residential sessions and dealt with all aspects of successfully setting up a new business. Dragon's Den (Takeda) solicited digital 'patient-and customer-centric ideas' from the employees.

Indian pharmaceutical companies can take a leaf out of prominent global pharmaceutical companies' book for their intrapreneurial initiatives and learnings. This can be helpful for Indian pharmaceutical companies in improving R&D, innovation, launch of new products/services, and patient-and customer-centric ideas, digitalization, to name a few areas thereby contributing to their efficiency and effectiveness.

Dr. Anil Kumar Angrish-Associate Professor (Finance and Accounting), Department of Pharmaceutical Management, NIPER S.A.S. Nagar (Mohali),
DISCLAIMER: Views are personal and do not represent the views of the Institute.



Markets stage sharp recovery; Sensex reclaims 79,000 level, Nifty surges 557.35 points

MUMBAI: Benchmark equity indices rebounded sharply on Friday, with the Sensex climbing 2.54 per cent to reclaim the 79,000 level, driven by across-the-board rally and value buying at lower levels.

Strong buying by domestic institutional investors and a firm trend in the US markets also helped the indices, traders said.

The BSE benchmark Sensex jumped 1,961.32 points or 2.54 per cent to settle at 79,117.11. During the day, it surged 2,062.4 points or 2.67 per cent to 79,218.19.

The NSE Nifty soared 557.35 points or 2.39 per cent to 23,907.25.

All the 30 Sensex firms ended in the green.

Hectic buying in blue chip counters like Reliance Industries and IT shares boosted



market sentiment.

State Bank of India, Tata Consultancy Services, Titan, ITC, Infosys, Larsen & Toubro, Reliance Industries and Bajaj Finance were the biggest gainers.

The majority of the listed Adani group firms ended higher, bouncing back from the previous day's sharp fall

after billionaire industrialist Gautam Adani was charged in the US for alleged bribery and fraud.

Ambuja Cements surged 3.50 per cent, ACC jumped 3.17 per cent, Adani Enterprises climbed 2.16 per cent, Adani Ports (2.05 per cent), Adani Total Gas (1.18 per cent) and NDTV (0.65 per cent) on

the BSE.

Foreign Institutional Investors (FIIs) offloaded equities worth Rs 5,320.68 crore on Thursday, while Domestic Institutional Investors (DIIs) bought shares worth Rs 4,200.16 crore, according to exchange data.

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

European markets were trading lower. The US markets ended higher on Thursday.

Global oil benchmark Brent crude climbed 0.19 per cent to USD 74.37 a barrel.

On Thursday, the BSE benchmark tanked 422.59 points or 0.54 per cent to settle at 77,155.79 points. The Nifty slumped 168.60 points or 0.72 per cent to 23,349.90.

Govt Challenges RBI's Higher Reserve Proposals for Banks



NEW DELHI: The Indian government is contesting two significant regulatory proposals from the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) that would require banks to maintain higher reserves for infrastructure projects and digital deposits, according to a senior government source.

The RBI's May proposal mandates banks to allocate 5 per cent of loans for infrastructure projects under construction as reserves, reported Reuters.

potentially constraining their lending capacity.

This comes at a time when bank credit growth has reached approximately 14 per cent over the past year, with large segments of Asia's third-largest economy dependent on bank financing.

The federal finance ministry's banking division has reportedly addressed letters to the RBI on two occasions, requesting modifications to these guidelines, citing concerns about potential credit constraints in the economy. For infrastructure project financing, the ministry suggests implementing a sector-specific approach based on risk profiles, rather than applying uniform regulations. According to the government source, while high-risk sectors like real estate could maintain the proposed 5 per cent provisioning requirement, renewable energy and solar projects should be exempt from increased provisioning mandates.

Bitcoin marches towards \$1,00,000 on optimism over Trump crypto plans



NEW DELHI: Bitcoin's march toward \$100,000 gathered pace on Thursday as investors bet a friendlier U.S. regulatory approach to cryptocurrencies under President-elect Donald Trump will unleash a boom era for the asset class.

Bitcoin prices topped \$98,000 for the first time during European trading, and were last up around 4% on the day.

The cryptocurrency's price has more than doubled this year and is up about 40% in the two weeks since Trump was voted in as the next U.S. president and a slew of pro-crypto lawmakers were elected to Congress.

"While it's now firmly into overbought territory, it is being drawn toward the \$100k level," said IG Markets analyst Tony Sycamore.

Trump embraced digital assets during his campaign, promising to make the United States the "crypto capital of the planet" and to accumulate a national stockpile of bitcoin.

More than \$4 billion has streamed into U.S. listed bitcoin exchange-traded funds since the election. This week, there was a strong debut for options on BlackRock's ETF, with call options - bets on the price going up - more popular than puts. Crypto-related stocks have soared along with the bitcoin price and shares in bitcoin miner MARA Holdings were up nearly 14% overnight, while MicroStrategy, a loss-making software company that has been buying bitcoin, rose 10% to take its market capitalisation beyond \$100 billion.

"Many are wondering if this administration will bring the regulatory clarity the crypto community has been waiting for. It's likely too soon to say," said Will Peck, head of digital assets at WisdomTree, a global exchange-traded fund issuer.

"We see all of this excitement as bullish not only for bitcoin or crypto broadly, but the entire blockchain-enabled ecosystem that is growing today."

Indian economy capable of handling global shocks says RBI Governor



NEW DELHI: Reserve Bank of India (RBI) Governor Shaktikanta Das has said that the Indian economy is strong enough to handle any adverse fallout from global events. "Today, the growth of the Indian economy presents a picture of stability and strength," Das said while addressing an event at the launch of the Kochi International Foundation here.

The country's external sector is also strong and the current account deficit (CAD) has remained within manageable limits as it presently stands at 1.1 per cent of GDP. Earlier, in 2010 and 2011, it was in the range of six to seven per cent, he added.

The central bank chief also pointed out that India has one of the largest foreign exchange reserves in the world at about \$675 billion. He further stated that the country's inflation was expected to be moderate despite periodic humps.

RBI Governor Pulls Banks for Ineffective Grievance Redressal

MUMBAI: Reserve Bank of India (RBI) Governor Shaktikanta Das has raised serious concerns regarding the misreporting of customer grievances by private sector banks, criticising the practice of classifying complaints as mere queries.

In a keynote address at the Conference of Directors of Private Sector Banks in Mumbai, Das called on private lenders to adopt a more transparent and customer-centric approach, ensuring that genuine complaints are appropriately handled and escalated when necessary.



MSME bodies have been alluding to a dysfunctional grievance redressal mechanism in banks. Federation of Indian Micro and Small & Medium Enterprises (FISME), the national MSME body, has repeatedly raised the issue.

"It is not just private sector banks, in all commercial banks grievance redressal system is broken. There is no time bound grievance handling system and an escalation matrix displayed anywhere on websites. It is very frustrating to MSME clients," says Neeraj Kedia Chairman of Banking Committee of FISME.

"It is disheartening to see complaints being misclassified, un-

dermining the very foundation of customer trust," said Das. He emphasised the importance of robust grievance redressal mechanisms, urging banks to properly escalate unresolved complaints to internal ombudsmen.

Highlighting instances where grievances were rejected without due escalation, he urged bank boards and customer service committees to scrutinise these practices, underscoring the need for a sincere commitment to customer-centricity. Das also expressed concern over the growing trend of banks viewing service charges and penalties

India's Economic activity growth hits 8-month high in October at 10.1%



NEW DELHI: India's economic activity surged to an 8-month high of 10.1% growth in October, up from 6.6% in September, as reported by credit rating agency ICRA. This rise is attributed to the post-monsoon boost in sectors like mining and electricity, robust festive demand that spurred vehicle sales, fuel consumption, and air travel, along with a significant increase in exports. ICRA's 'Business Activity Monitor' reported a 9.9% month-on-month growth in October, marking the highest increase since March 2023. Key indicators such as vehicle registrations and electricity demand showed strong growth, with early November data also remaining positive due to continued festive demand. Non-oil exports increased substantially by 25.6%, driven by sectors including electronics, engineering, chemicals, and garments, indicating a projected uptick in GDP growth for Q3 FY2025 compared to the first half of the fiscal year.

Tax Payers asked to Declare Foreign Income & Assets by December 31



NEW DELHI: The Chairman of the Central Board of Direct Taxes (CBDT), Ravi Agarwal, has urged taxpayers to disclose their foreign income and assets in their Income Tax Returns (ITRs) by December 31.

This reminder comes as part of the income tax department's efforts to ensure compliance with disclosure requirements, according to a report by Business Standard.

Agarwal highlighted that the tax department receives detailed information on foreign assets through the automatic exchange of information agreements with various nations.

Speaking at the inauguration of the Taxpayers Lounge at the India International Trade Fair (IITF) in New Delhi, he stated, "The basic intent is to remind taxpayers to declare foreign assets. They can file revised

returns by December 31."

The department is actively reaching out to individuals who have not disclosed high-value foreign assets or income, sending reminders via SMS and emails.

The types of foreign assets requiring disclosure include bank accounts held abroad, foreign cash value insurance, financial interests in overseas businesses or entities, immovable property outside India, foreign equity or debt interests, accounts where the individual has signing authority, and other capital assets located abroad.

This initiative follows a recent warning from the tax department, which cautioned that failing to disclose foreign assets or income earned abroad in ITR filings could attract a penalty of Rs 10 lakh under the anti-black money law.

Impact of Trump on Indian Economy



SATISH SINGH

Donald Trump's economic policies in his previous tenure were related to increasing trade volume, US-friendly trade agreements, positive import-export policies etc. and during his tenure, Trump focused on increasing economic cooperation between the US and India, strengthening business relations, encouraging investment in US-based technology companies, etc., which was largely beneficial for India.

Due to this policy, Indian IT and technology professionals also got employment in the US. However, due to Trump's "US First" policy, high import duty was imposed on many Indian products, due to which India also suffered some losses.

Based on the implications of the analysis of available data, it is believed that Trump can implement his old policies in his new tenure as well, which can benefit India largely. India is less likely to suffer any extensive loss in this case, because even after the Corona pandemic, the Indian economy remains strong and the growth rate in India is better than some developed countries of the world.

In the last term, under the leadership of Trump, US had a hard-hitting attitude towards China and even now US does not have cordial relations with China. There is no hope of any significant improvement in the situation after Trump comes to power again. Obviously, such a situation can be beneficial for India, that is, new opportunities for increasing business between US and



India can be created.

The Federal Reserve Bank of US cut the policy rates by 50 basis points on 18 September 2024, so that investment could increase. It was necessary to do so due to the possible economic recession in US. The cut in interest rates has partially strengthened the dollar. On the other hand, Trump's return to power in US reduced policy level uncertainty in US, which increased investor confidence and increased the possibility of investment boom as well as strengthened the dollar.

The Modi government is looking at Trump's return positively. Therefore, both Sensex and Nifty saw a rise after Trump became president. However, the rupee weakened, and the dollar strengthened, but this is also natural, because US is the most powerful country in the world from both economic and strategic perspectives and the US dollar is the strongest currency in the world.

Anyway, the strengthening of the dollar has increased the possibility of increased investment in India because it is cheaper for investors to invest in rupees and everyone wants to get more returns with less investment. Therefore, there is a lot of scope that

foreign investors will invest more in the Indian market when the dollar strengthens. This will strengthen the Indian economy. However, the other side of such a situation can also be negative, for example, weakening of the rupee against the dollar can reduce capital flow in terms of portfolio investment.

When the dollar strengthens, the export of Indian products becomes more competitive, because their price decreases in the foreign market. Therefore, the strengthening of the dollar may increase investment in sectors which are dependent on exports, such as IT, pharmaceuticals, etc., but it increases the cost of loans taken in foreign currency in India, which increases the financial pressure on companies. Thus, it would be correct to say that the strengthening of the dollar will have a mixed impact on the Indian economy.

Gross Domestic Product (GDP) figures in India are continuously improving. Global rating agency Moody's has raised India's GDP growth forecast for calendar year 2024 to 7.1 percent, from 6.8 percent and 6.1 percent earlier. However, Moody's has kept India's GDP growth forecast for 2025 unchanged at 6.5 percent, while the GDP

growth forecast for 2026 is 6.6 percent. Even though Moody's has lowered the GDP growth rate forecast for calendar year 2025 and 2026 compared to calendar year 2024, these figures are better than many developed countries of the world. However, retail inflation rose to 6.21 percent in October, which is more than the tolerance limit of 6 percent set by the Reserve Bank of India. Vegetables have contributed the most to the increase in inflation in October, as their price has increased by 42.18 percent. The current rise in inflation cannot be called permanent, as both the crop and arrival of vegetables remain good in the winter season. Therefore, inflation may remain soft from November 2024 to March 2025.

At the domestic level, the Indian economy is continuously strengthening. The government has collected Rs 1.87 lakh crore from Goods and Services Tax (GST) in October 2024 and it has increased by 9 percent on an annual basis. This is the second largest tax collection ever from the point of view of overall tax collection. Earlier, the government had collected GST of Rs 2.10 lakh crore in April 2024 and Rs 1.87 lakh crore in April 2023. At the same time, last month in September, the government had collected Rs 1.73 lakh crore through GST. October is the eighth consecutive month when GST collection has been more than Rs 1.7 lakh crore. GST collection in the first half of FY 2024-25 was Rs 10.87 lakh crore, which is 9.5 percent more than the first half of FY 24. The central government has collected a net direct tax of Rs 11.25 lakh crore from April 1 to October 10. This

includes corporate tax of Rs 4.94 lakh crore and income tax of Rs 5.98 lakh crore. The Income Tax Department had collected direct tax of Rs 9.51 lakh crore during this period last year. Thus, there has been an increase of 18.35 percent on an annual basis.

According to the Reserve Bank of India, there was a slight stagnation in the loan uptake in the month of October, but it increased in the month of November. There was a sharp increase in the retail and construction sectors. Personal loans are expected to grow by 40 percent, while in the agricultural sector it is 24 percent. The demand for loans in the service sector and the infrastructure sector is also consistent and the loan uptake is accelerating economic activities.

At present, GDP is increasing, tax collection has also increased. Inflation has become a bit uncontrolled in the month of October, but from November 2024 to March 2025, it is expected to remain within the tolerance limit set by the Reserve Bank of India. The increase in loan uptake is accelerating economic activities, which is likely to continue in the coming months as well. The dollar is likely to strengthen and the US policies under Trump are likely to be favourable to India. In short, it can be said that with the Indian economy continuing to remain strong at the domestic level and Trump's economic policies being broadly favourable for India, the Indian economy will continue to remain booming in the coming months.

Satish Singh, Ahmedabad Based Senior Columnist, views are personal

Direct Tax Collections Poised to Surpass Budget Target for 2024-25

NEW DELHI: The Income Tax Department expects to surpass the direct tax collection target of Rs 22.07 lakh crore fixed in the Union Budget for the current financial year, according to Central Board of Direct Taxes (CBDT) chairman Ravi Agarwal.

Agarwal told journalists collections from corporate and non-corporate taxes have risen and the Income Tax Department believes that it will cross the budget target for the second year in a row. This reflects the strong fiscal position of the country driven by robust economic growth.

India's net direct tax collections, comprising corporate tax and personal income tax, shot up by a robust 15.4 per cent to Rs 12.1 lakh crore, from April 1 to November 10 during the cur-



rent financial year, according to the latest figures released by the CBDT. On a gross basis, direct taxes surged by over 21 per cent to Rs 15 lakh crore on a gross basis during the period. The government issued tax refunds of Rs 2.9 lakh crore which is a 53 per cent increase over the same period last year.

The government's target to collect Rs 22.07 lakh crore during the current financial year

comprises Rs 10.20 lakh crore from corporate tax and Rs 11.87 lakh from personal income tax, non-corporate tax and other taxes. The net direct tax collections for the financial year 2023-24 had also clocked a double-digit growth to exceed the Union Budget Estimates (BE) by Rs 1.35 lakh crore or 7.4 per cent reflecting the strong fiscal position of the country driven by robust economic growth.

SEBI sends Rs 26 crore notice to Reliance Big Entertainment in RHFL fund case

MUMBAI: The Securities and Exchange Board of India (SEBI) has fined Reliance Big Entertainment Rs 26 crore for failure to clear penalties imposed by the capital markets regulator.

The company earlier failed to pay penalties in a case pertaining to illegal diversion of funds. SEBI issued the demand notice after Reliance Big Entertainment failed to pay the Rs 25 crore fine imposed by the regulator in August this year.

SEBI has directed the entity to pay Rs 26 crore, including interest and recovery costs within 15 days. If Reliance Big Entertainment fails to make the payment within the stipulated deadline, the regulator can attach its assets, including bank accounts. In August this year, the markets regulator barred



industrialist Anil Ambani and 24 other entities for five years for diversion of funds from Reliance Home Finance Ltd (RHFL).

The SEBI also fined Ambani Rs 25 crore and prohibited him from holding any position in the securities market, including roles as a director or key managerial personnel in listed companies, for the same duration. In a 222-page order, SEBI said that Anil

Ambani, with the help of RHFL's key managerial personnel, orchestrated a fraudulent scheme to siphon off funds from RHFL by disguising them as loans to entities linked to him. "The Board of Directors of RHFL issued strong directives to stop such lending practices and reviewed corporate loans regularly but the company's management ignored these orders. This suggests a significant failure of governance, driven by certain key managerial personnel under the influence of Anil Ambani," it stated. The other 24 entities which have been barred include Amit Bapna, Ravindra Sudhalkar and Pinkesh R. Shah -- former key officials of RHFL. The regulator levied a fine of Rs 27 crore on Bapna, Rs 26 crore on Sudhalkar, and Rs 21 crore on Shah.

INTERNATIONAL

PM Modi meets Caribbean leaders in Guyana, underscores deep ties that bind region with India

GEORGETOWN: Prime Minister Narendra Modi, on a historic trip to Guyana currently, met several Caribbean Community (CARICOM) leaders soon after his arrival in Georgetown Wednesday morning (India time), Guyanese President Mohamed Irfaan Ali has revealed.

In a special gesture, the President of Guyana - along with the Prime Minister of Guyana Brigadier (Retd.) Mark Anthony Phillips and over a dozen Cabinet Ministers - welcomed PM Modi at the airport as he arrived from Rio de Janeiro following the conclusion of the G20 Summit on what is the first visit by an Indian Prime Minister to the South American nation in 56 years.

"Later in the evening, at the Guyana Marriott Hotel in Georgetown, I had the pleasure of introducing Prime Minister Modi to several CARICOM leaders who are here for the 2nd India-CARICOM Summit. This meeting underscored the strengthening bonds between India and the Caribbean, built



on shared values and a vision for mutual progress," Guyanese President posted on X on the morning of the event (Wednesday evening, India time).

The Guyanese leader specifically mentioned that Prime Minister Modi also had the opportunity to connect with members of the vibrant Indian diaspora in Guyana.

"It was heartwarming to witness a cultural display under our 'One Guyana' initiative, celebrating unity in diversity and the deep ties that bind our

nations," he said.

As PM Modi continues to bat for the Global South, the 15-member CARICOM has been highlighting the significance of maintaining a "close and vibrant working relationship" with India - a country they believe is playing a major role in having their voices heard at major global platforms.

"Today, we look forward to engaging in high-level discussions and formalizing several agreements through the signing of multiple Memorandums

of Understanding (MoUs). This visit is a testament to the enduring partnership between Guyana and India, and I am confident it will lead to even greater collaboration in the future," Ali mentioned.

During his two-day visit to the energy-rich Caribbean nation with strong historic cultural links with India through a large diaspora, PM Modi is also scheduled to address a special session of Parliament besides co-chairing the India-CARICOM summit, underscoring India's role as the voice of the Global South that supports the political and economic aspirations of those countries.

"India is an important global actor. Our Member States are keen to meet Prime Minister Modi and develop deeper technical relationships, deepen the relationship in terms of advocacy for small states in the international arena, and strengthen people-to-people ties", CARICOM Assistant Secretary-General Elizabeth Solomon was quoted as saying by Antigua Newsroom.

Australian govt to fine tech companies failing to enforce under-16 social media ban



CANBERRA: Social media companies that fail to prevent Australians younger than 16 from using their service will face fines worth tens of millions of dollars under world-first laws.

Australia's governing Labor Party on Thursday introduced legislation to parliament to introduce a minimum age limit of 16 years to use social media, Xinhua news agency reported. Under the legislation, the onus to enforce the minimum age limit will fall on social media companies rather than children, parents, or guardians. Social media companies that systematically fail to enforce the age limit will face fines of up to Australian \$50 million (\$32.5 million). "This is about protecting young people, not punishing or isolating them, and letting parents know we're in their corner when it comes to supporting their children's health and wellbeing," Minister for Communications Michelle Rowland told parliament upon tabling the legislation. "This bill seeks to set a new normative value in society, that accessing social media is not the defining feature of growing up in Australia."

Sri Lanka's New Cabinet Sworn In

COLOMBO: Twenty-one cabinet ministers were sworn in before Sri Lankan President Anura Kumara Dissanayake on Monday morning at the Presidential Secretariat in Colombo.

Deputy ministers will be sworn in later, it was announced at the event.

After Dissanayake won the September 21 presidential election, he governed with a cabinet composed of Harini Amarasuriya and Vijitha Herath.

The new cabinet ministers were chosen among the 159 members of parliament from the National People's Power (NPP) elected in the November 14 parliamentary election.



This is the first time a political party has won two-thirds of the majority in parliament since the introduction of the proportional representation system.

Amarasuriya continued to serve as prime minister in the new cabinet, and Herath was re-appointed as minister of foreign affairs, foreign employment and tourism.

India Backs UK's Plan to Resume FTA Talks in early 2025



NEWDELHI: The Indian Department of Commerce has expressed support for British Prime Minister Keir Starmer's recent announcement to restart Free Trade Agreement (FTA) negotiations between India and the United Kingdom in early 2025.

The announcement came after Starmer's bilateral meeting with Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi during the G20 summit in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil.

In an official statement released Wednesday, the Department of Commerce emphasised its commitment to working closely with Brit-

ish negotiators to address outstanding issues, highlighting the importance of achieving a balanced and mutually beneficial trade agreement.

The precise dates for these discussions will be determined through diplomatic channels in the near future, with negotiations expected to build upon previously established progress.

The bilateral trade relationship between India and the UK has shown significant growth, particularly evident in recent trade figures.

During the April-September 2024 period, Indi-

an exports to the UK grew by 12.38 percent, reaching USD 7.32 billion compared to USD 6.51 billion in the corresponding period of 2023.

Key export sectors including mineral fuels, machinery, precious stones, pharmaceuticals, apparel, iron and steel, and chemicals account for 68.72 percent of India's total exports to the UK.

The trade negotiations, which began in 2022, have already progressed through 13 rounds of talks.

The 14th round was postponed due to elections in both nations earlier this year. As India aims to achieve its ambitious export target of USD 1 trillion by FY30, the UK remains a priority market, with bilateral exports projected to reach USD 30 billion by 2029-30.

Both governments have demonstrated strong political commitment to finalising the agreement, which is expected to further strengthen their economic partnership.

UNRWA Chief: Gaza a 'Graveyard' for Children amid Escalating Crisis



UNRWA Commissioner-General Philippe Lazzarini declared Gaza a "graveyard" for children, condemning the severe toll on young lives due to ongoing violence. Marking World Children's Day, Lazzarini highlighted the devastation faced by children in Gaza, who suffer from death, injury, displacement, and the loss of basic rights such as safety, education, and play. The crisis has left many children unable to attend school, leading to fears of a "lost generation." The Palestinian Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Palestinian National Council called for global action, stressing the dire humanitarian conditions for children in Gaza and the West Bank. Children in Gaza endure severe shortages of essentials like food and clean water, while children in the West Bank face arbitrary detention and violations of their fundamental rights. The National Council's statement noted that since October 2023, Palestinian children have been disproportionately affected by conflict, with many killed, orphaned, or suffering from disease amid the ongoing blockade. The council criticized the global community for failing to address the crisis, which they describe as "genocide."

Trump names TV doctor Mehmet Oz to head healthcare programme

WASHINGTON: US President-elect Donald Trump named Mehmet Oz, a physician and a TV personality, to his team as his nominee to head the Medicaid and Medicare Services, the federal government's healthcare programme for the old and needy.

Oz used to host a popular TV show on health and ran unsuccessfully for the US Senate from Pennsylvania in 2022.

"I am very pleased to nominate Dr. Mehmet Oz to serve as the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) Administrator," Trump said in an announcement on Tuesday.

"America is facing a Healthcare Crisis, and there may be no Physician more qualified and capable than Dr. Oz to Make America Healthy Again. He is an eminent physician, heart surgeon, inventor, and world-class communicator who has been at the forefront of healthy living for decades."

Portrait of Sikh MP Lord Indarjit Singh Installed in UK Parliament



LONDON: In a landmark moment for the Sikh community, the portrait of Lord Dr. Indarjit Singh, the first turbane Sikh parliamentarian in the UK and Europe, has been installed in the Bishop's Corridor of the House of Lords at the British Parliament in Westminster, London.

This installation is the first time a Sikh's portrait has adorned the walls of the British Parliament, signifying recognition of Lord Singh's immense contributions to public service and interfaith understanding in the UK.

The unveiling ceremony brought together notable figures, including British Sikh MPs Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi, Lord Kuldeep Singh Sahota, Jas Athwal, and MP Richard Bacon, among others.

Lady Singh Dr. Kanwaljit Kaur OBE also attended, accompanied by family and friends. Lord Speaker Faulkner, Chairman of the House of Lords Heritage Committee, honored Lord Singh's extensive contributions, stating he had "brought into

Sydney Train Network to Shut Down for Four Days Due to Pay Dispute

SYDNEY: Sydney's entire train network will be closed for four days starting Thursday as rail workers prepare to strike over a pay dispute with the New South Wales (NSW) state government. The shutdown, lasting from Thursday through Sunday, is expected to impact millions of commuters, according to Transport Minister Jo Haylen.

Last-ditch negotiations between the Rail, Tram, and Bus Union (RTBU) and the government failed to prevent the strike. The union is demanding a 32% pay increase



over four years for Sydney's 14,000 rail employees, along with a commitment to operate 24-hour weekend services across all train lines. However, the government argues that such changes would strain the net-

work, instead proposing limited 24-hour weekend services between western Sydney, the central business district, and northern suburbs—an offer rejected by the union.

"This will cause major disruption

to the millions of people that rely on these services," Minister Haylen said, cautioning that all suburban and inter-city rail lines would be affected, impacting even those commuting from outside Sydney. In response, the government is exploring options to increase other public transport services to accommodate the anticipated demand. However, Transport NSW acknowledged that it would be unable to arrange special buses for all major events in the city during the shutdown period, potentially affecting weekend sporting and music events.

G-20 CONCLUDES IN BRAZIL

Fails to Censure Russia on Ukraine War, Biden allows Ukraine to Hit Russia with Deadlier Missiles



GOPAL MISRA
The contemporary world is simultaneously witnessing two conflicting narratives, the welfare of the mankind, and apprehension is that the world being also pushed towards an imminent nuclear catastrophe; interestingly both being endorsed by the outgoing US President, Joe Biden. The issue is whether a lame duck president should escalate the war, who will finally be demitting his office on January 20, 2025, or does he genuinely honor his commitment to a hassle-free transaction of power to the new incumbent.

At the 19th G-20 summit, Biden is seen being unanimous with the rest of the world leaders that sustainable development is essential for the mankind; however, at the same time, or could be within a few hours of this high-profile conference, he permits Ukraine to hit Russia with more fatal weapons and missiles. With Biden's consent, Ukrainian President, Vladimir Zelenskyy, has already embarked upon hitting Russian military stores with much deadlier missiles, on



November 20, thus expanding the war theatre; perhaps, intensifying nuclear threat; thus, pushing the mankind to an unprecedented disaster, if not annihilation.

There are also reports that the new Russian nuclear doctrine clearly says that if Ukraine is being directly supported by the nuclear-powered nations with new weapons escalating war to the Russian inlands, Russia might also hit them with much lethal missiles, including those having nuclear warheads.

The foreign and strategic affairs scholars and experts in New Delhi and Washington appear to be in unison that Biden's decision to allow Ukraine to expand the war to other areas could be a part of strategy to foil the much-trumpeted peace plans of the President-elect, Donald Trump. Trump and

the nominees of his cabinet like Elon Musk and Vivek Ramaswamy are being frequently quoted for cutting federal expenditure; or in other words ending the avoidable conflicts in Eastern Europe and West Asia.

The declaration of world leaders at the G-20 at Rio-de Janeiro has unanimously ratified the theme of the summit, "Building a Just Order and a sustainable Planet. It concluded on November 18-19, promising a broad-spectrum approach towards the key issues for sustainable development, energy issues, social inclusion, but it did not focus on how to attain these goals, if the world continues to face conflicts across continents. Instead, the Canadian Prime Minister, Justin Trudeau, appeared to be unhappy that he could not use the international forum to condemn Russia.



Trudeau, who was present at the G-20 summit, however, tried to compensate the growing frustration of the West for its inability to condemn the Russian aggression by promising severe censure of Russia at G-7, which is scheduled to be hosted by his country next year. He, perhaps, was echoing the feeling of Biden, who had allowed the escalation of the conflict, just 48 hours before the summit allowing Ukraine to hit Russia with new weapons.

The Russian Defense Ministry has confirmed that six ATACMS ballistic missiles, which were used for the first time against Russia, hit its military areas; according to the Russian sources, while five of them were destroyed before they could hit the target, the sixth caused fire, but it was promptly extinguished. There

was no loss of life or property. However, it is quite amusing how an experienced person like Biden hopes to attain the development agenda of G-20, while escalating the war.

Even before the ink of the declaration could dry up, there are reports that two undersea fiber-optic cables in the Baltic Sea, including one 1200-kilometer link between Germany and Sweden, and 218-kilometer link between Lithuania and Sweden have suddenly been snapped. The immediate impact of the disconnection is being felt in the region on various trade and business activities. It is believed that either it could be the handiwork of those interested in delaying the peace process being repeated by the President-elect, Donald Trump, or some aggrieved by the Ukrainian's renewed at-

tack hitting targets deep inside Russia. It is an ill omen for those interested in peace in the region; especially when the conflict is being aggravated on the 1000th day of this tragedy on November 20.

The two European powers, Germany and Sweden, have so far not made any accusation regarding the severance of the cables, which have brought the functioning of many ports to a sudden halt due to the communication disruption. They, however, have issued a joint statement condemning the mischief, but they did not make specific accusations. It is expected to take about a fortnight to reconnection the communications through the cables. The confusion and conflicts might be finally over when the new president finally assumes office in January; but the war games being played by a lame duck president could not only be disastrous for immediate peace, but might also adversely peace prospects in future.

Gopal Misra has been associated with national and international media. His books on journalism and geo-politics have been well-appreciated. Views are personal.

Israel's economy sees recovery with 3.8 per cent growth



JERUSALEM: Israel's economy grew at a faster pace in the third quarter of 2024, with its gross domestic product (GDP) rising by an annualised 3.8 per cent, the Central Bureau of Statistics said in an initial estimate.

For the second quarter of 2024, the bureau revised the GDP growth to 0.7 per cent year-on-year in its second estimate in September, down from an initial 1.2 per cent reported a month ago, Xinhua news agency reported.

The overall growth is mainly driven by a year-on-year 8.6 per cent increase in consumer spending and a 21.8 per cent surge in investment in fixed

assets, it showed.

Meanwhile, total exports of goods and services, excluding diamonds and start-up companies, and total imports of goods and services rose by 5.2 per cent and 9.8 per cent, respectively, on a yearly basis, whereas government spending dropped by 10.8 per cent, according to the estimate.

On October 9, Israel's central bank downgraded its growth forecast for the Israeli economy from 1.5 per cent to 0.5 per cent in 2024, citing lower-than-expected growth in the first half of this year and the economic fallout from the recent security deterioration.

Diljit Dosanjh directed to not sing songs promoting drugs at Hyderabad concert

HYDERABAD: The Telangana government has served a notice to Punjabi singer Diljit Dosanjh, directing him not to sing any song promoting alcohol, drugs, and violence during ‘Dil-Luminati’ concert, scheduled here on Friday.

Diljit has also been directed to not bring children on stage during his concert, which is set to be held at GMR Arena, Airport Approach Road. District welfare officer of the Department of Welfare of Women and Children, Disabled and Senior Citizens, Rangareddy district, served the notice on November 7. The notice was issued after a complaint by a Chandigarh-



based Professor, Panditrao Dharenavar, against Dosanjh to prevent him from singing such songs at the live show. The complainant submitted

video evidence of Diljit singing songs promoting alcohol, drugs, and violence during the live show at Delhi’s Jawaharlal Nehru Stadium on October 26

and 27.

“We are issuing this notice in advance to deter promoting alcohol/drugs/violence through songs in your live show,” the notice said.

The manager and organisers of the event have also been directed to ensure that peak sound pressure level does not exceed the permissible limit. “According to the World Health Organization, adults should not be exposed to sounds with a peak sound pressure level above 140 decibels. For children, the level is reduced to 120 decibels. Therefore, children should not be used on stage during your live show where peak sound

pressure is above 120 decibels,” reads the notice.

The singer has also been directed not to bring children on stage. “Your concert guidelines say that children are allowed below 13 years of age. Concert guidelines also say that concerts may include loud sounds and flashing lights. Both loud music and flashing lights are harmful to children,” the notice added.

Diljit landed in Hyderabad on Wednesday and posted videos of his city tour on social media. In a video on X, Diljit can be seen taking an auto-rickshaw ride in the old city and visiting the famous Charminar and a few places of worship.

Amid Abhishek-Aishwarya Divorce Rumours, Amitabh Refutes ‘Speculated Untruths’



MUMBAI: Amitabh Bachchan seems to have broken his silence over the ongoing divorce speculation surrounding his son Abhishek and daughter-in-law Aishwarya Rai.

In his latest blog post, Big B penned a note addressing his concerns about “information ending with question marks” and the negative impact it has on those involved. The veteran actor wrote, “It takes immense courage conviction and a sincerity to be different and believe in its presence in life... I rarely say much about family, because that is my domain and its privacy is maintained by me...”

Amitabh added, “Speculations are speculations... they are speculated untruths, with-

reader to believe and expand on it, so that your write gets valued repeats ..”

Bachchan went on to mention, “Your content is done , not just for that one moment, but for many moments ..the reader when they react to it gives content expansion ..the reaction could be in belief or in the negative ..anything that be, give credence to the write ..and that is the writes business .. his or her commerce dependence ..fill the World with untruth or questioned untruth and your job is over ..how it may have affected the subject individual or situation has been hand washed away from your hands..”

The actress’ post comes amid reports of trouble in Abhishek and Aishwarya’s marital paradise. Not to forget, Aishwarya recently gave a glimpse into her daughter Aaradhya’s birthday celebrations by sharing a heart-felt photo dump on Instagram. The collection included candid moments with her daughter.

However, some netizens couldn’t help but notice an odd absence. While Aishwarya’s post was filled with warmth and family love, many were left puzzled by the absence of a birthday wish from Aaradhya’s father, Abhishek Bachchan.

Reports are also circulating that the actress is living separately with her mother.

out verifications. Verifications are sought by the seekers to authenticate their business and commercials of the profession they be in... I shall not challenge their desire to be in the profession of their choice... and I shall appreciate their effort in serving society...”

The post further read, “But untruths .. or selected question marked information can be a legal safeguard for them that inform .. but the seed of suspected belief is sown with this most used emblem .. the question mark ..write express whatever you like .. but when you follow it up with a question mark, you are not only saying that the write may be questionable .. but also quite surreptitiously wanting the

Shashank Upadhye Redefines Pharmaceutical IP Learning at TeaNOTE

FW DESK
SAS Nagar (Mohali)

On 14th November, 2024, the Department of Pharmaceutical Management, NIPER S.A.S. Nagar (Mohali), in collaboration with TIE Chandigarh, set a benchmark for intellectual discourse by hosting the esteemed Shashank Upadhye, Founding Partner of Upadhye Tang LLP, Chicago (IL). The TeaNOTE session, known for bridging academia and industry, reached new heights with this event, drawing over 150 attendees from NIPER and TIE Chandigarh. This session marked a milestone in the TeaNOTE series, which has so far conducted over 35 enlightening discussions. Yet, this event stood out for its sheer magnitude and the depth of learning it provided.

The session was graced by numerous figures like Satish Kumar Arora, President of TIE Chandigarh; Advait Upadhyay, Treasurer & Joint Secretary; Abhay Goel, Co-founder & CEO of LogicApt Global Accounting among others.

Upadhye, a globally renowned expert in pharmaceutical IP and FDA law, shared his extensive 28-year journey in the legal discussion of Para IV ANDA cases, patent litigation, and FDA strategies. His wealth of experience, gained through leading roles in in-



dustry giants like Apotex and Novartis-Sandoz, made him the ideal mentor for a session that aimed to unravel the complexities of pharmaceutical IP and FDA law.

The session began with a warm message from Dr. Anand Sharma, Professor of the Department of Pharmaceutical Management, who emphasized the importance of such interactions in shaping future pharmaceutical leaders. The audience, a mix of students, faculty, and industry professionals, was captivated as Upadhye delved into intricate topics, including the nuances of ANDA development, the strategic decisions behind Para III and Para IV filings, and the advantages of 505(b)(2) applications.

What set this TeaNOTE apart was Upadhye’s engaging approach. By weaving in real-life cases and sharing both successes and blunders, he

offered attendees invaluable insights into the legal and regulatory challenges of the pharmaceutical industry. Topics such as patent litigation costs, licensing issues for API and finished dosage formulations, and the role of U.S. attorneys in milestone achievements were brought to life through his articulate explanations and patient responses to audience queries.

The evening concluded with a heartfelt presentation of a token of gratitude to Upadhye, a gesture symbolizing the department’s appreciation for his time and wisdom. Under the guidance of Prof. Pramili Tiwari, Head of the Department; Professor Anand Sharma; and Associate Professor Dr. Anil Kumar Angrish, the event proved to be a resounding success, leaving the audience with the impression of having experienced something truly remarkable.



Indian cricketer-turned-politician, Senior Congress leader Navjot Singh Sidhu with his wife Navjot Kaur Sidhu addresses a press conference on his wife’s cancer journey, at his residence on the outskirts of Amritsar on Thursday.

A. R. Rahman, Wife Saira Banu Parted Ways as Latter Issues Statement Over Divorce

MUMBAI: The Oscar and Grammy-winning composer A. R. Rahman and his wife Saira Banu are headed to splitsville.

After 29 years of staying together, the couple is reportedly parting ways. Rahman’s wife, Saira has cited emotional strain as the cause behind the divorce. The strain has led to an insurmountable gap between the couple.

Saira’s lawyer Vandana Shah has released an official statement with regards to the couple’s decision to separate.

The statement reads, “After many years of marriage, Mrs Saira has made the difficult decision to separate from her husband Mr AR Rahman. This decision comes after significant



standing from the public during this challenging time, as she navigates this difficult chapter in her life”, it added.

Rahman and Saira tied the knot in 1995 through an arranged marriage.

They are parents to daughters Khatija, Raheema, and son Ameen.

Rahman’s son AR Ameen, who is also a singer, took to the Stories section of his Instagram, and requested everyone to respect their privacy.

He wrote, “We kindly request everyone to respect our privacy during this time. Thank you for your understanding”.

Punjab’s Governor, CM & lions Club President handover Ambulance to SMO Dera Bassi

RAVINDER SINGH
Mubarikpur/Dera Bassi(Mohali)

‘Jain Bhagwati Diksha Mahotsav’ Jain Muni event held on Thursday in Mubarikpur Dera Bassi District Mohali.

Punjab Chief Minister Bhagwant Singh Mann said that the state government is following the footsteps of the great gurus, saints, seers, prophets and martyrs for the welfare of the people and development of the state.

In the presence of Chief Minister of Punjab Bhagwant Mann, Punjab Governor, DC Mohali, President of lions Club Nitin Jindal donated an Am-



bulance to SMO Dera Bassi for the public use.

On this occasion, members of lions Club and Social Worker Ravinder Singh, Sushil Dhiman, Balkar Singh, Kewal Goyal, Upadhyay Bansal, Master Karam Chand Singh were

present.

This Ambulance service has started from Civil Hospital Dera Bassi. Anyone can get the service of Ambulance, if they need it. This is a great social welfare initiative taken by lions Club.

When Raveena Tandon said she would be assassinated if she entered politics

MUMBAI: Bollywood actress Raveena Tandon once spoke about why she has no intentions of entering politics. Known for her bold and outspoken nature, the actress admitted that her honesty and inability to tolerate wrongdoing would make survival in politics challenging. An old video of Raveena telling how her unwavering honesty and inclination to fight for what she believes in could make politics a dangerous space for her.



In the clip that is doing the rounds on social media, the ‘Patna Shukla’ actress could be heard saying, “The day I enter politics, someone will shoot me. Because I can’t turn truth into lies. It becomes difficult for me as whatever I dislike reflects on my face, and then I start fighting for it. In today’s world, honesty is perhaps not the best policy. That’s why whenever someone asks me to join politics, I say I’ll be assassinated very soon. It will be difficult.”

In 2022, Tandon, during an interactive session on X, was asked if she had any plans to join politics.

The actress replied, “Never say never.” Raveena went on to mention that there was a time when she seriously considered entering politics. The ‘Mohra’ actress revealed that she had received offers for political seats across various regions, including West Bengal, Punjab, and Mumbai. However, she ultimately declined these opportunities, admitting that she wasn’t fully prepared to take on the responsibilities at that point in her life.

On the professional front,

“The day I enter politics, someone will shoot me. Because I can’t turn truth into lies. It becomes difficult for me as whatever I dislike reflects on my face, and then I start fighting for it”

Raveena Tandon made her debut with the hit film ‘Patthar Ke Phool’ in 1991. She is known for her performances in films like ‘Mohra’, ‘Dilwale’, ‘Aatish’, and ‘Laadla’, all of which were among the highest-grossing films of the year.

She was last seen in the role of a lawyer in ‘Patna Shukla’. She also featured in the movie ‘Ghudchadi’ alongside Sanjay Dutt.

AIIMS Research Study: The ability to conceive pregnancy in females between the age 31-34 years decreases

PARVESH HANDA
New Delhi

A study by AIIMS New Delhi has revealed that the ovarian reserve of Indian women starts declining between the ages of 31 and 34, which affects their ability to conceive. The study by senior Dr Neena Malhotra of AIIMS Gynecology department said that women willing to become mother should be counseled to plan pregnancy before the age of 31 to 34 years, since the ability to become a mother starts decreasing from after age of 31-34 years, which came to light in a study conducted by AIIMS on 3240 women, which determined the cutoff age for decreased ovarian reserve. This study of AIIMS has been published in the International Medical Journal recently. Study conducted by the Department of Gynecology of AIIMS also revealed that the ovarian reserve (good quality eggs) starts decreasing in Indian women from the age of 31 to 34 years.

Dr. Neena Malhotra, Head



of the Department of Gynecology, Delhi AIIMS said that the trend of getting married by females at late stage is fast increasing at present usually due to secure their future and to get a job, as such the problem of infertility among females is fast increasing. Women come for IVF even at the age of 38 to 40 years. In view of this, this study was conducted to find out the cutoff age for low ovarian reserve in Indian women which revealed, the problem of infertility is increasing due to late marriage, in view of this, this study was conducted

to find out the cutoff age for low ovarian reserve in Indian women, however women come for IVF even at the age of 38 to 40 years and even after this. Surprisingly, in the recent past couple of years, a woman of age around 68-69 in a Haryana village became pregnant and gave birth to a healthy child.

Earlier, the cutoff age for decreasing ovarian reserve was not determined in Indian women. Through this study, for the first time, the cutoff age for decreasing ovarian reserve has been determined in women suffering from infertil-

ity and healthy fertile women.

This study was conducted on 3240 women, including 1902 women suffering from infertility. Apart from this, 1338 women were included who did not have the problem of infertility and had at least one pregnancy. All the women in this study were tested for antral follicle count (AFC) and anti-mullerian hormone (AMH) by taking their blood samples for testing ovarian reserve, which revealed the average AMH in women suffering from infertility was 3.4 nanograms per deciliter and AMS in fertile women was 4.37 nanograms per deciliter. The number of AFC in women suffering from infertility was found 12 and the number of AFC in fertile women was 15. Dr Neena Malhotra said that a decrease in ovarian reserve does not mean that women cannot become mothers after the age of 31 to 34 years, but the ability decreases. “Better, have pregnancy developed at an early age, avoid delaying for a safe side,” she added.

St. Thomas School students did it once again



GULSHAN KUMAR
Yamunanagar

St. Thomas School is a renowned name in the field of education providing quality education since 1966. Apart from academics, the school has excelled in various other fields such as games and sports and robotics. Recently the school’s computer department prepared the students for the CISCE INTER SCHOOL ROBOTICS CHAMPIONSHIP (2024) IHFC conducted by IIT DELHI on 11Nov 2024 - 13 Nov 2024. The team (Roboblitz) consisted of Reyansh Mittal, Rudransh Gulati, Harshvardhan Dugar and Dhairya Kaushik and the team leader Ujjwal Nyotane participated in the Robotics Championship held at Hyderabad under the able guidance of Gagandeep Kaur, the Computer teacher and earned 4th position at the National Level. This is noteworthy that Roboblitz is the only team from the state of Haryana to qualify for the Semifinals. Gagandeep was also honoured with the National Level Mentor award in Robotics. The school Principal Dr. Chandana Lall felicitated the team, the team leader and their mentor Gagandeep Kaur, praised them all for their hard work and wished for the bright future of the students.

SRK death threat: Arrested lawyer scoured superstar’s security details online

MUMBAI: Raipur-based lawyer Faizan Khan – who was arrested in connection with the extortion-cum-death threat to Bollywood megastar Shah Rukh Khan – had scoured online to get sensitive security details of the actor and his family members, investigations have revealed.

Prior to issuing the death threat and a demand for Rs 50 lakh as extortion money, Faizan Khan had carried out

extensive online searches on Shah Rukh Khan and son Aryan Khan’s security details and also their movements.

This was found after forensic analysis of Faizan Khan’s second mobile phone that the Bandra Police probe team recovered, as the accused lawyer remains in judicial custody for the next ten days.

However, Faizan Khan has been giving evasive and misleading replies on the motives behind collect-

ing the information on the VIP star father-son duo’s security set-up – who are accorded a Y-Plus level of protection.

On November 7, Faizan Khan set alarm bells ringing when he made the menacing call to the Bandra Police Station landline, which swung into action and registered a case against an unknown person.

Faizan Khan reportedly said to the policeman who



picked up the phone, “Is not Shah Rukh Khan the same who lives in ‘Mannat’ (bungalow)... a Bandstand-wala... If he doesn’t pay up Rs 50 lakh, I will kill him.”

When the on-duty cop asked for his identity, Faizan Khan said, “It doesn’t matter, my name is Hindustani”, and disconnected the call after the threat.

The police immediately swung into action, filed the case, traced the number to

the Chhattisgarh capital Raipur, deployed tech-intel, sought help from the local police and managed to zero in on Faizan.

He was finally nabbed on November 12 by a Mumbai Police team and brought here for the probe.

The accused was produced before a court that remanded him to police custody till November 18, and then he was given judicial custody for 14 days.